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## BY PROXY.

Bob Montgomery and I were old chums. We had fraternized at school in a truly Damon-and-Pythias manner touching to witness. We swore eternal friendship in those good old days, and faced the battle of life together when we shook from our feet the dust of that temple of Minerva wherein we had asked our thirst at the fountain of knowledge.

Being possessed of a literary turn of mind, Bob turned his back on our little Devonshire village and gravitated to London, that Mecca of every literary pilgrim.

My hobby was music—my one desire to win fame by my compositions.

After many vicissitudes, Bob secured a fairly good position on a newly started evening paper, on which I was fortunate enough to get installed as musical critic. Prior to this a couple of my songs had reached the public through the medium of one of the foremost publishers, and had "come down" well.

As Bob himself phrased it, "thing were looking up."

The new paper was an undoubted success—it "caught on" after the first six months—a result largely attributable to the energy of its editor, Richard Grahame, formerly sub-editor on the Daily Thunderer.

Grahame was an old journalistic hand (having been connected with the London press for over thirty years), and owing to his genial manner and thorough honesty there was not a more popular member of the profession.

He took a great liking to Bob and myself, and we frequently spent very pleasant evenings at his house. He was a widower, with one daughter—a sweet, winsome girl just out of her teens.

It would take a more facile pen than mine to describe Nellie Grahame, so I will not attempt it. I will simply quote Bob's summing up—"As nice a girl as you'd meet in a day's walk" which is but a meagre description, after all.

Bob, be it mentioned, was always a hot-headed, impetuous youth, so it is not to be wondered at that he should straightway fall head over ears in love with his chief's pretty daughter.

But what was certainly surprising was that fact that I—unemotional, phlegmatic John Adams ("Steady John" he usually called me)—should actually go and do likewise.

One evening Bob came in looking rather glum and sat down to tea, with a very preoccupied manner. He answered my occasional queries with monosyllabic replies—not always coherent—and appeared to be in an extremely brown study.

Feeling sure he would get it off his mind in due course, I maintained a most discreet silence for a considerable time, awaiting developments.

He turned away from me and stood for a few moments staring out through the window. Then he spoke abruptly, his back still turned to me:

"I want you to plead my cause for me to Nellie Grahame."

Had a thunderbolt landed in the room I could not have been more astonished. Fortunately, he did not look around, or my face must have betrayed me. After a slight pause he went on:

"You know I love her sincerely. I have for weeks past endeavoured to put my thoughts into words, but when I am in her presence all my courage oozes out, and I feel a veritable coward. The long and short of it is—I cannot do it. Will you do it for me? She looks upon you now as an old friend"—I winced a little—"and I am sure you could put things to her in a nice way and make it all plain sailing. I think she does care for me just a little."—"There seems to be no doubt about that," I acknowledged mentally—"and I am sure, John, for the sake of our long friendship, you'll do this much for me."

With a start I jumped up, to find he had turned and was watching me anxiously. For a moment my glance avoided his, and then I had made up my mind.

"I will do it, Bob."

"Thank you, old man," was all he said, but his look expressed more than the simple words. Rather hurriedly I donned my outer habiliments and sallied from the house, determined on immediate action.

On reaching the Grahame's domicile I found that Mr. Grahame was out and his daughter alone in the drawing-room.

She came forward to meet me with a frank, winning smile, and as I gazed for a moment

into her bright eyes my heart rose up in hot rebellion against the thought of pleading for another suitor.

"Good evening, Mr. Adams. What has happened to your bosom friend that he is not with you?"

"He is not well; that is—I mean, he was unable to accompany me," I stammered in rather a halting fashion, as she looked at me inquiringly. "In fact, Miss Grahame, he did not come because I wished most particularly to have a private conversation with you on a most vital subject."

She opened her eyes wide at this rather portentous announcement and motioned me to a seat. I drew over a chair and sat down beside her. "Now for it," thought I, setting my teeth together with a resolute snap.

"Where you ever in love, Miss Grahame?" I hazarded, not exactly knowing how to come to the point.

She blushed a little and turned her head aside, asking after a slight pause:

"Why do you ask me such a strange question?"

"Because I—he—that is—I mean,"—I stopped in some confusion.

"Miss Grahame—Nellie," I went on hurriedly, "there is a certain gentleman whose dearest wish is to call you his; from the day upon which he first met you he has loved you. He hopes his love may not have been in vain, but that it has touched a responsive chord. Is that hope futile?"

She grew rosy red, and played nervously with the bunch of seals on her chain. I moved my chair a little nearer and laid my hand on hers. It trembled in mine like a imprisoned bird fluttering in its cage.

She smiled a queer little smile and put out her hand, the rich color again lighting up her face.

"You must excuse me now, Mr. Adams. I must think over what you have said. You have taken me by surprise."

"I hope I have not offended you," I murmured apologetically as I took the proffered hand in mine.

"I am not easily offended," she returned smilingly, adding as an afterthought: "I do not think you could say anything which would offend me."

"Thank you"—and, moved by an irresistible impulse, I stooped down and kissed the little hand I held. She blushed furiously, her fingers trembling in mine, and said hurriedly:

"Don't you think me rude if I send you away now. I will write you by an early post. Good-by."

I murmured some kind of confused adieu and took my departure, feeling not too well pleased with the manner in which I had carried out my delicate mission. I found Bob striding up and down the little sitting room as if in training for a pedestrian handicap. Before I was well inside the door he had seized me by the shoulder and inquired: "What news?"

"Indefinite," I returned briefly. "Miss Grahame has promised to think over it and write"—with which he was forced to remain content.

For the next couple of days poor old Bob was in a condition of nervous tension, which proved rather a strain on my usually steady nerves.

Every step in the quiet little street in which we lived resulted in a headlong rush to the window to see if the newcomer was a postman bearing the all-important epistle—so anxiously awaited, so long delayed. But the postman came and the postman went, morning, noon and night, without result.

On the third evening, however, the familiar double knock was heard reverberating through the house. Bob at once rushed out on the landing and looked over.

"For the other gentleman, sir," said the trim little servant maid, tripping up stairs with a small parcel in her hand.

Bob was so disappointed that he forgot to say "Thank you" as he seized the parcel and tossed it across the room to me.

A small, neat package, it was, addressed "John Adams, Esq.," in a handwriting distinctly feminine. I cut the cord and opened up the brown paper covering, bringing to light a small blue and gold bound volume bearing the legend, "Longfellow's Poems" stamped on the back.

Bob's curiosity was aroused and, reaching over he picked up the book. As he did so, a folded sheet of paper slipped from it and fluttered to the floor. I seized it, spread it out and read the following:

"See page 113 for my answer.—N. Grahame."

In a moment I had snatched the little volume from behind and eagerly turned to the page quoted. It was the "Courtship of Miles Standish"—and four lines were marked with blue pencil:

"But as he warmed and glowed, in his simple and eloquent language, Quite forgetful of self, and full of the praise of his rival.

Archly the maiden smiled, and with tears overrunning with laughter, Said in a tremulous voice, 'Why don't you speak for yourself, John?'

The book fell from my hand as I realized the significance of that last line:

"Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"

The twilight sky seemed to glow with all

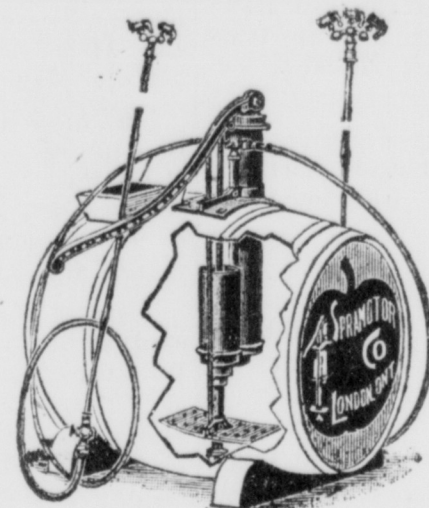


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the radiance of noon. I seemed to hear the music of birds in the air. My heart beat tumultuously with an ecstasy of sudden joy. Utterly oblivious of Bob, I started up and, seizing my hat, rushed from the house straight to the Grahames.

Fortunately, Nellie was alone when I entered unbidden—not waiting to be announced.

As I crossed the threshold she turned to greet me, and I read that in her eyes which—blind fool as I was—I had failed to read before.

One shy, sweet glance, one tender smile—and I had folded her to my heart.

"Poor Bob!" said I some time after, when we had descended to things sublunary, "what will he think of me?"

"You did the best you could for him, John, dear," said Nellie, with an arch smile; "it was not your fault I did not accept him. I am very sorry for the poor boy, but you know I wouldn't give you up, John, for all the Bobs in Christendom."

Now what answer could I make to that?

## Use Brains With Feed.

There is a great difference in the amount of grain required by different men to keep a given horse in condition. Some teamsters seem to think that if they are shovelling into each manger half a bushel or three pecks of oats a day, and a little hay, they are feeding well, and cannot understand why the beast does not keep fat. Others feed scarcely any grain, and not a few farm horses get little of anything but grass all summer, yet always keep in good flesh. The usual comment is that such a horse must be an easy keeper. Often the credit belongs to the man, rather than the horse. We believe in feeding horses well, for upon the efficiency of the team depends the economy of the farmer's and his hired man's time, but experience shows that the quantity of oats per meal is by no means the only important factor in keeping horseflesh in good shape. Judgement in working and increasing or diminishing the allowance of heavy feed, regularity in time of feeding, and working, also, as far as may be practicable frequency of watering, and care in fitting harness and matching teams—in a word, that rare quality called "horse sense"—are the secrets of maintaining the teams in presentable shape and strong working condition. It is not so much what you do as how you do it. Horse sense without oats is better than oats without sense.

## For Mothers.

Children need models more than criticism. To bring up a child in the way he should go, travel that way yourself.

The sooner you get a child to be a law unto himself, the sooner you will make a man of him.

We can never check what is evil in the young unless we cherish what is good in them.

Stories first heard at a mother's knee are never wholly forgotten, a little spring that never dries up in our journey through scorching years.

Line upon line, precept upon precept, we must have in a home. But we must also have serenity, peace, and the absence of petty fault-finding, if home is to be a nursery fit for heaven's growing plants.

There are no men or women, however poor they may be, but have it in their power by the grace of God to leave behind them the grandest thing on earth, character; and their children must rise up after them and thank God that their mother was a pious woman, or their father a pious man.

## An Unrecognized Opportunity.

"I tell you, Mrs. Juniper," Mrs. Hubbard was saying to her caller, "we often fail in trying to be helpful to needy people because we will not put ourselves in their places and try to see things from their point of view. We consult our own pleasure and our own convenience even in our charitable work. Self-sacrifice is nobler than giving. If we were more considerate of—"

Here Mrs. Hubbard was interrupted by the maid, who came to tell her that a woman at the kitchen door wished to speak with her. She excused herself and went out, but returned a few moments later.

"It's a woman with a four-year-old child," she said, "looking for work. I should be glad to have her help Norah with the housecleaning, but of course we can't have that child running over the house. She ought to know better than to go round with such a handicap as that."

## Iceland Horses.

Icelanders have a strange but effective plan for preventing horses from straying away. They tie the head of one horse to the tail of another, and the head of this to the tail of the former. In this state it is impossible for the horses to move on, either backward or forward. If disposed to move at all it will only be in a circle, and even then there must be mutual agreement to turn their heads the same way.