

Too Much Efficiency

By E. J. Rath

BEGIN HERE TODAY

JOHN W. BROOKE, widowed hardware magnate, before leaving the city for two months, arranges with a firm of efficiency engineers to take charge of his home during that time. He fails to tell his plans to his grown children, Constance, Billy and Alice. They soon find out, however, when.

H. HEDGE, assigned to the job, takes control of the Brooke household, occupies John W.'s private suite and turns the library into an office. He is now in the process of buying an efficiency hat for Constance. He has selected one from quite a number sent to the house by an exclusive store. Constance trying it on admits that she likes it. He turns to the saleslady and asks the price.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"All right. How much is it?" "We have not the price," said the chief saleswoman. "They were not sent up with the hats. But if monsieur—"

"Never mind. Monsieur can tell a cheap hat when he sees it, likewise a strongly built hat. Miss Brooke buys this hat. Tell them to send up the bill. Phone me, by the way, as I want to get it in my records today and send the regular requisition. Now, you can bundle up all that millionaire stuff and sell it to the cash-marks. Good day."

The two ladies from the Luxembourg put the extravagant hat back in the boxes, while Constance hurried up to her rooms. She planted herself before a mirror and made a short speech to the hat.

"You little dear!" she exclaimed softly. "I love you for being so plain. I love you for being so soft and simple and cheap. And I'm so glad they sent up all the other horrid ones. But—oh, I'm afraid something is going to happen. But he bought you; he said so. And I won't give you up. I'm going to make sure of you wearing you—right now! We're going out for a walk, little hat—just you and I. Come—let's hurry!"

While Constance and her little hat went for a walk, H. Hedge was grinning in satisfaction.

"It's not going to be such an awful job to put economy and efficiency across on this house, after all," he mused. "Miss Brooke has just learned an important lesson. Took it sensibly, too. That girl has a head on her shoulders, if she'll only use it."

Twenty minutes later the telephone rang.

"Oh, it's the Luxembourg, is it? All right. Yes, I took that small hat. It's what? Oh, I don't care anything about the model being exclusive. That stuff is all rot, anyhow. No, and I don't care whether it's

from Paris or Pittsburgh. That's more rot, too. Just send the bill, and let me have the amount now. What?"

H. Hedge's dark hair bristled. "Say that again! What?"

He had started to write a memorandum, but his fingers trembled.

"A hundred and fifty dollars! Cut that out! I didn't buy all the hats—just one! The little one!"

He swallowed hard and listened again.

"That was the most expensive hat in the bunch? Paris—exclusive? And a hundred and fifty dollars! Say, are you a milliner or a burglar? Wait! Hold the wire!"

He raced out into the hall and

gan marbling aimlessly on a pad. But the marks gradually assumed the form of letters:

STUNG

Billy had been crisscrossing the floor nervously, with his hands deep in his pockets. The outbreak alarmed Alice while it inspired astonishment in Constance. Normally, Billy was easy-going.

"Oh, it's all right for you to smile, Connie," he said savagely. "You worked him good and plenty, but only because he didn't know it. A fool hat is one thing, and gasoline is something else. But it isn't that so much either. I don't care if I never get anything out of him. I'll talk."

"What talk?" asked Alice hastily.

"Oh, these good old friends of the family—the rubber-neck crowd. I've been out a bit today. I'm hearing the gossip. You told me not to say anything, so I couldn't explain. But they're asking questions about E. E. and every one of 'em has different

Constance flushed vividly. "How absolutely absurd!" she exclaimed.

"I'm only giving you what they say," declared her brother wrathfully. "Another one has it that he's a classmate of mine who is just back from South America, where he's been on a ranch. And—get this—there's another yarn out that E. E. is a famous portrait-painter who's putting the whole family on canvas. They've gone so far with that that Alice is already painted, and I'm going to be exhibited next spring. They're going to call it 'Girl With Fan' or something like that."

It's unbearable," declared Constance. "Unspeakable," affirmed Alice. "Well, it'll end anytime you say," said Billy, coming to a halt and indulging in an emphatic gesture. Alice displayed alert interest.

"I don't understand," said Constance. "You mean that you have a plan? You have some way to end it?"

"Sure, I've had one from the first. Only you've been going into arguments with him."

The son of John W. Brooke spoke with assurance and ease.

"The plan, please," said Constance. "Chuck him."

"How?"

Billy stretched lazily and glanced down at his own considerable bulk.

"You propose to tell him to leave the house?"

"Tell him? Not for a minute. Why tell him? Just put him out; that's all."

Alice looked at her big brother and betrayed excitement.

"Really, Billy?" she exclaimed.

"Why not? Any reason why it cannot be done? You two have been beating around the bush with your schemes, when there's only one easy way. And it's so darned simple. I suppose that's the reason you never thought of it."

He viewed his sisters magnanimously.

Constance pursed her lips and considered the idea. Beyond question it was necessary to terminate the dictatorship. Argument and compromise had failed. Yet Constance instinctively revolted at anything so vulgar as the employment of force. It was something unknown in the Brooke household; something foreign and distasteful. Still, the situation was also new and unknown since the day she could first remember anything.

"I'm for it," declared Alice promptly. "Will you really do it, Billy?"

"Watch me."

"How about you, Connie?"

"Well," said Constance cautiously. "I'll watch—if he'll do it."

"Come on." NEXT CHAPTER: Efficient dancing.

SHE DEFENDS YOUNG SMART SET OF TODAY

Stupid Fellows at Nice, Exclusive Dances Driving the Smart Misses to the Cabarets.

New York.—Ellin MacKay, 21 year old daughter of Clarence H. MacKay, president of the Postal Telegraph Company and cousin of Alice Duer Miller, the novelist, broke in to print today defending visits to cabarets by the young smart set.

In The New Yorker, a magazine he writes that, paradoxically, the younger generation of the smart set prefers the privacy of public cabarets to rubbing elbows with the hoi-colo at exclusive dances given by their anxious and solicitous parents. Miss MacKay's first article, to be paid for at space rates, declares that "our elders attribute to us sins too gaudy to be true. The trouble is our elders are a trifle glibbie; they have swallowed too much of Mr. Scott Fitzgerald and Miss Gertrude Atherton."

Mentioning cabarets, the Lido-Venice, recently padlocked for dry law violations, is described by Miss MacKay as "palely innocuous." "We like to go to cabarets," continues the article. "It is not, as our elders would have it, because we enjoy rubbing elbows with all sorts of people. We do not particularly like dancing shoulder to shoulder with gaudy and fat drummers. We do not like unattractive people."

"If our elders want to know why we like to go to cabarets, let them go to the best of these, our present-day exclusive parties, and look at the tag lines. There they will be extremely unalluring specimens. A third or two of the stags are attractive agreeable young men. The rest are just stags and pretty terrible."

"We go to a party and take pot luck and the luck is fair to one against us. At last, tired of fruitless struggles to remember half familiar faces, tired of vainly trying to avoid unweelcome dances, we go to a cabaret."

"We go to the cabarets because of the very fastidiousness that our elders find so admirable a quality. We have privacy in a cabaret. What does it matter if the flapper and her fat-tish boy friend are wiggling beside us as we dance? We go because we prefer rubbing elbows in a cabaret to dancing at an exclusive party with all sorts and kinds of people."



"Tell him? Not for a minute—just put him out, that's all"

bumped into Matilda.

"Where is Miss Brooke?" he demanded.

"She went for a walk a few minutes ago."

"Did—did she wear a new hat?"

"She did," answered Matilda stonily.

H. Hedge gulped, wiped his forehead, and walked slowly back to the library. The receiver of the telephone hook attracted his attention.

He picked it up gingerly.

"Send up your bill," he said.

"What? Why certainly! I know a hat when I see one!"

Then he sat down heavily and be-

dope."

"What are they saying?"

"Everything! One line of talk is that father has picked up some favorite nephew and made him a protegee and taken out guardianship papers."

"He doesn't need a guardian," remarked Alice with a shake of her head. "He need a keeper and a padded cell."

"There's another yarn that this guy is a British nobleman," continued Billy, ignoring his younger sister; "that he is a house guest for an indefinite time, and that maybe he'll be a son-in-law."

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