



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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PROLOGUE.

A romping, madcap, bewitching Irish girl, as Irish as St. Patrick's day in the morning, is turned over to the care of aristocratic English relatives. They are stiff and artificial, and she is as sweet and natural as a healthy country girl can be. They dislike her, but Peg holds her own with jaunty pride and in the end, by her generosity and big heartedness, wins them over, and, what is more, wins her fortune, and, what is still more, wins a very gallant lover. This, in brief, is the story of a play which by its originality, sweetness and charm has been one of the most phenomenal successes New York has seen in a long time. The author of the play has turned it into a novel, so sympathetically, so brilliantly, that Peg as a heroine of fiction is as lovable as she was on the stage.

CHAPTER. I.

The Irish Agitator and Angela. FAITH, there's no man says more and knows less than yourself, I'm thinking. "About Ireland, yer riverence?" "And everything else, Mr. O'Connell?" "Is that criticism or just temper, father?" "It's both, Mr. O'Connell." "Sure it's the good judge ye must be of ignorance, Father Cahill." "And what might that name?" "Ye live so much with it, father." "I'm looking at it and listenin' to it now, Frank O'Connell." "Then it's a miracle has happened, father. To see and hear oneself at the same time is indeed a miracle." "Don't provoke the man of God!" "Not for the wurrid!" replied the other weekly, "bein' meself a child of Satan."



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"And that's what ye are. And ye'd have others like yerself. But ye won't while I've a tongue in me head and a strong stick in me hand." O'Connell looked at him with a mischievous twinkle in his blue-gray eyes; "Ye eloquence seems to me some-thing to back it up, I'm thinking." Father Cahill breathed hard. He was a splendid type of the Irish parish priest of the old school. Gifted with a vivid power of eloquence as a preacher and a heart as tender as a woman's toward the poor and the wretched, he had been for many years idolized by the whole community of the village of M., in County Clare. But of late there was a growing feeling of discontent among the younger generation. They lacked respect their elders so willingly gave. They asked questions instead of answering them. They began to throw themselves, against Father Cahill's express wishes and commands, into the fight for home rule under the mastery statesmanship of Charles Stuart Parnell. Already more than one prominent speaker had come into the little village and sown the seeds of temporal and spiritual unrest. Father Cahill opposed these men to the utmost of his power. He saw, as so many far-sighted priests did, the legacy of bloodshed and desolation that would follow any direct action by the Irish against the British government. Though the blood of the patriot beat in Father Cahill's veins, the well being of the people who had grown up with him was near to his heart. He was a priest, and he could not bear to think of men he had known as children being beaten and maimed by constabulary and sent to prison afterward in the fight for self-government. To his horror that day he met Frank Owen O'Connell, one of the best known of all the younger agitators, in the main street of the little village. O'Connell's backsliding had been one of Father Cahill's bitterest regrets. He had closed O'Connell's father's eyes in death and had taken care of the boy as well as he could. But at the age of fifteen the youth left the village that had so many wretched memories of hardship and struggle and worked his way to Dublin. It was many years before Father Cahill heard of him again. He had developed meanwhile into one of the most daring of all the fervid speakers in the sacred cause of Irish liberty. And Father Cahill was going to hear from Frank Owen O'Connell again, though little did he reckon on the importance that the present young man comparatively untutored reformer would achieve.

stunt attention to keep her alive. From tremulous infancy she grew into delicate youth. She seemed a child apart. Not needing her, Kingsnorth did not love her. He gave her a form of tolerant affection. Too fragile to mix with others, she was brought up at home. Tutors furnished her education. The winters she passed abroad with her mother. When her mother died she spent them with relations or friends. The grim dampness of the English climate was too rigorous for a life that needed sunshine. Angela had nothing in common with either her brother or her sister. She avoided them and they her. They did not understand her. She understood them only too well. A nature that craved for sympathy and affection—as the frail so often do—was repulsed by those to whom affection was but a form and sympathy a term of reproach. It was on her first homecoming since her mother's death that her attention was really drawn to her father's Irish possessions. By a curious coincidence she returned home on a day when Wilberforce Kingsnorth had delivered an electrical speech, invoking Providence to interpose in the settlement of the Irish difficulty. It was noted for his hatred of the Irish. It was the one topic of conversation throughout dinner. And it was during that dinner that Angela for the first time really angered her father and raised a barrier between them that lasted until the day of his death. The old man had laughed coarsely at the remembrance of his speech on the previous night and licked his lips at the thought of it. Monica, who was visiting her father for a few days, smiled in agreeable sympathy. Nathaniel nodded cheerfully. From her father's side Angela asked quietly: "Have you ever been in Ireland, father?" "No, I have not," answered the old man sharply. "And, what is more, I never intend to go there." "Do you know anything about the Irish?" persisted Angela. "Do I? More than the English government does. Don't I own land there?" "I mean do you know anything about the people?" insisted Angela. "I know them to be a lot of thieving, rascally scoundrels, too lazy to work and too dishonest to pay their way even when they have the money." "Is that all you know?" "Isn't it enough?" His voice rose shrilly. It was the first time for years

any one had dared use those two hated words "Ireland" and "Irish" at his table. Angela must be checked and at once. "It wouldn't be enough for me if I had the responsibilities and duties of a landlord. To be the owner of an estate should be to act as the people's friend, their father, their adviser in times of plenty and their comrade in times of sorrow."

Indeed! And pray where did you learn all that, miss?" asked the astonished parent. Without noticing the interruption of the question, Angela went on: "Why deny a country its own government when England is practically governed by its countrymen? Is there any position of prominence today in England that isn't filled by Irishmen? Think! Our commander in chief is Irish; our lord high admiral is Irish; there are the defenses of the English in the hands of two Irishmen, and yet you call them thieving and rascally scoundrels!" Kingsnorth tried to speak; Angela raised her voice: "Turn to your judges—the lord chief is an Irishman. Look at the house of commons. Our laws are passed or defeated by the Irish vote, and yet so blindly ignorant and obstinate is our insular prejudice that we refuse them the favors they do us—governing themselves as well as England."

Kingsnorth looked at his daughter aghast. Treason in his own house! His child speaking the two most hated of all words at his own dinner table and in laudatory terms! He could scarcely believe it. He looked at her a moment and then thundered: "How dare you! How dare you!" Angela smiled a little amusedly tolerant smile as she looked frankly at her father and answered: "This is exactly the old fashioned tone we English take to anything we don't understand. And that is why other countries are leaving us in the race. There is a nation living within a few hours' journey from our doors, yet millions of English people are as ignorant of them as if they lived in Senegambia." She paused, looked once more straight into her father's eyes and said, "And you, father, seem to be as ignorant as the worst of them!" "Angela!" cried her sister in horror.

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"Radicals, eh?" snapped her father. "No, Conservatives. One of them had once held the office of chief secretary for Ireland and was Ireland's most bitter prosecutor until he visited the country. When he saw the wretchedness of her people he stopped his stringent methods and began casting about for some way of lessening the poor people's torment." "The more shame to him to talk like that to a girl. And, what's more, you had no right to listen to him. A Conservative indeed! A fine one he must be!" "He is. I don't see why the Liberal party should have all the enlightenment and the Conservative party all the bigotry."

"Don't anger your father!" pleaded Monica. "Why, little Angela has come back to us quite a revolutionary," said Nathaniel. "Leave the table!" shouted her father. Without a word Angela got up quietly and left the room. Her manner was entirely unmoved. She had spoken from her most convictions. The fact that they were opposed to her father was immaterial. She loathed tyranny, and his method of shutting the mouths of those who disagreed with him was particularly obnoxious to her. It was also most ineffectual with her. From childhood she had always spoken as she felt. No discipline checked her. Freedom of speech as well as freedom of thought was as natural and essential to her as breathing.

From that time she saw but little of her father. When he died he left her to her brother's care. Kingsnorth made no absolute provision for her. She was to be dependent on Nathaniel. When the time came that she seemed to wish to marry, if her brother approved of the match, he should make a handsome settlement on her. In response to her request Nathaniel allowed her to go with him to Ireland on his visit of inspection.

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Angela went about among the people and made friends with them. They were chary at first of taking her to their hearts. She was of the hated Saxon race. What was she doing there—she, the sister of their, till now absentee landlord? She soon won them over by her appealing voice and kindly interest. All this Angela did in direct opposition to her brother's wishes and her sister's exhortations. The morning of the meeting she had ridden some miles to visit a poor family. Out of five three were in bed with low fever. She got a doctor for them, gave them money to buy necessities, and, with a promise to return the next day, she rode away. When within some little distance of her brother's house she saw a steady, irregular stream of people climbing a great hill. She rode toward it and, screened by a clump of trees, saw and heard her first "home rule" meeting.

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mastery of his power communicated itself to her. It pulsed in her blood and throbbed in her brain. For the first time she realized what a marvelous force was the call of the patriot. To listen and watch a man risking life and liberty in the cause of his country—her heart and her mind and her soul went out to him. When the soldiers marched on to the scene she was paralyzed with fear. When an order to fire was given she wanted to ride into their midst and cry out to them to stop. But she was unable to move hand or foot. When the smoke had thinned and she saw lying motionless on the ground the bodies of men who a moment before had been full of life and strength; when was added to that the horror of the wounded crying out with pain, her first impulse was to fly from the sight of the carnage. She mastered that moment of fear and plunged forward, calling to the groom to follow her. She ordered the body of O'Connell, who had been hit, taken to her own home. The long, slow, tortuous journey home, the men slowly following with the ghastly, mute body on the rude litter, became a living memory to her for all the remainder of her life. She glanced down every little while at the stone white face and shuddered as she found herself wondering if she would ever hear his voice again or see those great blue eyes flash with his fierce courage and devotion.

Kingsnorth looked at his daughter aghast. Treason in his own house! His child speaking the two most hated of all words at his own dinner table and in laudatory terms! He could scarcely believe it. He looked at her a moment and then thundered: "How dare you! How dare you!" Angela smiled a little amusedly tolerant smile as she looked frankly at her father and answered: "This is exactly the old fashioned tone we English take to anything we don't understand. And that is why other countries are leaving us in the race. There is a nation living within a few hours' journey from our doors, yet millions of English people are as ignorant of them as if they lived in Senegambia." She paused, looked once more straight into her father's eyes and said, "And you, father, seem to be as ignorant as the worst of them!" "Angela!" cried her sister in horror.

Nathaniel laughed good naturedly, eaned across to Angela and said: "I see our little sister has been reading the sensational magazines. Yes?" "I've done more than that," replied Angela. "In Nice a month ago were two English members of parliament who had taken the trouble to visit the country they were supposed to assist in governing. They told me that condition of misery existed throughout the whole of Ireland that was incredible under a civilized government."

"Radicals, eh?" snapped her father. "No, Conservatives. One of them had once held the office of chief secretary for Ireland and was Ireland's most bitter prosecutor until he visited the country. When he saw the wretchedness of her people he stopped his stringent methods and began casting about for some way of lessening the poor people's torment." "The more shame to him to talk like that to a girl. And, what's more, you had no right to listen to him. A Conservative indeed! A fine one he must be!" "He is. I don't see why the Liberal party should have all the enlightenment and the Conservative party all the bigotry."

"Don't anger your father!" pleaded Monica. "Why, little Angela has come back to us quite a revolutionary," said Nathaniel. "Leave the table!" shouted her father. Without a word Angela got up quietly and left the room. Her manner was entirely unmoved. She had spoken from her most convictions. The fact that they were opposed to her father was immaterial. She loathed tyranny, and his method of shutting the mouths of those who disagreed with him was particularly obnoxious to her. It was also most ineffectual with her. From childhood she had always spoken as she felt. No discipline checked her. Freedom of speech as well as freedom of thought was as natural and essential to her as breathing.

From that time she saw but little of her father. When he died he left her to her brother's care. Kingsnorth made no absolute provision for her. She was to be dependent on Nathaniel. When the time came that she seemed to wish to marry, if her brother approved of the match, he should make a handsome settlement on her. In response to her request Nathaniel allowed her to go with him to Ireland on his visit of inspection.

Mr. Chichester was actively engaged at the Old Bailey on an important criminal case, so Monica also joined them. Everything Angela saw in Ireland appealed to her quick sympathy and gentle heart. It was just as she had thought and read and listened to. On every side she saw a kindly people borne down by the weight of poverty, lives ruined by sickness and the lack of nourishment—a splendid race perishing through misgovernment and intolerant ignorance.

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