

Lessons Out of School

By GERALD ST. ETIENNE

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The stay on the farm movement carried no appeal to John Peters. Not that John disliked farm life, but his soul craved for something bigger and better. Education to him was the most wonderful thing in life. Graduating from the country school with the highest marks in the county had been his first intimation that there were big things in store for him in the educational world and he had gone to high school in the city with big aims stored up in his heart.

It was in the first term he had discovered how different country people were from city people. Gradually it had dawned upon him that there were little colloquialisms in his speech that the city pupils lacked, and straightway he had set to work correcting himself.

Twenty-one found John back on the farm for the vacation season, but ready to break into university the next year. The two years he had been teaching had only made his longing for more education stronger. Up to this time John had confined his corrections in speech and deportment to himself, but apparently the teaching bug had got into his veins, for he had not been at home many weeks before he was correcting every member of the family.

"See here, John Peters," his father had declared, at last worn out by the everlasting corrections, "if this farm and the manners of us that is on it is too all-firingly small for your high-toned notions, then you know what you can do. All I can see is that education has made a dum fool of you, and the time is come when you will have to make a choice between us and it. If you are willing to settle down here, this big farm that requires 24 hands to work it and nets me an income something over \$10,000 a year, is half yours now and all yours when I get too old to take an interest in it. If not, you had better leave now."

John left. It was necessary for him to teach school seven long years more before he had the coveted sum to complete his education, but he stuck to it admirably. At the end of the seventh year he decided that he could manage his way through university. Every vacation since the one that had ended in his leaving home he had worked in the city, but now the longing for the big outdoors came over him. Somehow he found his way up in the lumber camps and his services were engaged as timekeeper.

John had met ignorance in his day, but never such ignorance as he found among those lumberjacks. Why, he was about the only man there that could speak a correct sentence of English. It had not been for Jean his existence would have been unbearable. But in her he found a companion worth having. Seeing that Jean was the daughter of the superintendent of the camp, it is only to be expected that she was different from the others. That is why John took such a liking to her.

"Something should be done to improve the education of the men here," John confided to Jean one night when they were out on the lake in her canoe. "I wonder if they would attend school."

"Why not try them and see?" she suggested. "I was reading a novel to-day about a sky pilot that worked wonders in a lumber camp."

"My dear girl, you don't read novels, do you?" John asked, a mingling of surprise and horror in his tone.

"Why certainly," she answered in wonder. "Don't you?"

"I read nothing but the classics," he told her proudly. "You don't know what you are missing."

"Oh, I don't know," she smiled, "the very name classics worries me out here—they are so heavy, so hard to wade through."

"They are wonderful," he tried to assure her. "Let me go over some of them with you."

"Please don't," she pleaded. Nevertheless, from that day John started to work out plans to make Jean acquainted with the classics. On canoe trips, indoors on rainy evenings, before the big camp fires when the nights were chill, he managed to make some reference to them or tell her parts of some of his favorite pieces of fine literature. Gradually Jean seemed to fall in line with his plans; she began to soak in what he told her of the master writers. Once or twice she had quoted Shakespeare; more than once or twice she had referred to Bacon. Indeed she was an apt pupil.

As the vacation season neared its end and the changing of the leaves reminded John that university was soon to open, a great longing came over him. It was a different longing than the old one. This time it wasn't learning he longed for, but love. Yes, in spite of the "old masters" Cupid had squeezed in his work.

It was just a week before John was to go back. They were on the lake probably for the last time. The autumn moon was casting glows over the water as the canoe glided to and fro among the shadows. John dropped the oars and, without causing as much as a rock of the canoe, found a place by Jean's side. Just as if it belonged there, his arm slipped about her waist. As if in answer to his touch her head nestled against his shoulder.

"Dear little girl," he began, "I have been wanting to say something tonight, but I haven't had the courage."

She looked up at him and smiled.

"Our doubts are traitors, making us lose what we often might win by fearing to attempt," she quoted.

John looked at her in surprise. "Why, that's Shakespeare—a quotation you never got from me either!" he exclaimed.

Somehow that seemed to have knocked the wind out of his sails, for he did not finish what he had begun. The next day Jean left for the East.

At the station John held her hand until the time for the train to depart arrived. He did not think it his right to inquire where she was going; she had not thought it necessary to tell him. "Goodbye, little girl, and don't forget to study the classics," he told her. As the train shot out of sight John looked after it longingly. He had sacrificed his only chance for happiness at the altar of learning, for he had restrained himself from proposing to Jean because it would have meant the end to his plans for a university course. What a fool he had been! Right there he made a resolve, and a telegram that was waiting him back at the camp decided definitely for him. "Come home, I need you," and it was signed "Father."

For two weeks John stayed at the bedside of his father, without any other thought but the sick man before him. At last the crisis was reached and the danger passed. From then on John devoted himself to the farm—the great big stretch of God's country that called out to him for cultivation and responded so nobly to his efforts. Jean was not forgotten. It was for her he was working. Some day, somehow, he would find her again and bring her to a home of great prosperity, he told himself.

The Christmas holidays brought John's sister Flora home from college with a guest—her teacher of English and literature. John had displayed no interest in the expected arrival, but when Flora brought some one to him and he looked into two big, familiar eyes and saw a familiar smiling, blushing face, he was almost swept off his feet with surprise.

"Jean!" he cried in surprise. "John!" she echoed his tone.

Explanations did not come until after supper when they were alone in the library. She had found John with head in his hands.

"I was a fool," he condemned himself severely. "I might have known that your education was far superior to mine. Why, you were a university graduate, while I was just a common public school teacher; I should never have left the farm."

"If you had not you would never have met me."

"And what good has it done me—just made me miserable. Oh, my lesson has been a severe one; I have learned it well."

"And I have learned a lesson, too—a wonderful lesson, the most wonderful lesson in life."

"There was something in her tone that brought his heart to a quicker beat. He looked up eagerly. "What—what do you mean?" he muttered weekly.

"Oh, John, are you going to make me say it, say what you started to say that night on the lake—that night that Shakespeare had to spoil it?" She was almost in his arms; there was a wonderful expression on his face. He gathered her up in one great hug.

Right there he discovered how useless language is.

SYMBOL OF FRENCH PROWESS

Martial Bird Placed in Prominent Position on Pont de Kehl, Over the River Rhine.

A Gallic cock now adorns the Pont de Kehl on the Rhine at Strasbourg where but only the other day sat erect the griffin of Baden, symbolizing the iron heel upon Alsace. The idea of the setting up of the Gallic cock was that of the French general, Cernisson, the first officer in charge of the engineers in a freed Strasbourg.

The scheme was put before General Hirschauer and was immediately adopted. The sculptor chosen to carve the emblematic bird was the Alsatian Schultz. Since the peace treaty gave France possession of the entire length of the Rhine bridges, the Gallic cock in bronze has been placed aloft on the right bank of the Rhine. It has an air, that bird, the air of the king of the barnyard lustily crowing at dawn. It may be hailing peace, but the cock is, naturally a martial bird and this particular one with its eye fixed on Germany certainly commands respect.

It had been the intention to use the bronze of a kaiser statue in the casting of the Pont de Kehl cock, but the statue of William I before the palace in Strasbourg was found to belie its appearance and to be merely composition.

Little Willie.

Little Willie was entertaining the visitor till his sister was ready. "I say," asked Willie presently, "are you engaged to my sister, or are you not?"

"I am—am not," answered the caller, blushing, "but I would like to be."

"Come out from behind that door, Mary," called Willie. "I know I'd earn that shilling!"

A Post.

"So you enjoyed your vacation?" "I certainly did. In fact, I had the time of my life."

"Good! Here comes a man I don't want you to meet. He would spoil your disposition."

"Why?"

"He has worked for the same firm for twenty-five years and it is his proud boast that he has never missed a day."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

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St. John, N.B., June 30th 1920.

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