

JOHN'S SPEECH

by
HERBERT DROCER

ANYTHING between the ridiculous and the sublime probably would have left John Moran with a very uncertain appreciation of the Fourth of July celebration. Neither the one nor the other, in his opinion, could have been very fruitful of results.

Of the two extremes, the sublime had been deliberately planned; it was premeditated. The ridiculous wasn't. The former was the result of a clever scheme and weeks of hard work. The latter was the chance of a minute, unforeseen, unexpected, and, some might have said on the spot, unpropitious.

For several years John Moran had wooed Susan Duvau, but so far he seemed to himself to be nearer the matrimonial goal than he had been at the beginning. All her people had been assisting him without apparent avail.

He had pleaded with her; he had coaxed and cajoled and even essayed to coerce after a mild fashion, his threats reaching that superlative pro-



"Show Me that You Can Rise to the Occasion."

portion where he promised to identify himself for life with the sublime order of bachelorhood.

But to all this she merely cast down her eyes demurely and asked him to wait awhile.

A score and one-half years had come and gone around the life of Susan. As her 31st birthday approached John, who had schemed until his hair was beginning to fall out, decided on a bold stroke.

That night he sat with her on the front porch, after the family had retired. Over them a dim light shined from the parlor window cast a pale glow. John sat quietly waiting for the silence he depended on for the furtherance of his plan.

After awhile it came, and then, when the stillness had locked the night in its embrace, he began to hum, "Silver Threads Among the Gold." When he had ceased, tears stood in his eyes.

He drew his chair closer to hers, reached out for her hand again and asked her to become his wife. But it was the same old prosaic answer.

"Wait awhile, John," she insisted. "Wait awhile. Do something grand. Show me that you can rise to the occasion."

Rise to the occasion, he would. He resolved that firmly as he stood up forthwith and bade her good-night. He resolved it all the way home. The next morning he still resolved it. But how?

A happy thought struck him. John had a penchant for happy thoughts. He would make a speech at a Fourth of July celebration. It would be so grand and so eloquent, couched in such rich expressions and so laden with noble sentiment that she could not help but feel the appeal. He would show her that he could "rise to the occasion."

John got out his old school dictionary and brushed the dust from its covers. Then he borrowed an immense volume of masterpieces orations from a friend and read every speech he could find that contained any patriotic reference or expression.

For four weeks he labored almost incessantly, night and day, on his effusion, and finally he had it completed.

An obstacle that John had not reckoned on now loomed up. John was a member of the program committee, and he doubted the propriety of having himself included among the list of speakers.

The morning before the celebration he called around to see the chairman of the committee.

"You see—ahem!—Mr. Grubbs," John began, "being one of the com-

mittee, I should regret to see any part of the program fall flat."

"Just so," answered the chairman. "I feel the same way."

"Well, as a matter of precaution, Mr. Grubbs, I think I shall prepare a few remarks myself today. Should any of the speakers be tardy, or fail to respond, you might call on me."

"Fine idea, John. I'll do it." Then John took himself around to the residence of Squire Sloan. He knocked at the door and was admitted.

"Ahem, Squire," began John, after an inquiry concerning his host's health, "we are altering the program for tomorrow slightly."

"So?"

"Yes. You see, on account of your advanced years and the fact that you have been ailing, we thought it might suit you better to speak, say, at 11:30 than at 11 o'clock."

"I believe it would," answered the old man.

About 11 o'clock the next morning Chairman Grubbs scanned the gathering in vain for a glimpse of Squire Sloan. Then he stood up and announced:

"Though not appearing on the program, the Hon. John Moran has been requested to make a few remarks. It is not necessary that I introduce our esteemed fellow-citizen."

As John approached the edge of the platform he looked down into the face of Susan and made a mental note of the surprise expressed in her countenance. He paused a moment, as if improvising a speech, while he chuckled inwardly at the satisfaction the occasion afforded.

And rise to the occasion he undoubtedly did. His was the most eloquent, the most logical and the most impressive speech delivered that day. As he concluded he was greeted by a loud and prolonged applause.

He stepped down from the platform and made his way toward Susan. As he approached, he observed a twinkle in her eyes, but did not trouble himself with an explanation just then. He was too happy.

She arose and took hold of his arm. "Let us go off to some place where we can sit alone," she said.

They made their way toward the outskirts of the crowd. When they had reached a point where they could speak without being overheard, he turned to her questioningly.

"Well," he said, "Did I—"

"You certainly did, John," she interrupted. "Who would have thought it?"

The sublime had been attained.

"Who wrote it for you, John?" she asked.

"Wrote it?" in hurt surprise. "Why nobody."

They walked along in silence.

"How long did it take you to prepare it, John?"

He did not answer.

"Yes, you certainly did rise to the occasion, John. Now, you want to be famous, don't you?"

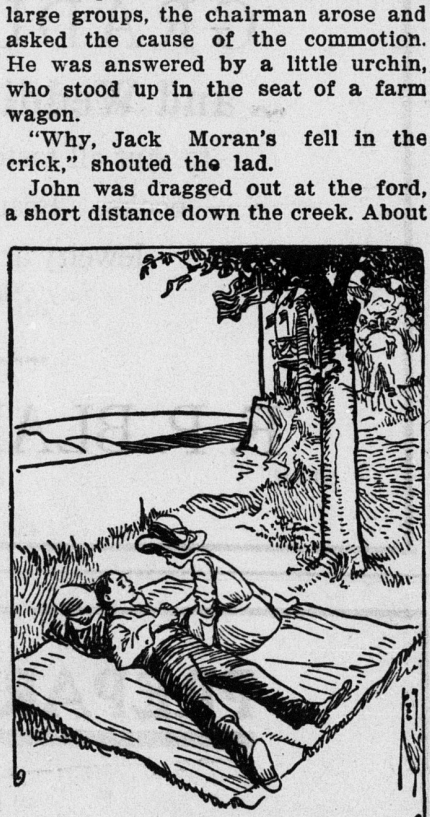
Fate would have it that he felt that instant. Twitted and stung by her raillery, he had been walking perilously near the edge of the high dirt bank that overhung the creek. Without thought of danger.

As she spoke, the ground beneath his feet gave way, and he went tumbling through the dirt and sand into eight feet of water below.

Susan shrieked, and the crowd, alarmed by her cry, began to rush to the spot. As the gathering in front of the speakers' stand broke away in large groups, the chairman arose and asked the cause of the commotion. He was answered by a little urchin, who stood up in the seat of a farm wagon.

"Why, Jack Moran's fell in the creek," shouted the lad.

John was dragged out at the ford, a short distance down the creek. About



"Did I Rise?" He Began.

his eyes, mouth, nose and ears, and over a part of his clothing, were black splatters of mud.

Resuscitating methods were applied, and as he began to revive, the crowd drew back, leaving him stretched out on a soft laprobe and attended by Susan.

When he opened his eyes she was kneeling by his side and looking down into his face.

"Did I rise—" he began.

"There—there," soothingly. "Yes, you did. Now, lie quiet."

She gently stroked the hair back from his brow. He grasped her hand in his and she suffered him to hold it.

One night, three months later, after the wedding toasts had been proposed and John had made his response, he made a mental observation to himself, as he took his seat.

"I wonder," he reflected, "whether it was my celebration speech or the tumble I got?"

Training Civilians for Naval Warfare.

In order to lay the foundation for the naval reserve of 100,000 men, which military experts assert is essential to the proper defense of the nation in the future, the Navy Department will undertake during the months of August and September, for a period of four weeks, a training cruise designed to instruct some 4,000 civilians, of all classes of life, in the duties of the modern man-o-war's man.

The eight battleships carrying the civilian sailors will leave from six ports along the Atlantic coast—two ships from Boston, one from Narragansett Bay, two from New York, one from Philadelphia, one from Norfolk, and one from either Charleston or New Orleans—on August 15. From that date until September 12, the civilians on board will be given daily drill in the duties which would be expected of them in war time.

For two weeks they will be instructed in the rudiments of seamanship, under officers experienced in the handling of recruits and in company with trained sailors who are conversant with the naval life. At the end of this fortnight of preliminary training, the squadron will proceed to Newport to take part in the annual "war game" in which the entire Atlantic fleet will participate. This will give the men a taste of actual fighting conditions, without the danger of the combat, and will train them for the duties which they will be expected to perform under fire.

The war game, which will be held on a greater scale this year than ever before, will consume the third week of the cruise and at the end of this time the training ships will return to their home ports, where the men will work out problems of local defense with the aid of the coast artillery and the various motorboat organizations which the navy is recruiting.

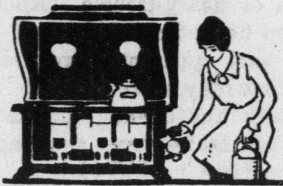
This final week of the cruise is considered by naval experts as the most important of the entire four, inasmuch as it will round off the rough edges of the recruits and give them actual practice in the localities to which they would be assigned in time of war. For example, the vessel which starts from Norfolk will, at the conclusion of the war game, be stationed at Hampton Roads and the civilian sailors will obtain first-hand experience in the handling of the smaller units of the second line of defense—the mine sweepers, dispatch boats, submarine chasers, etc., which are so essential to the proper defense of the coast line. In this manner, the navy hopes to create the basis of a reserve which not only is conversant with its duties but is also familiar with the territory along which it will be expected to work. The department has secured the services of a large number of privately owned motorboats, and other small vessels, which will work with the training squadron during the second week of September.

In order to take the cruise, a man must be between the ages of 19 and 45; must pass a prescribed physical

examination; must be a graduate or undergraduate of a college, university, technical or high school, or, in lieu of this, must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the recruiting officer sufficient knowledge of maritime matters or experience with water craft to warrant enlistment.

Ample opportunities will be provided in the course of the day's routine for specialization in different branches of naval work. In addition to instruction in signaling, navigation, ra-

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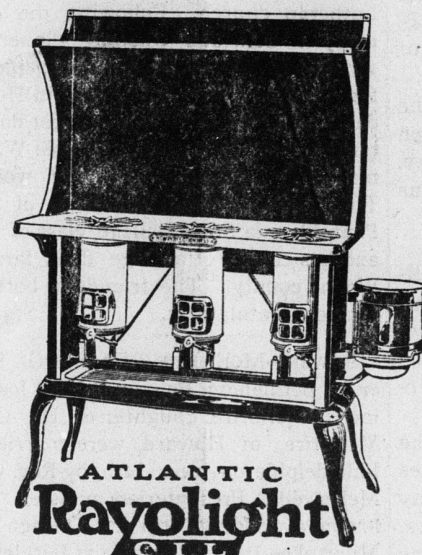
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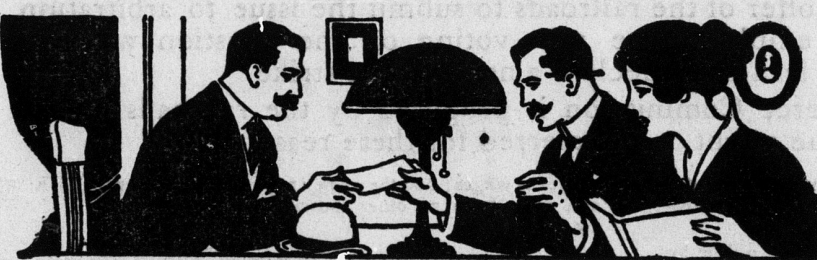
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