

A VILLAGE ROMANCE.

There could be no doubt about it. Molly had been a different girl since she and John Lock had been "keeping company." At least this was what the village gossips declared, and surely no one would have the temerity to contradict authorities so well informed. And the village gossips had spoken truth this time. Molly, the pride of all Longville, the pretty country girl whose nature had enlivened with a superabundance of animal spirits; Molly, the fascinating coquette, had been subdued, and John Lock, the village carpenter's son, had conquered. At least that was what all Longville thought.

John in himself, although boasting no ancient lineage, was as the laborer termed him, cut above the ordinary run. Somehow without having had any educational advantages he had developed a strong love for books, and when the day's work in the little carpenter's shop was done he would go out into the soft summer eve, and a brisk walk over the hills would bring him to the rugged cliffs by the sea. Here he would throw himself down, and as long as the red shoots of the setting sun gave light over the landscape he would read with rapturous intent, and when at last it had disappeared in a blaze of color in an opalescent sea he would watch the stars and talk learnedly of their distances and of what constellations they formed part of.

The good people of Longville could never quite understand John. He would astraddle them with his enthusiastic descriptions of fleeting clouds, would bid them hear a poem in the constant roaring of the sea and tell them that there were new worlds, of which they knew nothing, in pictures and books. But John was gentle and kind hearted, and so, although his personality eluded definite analysis by them, they yet recognized him as the village favorite for the humbler and maybe more useful qualities of good fellowship and unselfish courage.

It was little wonder that when Molly and John commenced "keeping company" that Longville should talk. Never two persons had less in common, so far as temperament and tastes were concerned, and yet somehow, for a reason which even old Mrs. Knight, who had seen two generations of village courtships, could not explain, these two people of opposite dispositions were destined to share life's storm and sunshine together.

How they came to be engaged I cannot say. There was a meeting of the two, when the usual chattering "Good night, John," and "Good night, Molly," ceased to have the old prosaic significance. The unmated, restless little heart of Molly beat convulsively, and the roses on her cheeks burned a deeper hue when that evening John stopped her and insisted on her walking with him. I was not there, so that of what was said I am unaware.

This much, however, all Longville soon knew—that John Lock and Molly Lane had become sweethearts. How the good wives enjoyed standing at the doorway and their cottages and discussing the probabilities of a village wedding and what it involved! These good souls would have made the devious, sinuous track of these two lives much straighter and more direct than it was fated to be.

No event is too wonderful to become familiarized with, and so it was that the wonder ceased, and Molly and John for months pursued their pleasant way, dreaming the old love dreams common to youth since the world began. It was not that sometimes John imagined "his Molly" was restless and sorely contented. She seemed to sigh for new opportunities of conquest. The old spirit which he thought dead, reared its head again and gave warning of a coming storm which actually broke out in open rebellion.

Then John would be troubled and would search his generous, simple heart in the hope of discovering some excuse for the discontent which only too obviously was smoldering in his sweetheart's mind.

One week in the middle of the following year Squire Hurst's only son came of age, and the event was celebrated with great éclat by the whole of the inhabitants of the village. The lovely old park actually broke out in open rebellion, and numerous were the alfresco attractions provided to amuse the assembled guests. The sports of the day terminated with a grand village ball, at which the heir to Longville Hall himself was present.

For where is the girl who wouldn't be? I don't know how it happened, but in some way old Moneybags Yelnik heard of the situation and appeared suddenly one evening at the residence of Miss Elaine's parents. At the time his train from New York arrived Patience and I were strolling along the shore of Champlain in the moonlight, I'll confess, and when we returned to the Elaine home, some time after ten o'clock, we found the callous hearted old fellow tramping up and down the veranda, smoking furiously and stroking his white whiskers in a manner that boded no good for us.

He never spoke to me, never acknowledged my presence by so much as a stare. Fact is, he utterly ignored me, and I'll admit that hurt my pride, confound him! He simply took Patience by the arm and marched her indoors, and next morning they went to New York before I had a chance to say farewell. But I was at the station, and as the train pulled out the dear girl called:

"Goodbye," Fred! Don't worry. It's all right. And then her father slammed the window and scowled as if he would like to bite me in half. During the ensuing six months I worked as hard as I could, but never did I write to Patience, although I sent messages to her in Marion Elaine's letters and heard from her now and then through the same medium, I wasn't really out of my mind. I came back to town about the middle of September, and a week later Miss Elaine arrived at the Yelnik home in New Jersey to make a visit. But of course old Moneybags wouldn't allow me to see Patience, and naturally I had to make some sense to call, but the deprivation was hard in more ways than one, as you will understand presently.

A month dragged by, and the time was approaching for Marion's visit to be concluded, when one Saturday afternoon I went aboard a ferryboat bound for Jersey City, whither I was to take a train for the town where Patience lived, and on the boat, for the first time in three months, I met Mr. Yelnik. He was feeling particularly amiable probably because he had managed to "freeze out" some business rival in one of his great schemes, and he approached me, saying with a grim smile:

"How do you do, sir?" "I'm well." "Haven't seen you lately out at the house," he continued sarcastically. "No, and you're not likely to," I replied, with emphasis. How long this conversation might have continued I don't know, but at that moment we passed in midstream close by a ferryboat steaming from Jersey City to New York, and one of the passengers on it, a girl we both knew, waved her hand to me, and I called out:

"Wait there! I'll be over at once." Then the boats had swept by each other, and I turned to look at Mr. Yelnik, who was looking at me with rage, and he trembled as with a chill. "You villain," he said threateningly. "So this is how you see each other. By heavens, I'll make you pay for this. I suppose you had arranged an elopement," he exclaimed, getting more and more excited. And he didn't become calm when I told him his surmise was true.

There were few passengers aboard, and Patience's father had the sense to speak in low tones to avoid a scene, but it was awful the way he swore he would put me in prison for life and shoot me dead if I ever so much as dared to look at his daughter again. Of course he didn't get off the boat at Jersey City. He staid close to me and of course I came back to New York to meet the dear girl. But alas and alack! When we reached the middle of the river again and met the other boat, both this time for Jersey City, old Yelnik fairly trembled for joy and shouted:

"There she is! I could recognize that hat and coat anywhere. So, you see, she won't elope with you, you miserable, sneaking hound, you young villain, you abductor!" My heart sank within me as he spoke, for, looking quickly at the passing craft, I saw her frightened half to death as she realized our plot had been discovered, but in desperation I shouted:

"Wait for me in Jersey City!" She nodded, and then we were gone again. Fifteen minutes elapsed before our boat left the New York ferry slip, and during that time Mr. Yelnik chuckled and slapped his knees and acted like a wild lunatic, he was so overjoyed.

"Yes, wait for me in Jersey City!" he mimicked. "Oh, she'll wait, don't you be afraid; she'll wait, but for me and not for you, and let me tell you one thing, sir—so soon as I can get a warrant you'll be locked up, and, by heavens, I'll see you in Sing Sing before I'm done with you!"

He went on in this fashion till we crossed the North river again and had come to a dead stop about 100 feet from the Jersey City ferry slip, blocked by a fleet of canalboats that were lazily crawling up the stream against the tide. I looked across them to the boat she had come over on. It was blocked inside of the slip, and, horror of horrors, there she stood on the deck ready to cross the river once more, having totally misunderstood the message I shouted.

A tugboat, awaiting to get down stream, slowly approached our craft and came to a dead stop so close that I could have stepped aboard her. Mr. Yelnik had walked to the other side of our deck, feeling safe so long as I was there and afloat. Like a flash I saw a chance to escape and called to the pilot of the tug:

"Want a job?" "That's my watermelon," he replied. Instantly I cleared our rail and

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Race for a Wife. "Two offers of marriage in one day! Well, which suiter is to receive the happy affirmative, Meta?" The speaker, a middle aged woman, regarded the girl before her with evident admiration and affection.

excitant blood leaping through every artery and every fiber of her body thrilled with the exuberant joy of living. "Faster and faster she flew along, until her efforts seemed involuntary. To herself she seemed impassioned and endowed with a freedom as perfect as the breeze which fanned her crimson cheek and tenderly lifted the curls about her face.

It was just 10 o'clock when Meta Randall, neatly attired in a cycling suit of olive green with glinting silver trimmings, passed out of the house and greeted her friends with a pleasant good morning.

A murmur of admiration rose from the feminine portion of the company as she stood for a brief second beside her wheel. Self possessed but modest, in the cool green of her costume she appeared a part of the natural picture which surrounded her. A bed of daffodils grew close to her feet, and she stooped and gathered a bunch of the brave yellow blossoms and fastened them securely at her belt.

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