

Story in the Family

By W. R. Rose.

It was a remarkably cool and pleasant room, a gentle breeze fluttered the white muslin curtains and the roses on their tall bushes nodded across the window sills at the caller. The caller smiled back at them and drew a long breath of the delicately perturbed air. He was a young man who liked roses and green fields and the charm of the countryside. And he liked the restful quiet of the little sitting room. He arose quickly as a lady entered the room.

"Good morning, madam."

"Good morning."

She was a slender lady of perhaps sixty, a gray haired lady of an old fashioned type, a lady of much dignity of movement, and yet with a quick manner that at times suggested the sprightliness of a bird.

She pressed her gold-rimmed glasses a little closer to her nose and carefully surveyed the young man.

"I trust you are quite well, madam?"

"Quite well."

She drew her thin lips together.

"If it's books," she said, "there isn't any use of your staying a minute longer."

The caller smiled.

"I'm not a book agent," he told her. "Is it apple cores?"

"I'm not a peddler."

"I bought an apple core of a young man who was something of your build more than three years ago. It broke on the second greening. He was a mite stouter, perhaps. She paused and again regarded him attentively. "If you are neither a book agent nor an apple core," she said, "you may take a chair."

"Pardon me, madam," he said, "my name is Richard Barclay, and my home is in New York. I am in the law office of Renfrew & Darnley and will be admitted to partnership in the firm the first of January."

"There is nothing very startling about that," said the lady. "Perhaps in time you will get around to the business that brought you here."

"Yes, madam. You have a niece."

"Oh, it's my niece you want to see?"

"No, madam, my business is with you."

"You are the strangest young man for beating around the bush I ever met. Why don't you say what you want, and be done with it?"

"Madam, I want your permission to marry your niece."

"I know," she presently said, "that I was taking great chances when Clare made that visit to New York with Louise Humphrey."

"I haven't much to offer her," he said; "at least, at present. I'm young and I'm making my way, and my chances seem good. I can give Clare a modest home in a nice neighborhood, a home in which there will always be room for you, dear madam."

The lady slightly sniffed.

"You are getting ahead a little too fast young man. I've no thought of moving just at present. Does Clare know about this—this delightful arrangement?"

"Yes, madam."

"It's all settled, then?"

"No, madam. It all depends on you."

Again the lady slightly sniffed.

"My piece was in New York just a month. During that month you contrived to persuade yourself that she was the only girl in all the world who could care for. Did you, or did you not?"

"I did, madam."

"Seems nonsensical, doesn't it?"

"No, madam."

"She shook her head at him reprovingly.

"You look like a fairly sensible young man. Does my niece reciprocate this—the fanciful attachment?"

"Yes, madam."

"And she sent you to me?"

"Yes, madam."

"But why come to me if you are both agreed?"

"Clare owes you too much, madam, to do anything contrary to your approval."

"Holt-tolt! And suppose I refuse?"

"We can wait, madam."

"That's just what you should do. How silly this seems. You have met my niece twenty times, we'll say, and no doubt think her the one perfect flower of all girlhood. Lo I use the right expression?"

"Yes, madam."

"She drew the gray shawl a little closer.

"Do you appreciate what you are asking of me?" she suddenly flamed out. "What do we know about you?"

"Very little, madam. I can only tell you that I am clean and honest, and have a good profession."

"That is what you say." Then her eyes suddenly twinkled behind her glasses. "I'll admit that I'm a little prejudiced in your favor—although you certainly are not as good looking as Clare would have me believe. And I like your letters."

"Did Clare show them to you?"

"How else could I have seen them? They were not nearly as slushy as might have been expected."

"Thank you."

"That one that told about the Italian child in the police court was as good

as a book. I'll admit that Clare and I both cried over it." She paused and drew a long breath. "It's very silly in me, I know, but never having had any love affair of my own it's natural I should feel extra interest in Clare's."

She took off her glasses and again wiped them with much care. He looked at her curiously.

"I begin to have a suspicion," he said.

"Of what?"

"That you knew me all the time."

The lady laughed softly.

"I wasn't particularly startled by your appearance."

"And you didn't really take me for a book agent?"

"No."

"Annie Lucy," said the young man, "you certainly are a very clever woman."

"Annie Lucy! Holt-tolt. You are taking a good deal for granted, Richard Barclay. But there; let's be frank and straightforward. I promise you nothing. You will stay and take dinner with us and then we three will talk this all over. We are going to be perfectly independent on our side, you understand. We may be poor—or at least very far from rich, but we are proud. We came by it naturally. That's my father's picture up there, Jethro Holt. He was as proud as a lord."

The young man looked up quickly.

"What did you call his name?"

"Jethro Holt."

The young man's eyes sparkled.

"Jethro Holt, of Petunia, Me. born there in 1815; died in 1863."

"Why, yes. He was my father."

The young man drew a narrow booby from his pocket and rapidly leafed it over.

"Jethro Holt left three children, a boy and two girls, Arthur, Lucy and Emily."

"Yes. I am Lucy Mellen Holt—commonly called Aunt Lucy Mellen. At least that's what Clare has called me ever since she could talk. Emily was Clare's mother. She died when Clare was a baby, and Clare's father died the year after."

The young man stared hard at her.

"Can you prove this relationship?"

"Why, yes, of course. I have the old family Bible and many letters and my father's picture and the deed of the old home."

He drew a quick breath.

"This is wonderful," he said. "Tell me about your brother."

"He was older than I—nine years older. He was a wayward boy and greatly worried my father. When he was eighteen he ran away from home and shipped on a whaler. The ship was lost in the Pacific and all the crew were reported drowned."

"Your brother escaped," said the young man. "He was picked up by a Russian sealer and landed at a Siberian port. He found his way to Australia and roughed it as a sealer. There, through some odd fancy, he changed his name. He was no longer Arthur Holt, he was Henry Harlan. He became a trader and prospered greatly. Finally he made his residence in New York. He lived there twenty years. He died there seven months ago."

The lady's strange look in her eyes, stirred suddenly.

"And that man was my brother?"

"Yes."

She sighed. "My poor brother."

The young man leaned forward.

"Oh," he said, "we have searched for you in so many places! The head of our firm was your brother's attorney and one of the executors of the estate. The matter of finding the heirs was played in my hands. I have traveled many miles on false clues; I have advertised in many sections—and now, to stumble on you like this!"

"Then we are heirs to his property?" said the lady.

"He died without a will. You and Clare are his only living kin."

"Does that mean we are rich?"

"Very, very rich."

They were both silent for a moment or two. Then the lady sighed.

"That comes a little late for me," she softly said, "but it will be beautiful for Clare."

A troubled look crossed the young man's face.

"Clare," he murmured. "This changes everything."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you see? Clare is now a great heiress. A new world opens before her. She can choose where she will."

"True," said the lady.

"It puts me in a painful, a false position. Why, even you might believe that I knew her relationship to Henry Harlan before I asked her to be my wife."

"True," said the lady again.

"Such a suspicion is shameful," he went on. "The one mainly thing for me to do is to release Clare from her promise."

The lady arose and went to the window. It was plain that she was agitated by his startling news. Presently she beckoned to him.

"Here," she said. "Do you see that young woman coming up the road-way? That is the great heiress. And she's something much better than that. She's a sweet and lovable girl whose womanly heart can't be spoiled by any amount of money. I know her better than any other living person. Richard Barclay, and I tell you you have nothing to fear." She turned and looked at him and laid a slender hand on his shoulder. "Besides—she began."

"Yes, dear lady."

"She softly laughed.

"It really looks as if we ought to have a lawyer in the family."

AS TO WRITING PENCILS

Putting Lead in Lips Spells Pencil and Endangers Health.

The act of putting a lead pencil in the tongue to wet it just before writing, which is habitual with many people, is one of the oddities for which it is hard to give any reason, unless it began in the days when pencils were poorer than now, and was continued by example to the next generation.

A lead pencil should never be wet. It hardens, the lead and ruins the pencil. This fact is known to newspaper men and stenographers. But nearly every one else does wet a pencil before using it. The fact was definitely settled by a newspaper clerk away down East. Being of a mathematical turn of mind, he ascertained by actual count that of 40 persons who came into his office to write an advertisement or a church notice, 49 wet a pencil in their mouths before using it. Now, this clerk always uses the best pencils, cherishing a good one with something of a pride a soldier feels in his gun or his sword, and it hurts his feelings to have his pencils spoiled. But politeness and business considerations require him to lend his pencil scores of times a day. And often, after it had been wet till it was hard and brittle and refused to mark, his feelings would overpower him.

Finally he got some cheap pencils and sharpened them and kept them to lend. The first person who took up the stock pencil was a drayman, whose breath smelt of onions and whisky. He held the point in his mouth and soaked it several minutes, while he was torturing himself in the effort to write an advertisement for a missing bulldog. Then a sweet-looking young lady came into the office, with kid gloves that buttoned half the length of her arm. She picked up the same old pencil and pressed it to her dainty lips preparatory to writing an advertisement for a lost bracelet. The clerk would have stayed her hand, even at the risk of a box of the best pencils, but he was too late. And thus that pencil passed from mouth to mouth for a week. It was sucked by people of all ranks and stations, and all degrees of cleanliness and uncleanness. But 'twere well to forbear. Surely no one who reads this will ever again wet a lead pencil.—Graphic.

Origin of the Baker's Dozen.

Some persons, including a few encyclopedists, are inclined to think that the baker's dozen originated when heavy fines were considered necessary to counterbalance light weights, and the bakers, in order to insure full weight, took the precaution to add an additional unit. Some have called it the devil's dozen, because thirteen was the number of witches who used to ride their broomsticks to the "Black Mass" of Satan. The baker's great book in Astor Library has another story of its origin:

Jan Pieterse, of Amsterdam, was a good church man, but nevertheless he was afraid of being bewitched. On the last night of 1654 he sat in his bakeshop trying to keep out the evil spirits by priming himself with a glass of good spirits. Sales had been brisk. There were no customers in the shop for the moment, and he sat back, meditating on the gains he would make on the morrow, when the fresh New Year's cakes were put on sale. He was startled by a sudden rap. An ugly woman pushed the door open.

"Give me a dozen New Year's cookies," she cried in a shrill voice.

The shrillness of her voice did not mean anything to his slow Dutch mind. It only annoyed him.

"Well, then, you needn't speak so loud," said Jan. "I'm not deaf."

"A dozen!" she screamed. "Give me a dozen. Here are only twelve."

"Well, then, twelve is a dozen."

"One more! I want a dozen."

"Well, you will not get it."

The hag left the shop, but from that night Jan had trouble. The shop seemed to be bewitched. His cakes were stolen. Either his bread was so light that it soared up the chimney or so heavy that the supports of the oven gave way beneath the burden. His wife became deaf; his children went wild. His trade took wings and settled in the shops of his rivals. Three times the old woman returned, and each time was directed to the devil's sabbath. At last, in despair, the baker called upon St. Nicholas to assist him. The venerable patron of Dutch feasts delivered a lecture on charity, telling the trembling man to be more generous in the future. Then he vanished and in his place stood the hag, who repeated her demand for one more cake. Jan, acceding, whereupon she exclaimed, "The spell is broken; from this time one dozen is thirteen." Taking from the counter a gingerbread effigy of St. Nicholas, she made the subdued Dutchman lay his hand upon it and swear to give more liberal measure in the future. Since that time thirteen has been called a baker's dozen.

The strength of a grindstone appears from recent tests to vary widely with the degree of its wetness or dryness, stones that are dry showing tensile strengths of from 148 to 186 pounds per square inch, but after soaking over night breaking under stresses of 80 to 116 pounds per square inch.

Hard facts do not always make an impression on a soft-headed man. Corrupt souls feed on corruption but a pure soul can look on, carry without being defiled.

ANTICS OF CHINESE STUDENTS

Quaint Members of Boys Sent to This Country to Study.

About the year 1870 the Chinese government sent some 50 or 70 boys and young men of high rank to the United States at the instance and under the guardianship of Yang Wing, a graduate of Yale of the class of 1851. The purpose was to educate these boys in American high schools and universities, and to give them such an acquaintance with American institutions and customs as might render them able to instruct their own countrymen on their return to China.

The party was divided into groups and distributed among the various educational centers. Some of them were sent to Yale. They were generally speaking of high intellect and attained excellent rank both in scholarship and socially; but they never quite got rid of their national tendency to take things literally, and they were tenacious of certain ideas of etiquette to an extent which they never wholly overcame.

One of these Chinese freshmen was invited to call at the house of an eminent Yale professor of science whose reputation was world-wide, and he promptly availed himself of the privilege. After remaining for a reasonable length of time, he rose to take his leave. One of the professor's daughters expressed her pleasure at having seen him, and asked him to call again. This he promptly did in about ten minutes, having apparently taken a walk round the block.

On another occasion, says the Youth's Companion, the same Chinese student was invited to the same house to an evening entertainment. He was seen by the hostess to come in at the door and to go upstairs to the dressing-room, but did not appear in the drawing-room. She requested one of her student friends to go to the dressing-room and bring the Chinaman down.

The student found him in the dressing-room calmly smoking, and asked him why he did not go down stairs, to which he replied that he could not do so because all the men and women were talking at once, and that, being contrary to his ideas of etiquette, would make him so uncomfortable that he would prefer not to take part in it. He remained in the dressing-room during the whole evening, smoking and talking with such of the men as dropped in there, and partaking of refreshments which were sent to him; but to the babel below stairs he would not go.

One of the Chinese students was coxswain of the university crew, and one of the best men at the tiller-ropes who ever sat in a boat. He had excellent control of the men, and up to the time of the race itself did not exhibit any of his national peculiarities; but in the excitement of the race itself he would at critical times give up the use of English, which he spoke perfectly, and about and jabber at his crew in Chinese in a manner which so provoked them to laughter as almost to throw them out of form. He was very small, weighing only 50 or 60 pounds, and the giant captain of the crew used to carry him through the excursion train on the return to New Haven, after a victory, upon his right arm, rustling in his many-colored silks and with his "pigtail" hanging down his back.

Game of Bridge.

When bridge was established a committee of three members of the Portland was appointed in December, 1898, to draft the required code of rules for the new game. The task was a difficult one, as their knowledge of the game was at that early stage a very elementary one, but the work was so skilfully and successfully done that the code of laws thus drawn up lasted practically unaltered for a period of ten years, and stood the test of covering all the debatable points of the game.

There were laws issued early in 1899, and in July of the same year they were submitted to a joint committee of the Portland and Tuff clubs, and, being passed with a few unimportant alterations, they became the standard laws of English bridge, and remained so until another joint committee of the same clubs issued the Revised Laws of Bridge, at the end of 1904.

There never was any game about which so many people have aired their different opinions. Between 1904 and 1906 something like one hundred books were published dealing entirely with the practice of bridge, and the list is not yet completed. They still come. Hardly a week passes without some fresh aspirant to literary fame setting forth his views under an alluring title.

Human Passions Photographed.

Some photographic records of human emotions, obtained at Geneva, by Dr. E. Magnin and M. Edward Flegelheimer, are of remarkable interest. The experiments have been made upon a very susceptible hypnotic subject who has been influenced by both music and oral suggestion, and the entire range of human passions—joy, anger, fear, sadness, gluttony, greed, etc.—have been recorded in about 100 photographs of the woman under the various forms of suggestion. The intensity of the expressions is said to have been rarely equalled by the great artists.

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