

# The Home Reading Circle

## THE TALE OF A REJECTED MANUSCRIPT.

Len Grove, in the Buffalo News.

"We all have our troubles," said the rejected MS. as it lay on the editor's desk, and fluttered its leaves with the aid of a gentle breeze, that was blowing in through the open window.

"What's that, what do you say?" inquired the small English paper cutter, awakening from a sound slumber, and falling over against the inkstand with a tiny crash. "I beg your pardon, were you speaking to me?"

"I was saying that we all have our little troubles,"

"Oh, yes, to be sure, quite sure," returned the paper cutter.

"I've had my share," continued the rejected MS. "But though I am a very much despised thing, have traveled considerably, and seen a great deal of the world."

"I dare say you have," the paper cutter replied. "I can easily imagine that you have."

"I have visited nearly all the principal cities from Boston to Denver, as far north as Duluth, and south as far as New Orleans. And though I have never been printed, I have been read by some of the most noted editors of the news. I have had a number of queer experiences, too; by the way, do you recollect that holdup on the Q. & C. a short time ago?"

"I do very well," answered the paper cutter.

"It has always been a mystery how the robbers obtained access to the express car without damaging the car in the least. But bless you, it was easy enough. I could have explained it all for you I was there and saw the whole transaction."

"How interesting," remarked the paper cutter, and all the different articles that littered the editor's desk murmured, "How very interesting."

"The messenger was in league with the robbers," said the rejected MS. "It was a combination mail and express car. We had just stopped a little while before, at a small station, where another mail bag was taken on. I was on my way home from New York, and at the time, and was being sorted, with a lot of other through mail for the east. The mail clerk was busy with the letters and I saw the express messenger open the door and admit two masked men, they bound the messenger hand and foot, just for appearance's sake, and then made short work of the mail clerk. I was very much frightened, I can tell you, for I never expected to see home again; but the mail was not disturbed. It was a very startling experience, though."

"I should think it was a startling experience," said the paper cutter, excitedly, while from all the other articles came a chorus, "I should think so. I should think so, indeed."

The rejected MS. was in a reminiscent mood. "I shall never forget when I was written," it said, reflectively. "It was about five months ago. My author is a very nice woman, with two beautiful children. I learned afterwards that she had married quite young, and not very happily. Her husband died about a year ago, leaving her with only a thousand or so to live on. This would not last long, so she set about to earn more in order to support herself and children."

"As she was of a literary turn, she decided to write. It was her first effort, and such pains as she took with me. I was written and rewritten, erased, and scratched out, until I began to think that I should never be finished. I have known her to set up half the night, writing one of my paragraphs, and the dozen times, while she held the youngest child in her arms most of the time. Such patience as she possessed. And even after I was written to her satisfaction I was gone over carefully, all my "i's" dotted, and all the "a's" topped, and my "o's" jolted together, and my "e's" rounded out, until I looked very beautiful, indeed. She was very proud of me, too, and looked at me fifty times a day. At last she procured a large envelope, and tying me up with a pretty, pink ribbon, I was placed therein, and after inclosing the necessary stamps, for my return in case I was not used, the envelope was sealed and addressed to Charles A. Dana, of the New York Sun."

"Of course, I felt no little trepidation at the prospect of being presented to this great editor for the first time, and I so young, too; but I had no cause for uneasiness."

"No?" said the paper cutter inquiringly.

"No! Why, gracious me! he never even saw me, let alone read me. They knew what I was the moment they laid eyes on me, and I was sorted out of the mail, with a number of others of my kind, and handed over to a young man, whose business it was to read us. And I'll stay right here, that I verily believe that to that same young man I owe all my subsequent misfortune."

"He was out of sorts that morning, I could see that, and he had a queer, dry, place he made fun of my pink ribbon. Then he swore at me because I was not typewritten; he skipped through my pages like a race horse, and missed some of my finest passages. I was rejected, of course, and I firmly believe that he placed a secret mark on me somewhere so that anyone who read me would know that I had been presented for publication and had been rejected. I have grounds for my belief, too, for each and every editor to whom I have been sent has invariably made the same remark: 'It's not the first appearance, by any means,' or words to that effect."

"How unfortunate," said the paper cutter feelingly. "How very unfortunate."

"It was, indeed," the rejected MS. went on, "but, the saddest time of all my existence was my return home for the first time. I shall never forget the look of disappointment that came over my author's face when she received me with trembling hands from the postman. She wept many bitter tears over me and then laid me away in her bureau drawer and never looked at me for over two weeks."

"I felt slighted, I can tell you."

"I should think so," said the paper cutter. "I should think you would feel slighted."

"But one day she was evidently in better spirits, for there was a hopeful look on her face as she took me out of the envelope and read me through again."

"It is a good story," she said, "but perhaps it is not just what the Sun wanted. I shall try the Herald," and so I was sent about, first to one paper, then to another; and I was as regularly returned, enclosed with a brief note saying, "Declined with thanks. At first she used to take on considerably, but after a time she became hardened to it and came to speculate as what style of printed rejection blanks each paper would give her. I have gathered quite a collection of them after a time, all sizes and colors; some printed, some typewritten, while others were in the editor's own handwriting."

"I have been on the road almost continually ever since my first trip, but this is to be my last. I have rejected today, I am to be destroyed, and the world will have missed one of the best stories ever written. But I can't complain," said the rejected MS. cheerfully. "I shall be glad to see my principal object in life as so far been a failure, but it is not my fault, and I shall not worry about my end."

"You certainly have quite a varied experience," said the paper cutter. "But I am sure that your lot has been preferable to mine. I have never left this office since the day I entered it, three years ago. It must be nice to travel; I should very much like to travel around a bit myself."

"You should soon tire of it," said the rejected MS. "and he glad to settle down again, to feel that you have a fixed purpose in life and that you are accomplishing it."

Just then a step sounded outside the door. It was the editor returning from his walk, and he had left off. He wrote three editorials, one on the attitude of the United States toward Cuba, one on the arbitration treaty with England, while the third pertained to municipal affairs, about two columns and a half in all. He attended to all the multifarious duties that fell to the lot of the editor of a great daily besides losing about an hour in conversation with one of the proprietors, who had just dropped in to give him a few pointers as to how the paper should be run, after which he was obliged to work all the harder in order to catch up. But he was used to it, and preserved an even temper through it all.

"The hours dragged slowly by and still he sat on, but at last even the editor's work for the day was finished, and he made preparations to depart. He arranged everything to his satisfaction and was about to close his desk when his eye fell on the rejected MS. He picked it up at a moment, then shoved it down into his pocket, remarking to himself:

"I don't suppose it amounts to much, but I may as well take it home with me and read it; there may be something in it which might do good. He closed the desk and locked it and departed. He dined at his favorite restaurant and then strolled through the hotel corridors. Not meeting anyone with whom he knew, he entered a room, and sought his comfortable bedchamber, and with a good cigar and his easy chair he prepared to spend the evening, very quietly and comfortably alone."

Presently he took the manuscript from his pocket and glanced through its pages.

"It has evidently traveled about considerably," he thought. "However, it looks readable and may be just what we want. So he settled himself in his chair and began its perusal."

It was a simple love story of every day life, quite well written, but very commonplace. Telling the story of a young and beautiful girl, a coquette, who had two lovers, the one of a few years of unhappy married life, until death had freed her from the bonds. Her mind reverted to the lover whom she had rejected, years before, and whom she had dearly loved all the time. So he settled himself in his chair and began its perusal."

The editor read a few pages, without evincing any special interest in the story, until he came to a passage describing the heroine, Dora Ames, as sitting 'neath the shade of a wide-spreading oak, near the banks of a gurgling brook. She was laughing merrily while the before-mentioned "true as steel" lover stood near by with downcast eyes and very unhappy countenance. He had just proposed and had been laughed at for his pains. And now, as he said, he was leaving her forever."

"How you scorned my love today," he said, "but I bear no malice toward you, though I am leaving you perhaps forever, my earnest wish is that you may be always happy. Good-bye, Dora," and he was gone.

While reading these lines the editor's face underwent a change; he leaned forward in his chair and read on with a new interest until the story was finished. Then he read it again, his mind dwelling on the lines quoted above.

"Can it be possible?" he murmured. "That these are the very words. I remember distinctly. The place, too, is described accurately." He took up the letter that had accompanied the manuscript and examined closely the signature of the author. Mrs. D. A. Brandon, 23 Elm street, Irvington. There was a narrow strip of black around the edge of the note paper indicating that the writer was in mourning.

"Dora Ames Brandon," he repeated slowly, "it must be; it is the same person. So she married Brandon, did she? and is evidently a widow now. Irvington. I had no idea that she lived so near." He leaned back in his chair again and smoked, and gazed at the ceiling. In fact, he was again a youth, and was standing 'neath the old oak tree, near the gurgling brook, saying farewell to the only woman he ever loved, and she had mocked him. He had left her with a heavy heart, and though he had made his way in the world and had managed to divert his mind, he had never forgotten that parting; he had ever been true to the memory of the love that was not for him.

The next day but one was Sunday. The morning dawned cool and bright. The editor arose and dressing himself with especial care, placed the manuscript in his pocket and after partaking of a light breakfast, he proceeded to the railway station and purchased a ticket for Irvington, where he arrived an hour later. He inquired the way to Elm street and it was pointed out to him; he had little difficulty in finding the right number. It was a modest little cottage, and a very old-fashioned street. A little girl was playing in the dooryard as he stopped at the gate. "Does Mrs. Brandon live here?" he enquired.

"Yes, sir," the girl replied. "Mrs. Brandon is my mamma."

"Will you give this card to your mamma, and tell her the gentleman would like to see her?"

"Yes, sir," and she ran to do his bidding.

In a moment she appeared at the door. He would have known her anywhere. The same face and form, older, of course, and more matured, but the same. She did not recognize him at once, and her eyes glanced from the card to his face questioningly.

"I have called in reference to your manuscript," he said calmly, at the same time drawing it out of his pocket.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "my story;" and then she stopped, her face flushed with excitement. "Do you think it will do?" she asked timidly.

"It is a very good story, in fact, it has appealed to me in a special way. Mrs. Brandon, is it possible that you do not know me?" she glanced from his face to the card, and again read the inscription:

James A. Forbes, Managing Editor, The Globe.

The light of recognition broke over her face, and she held out her hand to him. He clasped it warmly. She had never seen his name written that way before, or dreamed that it could be the same. And she remembered she had known so well. She invited him into the little parlor and they were soon in the midst of old recollections, talking of people they both had known in the little New England village they had both called home.

The MS. was forgotten entirely, so interested were they. He had only intended to stay a little while, but the time passed so quickly, so pleasantly, that it was a fact before they were aware of it. He remained for tea. He made friends with the children, too, the one a bright lad of seven, and the other, the girl, whom he had seen at first, about five years old.

But at last train time came, the last train, which he must take, if he would be in New York in time. He stood on the vine-covered porch, that in hand, saying "good-bye" reluctantly, when Mrs. Brandon remarked:

"My story, I had forgotten it, do you think it will do?" there was a wealth of questions in that fall.

"Oh, yes; it will do very well indeed, I shall edit it, of course," replied the editor smiling. And it will do very well, after the editor had rewritten it, embellishing it a great deal, and adding a new scene at the close, where the old lover came back to renew his suit, "True as steel," and ending the story very happily.

It was printed in due time, and a marked copy sent to the author, accompanied by a check for quite a tidy sum from the manager of the Globe Publishing company.

Mrs. Brandon was very much astonished when she saw the story in its revised form and as she read the closing chapter a soft flush mounted to her brow and she wept that night, while her eyes assumed a faraway expression of a happiness that she had long dreamed of, a joy that would yet be hers.

The editor became a regular Sunday visitor at the Brandon home. He sat from that time on as long as the pleasant weather lasted, and during the merry Christmas week, while the bells were pealing out the glad tidings of "Peace on earth good will toward men," Mrs. Brandon became Mrs. James Arle Forbes and the editor became a commuter at once. They have built up a very pleasant home in Irvington and Mrs. Forbes has never regretted sending her story to the Globe.

The original MS. is tucked away in a corner of the editor's desk. He would not part with it for worlds. And so ends the "Tale of a no longer despised and rejected manuscript."

Love is the key-stone of a woman's life. Her fondest hopes rest upon the special tender emotion; her highest pride is in her capacity to awaken the love which makes a happy wife; her noblest ambition is to become a loving and loving mother.

Any weakness or disease which incapacitates her to fulfill the exalted function of motherhood is the saddest blight which can come upon a woman's life.

But there is no reason in nature why such a blight should exist. Ninety-nine times in a hundred they are completely removed by the use of Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, which gives healthy power to the special organs; reinforces the nerve-centers and makes natural, healthy motherhood possible, safe and comparatively easy.

It makes the coming of almost free from pain; gives strength and cheerfulness to the mother, and constitutional vigor to the child. It is the only medicine in the world devised for this one purpose by an educated physician, a skilled and experienced specialist in this particular field of practice.

I cannot say enough in praise of Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, as it has done me a world of good, and has undoubtedly saved my life. I have used it four times; could get no medicine to do me any good. I concluded to try the 'Favorite Prescription' and after taking several bottles of it I made my husband a present of a fine girl. I think it is the best medicine in the world. Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets: One is a laxative, two a mild cathartic.

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