

Too Much Efficiency

By E. J. Rath

BEGIN HERE TODAY

JOHN W. BROOKE, widower and father of three grown children, Constance, Billy and Alice, has been away for several weeks since arranging with a firm of efficiency experts to manage his home. He returns unexpectedly to find his Fifth Avenue mansion ablaze with lights, strange servants in attendance and strange guests celebrating the engagement of Constance to H. Hedge, the man who is supposed to be running the household on an economic basis.

He tells the butler at the door that he is owner of the place and is held captive pending the arrival of the police.

Hedge who has never met Brooke, tells Constance about the incident at the door, and from a description by Hedge she assures him that the supposed lunatic is undoubtedly her father.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

This was his day of reckoning; this hour for him to render an account of his stewardship. He made a swift survey of the revelers about him and of the glories that had been achieved by dollars. Then, setting his shoulders stiffly he followed Constance into the hall. He found her hugging the lunatic.

"What in Sam Hill has struck this place?" demanded John W. Brooke after submitting to the enthusiastic salutations of his daughter. "Who are these servants here? What do they mean by throwing me out of my house?"

"They didn't know you, father," said Constance soothingly.

"But what are they doing here? And who are all these people?"

"We're giving a party, father dear."

"A party! What for?"

"Why—just for fun," faltered Constance.

Mr. Brooke surveyed the unemployed richness of his environment and fastened a steely blue glance upon his daughter.

"So, it's a party, is it? That's a fine way to welcome your father home—lugging several hundred people into my house with a strange gang of servants."

"But father, dear, we didn't expect you. Not for ever so long. You see, it's nowhere near the 19th of February. It's only a little after New Year's."

Constance was infinitely more nervous than she was not even with John W. Brooke in a tantrum.

"So!" he barked. "Just because I come home unexpectedly I catch you at it, do I? And you call this a party I call it a riot."

Constance cast a nervous glance at H. Hedge, who was a pace in the background.

"Do you know what they did to me?" demanded Mr. Brooke. "They led me into the library, before I knew what was happening, and some fussy little pony in a pink dress tried to get me to dance. Me! And when I told them I was boss here they sent for a couple of strong-arms and tried to pitch me out of my own house."

John W. Brooke, still garbed in hat and overcoat, paused, panting.

"Where's Alice?" he demanded. "In bed?"

Constance shook her head faintly. Alice was dancing somewhere, reveling a new-found liberty.

"Where's Bill?"

"Oh, he's around somewhere. Shall I call him?"

Mr. Brooke made a gesture of disgust.

"None of my children at the door to meet me," he declaimed angrily. "Nobody but a pack of strangers—and a party!"

"You're looking awfully well, father," said Constance soothingly. "You look younger."

"Cut it out!" he commanded peremptorily. "I've heard that stuff before. I don't look awfully well, and I'm not younger. Do you hear? I'm older, by several weeks. And I fell sick."

"Father!"

"Sick of all this tomfoolery. I mean. I came back, looking for a quiet life, and I might as well have butted into a Concy Island mardigras."

H. Hedge stepped forward.

"Please consider that the party is in honor of your homecoming," he said. "A sort of house-warming."

John W. Brooke turned a baleful glare in the direction of the speaker. He placed his hands on his hips, spread his legs wide apart, and studied H. Hedge from head to feet.

"Who in blazes are you?" he demanded.

"This is Mr. Hedge, father," said Constance hurriedly.

"Hedge? Why, that's the upstart who ordered these flunkies to throw me out!"

"Just a part of the surprise, Mr. Brooke," observed H. Hedge with a winning smile. "Of course, we didn't really mean it, you know."

The smile was lost upon the owner of the mansion.

"Oh, you didn't mean it!" he echoed savagely. "Well, you wait till I get hot of the police and you'll find out whether I mean something by jingo, there's a couple of cops now!"

Two men in uniform had entered

the hall.

"Where's the art?" asked the foremost. "Somebody 'phoned they had an old party with an empty attic."

H. Hedge stepped quickly forward and whispered to the officer.

"Escaped, eh?" said the policeman. "Which way did he go?"

"Ran north a block, and then across the corner," answered Hedge briskly. "You may get him if you hurry."

The two officers were retreating, when Mr. Brooke broke loose from his daughter's grasp and ran after them.

"Hed!" he cried. "If you're looking for a nut, here's one."

He pointed to H. Hedge.

"Lock him up!" he cried. "He tried to throw me out of my own house. Maybe he's a burglar, too."

Constance interceded hurriedly.

"Father! Now don't make a scene about things. You don't understand at all. Send those officers away and let me explain."

"I don't intend to have that man in my house one minute longer," stormed Mr. Brooke. "And I'm going to clear out the whole crowd, too."

"Ssh—father! Officers, please go away. I am Miss Brooke, and everything is all right. My father doesn't understand the situation yet."

"You bet I don't!"

"Come, father, we're going into the library to have a talk."

"The library's full of maniacs dancing," bellowed John W. Brooke.

"Then we'll go up stairs in your room. Come now, like a dear old daddy."

Mr. Brooke suffered himself to be led upstairs, and the policeman, at a peremptory sign from H. Hedge departed.

The sitting-room of John W. Brooke presented a normal appearance to his eyes, but when he stepped into the bedroom he stopped short.

"Who owns those pants?" he demanded, pointing to a garment hanging

over the back of a chair. "Not mine. Who owns these neckties? Those are not my hair-brushes. What the devil, Connie—"

Constance who had been following, hesitated.

"And say, where's the man in charge of this house?" demanded her father, suddenly remembering.

"I'm the man," said the voice of H. Hedge, who had also followed upstairs. Brooke wheeled upon him with a bellow.

"You!"

"That is, I was until this morning. I sent in my resignation."

H. Hedge was calm and still smiling.

"You want me to understand that you're the man sent here by the Economy and Efficiency people?"

"There are my credentials. You signed them," said Hedge, placidly, exhibiting the document.

Mr. Brooke swallowed once or twice as he glared at the paper.

"And is this the way you've been running my house?"

"No; not the way I did run it. But as I said, I quit running it this morning; that is, running it on that plan."

"Are you running this shindie downstairs?" inquired Mr. Brooke ominously.

"I was—for a time. But it's running itself very nicely now."

"He ran the house beautifully, father," said Constance nervously. "Truly."

H. Hedge grinned at her.

"Well, by the eternal!" exploded John W. Brooke. "I hired a man to run this house on the basis of economy, and I got a guarantee with it. And I come home to find myself insulted and thrown out, with a lot of strange servants on the place and my money being spent as if I was the government treasury. Where do I

come in? What does it all mean? That's what I want to know. Who authorized this blarney?"

"Oh, I authorized it," said H. Hedge promptly. "And organized it. It's a sort of double-barreled affair, you see. On one hand, it's a surprise party for you."

"And that's no lie!" boomed Mr. Brooke.

"On the other hand it, celebrates the announcement of your daughter's engagement."

John W. Brooke turned purple and whirled upon his daughter.

"Engagement? You engaged?"

Constance nodded and blushed.

"Who in blazes?"

"Me," answered H. Hedge.

"Well, I'll be—"

Mr. Brooke finished the sentence in a fit of choking that alarmed his daughter.

"Engaged," he repeated dully, after he had recovered speech. "My daughter engaged—and to this thing here. Say, let's all go down to Bellevue and have our hands examined. Engaged, hey? Well, you're hereby disengaged; and as for your young man, if you're not out of this house in thirty seconds you'll be disembodied."

NEXT CHAPTER: Hedge talks himself into a job.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL SCHOOL TAX ELECTION.

Whereas, a petition has been presented to the Board of Commissioners of Cleveland county, signed by more than 25 qualified voters within the proposed special school tax district, the notes and bounds of which are hereinafter set forth, requesting this board to enter an election in the territory embraced within the boundaries of said proposed school tax district, said boundaries comprising the present boundaries of Cabanis Local Tax district No. 42, the exact notes and bounds of which special school tax district are as follows:

Beginning with and including the farm of Joe S. Blanton and running thence with and including the following farms, viz: Nash Magnus, F. W. Cabanis, E. E. Cabanis, Pleasant Street, W. P. Hawkins, J. M. Brooks, the Covington farm owned by E. B. Blanton, Lee Cabanis, Mrs. White's farm owned by Tom Greene, W. T. Weatherly Frank Connor Mrs. C. G. Poston, J. C. Proutt, J. W. Irvin, Ellen Wilson, F. P. Goid, L. A. Blanton, the Perry Wellman place, T. P. Cabanis, and thence to the beginning; to ascertain the will of a majority of the qualified electors residing in said district upon the question of creating a special school tax district comprising the said boundaries and of levying a tax of not exceeding (50) cents on the one hundred dollars valuation of property, both real and personal, in said district, and whereas said petition has been duly approved and endorsed by the county board of education.

Now, therefore, the board of commissioners of Cleveland county, at their regular session held on January 24th, 1926 do grant said petition and order that an election be held at the usual polling place at the Cabanis school house, in the aforesaid district, on Monday, February 22nd, 1926, for the purpose of ascertaining the will of the electors within the proposed special school tax district upon the question of levying a special tax, not exceeding (50) cents on the One Hundred dollars valuation of all property, both real and personal, in said district, in addition to the county tax for the six months school term.

It is further ordered that G. T. Cabanis be and he is hereby appointed registrar of said election and that he be furnished with a copy of this order, and that Coleman Blanton, and Pick Lee be and they are hereby appointed judges of said election.

It is further ordered that at said election those who are in favor of said boundary becoming a Special School Tax district and of levying a special school tax, in which a special tax not exceeding (50) cents on the One Hundred Dollars worth of property may be levied for school purposes.

It is further ordered that a new registration of voters residing within said special tax district shall be had and that the registration books shall be kept open between the hours of 9 a. m. and sunset on each day, Sundays excepted, for twenty days preceding the day for the closing of the registration books, for the registration of any electors residing within the aforesaid boundary entitled to register, and that said books shall be opened for registration on January 21st, 1926, and closed Saturday, February 13th, 1926, before said election and that on each Saturday during the period of registration the registrar shall attend with his registration books at the polling place in said district for the registration of voters and that on the day of election the polls shall be open from sunrise to sunset and the election shall be held as near as may be under the law governing general elections.

It is further ordered that after the closing of the polls, the registrar and poll holders shall duly certify, over their hands the number of registered voters at said election and the number of votes for and against the special tax and transmit same to the Board of Commissioners, and same shall be filed and the board of commissioners shall canvass and judicially determine the result of said election and record such determination on their records.

It is further ordered that due publication of this order and of said election and new registration be made by publishing this order in the Cleveland Star once a week for three weeks,

the first publication hereof to be made in the issue of January 6th, 1926.

R. L. WEATHERS, Clerk to Board.

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ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Having qualified as the administrator of the estate of Mrs. Annie Parham, deceased, also of Cleveland county, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of the deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned, at Waco, N. C., or his attorney at Cherryville, N. C., on or before the 6th day of January, 1927, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment. This January 4, 1926.

A. J. PUTNAM, Administrator. David P. Dellinger, Attorney.

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SCHEDULE LINCOLN-TON-SHELBY BUS

Leaves Shelby 7:20 a. m., 10 a. m., 1 p. m., 4:30 p. m.—Leaves Lincolnton 8:30 a. m., 11 a. m., 3:00 p. m., 6:30 p. m. ZEB COSTNER, Manager.

SCHEDULE SHELBY-MORGANTON BUS

Leave Shelby 10:05 A. M. and 4:05 P. M. Leave Morganton 8:25 A. M. and 1:00 P. M.

SCHEDULE SHELBY-RUTHERFORDTON BUS

Leaves Shelby 8 a. m., 1 p. m., Leaves Rutherfordton 9:55 a. m., 2:15 p. m. Z. V. COSTNER, Manager.

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ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

State of North Carolina—Cleveland county.

The undersigned having been appointed and duly qualified as administrator of the estate of J. J. Blanton, deceased, all persons having claims against said estate are notified to exhibit the same before her on or before January 5th, 1927 or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the said estate will please make immediate payment. This the 4th day of January, 1926.

MARY BLANTON, Administrator.

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Having qualified as administrator of the estate of C. P. Peeler (at the Cleveland Motor Company) Shelby, N. C., on or before the 12th day of February, 1926, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment. This the 12th day of February, 1926.

R. M. GANTT, Adm. of C. Co. Georgia Gantt, Deceased.

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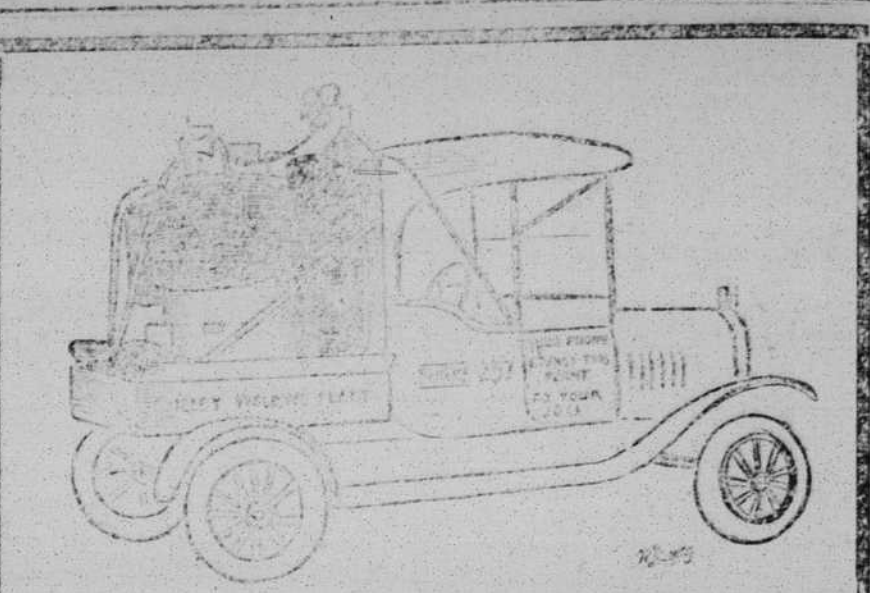
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