

The Collaborators

A distant cousinship, so remote that it is almost non-existent, has invested Sylvia with the idea that she possesses a sort of proprietary interest in my person.

Sylvia is twenty-two, yet five summers ago she took an almost maternal interest in my future. My decision that I intended to embrace literature as a career brought from her a telegram, demanding my immediate attention. I went, to receive a lecture on the folly of my choice.

Now that time has brought its measure of success, small though it be, Sylvia tells me of my wisdom in following her advice. And not for worlds would I enlighten her.

On my desk before me there lies a letter from Dick:

"Dear Dick: I have got a magnificent idea for a novel, simple exquisite, and I want you to help me with it. There are certain faults in your writing which I think I can help you to correct, and together we ought to write a lovely book, don't you think so? So come to tea tomorrow afternoon, and we can talk it over."

"SYLVIA."

From anybody else, I should throw the letter into the fire, and epitomize it as an example of impudence, but Sylvia is Sylvia, and I am off to catch the next train to Twickenham, where she lives.

Sylvia herself met me in the hall and took me into the drawing room where tea was laid for two.

"So good of you to come, Dick," she said.

"I am all impatient," I replied.

She rang the bell. "We will have tea, and then go into the garden to discuss my idea."

During tea Sylvia talked on many subjects, but she avoided the one. When it was over, I rose. "Now Sylvia," I said.

"We went into the garden and sat down in a couple of chairs in the shade of some lilacs."

Sylvia regarded me. "Dick," she said, "I have long felt that there is something missing about your books."

Perhaps she saw a shadow cross my face. "They are awfully nice, but you do not understand women."

"Then I must marry," Sylvia said.

"Isn't that ridiculous, Dick? Now I have an idea of a good woman."

"I thought you knew the other sex," I murmured.

For an awful moment Sylvia regarded me in silence. Then, "I could care the morning character through out the novel and you the man's."

"And the minor characters?"

"We will do that between us."

"And now the plot," I said. "That is the principal part of a book."

"Is it?" queried Sylvia.

"Most decidedly," I replied.

"I thought of this," she said finally. "A man and a woman."

"Yes," I said encouragingly.

"She is frightfully rich, and he is terribly in love with her."

"And very poor," I suggested.

"Exactly, Dickie dear," said Sylvia. In the whole of my existence it is the first time Sylvia has called me Dickie. She generally adopts a maternal attitude.

"He is a business man with a grand idea for making money, but lacking the necessary capital."

"Capital," I suggested.

"I beg your pardon," said Sylvia. "Excellent, I should have said," I murmured hastily.

"An unknown man lends him the money."

"Man?" I queried.

"Well, he thinks she is a man," said Sylvia.

"Foolish fellow!"

Sylvia looked at me steadily. "Are you extraordinarily dense, or are you attempting a joke?"

I ignored her scathing rejoinder.

"And the man is the girl all along."

"Yes, and he makes the business a huge success, and finds out how silly he has been."

"Is not proposing before, and then they enter into partnership."

"Yes," said Sylvia. "Of course we shall have to put in a few incidents. Pardon me, I don't know you."

"I believe so," I replied. "I have no need for it in my books."

"Then ours ought to be a great success, Dickie dear." Sylvia can be horribly sarcastic on occasions.

"When do we start?" I said.

Sylvia had brought a pencil and paper with her. "I thought we would commence now—write away, a couple of chapters this evening."

I looked at her in astonishment. This was a new side of her character. "You are most industrious," I said.

"I can be when I like," she replied. "Now, we will start."

"The open paper lay on her lap."

"Yes," I said.

"Well," she responded.

"Have I got to commence?"

"Certainly," replied Sylvia. "I am only responsible for the woman."

"Ladies should always be first," I responded. "Suppose we commence with a soliloquy from the heroine."

"This novel is going to be original," she replied. "Besides, soliloquies are out of date." Sylvia declared that the art of writing a novel had

I imagined.

"I propose making the hero have a conversation with a friend on a

purely on the river, in the twilight, you know, where we spent that evening a week ago."

"Don't," pleaded Sylvia.

"I gazed at her in astonishment."

"Why not?" she asked.

"It's such a lovely evening for the river. If you talk about it I shall be able to think about the book."

I leaped to my feet. "Sylvia," I said, "I have an idea! Let's go on the river, we can write the first scene there—on the spot. What could be better?"

The river runs at the bottom of the garden, and in less than five minutes I had unrolled the punt and was punting up stream.

"Now we will commence," I said. "It was twilight on the river—"

"That doesn't sound very original," said Sylvia critically.

"From a houseboat in the distance came the sound of a banjo."

"Yes, doesn't he play beautifully? That's the Governor's houseboat—I expect it's Teddy Gowers."

"I said critically."

"No, I am so sorry; would you mind saying it again?"

I groaned, and repeated the sentence.

"Sounds rather like a lampbrush," murmured Sylvia, bending over her pencil.

"Sylvia," I said severely, "I am responsible for the appearance of the hero, or are you?"

"No, I am so sorry; would you mind saying it again?"

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money to her lover. There were to be threats of divorce proceedings, some more scenes, culminating in the death of the husband. A melodrama-cum-problem novel. However, I know from past experience that if Sylvia wishes it so, so it will be.

Three o'clock on the Saturday afternoon I was at Twickenham, and Sylvia immediately took me to the garden, so that we might discuss our work uninterruptedly.

"How do you like the alterations?" she asked.

"They give tremendous scope. We can pack the book with incident."

"That is what I thought," observed Sylvia.

After tea we embarked on the river. "Now," I said when we reached our chosen spot, "comes the great scene. We must rehearse it carefully and make it absolutely like life—packed with delicate sentiment."

"What scene?" asked Sylvia.

"That scene," I said. "The great scene where the hero flirts with the heroine."

"Don't be so ridiculous! Dickie, dear, you're creating my dress." As I sat down beside her.

"The heroine would not say that, Dickie, dear, at least not yet."

"But I'm privileged, I'm collaborating with you." After all, collaboration has its advantages.

Sylvia sat amidst a pile of cushions, the picture of loveliness. A delicate blue dress, a large brimmed straw hat, adorned with a simple silk ribbon to match the dress. She was dangling one hand in the water, from beneath her skirt there peeped the delicate of ankles and a little gray kid shoe.

"For a moment I sat in silence, while Sylvia smiled provokingly, as if she had guessed my thoughts and was laughing at me."

Then from custom she felt in my coat pocket and drew forth a packet of chocolates. The writing pad was on her knee, and staring me in the face, reproachfully, the words "Chapter the first."

I turned over the sheet and wrote on the other side "Chapter 51—L'Evolution."

Sylvia watched me. "You funny fellow, Dick, do you always write your books like that—the last chapter first?"

"No," I replied, "but this is different—this is a chapter from life."

For a while, a long while, we talked on many subjects, the dusk gradually falling around us, while the river took on a deeper hue, broken only by the reflection of the moon. From a houseboat, recently far away, came the sound of music.

Sylvia laid a hand on my knee. "Hark!" she said.

I slipped an arm around her. For a few moments we listened, then she suddenly recollected: "Dickie," she said reprovingly, "Dickie!"

"Put that down," I said, "it's part of the story."

With a laugh, the meaning of which I knew, she complied.

"Now continue," I said. "He took her hand in his." I took Sylvia's hand in mine.

"How can I when you're holding my hand?"

"Then you must remember the words—For a moment he looked into her face—"

"This is too touching," murmured Sylvia.

"Then bending over her, pressed his lips to her." I suited the action to the word.

Sylvia's eyes dropped, and a blush overspread her face. "Dickie," she said, softly, "you mustn't do that."

I released her hand. "Capital," I said, "put it down."

Her head was very near mine, the scent from it rose intoxicatingly in my face. My arms crept round her.

"Sylvia," I whispered, "Sylvia—shall we collaborate?"

"We are," murmured Sylvia from my shoulder.

"Dear," I whispered, "you know what I mean. Let us do it with play acting and write another book together—a serious one—The Book of Life."

Sylvia looked up into my face with a smile, and I took I shall never forget, never before had I seen it on her face. I drew her closer to me.

Later, when the dusk had fallen, she took the pencil and wrote beneath the words "L'Evolution," which I had written, "The Book of Life."

"Oh," I said, "the book is written. She took the sheet of paper and hid it in the bosom of her dress. "I shall always keep it," she said, "and what shall we call the new book, dear?"

"Let us call it 'We Two,'" I said.

"Or The Collaborators," she suggested. There was a provoking smile on her face.

"I shall never collaborate with any one else," I said, "for I could never write such another success."

"I hope not," responded Sylvia, "and now, dear, we'll go home and tell father that our first book's complete, and we're starting a new one."

—The Throne and Country.

Collecting Debt by Dynamite.

By the explosion of a dynamite cartridge at the airhole of a cellar in M. Messan's house at Saint Rambert, the dynamite caused damage was done, but M. Messan, who is paralyzed, was so frightened that he swooned for a long time and complications were feared. It is alleged that the cartridge was planted by a contractor who had been refused payment on account of work done. M. Pansier, the contractor, has been arrested.—Le Figaro.

When Age comes knocking at the door a woman sends word that she is not at home.

DOG'S PATHETIC DEATH.

Faithful Animal Grew Infirm and Deaf During Six-Year Wait in Front of Montana Bank.

Anecdotal. Montpelier, the dog that has waited in front of the Daily bank six long years for his master, is dead. He was run over by an automobile and was so seriously injured that he was shot. Six years ago Shep's master, a sheep herder, came to town after a season on the range. He brought the dog with him. Shep waited outside the bank while his master went inside to cash a check. While inside the man was stricken with apoplexy, plied on a stretcher and taken to a hospital in an ambulance.

It did not look natural to Shep, but he followed the ambulance to the hospital and waited outside for several days. The man died a few hours after reaching the hospital. Shep saw the funeral procession, but did not understand, and he still waited. Then he remembered that his master had come into the bank the last time he had actually seen him, so he went there and curled upon the front steps. For months he would look up expectantly every time anyone came out of the building, but his hope began to wane. He was so old and feeble that he could not stand. A constant vigil and had made the front of the bank his home for six years, only leaving long enough to get something to eat.

He grew infirm and deaf during his long wait. Even the President E. J. Brizman of the bank paid his tax to the city, but he still waited for the sheep herder who did not come out of the bank. For the last few months Shep had been suffering with a sore foot that he kept lifting for him to walk. Then a flying automobile struck him and broke his back.

SETS TRAP; CATCHES CATFISH.

Arkansas Man Had Baited It to Get an Otter.

Lead Hill, Ark.—When John Hunter, who farms and traps near White River about ten miles from here, set traps in the edge of that stream he hoped to catch an otter. But instead, he captured a seven pound catfish in a big No. 2 trap.

Otters are caught, usually, by placing the trap, properly baited with live minnows at some place where the furry animals emerge from the water, or where they build a slide. It was in such a place that Hunter stalked his trap, arranging it with weights on a slide so that if an otter were caught and dived for deep water he would be thrown instead of gnawing his foot off to escape. It is evident, Hunter believes, that the big fish made an effort to get the minnow bait set for the otter and sprang the trap. He did not know when he dived for deep water and was making a great commotion in the water when Hunter went to his trap.

WEARS SKIRTS TO MILK COW.

Animal Had Been Property of Women Bolts When Man Appears.

Winsted, Conn.—Misses Johnnie and Alice Case and their mother conducted a dairy farm in North Canton and do all the work on the place themselves, even doing the milking. Frank Stoddard, of West Simsbury, bought a cow of them, and it so happened it was dark when he made his purchase. Next morning, when Stoddard went out to milk his new cow, it stared at him, bellowed, cleared a stone wall and disappeared.

Stoddard recalled the Case sisters had milked the same cow for several years without difficulty, and then the thought came to him that men never worked around the cows on the Case farm.

He returned to the house, dressed up in his wife's clothes and started out in quest of the unruly cow, which at sight of the petticoats bellowed and dodged like a lamb.

Farmer Stoddard, at last accounts, still was wearing skirts when milking that cow.

Passing Ship Saver Seven Castaways Norfolk Island, Australasia.—The shipwrecked crew of the schooner El Dorado of San Francisco, after being forced six months on Easter Island, a Chilean possession about 2,000 miles out in the Pacific ocean, were picked up and rescued by the Knight of Guir, a British steamer from Valparaiso to New Caledonia, New South Wales.

The El Dorado was abandoned at sea and her crew of 11 men made their way in a boat to Easter Island. The place is practically uninhabited and the men all died of