



HOME MAGAZINE



"The lily has an air,
And the snowdrop a grace,
And the sweet-pea a way,
And the heart's-ease a face—
Yet there's nothing like the rose
When she blows."
—Christina G. Rossetti.

A Matchmaker.

"Dear Brother Jim: This is a very nice place, and I am enjoyin' it accordingly. We are about a mile from the village and the road is good and Miss Laura and I drive over twice a day. Miss Laura lets me drive sumtimes, but she's afraid I'll get the horse—his name is The Dook—out of the stile of driving that women prefer. And when I titen up on the lines and The Dook strikes a lively clipp, she says 'Steddy, Tommy,' and then I have to pull him in.... But she is a nice girl notwithstandin'. She has the prettiest brown hair, and such depe darke eyes, and such a sweet way of speakin'. And they have a beautiful home. It's on a hill and you can see miles around it. From my window, I can catch site of the lake thru a gap in the hills. It's a very nice lake, tho not depe enuff to drown me—and Laura's father owns it. They say he is pritty rich. Mr. Rumridge—he sells books in the village and lets you borrow them for too cents a day—says Laura's father is a village Creeses. It tells about Creeses somewhere in a book and he was the richest man in the state, but I think he is dead now. I gess you must have heard about him. He was a hystorykal carackter. I wish you was here, Brother Jim. We'd have great times. Laura's most as good as a boy for havin' fun. There I heer her callin'. The Dook is a champin on his bit and waitin' impashent at the cassel gait. That's the way Laura talks. She's most as good as a play actor. Aunt Emmeline says Laura's romantick. So I must close. Write just as soon as you hear from papa and mamma. From your loving brother.

"TOM."

James Thornton, rising young attorney, smiled over this epistle and laid it away carefully in a pigeonhole of his desk, whence it would be taken and inclosed with his next letter to the absent parents across the sea.

There was a long gap between brother Jim, aged twenty-seven, and brother Tom, aged twelve, and this gap had seemingly drawn them closer together. To brother Jim, brother Tom had never seemed the aggravated nuisance that little brothers usually appear in the eyes of older brothers. Jim had looked with amused tolerance on Tom's wildest pranks, and as for Tom—well, there were few heroes of childish romance that did not suggest his clever big brother. And Tom had been left in Jim's care while the father and not overstrong mother went abroad for the latter's health. It was a hot summer, and Tom was convalescing from a severe case of measles, and so Jim thought it wise to pack him off to a little village that nestled in the woods of the upper Hudson, where he was sure to receive the best of care at the home of a superannuated bookkeeper of the firm of which John Thornton was the newly-admitted junior member. And it was from Bookkeeper Barclay's home that Miss Laura Garman had fairly kidnapped him. True, she wrote a model letter to Jim, in which she requested the loan of his young kinsman, but before his answer could be received she had him installed at Greycrag, and in a position to add his petition to hers.

He was such a delightful boy, she wrote, and he would make the hours at

Greycrag seem so much less lonesome. Saving for the presence of a maiden aunt she was quite alone there, her father and mother having gone to California to take an invalid sister of the latter. Besides, she was sure the altitude of Greycrag was quite certain to hasten the return of Tommy's strength. She hoped this was not taking a liberty, but she had never seen a boy who charmed her quite as much—perhaps because he reminded her of a little brother who had passed away in his seventh year.

What could Brother Jim do? He wrote a qualified acceptance of this letter of invitation. She must promptly return Tom when she tired of him. She mustn't tolerate him if he proved to be rude or unmanageable. And he would ask it as a particular favor if she would at once communicate to him any infraction of conduct of which Tom might be guilty. "Bein' so very much the youngest of the family," he wrote, in conclusion, "I fear that we fail to realize how thoroughly he is spoiled. No doubt you will find this out very soon. The moment you do, kindly return him to Mr. Barclay, to be left until called for."

Miss Laura Garman briefly acknowledged Brother Jim's letters, promising to faithfully abide by all its conditions, and thanking Jim for acceding to her request.

So Brother Tom was ensconced in the Garman household, and, as his many letters set forth, was having the time of his life. At least half of each epistle was given up to this theme, while the other half was devoted to the charms of Miss Laura.

"She's just the one girl for you, Jim," he wrote in one of his daily screeds, for Tom had become quite a letter writer. It may have been brought about by his weakened health and possibly took the place of some more boyish occupation, but it was true that he had Brother Jim hustling in the endeavor to keep up with his busy correspondent. "You'd make a stunion couple. Don't think I'm foolin'. Laura likes me so well that I'm pretty sure she would like you too. On my account, of course. Cant you come down for a day or two?"

And Brother Jim, greatly amused, would thank Brother Tom for his kind wishes for his matrimonial welfare, and assure him that it would be quite impossible for him to get away just at present.

And then one day the letter with the familiar handwriting was a little bulkier than usual. When he opened the envelope a photograph dropped out. It was a portrait of an unusually pretty girl. Of course, this must be Laura Garman. Brother Jim looked at the portrait long and earnestly. Brother Tom wasn't so far wrong when he praised this gentle-faced girl. Brother Jim placed the photograph on the desk where he could use it as confirmation of Brother Tom's praises, and then picked up the letter.

"I've bin fishing for bullheads in the pool," Brother Tom began, "and cot two—and one cot me. It didn't hurt much and Laura tied it up with her handkerchief. I'd know about bullheads horns next time. I am sending you Laura's picture. She don't know it. I begged it from her yesterday. I want you to get it framed up nice and charge it to pa. Then when she says, 'What did you do with my picthoor, Tommy?' He say I'm gettin' it framed. Can't you come up and see a fellow, Brother Jim? N. B.—It don't flatter her."

But Brother Jim seemed in no hurry

to have the framing contract carried out. The picture lingered on his desk just where he could catch sight of it whenever he chose to look up.

"Dear Brother Tom," he wrote in reply, "I am sorry the bullhead horned you. No doubt if you were a bullhead you would have done the same. I remember having some experience with bullheads myself, but there was no charming young woman's handkerchief to bind my wounds. By the way, that portrait you sent to have framed reflects credit on your taste. Miss Laura deserves all your praise. She is a beautiful girl—and I am sure she is as good as she is beautiful."

Two days later Brother Tom's reply was received. It was unusually brief, but to the point.

"Brother Jim," he wrote. "I showed your letter to Miss Laura. My, how she blushed. Say, can't you come up next week. There's going to be a big church picnic. Come sure."

Brother Jim scowled darkly. Then he chuckled. What a boy! The idea of his showing the letter. What must the girl think of the liberty he took? Still, there wasn't anything really rude about it. But he must be more careful when he wrote hereafter.

Then he sent Tom a short note, in which he said it would be impossible for him to attend the church picnic.

A few days later Brother Tom wrote in a somewhat melancholy tone. He wasn't feeling quite so well, he guessed he missed his mother—and his father, too, and maybe he was homesick. He wanted to see Brother Jim so much. But if Brother Jim couldn't come, would he send his photograph. It would be some comfort, anyway.

Brother Jim was considerably alarmed over this epistle. This precious young brother mustn't have a relapse. That would never do. So he hastily wrote an encouraging note to Brother Tom, in which Brother Tom was advised to cheer up and be a man—and with the note he forwarded his photograph.

The answer came back promptly, and it was again to the point.

"I shode your picthoor to Miss Laura and she liked it. She made me mad tho when she said you was better looking than me. N. B.—I told her it flattered you. Can't you come up Saturday?"

Brother Jim scowled again and laughed again. Really, this scallawag of a youngster wasn't to be trusted with anything. Still, if Miss Garman had any sense of humor she must find him amusing. Then he looked up suddenly at Miss Garman's portrait, and it seemed as if a smile was hovering about the pretty mouth.

And then came another disquieting letter from Brother Tom.

"There's a fellow hanging round here that I don't like," Tom wrote. "It seems Miss Laura met him somewhere and he came to see her cos he found out her father was away. That's the way it seems to me. He's got snaky eyes and a little black mustash and he laffs a grate deal. I don't relly think that Miss Laura likes him much. But he's got such a way of smilin' and sayin' soft things. I'll bet he is no good. He called me a cub the other day and Miss Laura didnt like it. Im going to look after her the best I kno how, but I wisht I was a little older."

Two days later another disquieting letter reached Brother Jim.

"That felow is comin' more than ever," Tom informed Jim. "I think there must be sumthing fascinatin' about him, cause Miss Laura don't seem able to tell him he ain't wanted here. He is

in a awful hurry, too. I guess he is afraid her father will come home unexpectted. He bet my life he is no good. I wish I could talk to sumbody. But there's no use speaking to Miss Laura's Aunt. All she thinks about is house-keepin' and hired girls. N. B.—He called me a cub twice agane."

The very next day brought the third disquieting letter.

"We were out riding to-day," Brother Tom explained, "and I was gettin' in the little seat behind and I guess he didn't kno how sharp my ears is. Its like that with measels sumtimes I spose. Anyway I heard a lot that he said and what do you think? He wants Miss Laura to run away and marry him. You ought to have heard him beg her. Ain't it a shalm? Sutch a nice girl and nobody to sho her what a mistake she is making. Anyway I know the felow is afraid of her father, cos he said as mutch—and somebody ought to find out about him rite away cos its Friday nite he wants her to go."

Brother Jim looked at the letter long and earnestly and the frown on his handsome face deepened. Then he pulled a pad of blank telegraph messages from a drawer.

They are waiting for him at the village station, Miss Laura in the pony phaeton and Brother Tom on the platform.

And Brother Tom grabbed him and drew him to the phaeton.

"This is my big brother, Miss Laura," he cried with a tremor of pride, and Brother Jim found himself bundled in beside the pretty girl, while Brother Tom sat up on the little seat behind.

"We have been expecting you so long and so anxiously—at least one of us has," said the pretty girl with a quick blush, "that it seems quite impossible that you are really here—doesn't it, Tommy?"

"He looks real to me," replied the smiling Brother Tom, as he landed a heavy thump on Brother Jim's broad shoulder.

And how delightfully pleased this pretty girl seemed! Was it an assumed delight? He looked around at Tommy and caught him grinning.

And what a charming little feast they had, and what a delightful little mistress of the household the fair girl made.

And after dinner Brother Tom drew Brother Jim away from the lovely presence and took him for a stroll to the little lake.

"Well?" said Brother Tom, as they trudged down the shadowy pathway between the trees.

"Well?" echoed Brother Jim.

"Nice, isn't she?"

"Very nice."

"Did I make it too strong about her?"

"Is this a confidential conversation?" inquired Brother Jim with a short laugh.

"It is," Brother Tom replied.

"And not a word to be repeated to any third party?"

"Not a word."

"Well, then," said Brother Jim, "you didn't make it strong enough."

Whereat Brother Tom landed a heavy blow from a puny fist in the midst of Brother Jim's waistcoat.

"Good old Jimmy!" he cried.

And then it was that Brother Jim put a heavy hand on Brother Tom's shoulder.

"See here," he gruffly said, "where is that black-mustached fellow with the snaky eyes?"

"Oh, I just made him up," said Brother Tom.

And Brother Jim suddenly laughed.—W. R. Rose, in Cleveland Plain Dealer.