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MY LESSON.

I told a secret. It wasn't much.
For a little girl to tell;
And I only told it softly and low,
To my intimate school mate, Della.

But the silly secret grew and grew,
And all around it spread,
Until at last it was hard to find
The thing I had really said.

And when I sat in mamma's lap,
With all my troubles told,
She said "Was the 'master great' that grew
From the 'little first' of old."

So I learned a lesson well that night
Before I went to bed,
And mamma gave me a rule to keep,
And this is what she said:

"The only way is never to say
A word that can offend;
Not even close to the listening ear
Of the dearest intimate friend!"

—Youth's Companion.

A TENNIS ROMANCE.

Francis Robinson had fallen in love.

No one besides himself suspected it, not even his mother, who knew better than anyone else how much her son was capable of feeling. No one, you see, thought of love in connection with Francis. He was "nice," of course. How he wished sometimes he wasn't. Then at least people would have some definite feeling about him. He wasn't stupid at all. Indeed, he had always learned easily and been near the top of his classes both in schools and at his university. All his comrades liked him well enough—no one ever thought of detesting him. He had a very clear mind, approaching brilliancy, and he could talk fairly well—as well as most of the men he knew. He was just ordinarily well looking, but who cares if a man is handsome or not? And of all things deliver us from a pretty man! But Francis Robinson wasn't naturally a person you would "take to," as the phrase goes. He couldn't help it, and you certainly couldn't either.

He had fallen in love, I said. He had shown good taste in his choice—far more taste than sense most people would have said. For who wants to nourish or encourage a hopeless affection? The girl was pretty and she was bright, very attractive in every way. Why shouldn't he fall in love with her if he wanted to, pray? But why should he? Do you think he could hope for a return of his regard?

He sat down determinedly one day in the privacy of his own room to decide the matter. He put it before himself as impartially as he could. He was used to communing with and consulting himself, for he had never had a friend dear enough to open his heart to. This is the way he put the case—he was studying for the bar, so the expression fits:

"I am young. I am not handsome, but I don't think that need count. I have money enough now to support a wife well and hope to earn more soon. I am in sound health, mentally as well as physically. I am not dull. I can and will make a mark in the world. I love Alice Starr. Why should I not make her care for me? I am certain she cares for no one else. Very well, I am not worthy of her, but no man is or ever will be, and if she will marry me I will make my life such that she need never be ashamed of any act in it. How am I to convince her of this? If I should tell her now she would think me mad, and justly. First I must do something worthy of notice, that is sure. I can't write. I never could excel that way. It will be some time yet before I can hope to distinguish myself in court. What can I do?"

There he had to leave the problem, and for some time it remained unsolved. What could he do? He asked himself again and again. This thought of the law court most naturally occurred to him, since that was his avocation in life. Suddenly, one day, as he was riding solitarily along a by street in Harwinton, his native town, he saw something that gave him his great idea. He reined in his horse so quickly that that peaceful animal was profoundly surprised, and doubtless pondered, with equine gravity, the why and wherefore of it in his stable afterward.

"By Jove!" thought and almost said Francis Robinson, "I have it. I'll win my laurels in one kind of a court, anyway. She is just devoted to tennis, and if I can't get to be champion of this town in that, with such an aim, I am more of an idiot than I think I am."

Which shows that at least he had some self confidence. He went to work immediately. He played tennis a little, of course, but had never devoted much time or thought to it. Perhaps this was partly due lately to the fact that he was not a member of Alice Starr's club. "Alice Starr's club" I say advisedly, for she was the leading spirit as well as the best player in it. Francis knew he could get into the club, otherwise known as the "Special," if he tried, but first he must play well. For over a month he devoted hours each day to practice with

the side of the house and run with any one he could lure into his toils. He had a fine court made on his own lawn, the better to entice people to practice.

With his determination he succeeded finely, and when he applied for admittance to the Special he knew he was up to any member in it unless it were Alice Starr. He might have waited a little longer, but he was getting impatient, and people were getting tired of being beaten. He was admitted to the club easily enough. I have said that no one disliked him, and if members didn't want to play with him they needn't. It is a fact worthy of notice that every individual who had been practiced on and of late badly beaten had forgotten to mention the fact. It was just beastly luck anyway, and on his own court, too. So there was no general impression of his good playing, as there might have been if his partners had been more generous in giving to the world their scores.

A day or two after he had been enrolled as a member Francis walked into the grounds one afternoon just as play was at its height. The five courts were all occupied just then, but soon, one being left, a man who thought it was rather a shame Robinson shouldn't have a game his first day, you know, asked him to play. Robinson gladly consented, though he knew Graves did not do much at it. At any rate it was a start, and he beat his adversary a straight set with provoking coolness. Graves had waked up a little by this time, and calling to a passing friend he said:

"Isay, Fairfield, don't you want to play? I am no use today and Robinson's been knocking me all out."

Fairfield assented: "Well, yes, he would have a try"—with a smile that plainly said, "We'll see how small fry like Robinson will show up on my playing," for he was one of the best men in the club. To his surprise, however, he found himself unaccountably beaten at every game. He got aroused, then angry, but it was only the worse for him. Robinson simply played better than ever. At last, after two sets, one Robinson's straight and the other 6-3, he became disgusted and said:

"Well, I'm down on my luck, too. I think I won't play any more. That serve of yours is very clever, Robinson."

By the time they stopped, almost every one was getting tired, and a group in which Alice Starr was standing had been watching them for some time. Robinson turned to her and said: "Won't you try one, Miss Starr? It seems a pity to stop so soon. Single or double, as you prefer."

Alice was by no means averse to displaying her excellent work and she was never weary, so they chose a court. To the satisfaction of both, no one else cared to play. Every one watched them, as theirs was the only court occupied. To every one's surprise—especially to Fairfield's—Robinson's good luck seemed to stand by him. How provoking it was! Alice would get vantage so easily, then lose the game. She grew more and more astonished as time went on. If Mr. Robinson had only seemed to try to play! But he didn't. He stood around as easily as possible and didn't even seem to exert himself at all, but just reached out lazily and returned the most difficult balls.

"Jupiter!" said Jamie Wright, whose chief occupation in life was to make supposedly witty comments on other people's actions; "Jupiter! I never saw a fellow play like that. It looks as if he stood in one place and reached out in all directions—regular octopus, don't you know?" And that is the way Francis pretty soon became known as Octo Robinson.

All the young people walked up town together. Francis felt to walk with Alice would seem rather triumphant to her, so he contented himself with talking to her dearest friend Janet Gray. At some complimentary remark of hers he answered:

"You mustn't forget, Miss Janet, that all my life almost I have practiced in ball playing. There's nothing in the world like that—especially amateur with all its tricks—to make a man's wrist as limber as an eel—forgive the comparison. Miss Starr has not had the advantage of that practice, but she plays magnificently—better than I should have ever thought possible without early training."

When Janet, as in duty bound, repeated this conversation to her friend Alice laughed and said:

"Mr. Robinson is shrewder than I thought. Little he knows of the hours and hours George and I have practiced curves in the back yard. If it hadn't been for that I never could have played so well."

All the rest of the summer Francis had chances for games with his star. Harwinton was in the transition state from borough to city, and was not yet so large that every one was in the game.

drives around it, too, and the young people of the Special often took them together. Of course, when Alice saw Francis so much at the courts she thought of him, naturally, as her particular escort on such occasions, to

carry fan and lippit, gloves and shawl. And yet she did not think of love. One always stands up for one's heroes, however unpretending they may be, but surely I am justified in saying that mine showed great self restraint and wisdom in keeping so long from telling Alice, even by a look, his secret. Seeing her almost every day, and often being alone with her, it was hard indeed to keep silent respecting his love for her. But he was succeeding in gaining at least her unconscious assent to his constant attention, and that seemed to him a long stride toward his goal.

He had convinced her of his physical ability, but how to do so of his mental? The chance came with the October winds. The tennis courts must be abandoned, but must the pleasant intercourse of the Special be dropped, too? Certainly not! The club had a very pretty house on the grounds, and this could easily be made suitable for winter. It was soon in order. Alice Starr was interested, and as Jamie Wright remarked: "When Miss Starr does take hold of a thing it's got to go!"

Once a week the rooms were to be opened in the evening and twice for reading and billiards—they had a particularly good table in the afternoon. A club of older people was started for the benefit of the chaperons and one parlor was given up to them. One was kept for dancing for the younger ones, while up stairs, besides the billiard room, two dressing rooms were utilized for cards and other games. In connection with this, at Alice Starr's suggestion, a debating club was formed. Any member of the club was entitled to membership, and two of the first names on the list were those of Alice Starr and Janet Gray. This opened the way for other girls, and pretty soon it was discovered that the list held an almost equal number of men's and girls' names. The debates took place once in two weeks and each time the speakers were appointed for the next.

Francis Robinson waited eagerly for his chance. A man and a girl supported each side, and after this an informal discussion by all the members followed, and, from Octo Robinson's swift, brilliant little speeches then, much was expected when he should take a leading part. The night came at last when he heard his name. He was to lead the negative with Mary Graves against Alice Starr and Henry Fairfield. The subject of debate was the following:

Resolved, That women should be allowed equal privileges with men at the polls and in public office.

Francis had one great advantage in this—a sincere conviction against it; that counts for a deal everywhere and most of all when one is unused to making any given point of view one's own. Francis put his whole heart in the work. All the first week he thought about it, racking his brains for novel and convincing argument, and at the beginning of the second commenced to write. It was perfectly allowable and very general to have a written speech, but he had no such ideas as that. How could he, impress everyone by his brilliancy if he constantly referred to an inglorious copy? Just as if he weren't sure what he did think!

Alice Starr worked hard, too. She had never given much thought to the subject before, not thinking it practical, but as she studied it she warmed to it more and more, and by the fatal Wednesday night was at a white heat. She herself had taken a different phase of the idea than she had thought her opponents likely to choose and given the more usual view of it to Fairfield. He, partly through devotion to her and partly through dislike of Octo Robinson, had done his best.

There was an unusually full meeting on that Wednesday evening, and even Francis felt a little shy. Fairfield opened the debate with a really bright speech, and the applause was warm at his eloquent peroration. Then Mary Graves, she was very quick, and, catching at one or two defective points in Fairfield's argument, turned the tide in her favor. After a pause Alice rose. She, too, had decided to speak without notes, and her eloquence and fire fairly carried away her little audience. Francis was naturally quick himself, but she fairly dazzled him to-night, and when she sat down he felt that he had nothing to say in answer to her unique brilliancy. But then, the great oration that he had prepared with so much care! Surely that, with its flash of conviction, would eclipse the fire of Alice Starr's words.

So he arose and, with an earnestness that surprised every one, began. His first few sentences impressed everybody, but suddenly he looked at Alice Starr. Her eyes were fixed on him with a look that said, "I have heard that you are a great speaker, but I have never heard you speak."

momentary silence—he went on for a sentence or two, but it seemed that every idea had fled from him. He looked at Alice Starr again, paused a moment and then said slowly:

"I hope every one will pardon me. The unexpected turn of my opponent's argument has just put me all out. I leave the field with the hope that some one here may fill the place I cannot."

He turned and left the room, and for a moment dead silence reigned. Then a murmur of comment arose and half a dozen sprang up at once to give their support to the negative.

Francis Robinson walked slowly out of the building, mechanically putting on his coat and hat as he went through the hall, and went on to the broad veranda. He stopped a moment, and then bethinking himself of a peculiar corner of the veranda, where he would be secure from intrusion, he went there and sat down on one of the benches. He took off his hat and let the cool air strike his forehead and sat gazing blankly at the courts. He tried to think, but it seemed almost impossible. His last chance was gone. Alice would even despise him now. How long he sat there he did not know, but at length he heard the applause that he knew must be for the announcement of the judges' decision, and he wondered if Alice were happy now. He sat with his face in his hands and did not hear a step approaching. Another person had thought of this retired spot and had come here to think. But she stopped as she turned the corner and looked in silence at the dejected figure a moment. Then she said softly: "I hope I do not disturb you, Mr. Robinson."

He started to his feet and his face showed still more the pain he was suffering.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I did not hear you. Certainly not—you do not disturb me, I mean."

An awkward pause ensued. She broke it. "You must not feel like that. I don't know what to say, but it wasn't your fault. No one thinks of it against you."

"Can't you see it isn't that?" he answered almost fiercely. "It was my great chance. I thought if I could make you see I really wasn't stupid, commonplace, I might win your love. And now—now you despise me, or at least you think me a fool. What do I care what others think? It was you I worked for."

There was another pause, and then she said slowly in an almost inaudible tone:

"But how do you know till you ask me, Francis?"

He seized her hands and his happiness. His defeat had done what his success perhaps never would have. A moment later she added, with a happy little laugh:

"And you needn't feel so badly. There were lots ready to help you, and it didn't take the judges long to decide in favor of the negative. So you see you won your point and your fiancée, too."—Isabel Dyrol in Springfield Homestead.

A Monster Salmon.

Mr. Fredmell writes: "I had the opportunity of weighing and measuring in Mr. Grove's shop in Bond street a remarkably fine salmon—the finest, indeed, both as to condition and weight, which has reached the London market. When put into the scales it just turned the weight at sixty-three pounds. It was a male fish, and measured from tip of snout to the middle 55 inches, and round the middle 20 inches. This monster was taken in tall nets at Montrose."—Public Opinion.

Comfort with Negligé Shirts.

Wearers of negligé shirts ought to be thankful to a New Haven man, who has hit upon a means by which all the advantages of suspenders and belt can be had without any of the disadvantages. His plan is a very simple one and consists of wearing the suspenders next to the undershirt, the silk, cotton or flannel shirt being outside. At the waist of the outer shirt horizontal slits are cut and stitched like buttonholes. Through these slits the straps of the suspenders are brought and fastened to the trousers. A broad belt or sash covers the waistband, slits and straps, and the result is a belt effect with a suspender comfort.—Baltimore Ledger.

A Real, Live, Wild Boy.

The Humane society of Pittsburg has turned up a genuine wild boy. He is colored, aged 12, and his name is supposed to be Harry Allen. He was brought from the mountains of Virginia because his parents, who lived there in a semi-civilized state, could not keep him at home. He would run away everywhere he was old enough to climb on the mountain side. Sometimes he would be in the woods alone for a month at a time. He lived on berries, roots and live birds, which he could catch with the facility of a cat. These things he always ate raw. His hands are like claws, and he is