

"H 21, LEFT"

RICHARD BARKER SHELTON

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Crompton stood for a time at the head of the aisle waiting for an usher. It was a few minutes after 8, and the drums and brasses of the orchestra were announcing the finale of the overture. People crowded past him and streamed far down the sloping aisle, and all about was the clatter of seats turned down, the swish of silken skirts and the subdued hum that precedes the rise of the curtain. Then half the lights in the house went out, and the orchestra began a certain cue in a creepy minor.

Crompton fished in his pocket for his check. "H 21, Left, Orchestra Stall," he read in the dim light. He was blissfully ignorant that his check was a week old and from another theater uptown, while the check he should have presented reposed undisturbed in the pocket of his overcoat. He strode down the aisle, where worried looking ushers were hustling people into their seats. When he reached "H, Left," he found it was the end seat, and he sank into it, thankful for its proximity to the aisle.

Scarcely had he seated himself when he felt a hand on his arm, and a voice beside him said:

"I was afraid you wouldn't get my note, Jack. It was late when I sent it to the club."

Crompton turned and found beside him a refined, elderly lady with a kindly face. He was about to inform her of her mistake when she turned to a young woman on her left.

"Constance, dear," he heard her say. "Jack has come."

The young woman leaned forward, and Crompton caught sight of a very charming face. Her great, dark eyes looked at him for a moment and then opened wide with surprise; an angry flush colored her cheeks, and her mouth curved scornfully. For a moment she simply stared at him, while his heart went through some strange gymnastics.



"IT IS VERY GOOD OF YOU, JACK," SHE SAID.

Then an amused twinkle came to her eyes, and her lips took on a grim smile. "It is very good of you, Jack," she said, with significant emphasis, and settled back in her seat.

Crompton felt dazed and helpless. What was the meaning of this? The elderly lady was speaking again.

"I'm so glad you came," she said. "You can make me see it all so beautifully. I can't borrow another pair of eyes in the city worth a cent to me."

She turned to him with a pathetic smile which gave him sudden enlightenment. She was blind.

The young woman leaned forward again. She looked him over deliberately, as if taking his measure, and then said:

"Jack, Aunt Agatha wouldn't go to the theater all the time you were away. She says my descriptions of scenery and situations are either flippant or dreary. Oh, there's nothing like being a favorite nephew, Jack Armstrong."

Crompton felt a great sense of relief. This lady beside him was his Aunt Agatha; he was Jack Armstrong. The young woman had tactfully made these points clear to him. He flashed her a look of gratitude, which she recognized with another grim smile.

The curtain had gone up and the play commenced.

"Tell me about it," he heard Aunt Agatha whisper.

Crompton whispered a vivid description of the stage setting and the costumes. The woman beside him listened attentively, and as he finished she elated contentedly.

"Thank you, dear," she said. "I can see it myself now."

Crompton wiped his brow. The test had come, and he had passed it creditably. He felt a sense of elation. Whatever this strange situation meant he would see it to the end. The absurdity of the whole affair appealed to him. He would play the game out. It was evident that the note had not reached Armstrong at his club, for, despite Crompton's qualms in that direction, the original "favorite nephew" failed to appear.

Crompton found himself enjoying

the unique adventure wonderfully. Between the acts he chatted with Aunt Agatha. He found good need for a ready wit, for that lady had a way of asking personal questions about himself and his trip abroad, which, as he was totally unacquainted with Mr. Armstrong, he found quite impossible to answer. Therefore he parried them. And once, when he found himself in a conversational tangle, Constance came to the rescue and, deftly extricating him, turned the talk to safer subjects.

Why she had not shown him up for an impostor, why she had given him the cue to his identity and why she allowed—may, even helped—him to pose as Armstrong was quite beyond his comprehension.

At 11 he found himself in the carriage driving uptown with them, Aunt Agatha still chatting with him and Constance sitting silently opposite, her face giving no hint of what was taking place in her mind.

The carriage drew up finally before a comfortable house well uptown, and they entered a quiet drawing room.

"I'm quite tired out," Aunt Agatha said, "so if you'll pardon me, Jack, I'll leave you to Constance. Dine with us Wednesday if you can."

When Aunt Agatha had left on the arm of a maid Crompton rose and picked up his hat.

"I realize it was detestable of me," he said, turning to Constance. He paused. She stood watching him silently. "I'm very much alone here. My home is in the west. It saved of adventure, and—well, I succumbed. I confess I found it a diversion—a very charming diversion—and more," he added, looking quickly at her. "Perhaps I'd better not intrude further," he said quietly, taking a step toward the door. "I wish I might ask your forgiveness, but I don't deserve it."

"I was quite sure of you from the first," she said. "I knew you would neither take advantage of the situation nor ask questions. I—I don't know what you will think of me, but I shall make a confession. Aunt Agatha is a dear, persistent old matchmaker. Jack Armstrong is a nephew on her husband's side of the house. I've been thrown at his head all my days. I wanted to be free from him this evening at any cost."

She flushed as too late she realized the full import of her words.

"I trust the cost hasn't been too dear," Crompton said.

"Oh, I beg your pardon"—she began. "Believe me," Crompton said quickly, "I am glad to serve you in any way—even in this humble capacity."

His hand was on the door.

"Perhaps," she said lightly, "you might like to meet your original. Mr. Armstrong will be here Wednesday evening."

"Will he be here Thursday?" Crompton asked.

"No," she said.

"Might I dare intrude again, then?" he ventured.

She looked at him, and her eyes fell before his eager glance.

"It won't be an intrusion," she said gently.

When Crompton reached the sidewalk he drew a small bit of cardboard from his pocket and pressed it to his lips. It read, "H 21, Left."

Song of the Ancient Spinning Reel.

The first reel that was invented was the hand reel, the yarn being wound into skeins by turning the wheel and fastening the skeins after counting a sufficient number of strands. The flax was first woven into thread, or yarn, on the spinning wheel; then the bobbins, full of yarn, were placed on the hand reel and yarn wound off them on to the wheel into skeins. The strands were carefully counted and the heben fastened on them to keep them together. The heben was a thread running across the skeins to keep them in place.

A later invention was the clock reel, with a face on which numbers were printed, and it had two hands, like a clock. When the wheel was turned, reeling off the strands from the bobbin, the clock would tick when a certain number of strands were wound on the reel, and the housewife instead of tediously counting the threads, as on the earlier invented reel, would fasten on the heben.

In a quaint old ballad entitled "Miss Polly at the Reel" occurs this refrain:

He kissed Mistress Polly as the clock reel ticked,
The hissing being done at the propitious moment when Mistress Polly was busy fastening on the heben.

Why He Wouldn't Sell.

He was the gray haired proprietor of a country store, "the village emporium," he called it, though it was weatherboarded and whitewashed and

"approved" summer sojourners and they could never find anything there that they wanted, but the proprietor's chief pride was that he was quite "out" of anything. His method of keeping up his reputation in this line as discovered by an importunate sojourner was, to say the least, original. It chanced that this sojourner wanted a pair of hobnails for some impromptu theatricals and wanted them at once. Yes, the proprietor of the "village emporium" had a pair of the "village emporium" had a pair of No. 8's; but, after rummaging among various shelves and boxes: "It's the only pair of that size I've got, young man, and I don't like to get out of anything that way. Couldn't ye put off the show till next week? I'll be gone" in town then and can lay in another pair or two." Upon being assured that delay was impossible and he could have double the price of the boots if he would only part with them, "It's a temptation," he said, shaking his bushy head, "but a man must stand by his principles, young feller, if he means to make his mark in the world." And the boots were returned to their box.

Marriage in the Orient.

In the east—in India, China and Japan—girls are married very young. With us they would still be considered children and would be in bibs and pinafores. But over there girls of twelve are considered of full marriageable age, and it is not at all uncommon to find wives of six or eight or ten years. When a proposal of marriage is made the father of the young girl is applied to, and the following style of answer is considered stylish and elegant:

"I have received with respect the marks of your goodness. The choice that you desire to make of my daughter to become the wife of your son shows that you esteem my poor daughter more than she deserves. My daughter is coarse and stupid, and I have not had the talent to bring her up well. Yet I shall nevertheless glory in obeying you on this occasion."

This is the proper and accepted mode of reply. But, fortunately for the girl wives of the east, individuals are often kinder than the law itself, so that a family is often bound together by happy and cordial relations, such as could not exist if a man really felt his wife to be coarse and stupid.

Best Fed Sailors in the World.

The navy ration is of course provided for by law, and the daily diet of the enlisted man must conform in some degree to this prescribed regime, but infinite is the variety and ample is the dietary realm of Jack, the sailor. As compared with the daily bill of fare of the workman on shore the odds are greatly in favor of the sailor. Should he be inclined to grumble at his daily fare it must be from caprice of appetite, for what laboring man enjoys better and more wholesome food? His food must be well cooked, for no bad cooks are allowed in the navy. Where a cook is incompetent he is reported, for Jack Tar's stomach must be kept in a healthy condition if our ships are to be manned with a sturdy lot of sailors. His food must be of the best quality, for it is no secret that Uncle Sam demands the best article in the market and gets it.—Gunter's Magazine.

Weather Wisdom.

A very curious method of making weather predictions has been discovered by an old French farmer.

"On Christmas eve," he says, "when the bells begin to ring for midnight mass, take twelve onions and place them in a row on a table. The first onion will represent January, the second February, and so on. Next make a large slit in each onion and pour some salt into it. If at the end of an hour you find that the salt in the March onion has melted you will know that there will be much rain in March, and, on the other hand, if the salt in the April onion is not melted you may be certain that April will be a dry month. Moreover, if the salt in any onion is melted at the top, but not at the bottom, the first fortnight of the month will be wet and the second fortnight dry."

The Hoopoe Bird.

The hoopoe is essentially a bird of the desert. A pretty tradition regarding the crest upon this bird's head tells that the crest was a gift from King Solomon in gratitude for shelter from the midday sun provided by a flight of hoopoes. The first decoration was a crown of gold, but as this brought unwelcome attentions from fowling the monarch changed the crown to a crest of feathers.

The characteristic note of the hoopoe is produced as follows: The bird swallows as much air as possible and then tips its beak upon the ground. The escaping air produces the "hoop-hoo" which has earned for the bird its popular name.—London Mail.

Drummers in King Henry's Time.

King Henry V. had a band which discoursed sweet music during his expedition to Harfleur, each member being recompensed for his services with the sum of 12 pence per diem. When the citizens of London were mustered in the thirty-first year of the reign of Henry VIII. we hear that "before every standard was appointed one drummer, at the least." Each company of 100 men at this time possessed a couple of drummers.—All the Year Round.

TIMBER LAND, ACT JUNE 3, 1878. NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

United States Land Office, Roseburg, Oregon, Feb. 5, 1905.

Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada, and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1894.

WILLIAM W. FRIBBLE, of 191 Monroe St., Portland, county of Multnomah, State of Oregon, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 4403, for the purchase of the SE 1/4, of Sec. No. 14, Tp 26 S., R. 12 west, and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber, or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before the Register and Receiver of this office at Roseburg, Oregon, on Wednesday, the 9 day of Dec, 1905.

He names as witnesses: Oscar Edwards of Oakland, Oregon; George Finley, Galen A. Knapp, of Grantsville, Oregon; E. N. Smith, of Myrtle Point, Oregon.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above-described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 9 day of Dec, 1905.

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