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Her Christian Name

By BEVERLY SMITH Copyright, 1904, by W. W. Hines

Silence was, to quote from Jimmie Spencer, Henry Walcot's "long suit." There was a great bond of friendship between the two. Perhaps they followed in this the law that opposites attract each other, for Jimmie Spencer was the reverse of Henry Walcot in almost every particular. While Henry was tall and dark, Jimmie was rather the medium height and so inclined to rotundity of figure that his face, beaming always with good humor, inevitably suggested to an observer the qualifying adjective "chubby."

"Why do I like Henry so well?" said Jimmie one day in reply to a question. "Because he is such a jolly good fellow and knows how to keep his mouth shut. Say, do you know," growing suddenly enthusiastic, "Henry can speak English, German and Spanish, but, by Jove, he knows how to keep quiet in about fourteen other languages, not counting dialects and slang!"

"Why do I like Jimmie?" said Henry musingly. "Because he is a jolly good fellow and knows how to talk, I suppose."

So they sat now in front of a cheerful open fire in Walcot's rooms, smoking and talking. Jimmie was chatting away, as usual, but there was something a bit distraught in his manner which did not escape the keen eye of his friend. By and by even Jimmie's fund of small talk seemed exhausted, and each sat, smoking and musing.

It was Henry who broke the silence. "Sit up, Jimmie, and talk out like a man," said he, with a laugh. "You know you never tramped all the way up here in the snow and then climbed three flights of stairs just to have a chat. Out with it, man! What have you got on your mind?" Jimmie looked up queerly, and



"THEN YOU ARE ENGAGED TO KATE PRESTON?" catching the friendly gleam in the other's eye, he laughed himself and replied: "No dodging you, you sly dog! I believe you are a mind reader anyhow."

"Perhaps I do a bit in that line now and then," answered Henry, with an assumption of great mystery, "and to prove it to you I will tell you that you came up here for no other purpose than to tell me that you have gone and got yourself engaged."

"Now, how in thunder did you know that?" asked Jimmie, sitting up in astonishment. "You look guilty," answered Henry, with one of his peculiar, almost inaudible chuckles.

"But I never told you that I was even paying attention to the girl whom I am to have the honor of marrying," declared Jimmie protestingly. "You could not have had any idea of it."

"Now, Jimmie, my boy, do give me credit for using my powers of observation occasionally," protested Henry. "So," said Jimmie, "then maybe you have used them far enough to tell me the name of the girl?"

"I undoubtedly can," averred Henry solemnly. "Stunted as my powers of observation may be, they have been sufficiently powerful to enable me to declare that the young lady in question is none other than Miss Preston."

This prescience was too much for Jimmie, who simply stared open mouthed at his chuckling tormentor. "That's the worst of you close mouthed people," said he presently, with an air of deep disgust. "You sit around and don't say a word, and all the while you are keeping close tab on everything and everybody. Then when a fellow comes around to tell you a piece of important news you take the wind all out of his sails with your air of worldwide knowledge and consciousness of his most intimate thoughts. I must say that I think you might have pretended ignorance. Now, I'll just keep quiet about the matter." And Jimmie resolutely shut his mouth and turned again to his cigar.

"Now, Jimmie," said Walcot, with dignity, "don't be any more of a chump than usual. You know you are so full of the subject that you have just got to talk. So fire away."

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resolve. "But, Henry, all natural prejudice aside, I just can't believe my good luck. To think that she should accept me when she might have had any man—why, she might have married you, old chap, couldn't she?"

"Did she tell you so?" "Nope," said Jimmie cheerfully, "but I can't see how it is that you haven't fallen in love with her."

"Maybe I was in love with another woman," said Walcot slowly. There was something in his tone that made Jimmie look up quickly. Walcot was gazing into the cheerful fire, and there was such a smile upon his face as Jimmie had never seen. That mercurial youngster was on his feet in an instant and rushed over to Walcot.

"By Jove, old chap, so you have been indulging in a love affair and didn't even take me, your best friend, into your confidence! I call that shameful of you, but I am deceived glad to know that you are in love, after all. Take my word for it, old chap, there's nothing like it in all the world."

"Easy, boy, easy," said Walcot, with a quiet smile that may have concealed some embarrassment. "I haven't confessed to any love affair yet. And as for confidences, remember that you told me nothing of yours until you were actually engaged. Even good friends like you and me don't talk over such affairs. However, I may have—I hope to have—some good news to tell you soon."

"How soon?" "Who can say?" "Have you proposed to her?" "No, but I intend to do so."

"Good boy! Go in and win. If you want a certificate of good character call on me. I am always ready to tell a lie in the sacred cause of friendship." And Jimmie's infectious laugh took all sting away from the remark.

Once more fell a period of silence and Jimmie broke it with: "Did you ever notice the color of her eyes, Henry?" "Yes," answered Henry, with an air of amusement. "They are blue, aren't they?"

"No, indeed," said Jimmie somewhat indignantly. "They are a wonderful deep gray, almost black."

"Is that so?" was the somewhat indifferently reply. "Then she has the same color of eyes as her cousin. I know that she has wonderful, deep gray eyes—wonderful eyes." This last was very soft.

"Not at all, stupid!" said Jimmie, vexed at so much stupidity. "Her cousin's eyes are blue. I'll be blessed if you ever observe anything!"

Jimmie himself was not observing anything, but was sitting with his gaze fixed on the heart of the flames and his mind lost in a happy reverie. He did not see his companion look up with a quick terror in his eyes and a face drawn with emotion, nor did he hear a question addressed to him. Indeed, Walcot's voice was very thick, and he hardly knew himself whether he had spoken the question aloud or merely in his anguish voiced it to himself.

"Then you are engaged to Kate Preston?" he finally managed to say, loud enough to make his companion hear. "Certainly," said Jimmie in astonishment. "Who did you think I was engaged to—certainly not to Annie Preston?"

"I didn't know," said Walcot weakly. "So your mind reading wasn't so good after all!" exclaimed Jimmie in triumph. "Well, I must be going. So long!"

And he was gone. For a long time Walcot sat before the fire, though his cigar went out unnoticed and was not relit. Then he slowly walked to his desk and took out a letter addressed in his own firm handwriting. Opening it, he stood in front of the fire and read it through twice. It was a proposal of marriage, simple, straightforward and winning in its declaration of great love.

The letter fluttered first to the fire, and the envelope followed it, Walcot standing quietly to watch them burn. One might have read the address on the envelope even after it was caught by the flames, and that address was: "Miss Kate Preston."

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the co-partnership of Hop Hing & Co., doing business as merchants and contractors for Chinese labor at No. 376 Bond street, Astoria, Oregon, is this day dissolved by the retirement of Yen Jin Song, Wong Hong, Lee York. The business will hereafter be conducted by the remaining members of the company. Chew Gok, manager, left on the Elder for Vancouver, where he will embark for China. He will return next year. His partners, Eng Fook and Jobg Hop, will manage the business during his absence. HOP HING LUNG & CO. AH DOCK, Chairman.

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