

"But how long ago was that, Sir Critical?" challenged Bessie.

"Long, long ago," affirmed Hampstead, with another of his humorous sighs, "when it was a part of my duty to take you to the circus and buy you peanuts and lemonade of a color to match your cheeks."

"And that," dissented the young lady triumphantly, "was only last September, and the one before that, and, in fact, almost every circus day since I can remember."

"But now that you are doing your hair up high, you will not need me to take you to the circus again."

This time the note of sadness in Hampstead's voice was genuine, whereat all the loyalty in the soul of Bessie leaped up.

"You shall," she declared, with an impulsive sweetness of manner, while she leaned close and added in a whisper that made the assurance deliciously confidential — "as long as you wish."

"Then I shall do it forever," declared John recklessly.

"However," and Miss Elizabeth Mitchell, with a playful acquisition of dignity, switched the subject abruptly by announcing briskly, "business before circuses."

"Phrosos before rhinos, as it were," consented John.

"Yes — now take your pencil and let me dictate."

"But," bantered John, "I allow no woman to dictate to me. Besides, I have a perfectly horrible hand."

"Oh," explained Bessie, "but I want them on the typewriter. It'll make the other girls wild. None of them can command a typewriter."

"Yet," protested Hampstead, "overlooking for the moment the offensiveness in that word 'command', I venture to suggest, Miss Mitchell, that things are not done that way this year. A typewritten invitation isn't considered good form in the best circles."

"I don't care; we'll have 'em," declared Bessie.