

**THE COURSE OF  
TRUE LOVE NEVER  
DID RUN SMOOTH**

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The course of true love never did run smooth by Charles Reade

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**CHARLES READE**

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THE  
COURSE OF TRUE LOVE  
NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH.

BY  
CHARLES READE,  
AUTHOR OF 'IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND,' 'PEG WOFFINGTON,' AND  
'CHRISTIE JOHNSTON.'



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# THE BLOOMER.

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## CHAPTER I.

*Propria quæ maribus tribuantur masculina dicas.*

*Free Truss.*—The things that are proper to males you may call masculine.

JOHN COURTENAY was the son of Richard Courtenay. Richard was the younger son of a good Devonshire family; his elder brother inherited four thousand a-year—he fifteen hundred pounds down from the same relative, his father—vive l'Angleterre!

His fifteen hundred pounds wouldn't do in a genteel country like England; so he went to America and commerce. He died richer than the owner of Courtenay Court.

John, his son, was richer still by the same honourable means.

He was also a staunch republican. The unparalleled rise and grandeur of the United States might well recommend their institutions to any candid mind; and John Courtenay spent his leisure moments in taking the gloss off John Bull's hide. He was not so spiteful against him as some of those gentry who owe their

cleverness to themselves, but their existence to Bull, and forget it: his line was rather cool contempt. The old country was worn out and decayed; it was progressing like a crab instead of going a-head, etc., etc., etc., etc.

For all this, one fine day something seemed to crack inside John Courtenay's bosom, when he saw an announcement from the modest pen of Robins that Courtenay Court was in the market.

He did not think such an advertisement would have interested him any more than consols ninety-six and a half—but it did.

This gentleman was at the moment working a loan at 5 per cent. with Kentucky; and he had promised himself to be in it to the tune of 50,000*l.*: but all this day he took more snuff than was good for him, and the next day after breakfast and a reverie he suddenly burst out 'Pshaw! the worst investment in the worst country: a sinking interest in a sinking kingdom.'

'Papa!' said a musical voice, 'your paying me no attention will I fear end in your being worried.'

This worrying meant a certain violent system of kissing with which the speaker used to fall upon John Courtenay when he was very good or very bad: she used it indifferently as a reward or punishment.

This time to her surprize the old gentleman answered her smiling threat by opening his arms in a moment and saying 'My child!'

In another moment Caroline Courtenay was in his

arms: he pressed his lips to her brow and said 'I will do it! I will do it!'

'What will you do Papa?

'That is my business I reckon,' said he, recovering the statesman and man of business with rather a brusque reaction—and off he bustled to Wall Street, 'where merchants most do congregate.'

Caroline stood irresolute and had a mind to whimper—she thought her affection had been for once half repulsed.

Caroline! doubt anything, everything, but a parent's love for his only child.

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## CHAPTER II.

IN three weeks after this the hammer came to Courtenay Court, and that hammer was wielded (I use the term he would have selected) by the St. George of the auction room.

Need I say the wood and water of the estate had previously been painted in language as flowing as the one and as exuberant as the foliage of the other?

In the large hall were two fire-places where piles of beech-log blazed and crackled.

Mr. Robins made his bow and up went Courtenay Court, Manor and Lordship, in a single lot.

There were present, besides farmers, some forty country gentlemen, many of whom looked business;



they had not examined their own horizon as John Courtenay Merchant had. Land was in vogue

I don't wonder at it.

Certainly a landed estate is 'an animal with its mouth always open.' But compare the physical perception and enjoyment of landed wealth with that of consols and securities.

Can I get me rosy cheeks, health, and good humour, riding up and down my Peruvian bonds: can I go out shooting upon my parchment, or in summer sit under the shadow of my mortgage deed, and bob for commas and troll for semicolons in my river of ink that mæanders through my meadow of sheep skin?

Wherefore I really think land will always tempt even the knowing ones, until some vital change shall take place in society: for instance, till the globe makes its exit in smoke and the blue curtain comes down on the Creation.

Three or four gentlemen held the bidding up till about thirty thousand pounds; it then became flat.

And now one Adam Eaves, a farmer, pushed sheepishly forward, made an advance on the bidding, and looked ashamed.

Why lookest thou ashamed, O yeoman, bulwark of our isle?

This is why. Adam Eaves farmed two farms; and he had for three years been praying his landlords for a decrease of rent, upon grounds that nowise tallied with his little offer of thirty thousand one hundred pounds

down on the nail for Courtenay Manor ; and therefore looked he ashamed the simple-minded yeoman bulwark of our isle.

Joshua Tanner, linen-draper in the market-town, he whose cry for ten years had been the decay of retail trade, was so surprized at this that thrown off his guard he bid an hundred more—but the mask once thrown off, he blushed not, but sprinkled insulting arrogance on all around.

Both these worthies who, unlike us writers, had for years announced themselves beneath their true value, gave way to heavier metal, and the estate began to approach its real worth. It was at 38,000*l*.

There was a pausc. St. George looked jocose, and felt uneasy : were they running cunning like their own hounds these South country gentlemen ?

He now looked carefully all round the room : a long attenuated figure with a broad-brimmed hat on, standing by a distant window, met his eye and, as if to oblige him, now for the first time made a cool nonchalant bid by nodding his head—round went all the company on their heels with their backs to the auctioneer, as, when in the last row of the pit two personages of this our day go to fisticuffs, I have seen the audience turn its back on the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius, or Melantius and Amyntor.

Forty-two, three, four thousand were reached—two country gentlemen bidders turned red and white—the pin bid on, rythmically, at measured intervals, like a

chaff-cutting machine, unconscious of opposition, indifferent to result.

The estate was now at thirty years' purchase; a hum that went round the room announced this fact without a word spoken—all the hounds had tailed off but one. He went on. The two bidders were strangely contrasted: it seemed odd they could both want the same thing. In shape one was like a pin: the other a pin-cushion.

Our friend at the window was all one colour, like wash-leather, or an actor by day-light; the other with his head of white hair as thick as a boy's, and his red brown cheeks, and his bright eye, reflected comfort as brightly as Hampton Court with its red brick and white facings, and cheered the eye like old Sun and old Frost battling for a December day.

At last the thin and sallow personage uttered these words, 'Forty-seven thousand pounds!!!' in a nasal twang that seemed absurdly unjust to the grand ideas such words excite in elegant minds conscious how many refined pleasures can be had for 47,000*l*.

His antagonist's head sunk for a moment.

He sighed, and instead of bidding higher or holding his tongue, the two business alternatives open to him, he said, 'then it will never be mine!'

He said this so simply, yet with so much pain, that some of those good souls, who unless they have two days to think it over with their wives or sisters, are sure to take the pathetic for the ludicrous, horse-laughed at him.