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THE

POTTER JOURNAL,

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M. W. McALARNEY, Proprietor.

☞ Devoted to the cause of Republicanism, the interests of Agriculture, the advancement of Education, and the best good of Potter county. Owning no guide except that of Principle, it will endeavor to aid in the work of more fully Freedomizing our Country.

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HOPE RASHLEIGH.

Grantley Watts was going out to India. It was his last day with his well-to-do cousin who had been like a father to him; he had passed the morning in shooting but when he returned he had only one bird in his bag, though game was plentiful this year and he was acknowledged to be a good shot. His cousin John Rashleigh rallied him unmercifully, and Hope said in her most disdainful way; "I thot' the coveys would be tolerably safe Mr. Watts!" but he only laughed and admitted that he was a muff and not worth his salt—that powder and shot was thrown away upon him—and that he would make but a sorry figure in India where men could shoot—with other jeerings playful or bitter as they might be, simply saying "Well, Miss Hope you must have it for breakfast some morning when I am gone; it is the last I shall shoot, and I should like you to have it."

"To which Hope answered, indiferently, 'You are very good Grantly, but I dare say Fido will be the only one to benefit by your last bag; I do not suppose I shall ever see the creature."

Grantley colored; and Mr Rashleigh himself thought she might have been more gracious just on the eve of the poor lad's departure, when perhaps they might never see him again; and after all, though he was a poor relation, and had very properly never forgotten that, or gone beyond the strictest demarcation, yet he had been many years in the house now, and Hope was very young when he came, so that if even she had considered him almost as a brother, no great harm would have been done; and so on, his heart unconciously pleading against his childs outward pride in favor of his dependent.

Perhaps it was some such half discomfort—it could not be said to be concious displeasure—that made him refuse Hope's requst that evening. As usual, she was out of funds and she had a special need for money at this moment. She wished to help poor Anne Rogers, down with the fever, with her husband in the hospital, and her children destitute, and she knew that her father would not give them a penny; for the man had been convicted of poaching, and Annie herself did not bear the most unblemished character, and had seen the inside of the county jail more than once in her life time. But these counter pleadings did not influence Hope; and she thought only of the suffering family, which she could help and would if she had the money. Then she wanted to make Grantley a present before he went away; and she did not want her father to know of it; though perhaps she would have been puzzled to explain why she wished to keep such a trivial matter a secret. She had never given him anything, not a book, nor even a flower, and he was almost the only person within her sphere so passed over; but now when he was going to leave forever, she would give him something as a remembrance—something that would make him think of her when he was away. Poor proud Hope come then at last to this!

She knew that her father had money in the house, when she went into the library-room to speak to him; for she saw him put a twenty pound note in his desk yesterday, which was just the sum she wanted and indeed was on the point of asking for it. She would have got it had she done so; but to day the vane had shifted, and for the first time in his life he refused her, and so sternly and positively, that as much in surprise as anger she gave up the point at once. But with a sullen flush of pride and determination on her face, which he did not see, sitting as he did toward the light, while she stood in the shadow. And then she left the room in stately silence; too, proud to coax even her father after a refusal so harshly made; though had she coaxed him as Hope knew how to coax, the whole thing would have been at an end, and John Rashleigh would have yielded. She was but a spoiled child, remember, whose faults had been fostered by the injudicious training of her life.

The distress of poor Anne Rogers pressed upon her. Unused to opposition and in a mood more than ordinarily excitable, everything became exaggerated, and she laid awake through the night in a state bordering upon mania, feeling herself to be a coward and a murderess in not executing the righteousness of will, and taking from her father what he would not but ought to freely give. Was not humanity before mere obedience? Was she to let a fellow creature die rather than take what could be spared so well, and what she had the right to demand? Yes, by right; her father's money was hers as well, if not by law, yet moral justice, and if he made a cold and churlish steward, it was her duty to supply his defects and let the poor benefit by his superfluities. All the wild reasonings of a willful mind aiding the impulses of a generous heart passed through her brain that night, and when she arose in the morning it was with the determination to do her own will and defy her father's.

John Rashleigh was a magistrate, and to-day was market day at Canstow, the town near which they lived, where the magistrates always assembled in the upper room of the town-hall and dispensed law, if not justice, on the offenders. His absence gave Hope the opportunity she wanted. Very quietly and very deliberately she unlocked his desk, and took from it the twenty pound note. But though the act was shameful, she had no idea she was doing wrong, beyond the conciousness of self will and disobedience which did not trouble her much—which, on the contrary, she had reasoned herself into considering the meritorious exercise of a better and nobler motive.

"Grantley, change this for me," she said and she handed him the note:

"I cannot change it, Miss Hope," he answered, "but I will get it done in Canstow; I am going over there directly."

"Change it where you like," she answered, carelessly. "I want the money as soon as you can give it to me, that is all; and Grantly, do you hear? if papa asks you do not tell him that I gave you the note to get changed."

"Very well, I will not said Grantley, who suspected nothing wrong, saw nothing odd in her request; and who indeed, felt not a little flattered that she should have made a secret with him in the matter. So, full of pleasing feelings, he rode over to Canstow, where he changed the note, and bought various things with the money, partly for Hope according to her orders, and partly for himself; not at Hope's charge it must be understood, the squaring of accounts was to come afterwards. And among other things, he bought a certain camp apparatus for himself at Tell's the iron-monger's, for which he paid with the note in question—that being the larges shop and the largestt purchase.

Now it so happened that Mr. Rashleigh went to pay his bill at this same iron-monger's that day. He took a check which he had just received in the market place from one of his tenants who owed him half a year's rent for his farm; and to save himself the trouble of going to the bank, he gave it to Tell, receiving the surplus change; among which came his own twenty pound note. Passing it through his fingers and looking at the number to take it down in his pocket-book he recognized it as that left in his desk at Newlands. He knew the number; and a certain private mark which he always made on his bank-notes, thereby rendering them double "branded;" and he knew no one could have obtained possession of it lawfully.

"Where did you get this, Tell?" he asked.

"Mr. Grantley, sir," said Tell. "He changed it here not half an hour ago, and ordered this patent camp apparatus," showing the young man's purchase.

"Mr. Grantley Watts?" cried John Rashleigh, flushing up; "he changed this note here?"

"Yes, sir—I hope no mistake, sir—nothing wrong?" asked the iron-mouger, anxiously.

"No, no, nothing! I was surprised, that was all; no, Tell, nothing wrong."

But his face was more truthful than his lips; and Tell saw plainly that something was very far wrong in spite of his denial, and that Mr. Grantley was in for it, whatever he has been doing. He did not suspect anything very bad. Canstow was by no means an immaculate place, and there were offences and offenders enough as times went; but it was by no means to be supposed that a young gentleman like Mr. Watts had stolen a bank note out of his cousin's drawer. Young gentlemen living in grand houses do not do such things; crime passes them by somehow; and the police exercise their functions very much in proportion to the yearly income. The most the man imagined was that Grantley had broken into a sum which Mr. Rashleigh had desired him to keep intact; and, as it was well known that the master of Newlands had a high temper of his own and liked to be obeyed that was quite enough to put him out, and to make his face grow so white and his thin lips so pale. At all events wherever the fault lay, the lad was in for it, thought Tell; not without a kindly feeling of regret for the evil hour at hand. For Grantley was a general favorite in Canstow, and most people there wished him well.

Home came John Rashleigh in a frame of mind more easily imagined than described. Things had gone crossly with him for the last few hours; John Rashleigh was not the man to bear with crossness of circumstances patiently. Hope's extravagance has annoyed him; partly because some other of his money matters had gone wrong at the same time; and like most proud men, the merest suspicion of possible embarrassment galled him terribly; then he was sorry at Grantley's leaving, and vexed with himself for being sorry, for what better could a poor relation do? and if he had made himself useful, so that he, John Rashleigh of Newlands, felt that he should be "quite lost" without him, why that was only the lad's duty and ought to have been, and he was worse than absurd to feel the least pain at his going. Then the magistrate's business had been worrying him to day; and had been on one side of an opinon and his brothers on the other, and had been forced to give in; which had annoyed him not a little; so that, when added to this accumulation of disturbing influences was the sudden conviction that he had been robbed, and that too by the boy he had loved and cherished more than he had ever openly acknowledged, we can understand in what a whirlwind of fiery wrath he rode full speed through Canstow and up to Newlands, not ten minutes after Grantley had returned home.

"Grantley!" he called out as soon as he entered and still standing in the hall; "Grantley Watts, where are you?"

"Here, sir," said Grantley coming out of the drawing room where he had been giving Miss Hope an account of his proceedings, and emptying his pockets of her commissions.

"Where did you get that twenty-pound note you changed just now at Tell's?" fairly shouted John Rashleigh.

Grantley was silent.

"Come, sir, I want an answer! cried his cousin. "Looking down and keeping a demure silence will not suit me; I want a simple straight forward answer. Where did you get that twenty-pound note from? I left it in my desk when I went to Canstow to-day, and my desk was locked; whoever got it forced the lock or opened it with a false key, it was either you or some one else. Who was it Grantly?"

Grantley still made no answer; the truth was beginning to break upon him.

I do not think any one in my household would do such a thing; two hours ago I should not have thought you would have done it; and even yet, suspicious as the whole thing is, yet I will accept any explanation that will clear you, else I must hold you responsible for the theft."

"I did not steal it. I have committed no theft," said Grantley, looking straight into his cousin's eyes.

"O! you may dislike the word, but that I do not care for," said Mr. Rashleigh, disdainfully. "I have always remarked that people shrink more from a word than a deed, and think themselves especially ill-used if called by the name of their crime. If you are not a thief, what are you, then? If you did not steal it how did you get it?

"I did not steal it," was all that Grantly could say, repeating himself monotonously.

John Rashleigh was an impatient man as well as a proud and high tempered one. At Grantley's second asservation he raised his hand and struck the youth across the face.

"Coward!" he said, "have you not the bad courage of crime? Dare you not confess what, by confession would have been only a fault? If you had told me frankly how and why you come to do such a thing I could have understood it as a boyish liberty, and forgiven it, but now I have only one way of dealing with it—as a crime."

When he struck him, Grantley involuntarily raised his own hand; but a thot' came across him, and he retreated a step or two and dropped his guard.

"It takes the remembrance of all you have done for me, Mr. Rashleigh, and more than even this to make me bear your insults!" he said excitedly; his boyish face convulsed with contending passions.

His voice, harsh and broken as it was had somehow a different ring in it to that of guilt, and Mr. Rashleigh had not been a magistrate for so many years, and accustomed to all shades of criminals, not to know something of the human voice, and what it betokened under accusation. Grantley's startled him—so did the proud flushed face with the honest eyes looking so frankly, and the indignation rather than fear upon it—made him half afraid that he had been too hasty. But men of his character do not long doubt themselves for good or evil; and while that one broad fact remained unexplained—how did Grantley get possession of money locked up in his desk? he was in his right to suppose that he had stolen it, and common sense and the law were on his side.

"Tell me how you come by it,' he then said in a somewhat gentler tone; "If I have done you wrong, boy, I am sorry for it, and we will bear no malice; but tell me how you got the note."

"I cannot sir," said Grantley, his heart swelling.

"You will not, you mean, you young fool!" said Mr. Rashleigh, contemptuously.

"No, I will not."

"Then you will not be surprised if I send for the police? Here, Lewis, Lewis! come here! The thing must be thoroughly sifted, Grantley; and if you are guilty I am sorry for the exposure you have brot' upon yourself. It is your own folly to let things come to such a pass, when they can never be mended again."

"To send for the police will not make matters much worse for," me said Grantley, "the servants have heard all that has passed, and my character will be none the blacker now for a public charge."

"At least we shall get to the truth then," said Mr. Rashleigh, "which will be so much gained."

"No, sir," said Grantley firmly," I shall not tell you even then where I got the money from, and how I came by it!"

All this while the drawing-room door had been standing half open, with Hope close to it, listening to what was passing. A whole world of feelings had possessed her by turns—fear of her father, fear for Grantley, and shame at the false position in which her self-will and cowardice together had placed him; something, too, that was more than admiration at the constancy with which he had borne such pain and indignity that he might keep faith with her, and a kind of dawning idea that what she had done had been after all a sin and a dishonor, and that confession would degrade her forever—all these thoughts passed through her mind by turns, and held her motionless and silent; with ever the bitter recolection that Grantley was but a poor relation at best, and that the distance between them was immeasurable, running like a sorrowful refrain to each. But when her father spoke of giving him in charge, and called to the servant, then she hesitated no longer. Throwing the door wide open she come out into the hall.

"I took the money, papa," she said boldly; and as she spoke she laid her hand in Grantley's, the first time she had ever willingly done so.

"Hope!" exclaimed her father, "are you mad? you took that money? You?"

"Yes, papa," she answered quite steadily, "you refused to give it to me when I asked you for it yesterday, and I took it this morning. I wanted it, and you ought to have given it to me."

"If I had thought that to refuse it would have made you capable of stealing it, Hope, I would not have hesitated a moment," said the father sternly.

"I do not call it stealing," said Hope defiantly. "It was only taking what I had a right to. I unlocked your desk with my own key and gave the money to Grantley to get changed."

John Rashleigh turned fiercely against the youth. "How dare you, sir, abet my child in folly?" he exclaimed, passionately. "What was folly in her, and excusable considering how I have always humored her and acceded to her wishes, and remembering after all she is a mere child still, was downright wickedness and dishonor in you. And how do I know but that you instigated her to it? How do I know but that it was your doing in reality, and she but the innocent tool of your cunning schemes? You bought a precious gimcrack for yourself, and paid for it with my money. I tell you, Grantley, the whole thing looks too black yet for your white-washing."

"Grantley accounted to me for that camp thing," said Hope. "Did I not tell you, papa, that it was my own doing from first to last? Grantley did not know where I got the note from. I only asked him to get it cashed for me. But I asked him not to tell you that I done so, because I was afraid you would be angry with me and I meant to tell you when you were kind again." This she said coaxingly.

"I could not break my word to Miss Hope, said Grantley in a low voice, but firmly. Yet I should have thought, Mr. Rashleigh, that you would have known me to well too have suspected me of such a thing as this. What Miss Hope had a right to do was another matter, but it would have been a theft in me; and men—(there Mr. Rashleigh smiled a little satirically) "do not become thieves all at once. Yet I do not think you have ever seen much want of honor in me!"

"I will not have that tone taken," said Mr. Rashleigh, harshly. "You have done ill Grantley, and it is absurd to attempt to give yourself the air of injured innocence, and as if you had the right to blame me because I suspected what was so entirely suspicious. And what do I know yet? I have no proof; only your own word and Hope's assertion, which for aught I know, may be merely her generous desire to get you out of a perilous position by taking the blame on herself. I can scarcely believe her guilty. To have gone into my room in my absence, unlock my desk, take the money I had refused her only a few hours ago, to steal, I cannot believe it! I will not! You have been at the bottom of it, Grantley; you have had some hand in it!"

"Now papa, how can you go on so?" cried Hope, thoroughly frightened. "Do I not tell that Grantley is innocent, and that I have been the only one to blame? what more can I say to convince you!"

"It is not an easy matter to convince me that my child has committed a theft," said John Rashleigh, gravely, and turning away his head.

"I did not think of it as a fault at the time, dear papa,' she cried, flinging herself into his arms. "I wanted it for poor Annie Rogers, chiefly; I did not want it I did not want it for myself. Forgive me dearest papa, for having been so wilful and disobedient, and do not blame or accuse Grantley any more! I am the only one to blame and he has been far nobler than I deserve." Here she burst into tears; and buried her face in her father's breast: "Won't you forgive me, dear papa?" she sobbed again, after a short pause, kissing his cheek which her tears made almost as wet as her own.

John Rashleigh could not resist this: Hope had never yet been unforgiven, even when she had not shown contrition, and the unusual softness of her mood to-day could meet with nothing but the most fervent response.

"Do not cry, Hope! Dry your eyes child!" he said tenderly. "There, there. Let us hear no more about it. I quite believe you that you did not know that you were doing anything wrong and that you were only thoughtless and impulsive as usual. And as to you, boy" (to Grantley), "I am sorry that I accused you so hastily; so shake hands; and think no more about it. You cannot expect me to say more than that I am sorry," he added pleasantly as Grantley hesitated. The blow on his cheek yet stung, and it was rather early days to take the hand which had just struck him. "No gentlemen can want more than an apology, and a father can only express his regret to his son; so shake hands, boy, and let us forget what has been a very painful misunderstanding

That word did what the feeling had failed to do. Grantley grasped his cousin's hand warmly; he had conquered all his boyish pride and manly indignation by the simple name of father.

"I have made you suffer, Grantley," said Hope, as her father left them; and again she laid her hand in his.

"I would have borne twice as much for your sake, Miss Hope," he answered; pressing her hand between both of his, and looking at her lovingly—she not haughty and disdainful as usual, but downcast, bashful and repentant.

"I do not know what we shall do without you, Grantley," she then said very gently; and as she spoke, she turned pale; and he felt her hand trembling in his.

"Oh! you will soon forget me. I have often displeased you, you will be glad to get rid of me," Grantley answered.

"I do not think we shall," said Hope, in a low voice. And then there was a moments silence. All this time they were standing with their hands clasped in each other's in the hall which had just been so noisy and heated with the late storm passing through.

"You have not displeased me; it is I who have been ill-tempered," Hope continued, in a still lower voice, stil softer and richer in tone. "I ought to ask your forgiveness, Grantley, for I have often behaved so badly to you."

"You must not do that," he exclaimed hastily; and his eyes filled up with tears. "I could not bear that, Miss Hope I cannot bear to hear you blame yourself for anything."

"Grantley!" she said; and then she stopped and said no more.

Still with her hand in his, still looking down on her as she stood with bent head and lowered eyelids before him, he drew just a shade nearer to her.

"You spoke?" he asked.

She laid her other hand on his arm.

"I am much obliged to you for all that you have done for me these many years," she said almost in a whisper.

The words were formal but the voice and tone were not; the downcast eyes, the parted lips, the cheek now crimsoning and now paling, the heaving breast, the pride swept away beneath the swell of this unusual tenderness and girlish gratitude, all told of something deeper and warmer stirring in that impetuous heart than what those quiet, formal words expressed.

"Do not say that you are obliged to me for anything, dear Miss Hope," said Grantley, himself scarcely able to speak; "It has been an honor to me to be allowed to serve you."

"No one has ever done so much for me," she said.

"Because no one ever——" He stopped in his turn, and said no more; then, after a pause, he went on: I have done nothing for you unwillingly, Miss Hope. If you had asked me at any time to give you my life I would have done it as freely as I would have given you a flower. I have had but one object—that of serving and obeying you; and I had but one desire—that of pleasing you. I have done in the first the best way that I could; if I have failed in the last sadly. But I want you to remember me when I am in India," he went on to say, "and to remember me with as little dislike as you can; and I am so glad of to-day, for the last thing you have to remember me of will be my faith to you."

The tears were swelling in her eyes, as in his.

"I shall never forget to-day," she said gently, "nor how good you have always been to me, dear Grantley."

[See 4th page.]