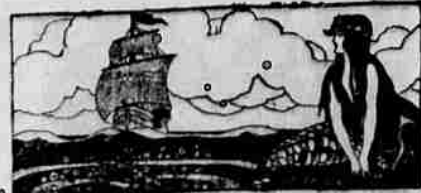


SHORT STORIES

OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE



LEWIS DENTON stretched himself with a weary sigh and ran his hand through his curly brown hair. He looked with tired satisfaction at the pile of papers on his desk, in his gray eyes the constant light of work well done.

"It's been a hard week," he muttered. "But I've changed my mind. Well, it's Saturday afternoon and I guess I'll take a holiday. I told Bella I'd sure be home early today and take the children out, but I guess I'll call it off."

He reached for the telephone and called his home number.

"Hello, Bella. Mind if I take in a show today? I'll be home to supper with my usual appetite. The children expecting me? Well, I need a change from this eternal grind at the office. That's a good old sport. All right, good-by."

He hesitated a moment after he hung up, for his wife's voice had sounded wistful, though she had gallantly told him to run away and play as she knew he worked hard.

"A man has to get away and rest his brain," he assured himself, to silence the guilty voice in his heart.

In the pretty suburban home Bella turned slowly away from the phone and faced the eager, anxious glances of the 7-year-old twins.

"No, daddy is not coming home early today," she said seriously. "Let's just enjoy his dinner and say the surprise for next time."

"He's always coming next time," whined Bonnie, while Jack gulped and rubbed his eyes.

"We have such good times when he comes, but he doesn't come," said the little boy.

"Daddy works very hard and needs a change," explained their mother, "but we'll have a good time by ourselves. We'll take a little walk. No, I'm not too tired to go as far as the park. We'll come home early and have a tea party."

Bella smiled brightly and the little downcast faces lightened in response. She sighed as the children scampered away for their coats, for it had been a full week and the position of housekeeper and mother, wife and nursemaid kept her busy every minute. She had looked forward to the afternoon holiday for the companionship of her husband and the rest he brought by sharing the care of the children.

"My woman," she scolded herself as she put on her hat, "you're lucky to have a dear, good husband anyway. There's lots worse things he might do than go to the movies on a Saturday afternoon."

In the theater, crowded with people enjoying their half-holiday, Lewis watched and laughed and forgot his business worries.

"That's a pretty thing," he murmured as a quartet of flower-laden girls tripped on to the stage.

"They can sing," he thought as their sweet young voices sang the old-time melodies, while the quaint hoopskirts festooned with flowers swayed back and forth in sedate minuets and graceful waltzes.

At the hearty encore they smilingly returned, bringing large flower-filled baskets on their arms, tossing roses on the stage as they sang a tender little love song:

The rose will tell that you love her dearly,
The violets that you love sincerely,

The lily speaks of devotion
With love as deep as the ocean—
Each little flower will tell that you love her.

Over and over, as the quartet glided away, came the chorus, first loudly and then softly and hauntingly:

"Say it with flowers, the fairest that grow—
They'll bear a message from you,
Say it with flowers—
Tulips, carnations and violets, too—
Say it with flowers."

The lights and people faded away and suddenly Lewis saw again the square hall of the big old church in the little town of his boyhood, on a drowsy Sunday morning. He saw himself standing at the foot of the stairs waiting for Bella. She came down slowly, her fair hair shining in the noontime sun, her blue eyes sweetly serious as she listened to the white-haired lady at her side.

When they reached Lewis the little old lady shook a playful finger at him as she twinkled. "Did you hear that sermon, young man? Don't wait until people are dead to bring them flowers. Your sweetheart will need them all her life; flowers of tenderness and kindness as well as roses that match her cheeks and forget-me-nots to match her eyes." Then she had chuckled at the young man's embarrassed face and the young girl's blushes as she walked away.

"Say it with flowers," How long had it been since he had brought Bella any of her beloved carnations? How long since he had heard her delighted cries as she buried her face in heart-rending roses?

Lewis sighed and came back to the present. He had lost his taste for the show and glanced idly around him. He saw women in furs with big bunches of violets, girls in silk with arbutus tucked in their coats, women with white hands and flashing jewels, girls with sparkling eyes and rosy cheeks.

"Bella is as pretty as any of them," he thought with pride. "In spite of her hard work she has kept her hands white and her hair lovely and when she's dressed up she looks good enough to go anywhere."

"Say it with flowers," Lewis stirred restlessly as he thought of his dejection that afternoon, the many nights that business had kept him working late and the Sundays he had been called away, leaving lonely hours for his wife and the children.

"Say it with flowers," "Yes, I will," he said half aloud as he rose and left the building. Straight to his former favorite florist he hurried, his quick, decided step ringing on the pavement as if he was going to meet his sweetheart. He picked out a dozen carnations, pale white and rose-pink, her old favorite as he remembered tenderly.

He ran up the steps whistling cheerily and let himself in, calling his wife's name hoarsely.

"Oh, you're home nice and early," cried Bella in pleased surprise as she hurried to greet him.

Lewis waited until she was almost in front of him and then brought the flowers from behind his back.

"Lewis, dear!" Bella exclaimed with shining eyes and radiant face. "What a treat! I haven't seen anything so lovely for years."

The tears came to her eyes as she threw her arm around her husband's neck, and he began to realize how starved for the little ways of love she had been.

"They are coming home with me every week after this, dear," he said gently. "I've been a selfish old grind and haven't half shown you how I've appreciated your work and sacrifice. We're going out together too; things don't have the right flavor when I go alone. We'll take the kiddies for good times every little while, and have some parties at home and be a regular family from now on."

"Oh, Lewis!" said Bella half laughing and half crying as she buried her face in the cool sweet blossoms, "I'm the most fortunate woman to have you!"

"Humph!" said Lewis as he swung the children up to his shoulders where they shrieked and giggled with glee. "I'm not so sure about that, but I know what it means to me to have you. I don't know how to tell you, so I guess I'll have to say it with flowers."

"I think we'd better be going," began Janet, nervously, picking up her purse and gloves. "It's a long way to my little flat and I don't want to get home late."

Franklin took her home, and when he said good night at her door he thanked her for the pleasantest evening he had had in years.

"Will you go for a ride with me tomorrow afternoon?" he added hopefully.

"It's too soon, isn't it?" "Not for me—is it for you?" "I don't know—what time?" "About 5—we can have dinner somewhere in the country. Would your mother like to come?"

"Oh, she'd love it—how sweet of you!" "Good night, Janet." He held her hand so long that she withdrew it at last.

"I've had the nicest time I've had in years, too," she told him before she finally said the door.

Then she went to her room and decided to hang up her neglected bathing suit before going to bed. And when she opened the door she found a bundle she took out, for the second time—Franklin's suit. Then she sat down and burst out laughing.

"I'll give it to him tomorrow," she decided, happily.

Pauline's eyes filled with tears and her heart thumped rapidly, but somehow she managed to say firmly, "Yes, Sonny, as soon as you can go."

A contented smile spread over the pale face and as she settled down into a peaceful slumber he said softly "Jack."

Albert pulled his tired but thankful wife away from the bedside, leaving the nurse in charge. Down the wide steps they went out into the clear night air. Pauline did not care where he led her. They wandered silently along until they came to the bank of the dark silent river. A few lights from the opposite shore glimmered across the water and mingled in with the thousands of city lights reflected there.

"Pineroft is over there," Pauline said simply.

"And I have a splendid chance to sell it tomorrow—shall I?" He asked thoughtfully.

"Oh, no," and her voice was wistful. "I want to go back; will you go?"

Their eyes met and their old love was rekindled as he took her in his arms and whispered softly in her ear, "Yes, we will go."

day that he had given them to her and that she had promised to keep them always—impossible to forgive. He would explain to her his attitude and say good-by—forever.

Eleanor, dressed as she had been the night before, was quietly waiting for him. "Look," she said, and showed him a wilted, stemless flower which she held in her hand. "See, I had it in my hair last night, like this," she indicated a fresh flower resting in her hair. "It fell out as I was watching for you. I found it this afternoon. I said that I shouldn't throw it away. I shall keep it, and this in my hair, and all the others which you see in the vase there. I always keep my word," she added, and rose proudly.

"Eleanor," cried Ralph. She showed with a new light in his eyes. She was true, she was faithful. "Eleanor, I have wronged you. Will you forgive me?"

A month later he held her in his arms and she did not resist him.

"Eleanor," said Ralph, "I never let a pink carnation come near me again."

The Wrong Parcel

By Jocella Johnson

IT was a scorching hot day in July and the thought of a cool bath in the ocean was the pleasantest thing in the world to Janet. She took the key of the bathroom from the man at the desk and hurried to the stuffy little cubbyhole to change her clothes.

She took down her hair and wound it into a tight little knot and slipped on her smart green cap. Then she opened her bundle and took out her lovely new bathing suit—or at least, what she thought was her suit.

"Oh!—Oh!" exclaimed Janet, in utter amazement, as she gazed at the ugly black garment in her hands. "This is a man's suit!"

She was almost in tears but her natural good sense asserted itself and she tried to think collectively. She remembered in the car, a man had slipped his bundle under the seat next to hers, and in her haste to get out of the car she must have picked up his instead of her own suit. It was too awful!

Janet fixed her hair again, and gathering up the black suit, hurried out to the pavilion to see if she could discover anyone who looked as if he had lost something. She almost smiled as she thought of what a surprise her suit must have given some unsuspecting man.

There was no one in sight who seemed to be looking for anything and after

wandering around aimlessly for a few minutes Janet decided to forego her bath, and sat down on the sand to rest. In a few minutes she was sound asleep.

She must have slept for over an hour, for when she opened her eyes the sun had sunk much lower in the sky and the waves had crept a great deal farther up the beach. She did not notice a young man who was sitting a little behind her on the sand.

"It's all my fault," he began at once. "I was in such a hurry to get in the water that I must have taken your suit by mistake—I'm dreadfully sorry!" He handed her the missing suit.

"It wasn't your fault any more than mine," returned Janet promptly. "And it was much worse for me to go to sleep and make it too late for you to go in. You should have grabbed your suit away from me and run!"

"I couldn't—I hadn't the courage," Janet laughed.

"You don't look so very timid," she

assured him.

"Well, I really am. Right now I'm dying to ask you something, but I'm simply trembling with fear."

"Try and see what happens—do I look like a dragon?"

"No, but it's such a nerve thing to ask—without any guarantee of respectability or anything. Could you go to dinner with me—on faith?"

"I'd like to, but I'm afraid I shouldn't. My mother has always lectured me about speaking to strange young men, from the cradle up; you don't look like a villain, though."

"I'm not, really; and under the circumstances I think any mother would trust her daughter to my tender care. Won't you take pity on me?"

"All right, I will," said Janet, deciding to be reckless for once in her life. And of course it really was all her fault about the suit.

"This is a relief after the hot city," she told him when they were seated at a little table overlooking the water a few minutes later. "Just see how the

tide is coming up now."

"It's the full moon that does it—I always like to watch an extreme tide like this. I've lived near the water all my life. Whenever anything worries me I always seem to be able to think it out better when I'm down by the sea."

"Was that why you came tonight?"

"No; I was looking for inspiration only. You are giving it to me."

They were really having a beautiful time, and Janet was thanking her lucky stars that tomorrow was Sunday and she wouldn't have to stifle in that hot office again, when her eye fell on a rather stout lady coming down the road toward them. It was her cousin, Anna Forbush—and she had seen Janet! Janet did not even know the name of the man with whom she was dining and she wouldn't ask him now. What a frightful situation to be passed around to all the aunts in the family by Anna's loving hand! Janet wished that she had taken her mother's early advice.

"How delightful!" cried Mrs. Forbush—"how absolutely delightful to meet you here, Ward Franklin! And with Janet, too. I had no idea you two knew each other!"

"Why, I've known Janet for ages," fabricated Franklin, looking straight into her eyes and praying that they would be spared further questions.

Janet felt that she was sinking—never in her life had she been in such a position; it was dreadful!

"I suppose you met at the magazine office where Janet works," put in the silent Mr. Forbush. "Didn't they run your last novel in a serial, before it came out in book form?"

"Yes, that was it exactly," put in Janet, feeling that things were steadily getting worse.

"When is your new book coming out?" asked Mrs. Forbush.

"In the Fall, I hope. It's so hot in town, though, no one can do much work. Janet and I just came down for a little swim to see if we could get cool."

him seemed to excel all of the other women in beauty and loveliness, but somehow he wondered if, in all this new dazzle and bustle, her old love were slipping away from him or if he only imagined it. But somehow he did not feel satisfied. And then he missed his old comradeship with Sonny. Yes, he was tired of it and wished that his stock had gone down with a slump!

He did not know that Pauline was tired, too, and longed for her old life at Pineroft. But she did not want to complain either, only to mar the pleasure which she felt content her husband was enjoying. She was proud of his fine appearance and popularity; but somehow she felt too, that he was just a little different. She wondered uneasily if his life of excitement and pleasure was turning his head, and she

wondered.

The weeks quickly slipped by with their haze content. No one seemed to

have time now to bother very much with Sonny. He did not seem to fit in very well in this new life and was left more each day with the maids. Sometimes his daily walks in the neighboring park were forgotten, but he did not care for the city and the things that interested his parents did not appeal to him.

But one morning he did not get up. Pauline frantically phoned for the doctor and Albert came rushing home from the office. The doctor stayed a long time and looked doubtful. "City life doesn't agree with him," he said slowly, "but perhaps—"

Pauline and Albert rested their hopes on the "perhaps," as they sorrowfully watched over Sonny for the next few weeks. Now they wondered if they had realized their real happiness too late.

Then one day the little boy opened his eyes and whispered softly, "Mother, can we go home now?"

"I can't explain fully here," "Then come out here now. Never mind your work."

"Ralph was entranced by her words. Thoughtless creature that she was to think of his dropping his work! Suddenly possessed with a mad desire to see Eleanor again after 21 hours' absence, he answered, the coldness almost gone from his voice: "All right, I'll come out at once."

Ralph resolved on the way out to Eleanor to be very stern and cold after all. For a moment a strong emotion, had almost prevailed upon him to forgive and forget her unfaithfulness. Now his pride had again gained the upper hand. To throw away something like a rasp at the other end of the wire, and then

"Oh, Ralph, know that I wasn't at all. Tell me why you went away after you had come as far as the steps."

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The Home of Pineroft

By Phil Moore

ALBERT WOOD leaned back in his worn office chair wearily but with satisfaction, mentally reviewing the happenings of the prosperous day. Then he swung open the door of the heavy safe and drew out a single paper, which he carefully placed in his vest pocket. He locked the office door cheerfully and boarded a crowded street car.

Almost before he knew it the noisy hum of the busy city was replaced by beautiful fields and country homes. He watched the road ahead expectantly for an accustomed sight, and when he saw it a pleasant smile spread over his face. It was a little, curly-haired boy sitting on the curbstone, with his chubby arm thrown around the neck of a huge St. Bernard.

The car stopped with a jerk and he sprang off. The impatient waiters rushed to meet him, nearly throwing him over in their enthusiasm, and a small voice cried happily, "Daddy!"

"Hello, Sonny," he greeted, swinging the little boy up on his shoulder, "now for our home. Are you ready?"

Sonny nodded his assent vigorously and they started up the hill.

Pineroft, located at the top of the hill, was a beautiful old, colonial house which seemed to nestle down among the towering pines which surrounded it. Old-fashioned roses climbed around the large front door, which opened into quaint, spacious rooms. For many years happy people had wandered through the large garden and around the rustic old spring which just seemed to breathe romance.

This was the home of the Woods, and their little boy, who was known to everyone as "Sonny."

"Hello, mother," Sonny called joyously as he saw her waiting for them at the gate, "here we are."

"Yes, little wife, here we are," another voice added, and a strong arm slipped lovingly around a slender waist as the happy family entered the house.

After the pleasant meal, Albert slowly drew the paper from his vest pocket and triumphantly passed it to his wife.

"We are rich, Pauline," he spoke quickly, "our stock sailed sky high and I sold it!"

She scanned the document in bewilderment, speechless with joy. But finally she cried, "Oh Albert, how fine! We are really rich at last! We will move to the city at once and sell Pineroft!"

"It seemed too good to be true, and yet the document lay before them confirming every doubt."

Albert spent all of his spare moments the following day "house hunting," and returned home at night in high spirits. No houses were to be had, but he had by luck found a fashionable apartment. There was only one thing that worried him—he knew that Sonny could not take his dog.

In a few weeks they were ready to vacate Pineroft, and a "For Sale" sign was already nailed on the house. Sonny sat disconsolately on the front steps with his dog.

"I just can't leave Jack, I can't," he

cried for the hundredth time that day.

"Don't feel bad, Sonny," his mother comforted, "we will leave him with the caretaker and we will come back sometime."

The new home was well situated in the city and beautifully furnished. The Woods were immediately invited into all of the leading social activities and entered into a busy world. No day went by when they were not entertained somewhere. It was not long before they became smothered by a whirl of dinner parties and theaters. Often Sonny had to eat alone and he had to be by an unlovable maid. He would softly cry himself to sleep wishing for his old home and playfellow.

Gradually Albert grew tired of the constant hurrying to dinner parties, arrived in an uncomfortable dress suit, and longed for a quiet evening at home. However, he did not complain or voice his sentiments, because he thought that his wife was happy. To

him seemed to excel all of the other women in beauty and loveliness, but somehow he wondered if, in all this new dazzle and bustle, her old love were slipping away from him or if he only imagined it. But somehow he did not feel satisfied. And then he missed his old comradeship with Sonny. Yes, he was tired of it and wished that his stock had gone down with a slump!

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A Pink Carnation

By Abner Anthony

ELEANOR was very young and very unsophisticated.

Otherwise she would certainly not have expressed such genuine delight that morning when she opened the big florist's box just delivered and found it to contain carnations. Carnations as a birthday gift from one's fiancé! How could anyone expect less than orchids, or roses, at least? But, strange to say, Eleanor was delighted with the carnations.

"How lovely of Ralph!" she murmured, caressing one of the pink beauties. "My favorite flower! I must thank him right away."

She was soon carrying on an animated conversation at the phone and dominating the house delighted terms possible to express her undying gratitude for his gift. "I shall keep them always," she asserted, "in memory of my 21st birthday."

"All of them?"

"All of them, I shall not throw one away."

"Well, I'll be around tonight. Good night."

"If she isn't the most adorable," he thought, "I wonder to meet those flowers tomorrow. My dear, my dear!"

That evening Eleanor was standing on the piazza waiting for Ralph. Nestled in her brown curls was a carnation selected from the big basket on the parlor table, and its color matched that of her cheeks and her beruffled orange dress. A gentle breeze was blowing and as she was gazing down the street for a sight of Ralph a curl was wadded into her face. She pushed it back indignantly, unconsciously discomposing the flower in her hair. Again a breeze came and blew the lock into her face. Again she pushed it back and this time the carnation fell to the ground.

But Eleanor did not notice this. Far down the street she saw the broad shoulders of Ralph turning the corner. In a flash she left the piazza and ran in the garden. She snatched

book from the table, arranged herself carefully in the chair by the window, and began to read insistently.

"Now, he'll think he's caught me napping," was her thought.

The steps rang as they came up the walk, but stopped suddenly as they reached the piazza. Eleanor kept her eyes fixed on the page while the color crept more deeply into her cheeks. If he thought that, just by staring at her he was going to make her look up, he was mistaken. A bit of a smile played about her lips.

"That's the steps," began again, but they were coming. Surprise held Eleanor in her chair. When she at last jumped up and ran to the door only Ralph's back was visible as he turned the corner.

"I must have forgotten the candle,"

said Eleanor after a moment's thought. "Though he never has before."

The nearest candle store was three minutes away. Eleanor waited, and then she started out into the stilling

night. "She marvelled, and then there came a great light."

Ralph had not felt very well that morning. His pride was deeply wounded. That "she" should promise to do something and then deliberately not do it! An awful realization—he loved one false. In the afternoon came a telephone call.

"Hello."

"Is that you, Ralph?"

Those honeyed tones were only too familiar. "Yes," he said, icily.

"You didn't come last night."

"Business at the last minute," said Ralph coldly.

There was something like a rasp at the other end of the wire, and then

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