

# In the Realm of Women --- Some Interesting Features

## The Luck of Geraldine Laird

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

Author of "The Story of Julia Page," "Heart of Rachel," "Joselyn's Wife," "Sisters," etc.

### SYNOPSIS.

"And you just want to dress to please your husband—ain't that grand?" said the dressmaker admiringly, archly.

"Oh, my dear, he's the one that cares—not I!" Geraldine answered, laughing. "You know I always say that the reason Mr. Laird fell in love with me was because he saw me first in that High School Kermess we gave for a whole week, and I wore my hair t'ightly braided, and the pretty Dutch costume with the wooden shoes! And then when poor father died, I wore the plainest kind of plain mourning, and the mischief was done! Clothes count with Mr. Laird."

"I won't ever forget you talking off that Dutch girl," Mrs. Potts said with a reminiscent chuckle. "If any one wouldn't have sworn you was born and raised in Holland! And the time you done the Irish servant—"

"Oh, but that was later—after I was married!" Geraldine smiled.

"Well, then, suppose we leave it that way—Tuesday?" she concluded, ready to go.

"And you're a real good girl to be so obliging about it!" the older woman assured her, gratefully. "Remember me to Mrs. Fitzpatrick," she said. "Girls well?"

Geraldine paused, and into her bright face came a look of softness and rapture.

"They are simply so sweet and dear and delicious," she answered, "that I declare I don't know why the Lord ever gave them to me!" and with a cordial good-bye she went out into the bright street, with a sense of content and well-being at her heart.

At four o'clock she was leaning forward to ring the bell of Louis Reding's studio, when, to her surprise, the door was noiselessly opened from within by a capped and aproned maid.

Geraldine knew the maid, who was employed by various clubs and householders in the town for unusual social occasions, and gave her, with her greeting smile, a rather concerned look, which embraced the square hallway, with its extravagant bowl of fruit-blossoms, and the studio beyond. A fire flashed in the immense fireplace, and a few men and women were grouped about the painter's tiny, white-haired mother, who occupied a sort of throne in the centre of the wide divan.

"Heavens, Louis, I had no idea it was going to be such a grand party!" Geraldine said, with a rueful laugh, to the tall, ruddy-faced man who came forward to greet her. "Why didn't you tell me? I thought it was just the usual thing."

"Go put your wraps in mother's room," Louis Reding said, with the host's quick, nervous laugh. "You thought—what? You thought it was going to be—yes, well, that was all I meant it to be, my dear. But you see everybody wanted to meet my little girl—dear girl, Jerry, I know you'll agree with me!"

"She must be!" Geraldine agreed. They had been good friends since the days, seven or eight years ago now, on his first arrival in Stockholm. Neither Geraldine nor Dean honestly admired Louis's rather odd paintings, but they loved the warm-hearted, generous, simple fellow who had brought a charming and welcome element into the prosaic town. There was a simplicity about him, about his studio suppers and Sunday morning walks that appealed to them both, and that they felt had the flavor of true Bohemia.

"Where's Dean?" Louis asked.

"Coming—he had to go to Albany. And I didn't get the gown I wanted, and I feel so shabby!" she explained.

But he was hardly listening in his anxiety to see how the conversation about the fire was moving, and who the newcomers were at the door.

"You're always charming, my dear. Nobody cares what you wear!" he assured her so seriously that Geraldine, quite comforted, went back to the bedroom, where women's hats and coats were already beginning to accumulate on the bed.

But I'd no idea it was such an affair!" she mused again, straightening her frills and her hair. "Well, I'll go right to the tea-table and pour, and then nobody'll notice me, anyway!"

And with a final dab of powder for her nose, and a final half-satisfied glance at her reflection in the mirror, over her shoulder, she went out to the studio.

Almost all the men and women gathered there were old friends, who had known her as little Jerry Fitzpatrick not many years ago, and as she joined them she realized that Louis was telling them with much relish a story of her mischievous and daring girlhood. Walking home from high school, years before, as usual linked with two intimate friends, and as usual giggling and babbling with inextinguishable spirits, the younger Geraldine had chanced to pass an unknown house, where a funeral was in progress, and, spurred by a spirit of idle mischief, had been inspired gravely to enter the house, gravely to console the family, and gravely to inspect the countenance of the aged and departed grandfather.

This shameless exploit had been actually kept secret for a long time by the half-frightened girls, but it had leaked out, and was a favorite with her friends now, and a source of mingled regret and amusement to herself.

The painter's little mother, a frail old lady with thin white hair streaked with yellow and strained away from a pink parting, a rustling silk dress, and shell-like hands emerging from frills of fine lace, drew her down to the divan, and said lovingly: "Well, how's Maggie?"

Geraldine laughed suddenly and merrily, and her hostess, still detaching her hands, added for the enlightenment of the group, "You know what this girl did last year, when I advertised for a maid? She dressed herself in old clothes, and came down here. She said she was Maggie. Something-or-other, and wanted to see about the job. The studio was dark, of course, and I talked to her for fifteen minutes before she burst out laughing in my face. I looked at the girl—!"

Another laugh, which Geraldine joined, interrupted her. "Every one knew the story, but every one enjoyed it."

"But tell me, where is Louis's guest of honor?" Geraldine asked, when she had settled herself at the old lady's side, for a chat.

(To be continued.)

## Promoter's Wife

By Jane Phelps

### To Do Right Brings Peace and Happiness

CHAPTER CXXVI

The summer came and went. Our garden was a constant source of pleasure as well as profit. Robert helped me before and after school and thru the vacation with my flowers and they were cared for as they should be. Neil rose early and worked an hour in the garden before he went into town. He was happier, healthier than he had been since the first years of our marriage and did not hesitate to say so. We had bought a lot, and were gazing for it as fast as possible. We had decided upon a plan for one house, and were so happy over it that we often laughed at ourselves for being so foolish. "Just like a couple of kids," Neil declared.

Ned Rayburn had bought the lot next us, and they would also build a house which would look well next to us. I had cautioned them about building too elaborately or we would be dwarfed. Many evenings that winter we gave to talking of our new home, or our plans for Robert and his little sister who had arrived in the late autumn, and whom Robert adored.

Neil was making good in adjusting the affairs of the business, "getting it on its feet again," he said. Mr. Frederick had not come east for months. He left everything to Neil. This entire confidence he displayed did more to give Neil back his self respect than any other thing could have done. He was growing brighter, more like his old self. Some of the boyishness was noticeable at times, and I fairly gloated over it. It was the old Neil I had married coming back to me, the best part of him.

By spring we had paid for the lot, and started building. What a constant source of pleasure it was to watch that little home grow. Every night when dinner was over Neil and I walked over to see what had been accomplished during the day. It made no difference that I had taken Elsie in her go-cart over in the morning. I was just as interested in going again. It seemed to me that never was a home so longingly looked for, so eagerly awaited as was that six room home on Long Island. We were to pay a little down, then some as rent, the rest on a mortgage which Ned Rayburn had taken at 5 per cent. That made it easy for us, and allowed us to buy what was necessary to furnish it. We moved in for Christmas. And never were two people more thankful than were Neil and I.

"It's quite different from the New York home, Bab," he said on Christmas morning. "It was our present to each other."

"But I shall love it far more, Neil. We are going to be so happy here. And when it's all paid for we will buy better furniture. One piece at a time until we have it all to our liking."

"What a little executive you are," he answered smiling, and bending down to kiss me. "Here is a letter from Frederick. I forgot it for a moment. The postman just left it."

We stood together as he opened it. I read it with him, then he read it aloud while we both let fall a few grateful tears.

"Dear friends: I wish you a very merry Christmas. I have planned for you to receive this on that day. I enclose a contract for next year for you Forbes; and a check for the wife and children. Buy them something they want, but don't really need. Barbara has gone without the pretty things women love so long, get her something really foolish—as she may think. Now I have something to tell you. Robert said I should be third with him because I had no boy of my own. I shall look after him, his education, etc. And if he outlives me make him my heir. I shall never marry." There was much more, but of interest only to us, until the close when he said:

"Many men have gone thru the deep water Forbes, you among them. But I am proud to call you friend; proud to have you associated in business with me. Experience is a hard teacher, but sometimes her work is so well done that one forgets the hardness in time because of the results. I believe you are a better, a bigger man, because of what happened." Then he wished us all a merry Christmas, and closed.

"Hadn't you better look at the contract?" I asked as Neil stood holding it in his hand. It was for ten thousand dollars, because you are worth it to the business, not because of friendship," he had said, so making Neil supremely happy. The check for Robert and me was for five hundred dollars. I wanted to put it toward the house, but Neil said "no," he would buy me the brooch I had so admired in a jeweler's window the last time I was in town. And for Robert he bought him a new suit he long had desired intensely.

"Right living, doing all one can seems to bring its own reward," Neil said as we sat together after the children were in bed. "I thank God every day of my life that he gave me the chance to be a man in spite of my mistakes."

"And I thank Him for you, my babies, and my happy home," and so we bade each other good night on our first Christmas in our new home. A happy, thankful, man and woman; a loving husband and wife.

The End.



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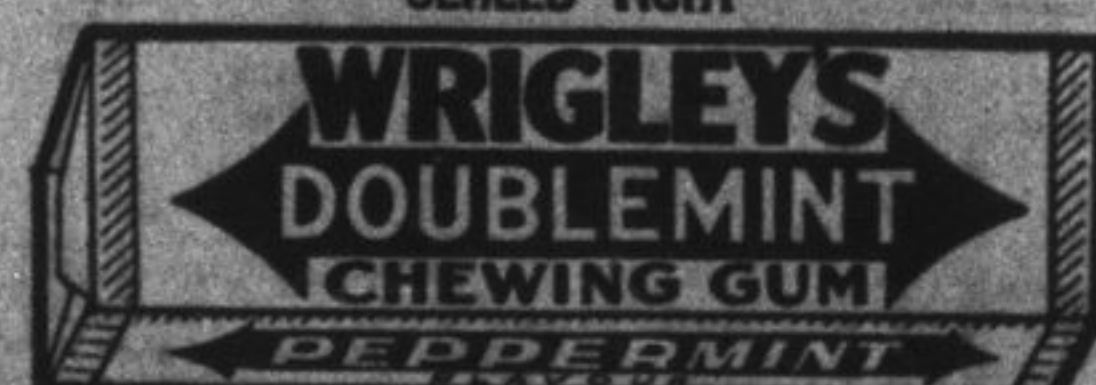
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