

John Stanley's Blessing.

('Silver Link.')

John Stanley put his prescription into his pocket and quickly left the doctor's office. He knew his mother was watching for him, and his mind saw her standing at the sitting-room window, long before the blurred eyes behind the dark glasses caught sight of the house. He felt that he would have liked to be alone just then, but he knew the little mother was anxious.

For weeks she had been asking him to go to a certain famous specialist in the city, but John had kept putting it off.

'It will be the same story, mother,' he would say, laughing. 'A pair of new glasses and some new kind of drops. Just let me initiate these new spectacles into the mysteries of Latin.' Then he would pore over his books, oblivious to all around him. And Mrs. Stanley would shake her head and sigh, feeling at the same time immensely proud of her boy, who stood at the head of his large class in the High School.

So time went on and John's scholarship improved, but his poor eyes became weaker

until he came to regard his affliction as harder to bear than any other in the world. And because he thought so entirely of himself and nursed his sorrow, the usually happy John became morbid and ill-natured.

Then very suddenly, one day, a ray of sunshine glanced through the black glasses, and it was such a warm ray that it comforted John through the weary months afterwards. And this is how it happened.

'John,' called his mother, 'I wish you would go down to Phillips' and have the boys call round for those two kitchen chairs. The cane seats are all broken, and I want new ones.'

John looked up slowly. His mind was solving a problem in algebra, and it took long for it to come back to kitchen chairs.

'Yes, mother,' he answered, 'It's the last house on Ferry-street, you say?'

So on went the dark glasses, and John started. He found the house easily, for a clumsily-written sign hung over the gate: 'Chairs Recaned with Neatness.'

In answer to John's knock, the door was opened by a small boy, whose eager blue eyes looked at the new-comer curiously.

I haven't very much to complain of. But I haven't walked a step for three years, and won't for as many more to come. But, as I said, it's not so bad for me, because I have my work.'

'Has this always been your work?'

Tom laughed. 'Dear me, no,' he said. 'I was learning a trade. Never thought of mending chairs at that time. Then I had my accident. Fell on my spine, you know, and had to give up everything. So I took to the first work that came to hand. Anything was better than thinking of my troubles.'

'But were you not wretched and unhappy?' asked John.

Tom laid down his tacks and hammer and looked thoughtfully at his visitor.

'No,' he said, slowly, 'and that's the strange part of it, too. At first—for a few weeks, you know—I kind o' felt I had just as soon die. Then one morning I woke up and the sun was shining through my windows, so glad like, that it made me smile. Then things seemed to come round for me to do. There was Billy, here,' pointing smilingly at the small laddie who had opened the door, 'and he was always wanting kites made. And what with that, and one thing or another, the days passed. But I think what made me accustomed like, more than anything else, was Peter Murray.'

'Yes?' said John, leaning eagerly forward in his chair, 'and who is he?'

'Oh, he's the blacksmith down yonder. Well, as I was saying, 'twas him, you know, that made me willing after all. He came in that evening—I remember it was just sundown—and when the door opened he stood right in the middle o' that big patch o' light. And he up and says, in that big, cheery voice o' his:

"So you're going to change your trade, Tom?"'

'I only smiled at him, and he went on:

"There's sure to be a new trade waiting, Tom, and a new fight to be fought. And now it isn't other people you are to quarrel with, but just yourself. And that's a deal harder, to my mind. But once you have fought it out, Tom, a man is worth something."

'I thought of all he said, and felt that the years of waiting should not be lost.'

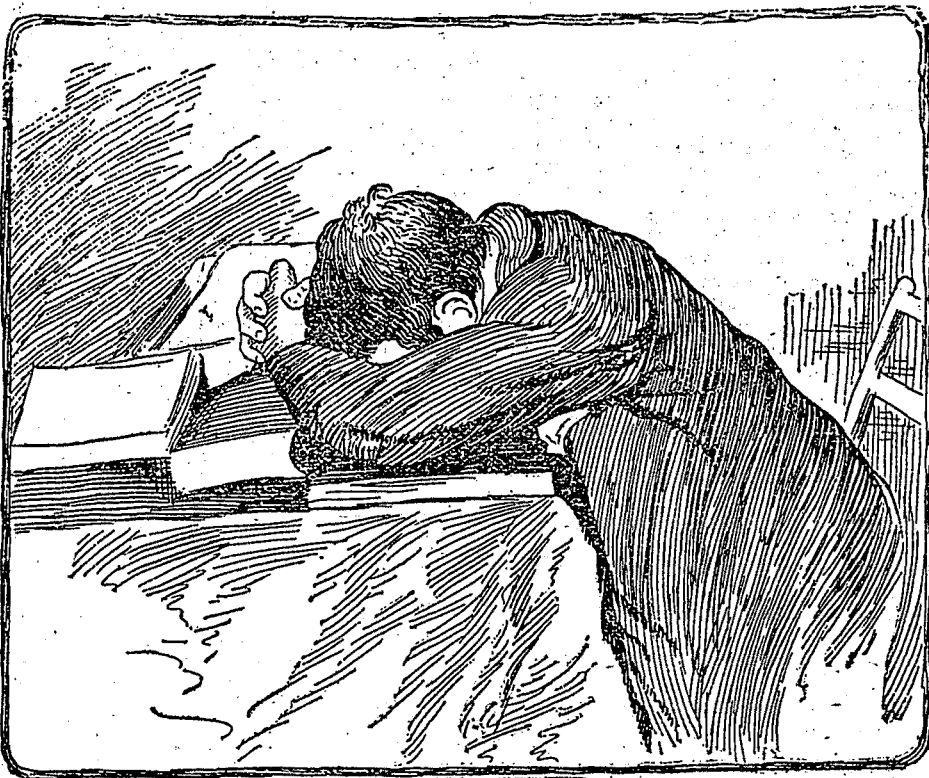
'Three years!' thought John, as he walked toward home. 'And three have already passed, yet Tom works hard, and does not despair, while I cry out because I have a twelve-month! Surely he is the more manly!'

Even the dark glasses could not keep the sun from shining behind them that day. So many rays stole through them, indeed, that John's whole face was radiant. And they went ahead of him, too, pointing out innumerable bits of work to be done at home. There were his mother's rosebushes languidly waiting to be trailed on the wall; there were many pretty flowers being choked by weeds; and here—

But the daylight had faded, 'And it is not half done,' sighed John, regretfully.

He always said afterwards that those twelve months of waiting were the most peaceful and happy ones of his life. And I think they were also the most blessed, Not because they taught the boy patience and good nature, but because they made him truly unselfish.

And when those twelve months of waiting had passed away, John returned with renewed energy to his work. But the lessons in forbearance were never forgotten, for truly 'the hand which hath long time held a violet doth not soon forego its fragrance.'



BLINDING HEADACHES MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR JOHN TO READ ANY LONGER.

and weaker, and it was not until blinding headaches made it physically impossible for the boy to read longer, that he would lay down his books. Then it was that he went to the famous physician, and he sighed despondently when the verdict was given.

'Moderation, my boy!' the doctor had said. 'If you had been practicing that all along, you could still go on with your work. As it is now, you must have entire rest for some months—a year probably. Do not even indulge in one hour's reading, else I cannot answer for the consequences.' And John knew the doctor meant what he said.

The black glasses he had to wear in the sunlight seemed singularly appropriate to him.

'I might just as well be blind as not able to go to school,' he said bitterly.

But his mother shook her head. 'It has all been given for good, my boy. There is always a reason for everything. It is hard to give up school, I know, but we must only wait in patience.'

So John waited, but not in patience. He chafed daily under the yoke he had to bear,

'Good-morning. Are you one of the Phillips' boys?'

'Yes, sir,' answered the little fellow. Then, as John stepped within, he said: 'That's the head of the business,' and pointed with evident pride to a pale, slender young fellow seated in an arm-chair.

His face lost its sharp look when he smiled, as he did when John entered, and he pointed to a chair in such an easy, friendly way that his visitor could not refuse to be seated. John delivered his message and then put on his glasses as though to go.

'Sun hurt your eyes?' inquired the 'head of the business,' as he went on with his repairing.

John laughed. 'Everything hurts them,' he said.

Then, seeing he had a listener, he told the whole story with a certain feeling of relief. And he concluded by saying: 'I'm practically no good, you see.'

'No, I don't see,' said Tom, for that was the chair-mender's name. 'I don't see that you are any worse off than many other fellows. There's myself, for instance, though