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Peg o' My Heart

By
J. HARTLEY MANNERS

A Comedy of Youth Founded by Mr. Manners on His Great Play of the Same Title — Illustrations From Photographs of the Play

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SYNOPSIS.

Frank O'Connell, young Irish patriot, is shot and wounded by British soldiers while making a home rule speech. He is aided by Angela Kingsnorth, an English society girl, who defends him.

Angela takes O'Connell to her brother's home and helps to nurse him. He recovers, and he and the girl become fast friends.

O'Connell when well is sent to jail for disturbing the peace. He finally writes Angela that he has finished his sentence.

O'Connell and Angela wed. She has espoused the Irish cause. Her brother, a member of parliament, is very angry.

CHAPTER VII.

A Communication From Nathaniel Kingsnorth.

THE months that followed were the hardest in O'Connell's life. Strive as he would, he could find no really remunerative employment. He had no special training. He knew no trade. His pen, though fluent, was not cultured and lacked the glow of eloquence he had when speaking. He worked in shops and in factories. He tried to report on newspapers. But his lack of experience everywhere handicapped him. What he contrived to earn during those months of struggle was all too little as the time approached for the great event.

Angela was now entirely confined to her bed. She seemed to grow more spirit-like every day. A terrible dread haunted O'Connell waking and sleeping. He would start out of some terrible dream at night and listen to her breathing. When he would hurry back at the close of some long, disappointing day his heart would be hammering dully with fear for his loved one.

As the months wore on his face became lined with care and the bright gold of his hair dimmed with streaks of silver. But he never faltered or lost courage. He always felt he must win the fight for existence as he meant to win the greater conflict later for liberty.

Angela, lying so still, through the long days, could only hope. She felt so helpless. It was woman's weakness that brought men like O'Connell to the edge of despair. And hers was not merely bodily weakness, but the more poignant one of pride. Was it fair to her husband. Was it just? In England she had prosperous relatives. They would not let her die in her misery. They could not let her baby come into the world with poverty as its only inheritance. Till now she had been unable to master her feeling of hatred and bitterness for her brother Nathaniel, her intense dislike and contempt for her sister Monica. From the time she left England she had not written to either of them. Could she now? Something decided her.

One night O'Connell came back disheartened. Try as he would, he could not conceal it. He was getting to the end of his courage. There was insufficient work at the shop he had been working in for several weeks. He had been told he need not come again.

Angela, lying motionless and white, tried to comfort him and give him heart.

She made up her mind that night. The next day she wrote to her brother.

She could not bring herself to express one regret for what she had done or said. On the contrary, she made many references to her happiness with the man she loved. She did write of the hardships they were passing through. But they were only temporary. O'Connell was so clever, so brilliant, he must win in the end. Only just now she was ill. She needed help. She asked no gift—a loan merely. They would pay it back when the days of plenty came. She would not ask even this were it not that she was not only ill, but the one great, wonderful thing in the world was to be vouchsafed her—motherhood. In the name of her unborn baby she begged him to send an immediate response.

She asked a neighbor to post the letter so that O'Connell would not know of her sacrifice. She waited anxiously for a reply.

Some considerable time afterward—on the eve of her travail and when things with O'Connell were at their worst—the answer came by cable.

She was alone when it came.

Her heart beat furiously as she opened it. Even if he only sent a little it would be so welcome now when they were almost at the end. If he had been generous how wonderful it would be for her to help the man to whom nothing was too much to give her. The fact that her brother had cabled strengthened the belief that he had hastened to come to her rescue.

She opened the cable and read it. Then she fell back on the pillow with a low, faint moan.

When, hours later, O'Connell returned from a vain search for work he found her senseless with the cable in her fingers. He tried to revive her without success. He sent a neighbor for a doctor. As he watched the worn, patient face, his heart full to bursting, the thought flashed through him what could have happened to cause this collapse. He became conscious of the cable he had found tightly clasped in her hand. He picked it up and read it. It was very brief. All it said was:

You have made your bed. Lie in it.
NATHANIEL KINGSNORTH.

Toward morning the doctor placed a little mite of humanity in O'Connell's arms. He looked down at it in a stupor. It had really come to pass—their child—Angela's and his! A little baby girl! The tiny wail from this child, born of love and in sorrow, seemed to waken his dull senses. He pressed the mite to him as the hot tears flowed down his cheeks. A woman in one of the adjoining flats who had kindly offered to help took the child away from him. The doctor led him to the bedside. He looked down at his loved one. A glaze was over Angela's eyes as she looked up at him. She tried to smile. All her suffering was forgotten. She knew only pride and love. She was at peace. She raised her hand, thin and transparent now, to O'Connell. He pressed it to his lips.

She whispered:

"My baby. Bring me—my baby."

He took it from the woman and placed it in Angela's weak arms. She kissed it again and again. The child wailed pitifully. The effort had been too much for Angela's failing strength. Consciousness left her.

* * * * * * *

Just before sunrise she woke. O'Connell was sitting beside her. He had never moved. The infant was sleeping on some blankets on the couch, the woman watching her.

Angela motioned her husband to bend near to her. Her eyes shone with unearthly brightness. He put his ear near her lips. Her voice was very, very faint.

"Take—care—of—our—baby, Frank. I'm—I'm leaving you. God—help—you—and—keep—you—and bless you—for—your—love—of me." She paused to take breath. Then she whispered her leave taking. The words never left O'Connell's memory for all the days of all the years that followed.

Peg—Pure as a Mountain Lily.

"My—last—words, dear, the—last—I'll—ever—speak—to—you. I—I—love—you—with—all—my heart—and—my soul—husband! Good—goodby, Frank." She slipped from his arms and lay, lips parted, eyes open, body still.

The struggle was over. She had gone where there are no petty treacheries, no mean brutalities—where all stand alike before the throne to render an account of their stewardship.

The brave, gentle little heart was stilled forever.

* * * * * * *

And now Peg appears for the first time and brings her radiant presence, her roguish smile, her big, frank, soulful blue eyes, her dazzling red hair, her direct, honest and outspoken truth, her love of all that is clean and pure and beautiful—Peg enters our pages and turns what was a history of romance and drama into a comedy of youth.

Peg—pure as a mountain lily, sweet as a fragrant rose, haunting as an old melody—Peg o' Our Hearts comes into our story even as she entered her father's life, as the savior of these pages, even as she was the means of saving O'Connell.

And she did save her father.

It was the presence and the thought of the little motherless baby that kept O'Connell's hand from destroying himself when his reason almost left him after his wife's death. The memories of the days immediately following the passing of Angela are too painful to dwell upon.

They are past. They are sacred in O'Connell's heart. They will be to the historian.

Thanks to some kindly Irishmen who heard of O'Connell's plight, he borrowed enough money to bury his dead wife and place a tablet to her memory.

He sent a message to Kingsnorth telling him of his sister's death. He neither expected nor did he receive an answer. As soon as it was possible he returned to Ireland and threw himself once again heart and soul into working for the "cause." He realized his only hope of keeping his balance was to work. He went back to the little village he was born in, and it was Father Cahill's hands that poured the baptismal waters on O'Connell's and Angela's baby, and it was Father Cahill's voice that read the baptismal service.

She was christened Margaret.

Angela, one night, when it was nearing her time, begged him if it were a girl to christen her Margaret, after her mother, since all the best in Angela came from her mother.

O'Connell would have liked much to name the mite Angela. But his dead wife's wishes were paramount. So Margaret the baby was christened. It was too distinguished a name and too long for such a little bundle of pink and white humanity. It did not seem to fit her. So "Peg" she was named, and "Peg" she remained for the rest of her life.

Looming large in Peg's memories in after life was her father showing her St. Kernan's hill and pointing out the mount on which he stood and spoke that day, while her mother, hidden by that dense mass of trees, saw every movement and heard every word.

Then somehow her childish thoughts all seemed to run to home rule—to love of Ireland and hatred of England—to thinking all that was good of Irishmen and all that was bad of Englishmen.

"Why do ye hate the English so much, father?" she asked O'Connell once, looking up at him with a puzzled look in her big blue eyes and the most adorable brogue coming fresh from her tongue.

"Why do ye hate them?" she repeated.

"I've good cause to, Peg, me darlin'," he answered, and a deep frown gathered on his brow.

"Sure wasn't me mother English?" Peg asked.

"She was."

"Then why do ye hate the English?"

"It 'ud take a long time to tell ye that, Peggy. Some day I will. There's many a reason why the Irish hate the English, and many a good reason too. But there's one why you and I should hate them and hate them with all the bitterness that's in us."

"And what is it?" said Peg curiously.

"I'll tell ye. When yer mother and I were almost staarvin', and she lyin' on a bed of sickness, she wrote to an Englishman an' asked him to assist her. An' this is the reply she got: 'Ye've made yer bed. Lie in it.' That was the answer she got the day before you were born, and she died givin' ye life. And by the same token the man that wrote that shameful message to a dyin' woman was her own brother."

"Her own brother, yer tellin' me?" asked Peg wrathfully.

"I am, Peg. Her own brother, I'm tellin' ye."

"It's bad luck that man'll have all his life!" said Peg fiercely. "To write me mother that—an' she dyin'! Faith I'd like to see him some day—just meet him—an' tell him"— She stopped, her little fingers clinched into a miniature fist.

CHAPTER VIII.

For the Cause.

O'CONNELL had changed very much since the days of St. Kernan's hill. As was foreshadowed earlier, he no longer urged violence. He had come under the influence of the more temperate men of the party and was content to win by legislative means what Ireland had failed to accomplish wholly by conflict, although no one recognized more thoroughly than O'Connell what a large part the determined attitude of the Irish party in resisting the English laws, depriving them of the right of free speech and of meeting to spread light among the ignorant, had played in wringing some measure of recognition and of tolerance from the English ministers.

What changed O'Connell more particularly was the action of a band of so called "patriots" who operated in many parts of Ireland—maiming cattle, ruining crops, injuring peaceable farmers who did not do their bidding and shooting at landlords and prominent people connected with the government.

He avoided the possibility of imprisonment again for the sake of Peg. What would befall her if he were taken from her?

The continual thought that preyed upon him was that he would have nothing to leave her when his call came. Do what he would, he could make but little money, and when he had a small surplus he would spend it on Peg—a shawl to keep her warm or a ribbon to give a gleam of color to the drab little clothes.

On great occasions he would buy her a new dress, and then Peg was the proudest little child in the whole of Ireland.

Every year on the anniversary of her mother's death O'Connell had a mass said for the repose of Angela's soul, and he would kneel beside Peg through the service and be silent for the rest of the day. One year he had candles blessed by the archbishop lit on Our Lady's altar, and he stayed long after the service was over. He sent Peg home. But, although Peg obeyed him partially by leaving the church, she kept watch outside until her father came out. He was wiping his eyes as he saw her. He pretended to be very angry.

"Didn't I tell ye to go home?"

"Ye did, father."

"Then why didn't ye obey me?"

"Sure an' what would I be doin' at home, all alone, without you? Don't be cross with me, father."

He took her hand, and they walked home in silence. He had been crying, and Peg could not understand it. She had never seen him do such a thing before, and it worried her. It did not seem right that a man should cry. It seemed a weakness, and that her father of all men should do it, he who was not afraid of anything or any one, was wholly unaccountable to her.

When they reached home Peg busied herself about her father, trying to make him comfortable, furtively watching him all the while. When she had put him in an easy chair and brought him his slippers and built up the fire she sat down on a little stool by his side. After a long silence she stroked the back of his hand and then gave him a little tug. He looked down at her.

"What is it, Peg?"

"Was my mother very beautiful, father?"

"The most beautiful woman that ever lived in all the wurrld, Peg."

"She looks beautiful in the picture ye have of her."

From the inside pocket of his coat he drew out a little beautifully painted miniature. The frame had long since been worn and frayed. O'Connell looked at the face, and his eyes shone.

"The man that painted it couldn't put the soul of her into it. That he couldn't: not the soul of her."

"Am I like her at all, father?" asked Peg wistfully.

"Sometimes ye are, dear, very like."

After a little pause Peg said:

"Ye loved her very much, father didn't ye?"

He nodded. "I loved her with all the heart of me and all the strength of me."

Peg sat quiet for some minutes; then she asked him a question very quietly and hung in suspense on his answer:

"Do ye love me as much as ye loved her, father?"

"It's different, Peg, quite, quite different."

"Why is it?" She waited.

He did not answer.

"Sure, love is love whether ye feel it for a woman or a child," she persisted.

O'Connell remained silent.

"Did ye love her bettther than ye love me, father?" Her soul was in her great blue eyes as she waited excitedly for the answer to that, to her, momentous question.

"Why do ye ask me that?" said O'Connell.

"Because I always feel a little sharp pain right through my heart whenever ye talk about me mother. Ye see, father, I've thought all these years that I was the one ye really loved"—

"Ye're the only one I have in the wurrld, Peg."

"And ye don't love her memory bettther than ye do me?"

O'Connell put both of his arms around her.

"Yer mother is with the saints, Peg, and here are you by me side. Sure there's room in me heart for the memory of her and the love of you."

She breathed a little sigh of satisfaction and nestled on to her father's shoulder. The little fit of childish jealousy of her dead mother's place in her father's heart passed.

She wanted no one to share her father's affection with her. She gave him all of hers. She needed all of his.

When Peg was eighteen years old and they were living in Dublin, O'Connell was offered quite a good position in New York. It appealed to him. The additional money would make things easier for Peg. She was almost a woman now, and he wanted her to get the finishing touches of education that would prepare her for a position in the world if she met the man she felt she could marry. Whenever he would speak of marriage Peg would laugh scornfully:

"Who would I be afther marryin', I'd like to know? Where in the wurrld would I find a man like you?"

And no coaxing would make her carry on the discussion or consider its possibility.

It still harassed him to think he had so little to leave her if anything happened to him. The offer to go to America seemed providential. Her mother was buried there. He would take Peg to her grave.

Peg grew very thoughtful at the idea of leaving Ireland. All her little likes and dislikes, her impulsive affections and hot hatred, were bound up in that country. She dreaded the prospect of meeting a number of new people.

Still, it was for her father's good, so she turned a brave face to it and said:

"Sure it is the finest thing in the wurrld for both of us."

But the night before they left Ireland she sat by the little window in her bedroom until daylight looking back through all the years of her short life.

It seemed as if she were cutting off all that beautiful golden period. She would never again know the free, careless, happy-go-lucky, living from day to day existence that she had loved so much.

It was a pale, wistful, tired little Peg that joined her father at breakfast next morning.

His heart was heavy too. But he laughed and joked and sang and said how glad they ought to be—going to that wonderful new country and, by the way, the country Peg was born in too! And then he laughed again and said how fine she looked and how well he felt and that it seemed as if it were God's hand in it all.

And Peg pretended to cheer up, and they acted their parts right to the end—until the last line of land disappeared and they were headed for America. Then they separated and went to their little cabins to think of all that had been. And every day they kept up the little deception with each other until they reached America.

They were cheerless days at first for O'Connell. Everything reminded him of his first landing twenty years before with his young wife—both so full of hope, with the future stretching out like some wonderful panorama before them. He returns twenty years older to begin the fight again—this time for his daughter.

His wife was buried in a little Catholic cemetery a few miles outside New York city. There he took Peg one day, and they put flowers on the little mound of earth and knelt awhile in prayer. Beneath that earth lay not only his wife's remains, but O'Connell's early hopes and ambitions were buried with her.

Neither spoke either going to or returning from the cemetery. O'Connell's heart was too full. Peg knew what was passing through his mind and sat with her hands folded in her lap—silent. But her little brain was busy thinking back.

Peg had much to think of during the early days following her arrival in New York. At first the city awed her with its huge buildings and ceaseless whirl of activity and noise. She longed to be back in her own little green, beautiful country.

O'Connell was away during those first days until late at night.

He found a school for Peg. She did not want to go to it, but just to please her father she agreed. She lasted in it just one week. They laughed at her brogue and teased and tormented her for her absolute lack of knowledge. Peg put up with that just as long as she could. Then one day she opened out on them and astonished them. They could not have been more amazed had a bomb exploded in their midst. The little, timid looking, open eyed, Titian haired girl was a veritable virago. She attacked and belittled and mimicked and berated them. They had talked of her brogue! They should listen to their own nasal utterances, that sounded as if they were speaking with their noses and not with their tongues! Even the teacher did not go unscathed. She came in for an onslaught too. That closed Peg's career as a New York student.

Her father arranged his work so that he could be with her at certain periods of the day and outlined her studies from his own slender stock of knowledge.

One wonderful day they had an addition to their small family. A little, wiry haired, scrubby, melancholy Irish terrier followed O'Connell for miles. He tried to drive him away. The dog would turn and run for a few seconds, and the moment O'Connell would take his eyes off him he would run along and catch him up and wag his overlong tail and look up at O'Connell with his sad eyes. The dog followed him all the way home, and when O'Connell opened the door he ran in. O'Connell had not the heart to turn him out, so he poured out some milk and broke up some dry biscuits for him and then played with him until Peg came home. She liked the little dog at once, and then and there O'Connell adopted him and gave him to Peg. He said the dog's face had a look of Michael Quinlan, the Fenian. So Michael he was named, and he took his place in the little home. He became Peg's boon companion. They romped together like children, and they talked to each other and understood each other.

The days flowed quietly on, O'Connell apparently satisfied with his lot. But to Peg's sharp eye all was not well with him. There was a settled melancholy about him whenever she surprised him thinking alone. She thought he was fretting for Ireland and their happy days together and so said nothing.

He was really worrying over Peg's future. He had such a small amount of money put by, and working on a salary it would be long before he could save enough to leave Peg sufficient to carry her on for awhile if "anything happened." There was always that "if anything happened" running in his mind.

Continued in next week's Banner.

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Height of the Panama Canal.

The middle section of the Panama canal, thirty-four miles long, has a water level of eighty-five feet higher than the two end sections, which are sea levels. Vessels entering the canal from the ocean on either side are lifted to the middle section, a height of eighty-five feet, by three sets of locks, each of which raises the vessel a fraction over twenty-eight feet, making a total of eighty-five feet. These locks are constructed side by side like a double track railway, so that one ship may be going up while the other is going down. Only one ship can be in a lock at the same time, but as the locks are constructed in pairs, side by side, two ships going in opposite directions, one going up the incline and the other going down, may pass each other within hailing distance. Vessels are towed through the locks by electric machinery.—Philadelphia Press.

A Domestic Disturbance.

The trouble began with a tea fight. The milk was sour, the cake cut up, and the sugar fell out with the tongs. The spoons clashed, and the table groaned. The fringes on the doilies snarled, and the crackers snapped. The easy chairs were soon up in arms, and even the clocks did not agree. Things were no better in the kitchen. The pitchers were all set by the ears and stuck out their lips, while the teapot and kettle poked their noses into every thing. The range was redhot, which made the saucepan look black and finally boil over. The bells started jangling, all the pickles and preserves in the cupboard were jarred, and there were any number of scraps in the refrigerator and meat safe. Naturally when the mistress of the house reached the scene of disorder the cook was put out.—Judge.

It Changed His Mind.

A switching engine prevented a Chicago man from committing suicide the other day. With a rope around his neck and fastened to the rails of the Rock Island railroad he was crawling between the ties, prepared to jump from a viaduct, when a switching engine came along and cut the rope. As he had lost his chance of hanging himself, he thought better of his project.

Good Advice.

"What would you say," said the prophet of woe, "if I were to tell you that in a very short space of time all the rivers in this country would dry up?"

"I would say," replied the patient man, "go and do thou likewise."—Stray Stories.

Confusing.

Tommy Figgjam—Paw, doesn't "reverse" mean to "back?" Paw Figgjam—Well, yes, it does. Tommy Figgjam—Then, what did Uncle Bill mean when he said that he busted up in business because he had too many reverses and not enough backing?—Chicago Post.

We Can Try.

We can't all be great, but we can all try to be good. And we can all try to be happy and do our best to give happiness to others.

Shaved Foreheads and Ear Sticks.

The Wakikuyu people of East Africa are known as the Kikuyu and Akikuyu and inhabit the Kikuyu hills, one of the most beautiful, fertile and economically important parts of the British East Africa protectorate, not far from Nairobi. These people have rich farms, a great variety of food to eat and are a very finely built race. The good looks of the women, however, are often spoiled by their curious custom of shaving their foreheads in order to make room for the headstraps to which they attach their loads. These people have many curious customs. They are very frightened of the spirits of the dead, for instance, and when any one of them falls ill and is at all likely to die the poor sufferer is at once put out and left to the mercy of the hyenas, entirely deserted by the rest of the tribe. The unmarried women wear sticks through their ears as a sort of badge, while the married ones sport bunches of bangles.—Wide World Magazine.

Dresden's Model Theater Stage.

Dresden seems to have theatrically solved the problem of long waits, for the Konigliches Schauspielhaus brings the technical side of the theater up to the highest point that has ever been reached. The three principal features are simplicity, rapidity of working and the liberal allowance for space, air and light. Instead of having the conventional stage where one scene must be taken down before the next can be set or of having a revolving stage the Schauspielhaus is provided with a stage which is lowered hydraulically for the purpose of shifting the scenery. While one scene is being used, the second is all set up below on the left hand side. The stage is then lowered, and the first scene is rolled off to the right by electric motors, the new scene at the same time being rolled on. Then the stage is again raised, and the play goes on with an interruption of but thirty seconds.—Exchange.

Family Fun.

They had been having a quarrel, and after Mrs. Gilson had spoken the last word, as usual, she felt that perhaps she had overdone the matter and, picking up the evening paper, began to read little items from it.

"Oh, Henry," she laughed, "isn't this funny? Here is a man advertising for a silent partner with $1,000."

"Funny!" growled Gilson. "Yes; it's terribly funny. If he'd married you he'd have been darned glad to get a silent partner even if she didn't have a cent."—Philadelphia Record.

Comprehensive Advice.

It is probable that seldom has better advice been given than in the following condensed rules: Drink less, breathe more; eat less, chew more; ride less, walk more; clothe less, bathe more; worry less, work more; waste less, give more; write less, read more; talk less, think more; preach less, practice more. To follow these is to strive for better health, further popularity and greater success.

Explaining It.

"Robert," said his mother, "what mischief have you been up to now? I can tell by the look in your eyes that you have been naughty."

"Oh," replied Robert, "that's part of the look left over from the last time I was naughty."—Chicago News.

THE SUCCESS of the Bank of Benton

Is in great measure directly attributable to small savings—that those of moderate means have started savings accounts and have from time to time placed on deposit small sums. That's one way the country bank proves of mutual benefit. The man ahead (the stockholder) and the small depositor are both helped.

¶ The first mile board on the road to independence reads: *savings accounts.* Have you started yours?

Liberal interest is paid on such accounts