

In the Realm of Women--Some Interesting Features

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The Luck of Geraldine Laird

BY KATHLEEN NORRIS,

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

She had already satisfied herself that Dean was not at home; the bed was empty. Geraldine tucked the child in warmly, stood looking about with a mother's eye for possible drafts and chills, and finally went slowly back to her own room.

"Why—" she said, half-aloud. "Has this been here all the time?" For there was a letter standing on her bureau.

"Lizzie must have put that there, and forgotten to mention it," Geraldine mused. She took it in her hand and a spasm of fear and distaste shook her. For it was addressed in Dean's hand.

Dean writing her? Sending her a letter, when she could have been summoned so easily to the telephone? It was strange, and she knew it was ominous as well. She stood holding the letter in her hands, unwilling to open it, and yet feeling that, even unopened, its effect upon her life was to be incalculable.

"It can't be as bad as I think it is!" she said to herself, after a while. Better any reality than the vague and painful fears that were possessing her. She tore it open.

Immediately, throughout her whole body as well as her soul, she felt the shock. It was not only worse than she had feared; it was the end. Youth died in her, as she began to read, joy and hope died. Geraldine felt that she herself might die in the sinking weakness and chill that swept over her.

She read it through twice, and began it a third time. Then she suddenly interrupted herself, and crushed the pages in her hand with a spasmodic gesture, and crushed the hand against her heart. She walked to the window and looked out into the familiar, shabby garden, lighted now by a full moon, and into the dim street.

The quiet neighborhood seemed to leer at her like a beloved face suddenly crazed and sneering.

"Dean!" Geraldine whispered, turning back into the room again. "Dean, my dear!" She walked irresolutely to the door, came back, dropped into her own

old chair, and re-opened the crumpled pages. Flattening them with one hand, and with the other, propping her tired forehead, she once more went through his letter, from the first page to the last; sometimes looking wearily away into space for a while, with her eyes narrowed as if she were puzzled, and her full lower lip caught with her teeth, and once letting her head fall back against the chair, and pressing her fingers tightly against her eyes.

"This was the letter: "My Dear Geraldine: I have been thinking this matter over for several days, and have come to the conclusion that it is time to end it. I have promised my uncle to take a New York agency for the firm, and I am to start on Monday. I am to be paid \$25 a week, and a small commission on such orders as I can get in the afternoons. In the mornings I shall write. Of course I am well aware that you have no sympathy with my ambition in that direction, but I believe that the times have come to decide between dragging my life out here in an environment and among people I despise, or having the courage to develop my life in my own way."

"I am tired of the struggle, to make a success of our marriage, tired of everything in connection with it. This is not a kind thing to say, perhaps, but it is better to be honest now, and have it all over at once. I have been unhappy and discontented for years. In a word, I am sick of the whole business; it has never been a success, and it never could be. You and I do not think alike about anything in life."

While you accept my decision on this subject, I will see that you receive a check for twenty-five dollars every week. It is not a large sum according to your brother's ideas of finance, but it will enable you to pay your mother a fair board, and to feel independent. But I do this only on condition that you agree not to attempt to follow or see me, and that you consider our marriage at over. Should you follow me to New York, I shall simply go away from there, and from every other city to which you trace me. I do not wish to see you or to see the children, and any notoriety that is given the matter will proceed entirely from you. I have meditated this step for several weeks and feel sure that you must eventually respect my honesty in telling you that I am tired of the arrangement, and that it is, in any case, my only chance to lead the life for which I am fitted. Give your family to understand as much or as little as you like of this letter, but remember that I shall immediately resist any steps toward a reconciliation, by making a move that will put it out of the question. You can easily secure my address and easily follow me, of course, but I advise you to consider well the inevitable result of such a step."

"That was all, except the full signature of Warren Dean Laird. The letter was hand-written, in his beautiful, square penmanship, on club paper. Geraldine had a vision of him there in the club's quiet writing-room, all this long afternoon, while she was wondering about him, filling page after page with the ugly, bitter words.

She felt ill. Her throat was dry, her hands icy, the actual pangs of pain ran through her whole body. It was as if the contents of the envelope had poisoned her, and the insidious drug were slowly wrapping her in its grip. Moments went by, hours went by, and still she sat there, staring dully ahead of her, shivering as the spring night wore on, brooding, brooding, brooding.

The impudence of it!—she thought, in one mood. The audacity of the married man, father of beautiful children, husband of a devoted and virtuous woman, to dare to dare to send her such a letter!

"But you can't do that, Dean!" she said aloud. "No, indeed, you can't! Marriage would be a very different affair if every time a man got angry he could go to his club and write a letter like this! No, you can't do it."

(To be Continued.)

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The BUSTER BROWN STOCKING

TALKING IT OVER

—With Lorna Moon—

Dad Goes Fishing

The fever is on again, we knew the moment Dad started rummaging in his "glory hole" for his old elk skin boots. That is always the first symptom.

Every summer for years Dad has promised to go the following summer with the family to the fashionable hotel in the pines, and every year up to now, he has argued, coaxed or growled, his way out of it.

It's a nice domestic, agreeable Dad all the year round, excepting just these few weeks during the summer when as irresistibly as a sleeping sickness come his desire to sit trance-like by the water's edge, and hold a fishing rod.

"It isn't as if you ever caught anything," Mother protests every year. "It can't give you any pleasure just sitting there like an idol hour after hour! You might just as well come to the pines with the rest of us."

"Next year," Dad assures her, "I'll come next year. There is a room booked for Dad at

the big hotel in the pines this year; and Mother has bought him a porgee suit, and some white flannel trousers. Dad looked at her purchases with the expression of a hunted deer, but he didn't say a word. His pockets and hat bands, are full of fishing tackle and his elk-skin boots stand in a corner of the kitchen, smelly, with a new coat of oil. Mother glares at them. Dad croons over them.

To-morrow Dad will mention his grey flannel shirt with a nonchalance that will deceive no one. Mother will weep or rave.

I am wondering if the clothier will take back the flannel trousers and the porgee suit!

The death of Charles A. Merriman, president and treasurer of the Ogdensburg Wholesale Mercantile Company Inc., and for many years a prominent insurance man of Ogdensburg occurred Thursday night at his summer home at Terrace Park.

Ralph Soper, aged nine, who with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Soper, Belleville, have been visiting relatives near Niles' Corners, was drowned in an abandoned quarry, Wednesday. He fell in the water.

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