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The Spectrum Page

By Richard B. Shelton

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Probably a third of the people of the civilized world know of the existence of the great glass company, one of the wealthiest of corporations, and at least a third more have seen in shop windows in all parts of the globe glassware of every description, clear as crystal or most perfectly colored, and annealed by a wonderful process which renders it so tough that an ordinary blow has no effect upon it.

It is the Allglass Company which has revolutionized the art, and which came into existence through a strange chance.

For years glassware had been John Temple's hobby. His house was filled with the choicest gleanings of many lands. His uncle, whose name he bore, had left him enough of a fortune to devote his time to such things, and he followed his bent with a zeal sufficiently fellow mania to be termed genuine enthusiasm. During his days of collecting, two points were brought forcibly to his attention. He could procure glasses of the most beautiful tints, but at a price which made them beyond the reach of people in ordinary circumstances. Again, when he had procured a treasure, it must be kept in a case or handled with care lest some chance slip might prove its destruction.

To overcome these two things—to make a glass of perfect coloring and at the same time one which would be tough enough to be serviceable—Temple bent all his energies. That it could be done he was positive, but ten good years of his life, spent for the most part in an ill-smelling laboratory, netted but scant results. He had, however, made some advancement, and his determination to accomplish his end was no whit lessened.

One afternoon in March, after weeks of disheartening work, he had discovered a process by which perfect amber tints could be obtained at a nominal sum. It was three o'clock when he finished work and locked the laboratory. It was Temple's custom after hours of concentration to walk down town, pausing now and then to peer into shop windows, that the trifling interest he found there might relieve the strain of the preceding hours.

It was a windy afternoon and heavy clouds hung the sky. He walked briskly, for the air was chilly, and it was not until he was well down town that he paused before the windows of a second-hand bookshop. Within was a miscellaneous collection of books in a more or less battered condition—volumes of encyclopaedias, Dickens, Thackeray and textbooks—and, strewn about, paper-covered novels with suggestive titles and more suggestive sub-titles. In the center of the window was a huge family Bible, opened, the text of Matthew on the right-hand page, and on the left a blank page of the "Family Record."

As he stood there, the sun broke through the clouds. A moment later he was staring through the window with wondering eyes. On the page of the "Family Record," indistinct at the beginning, but growing clearer as he read down the page, were these words, written in a cramped, but painstaking hand:

—this method of annealing gives a toughness which will render any ordinary shock. It is, moreover, if practiced on a large scale, cheaper than any known method, and for—

The remaining words were quite illegible. The rest of the page was seemingly a blank. He read and re-read the words and then rushed into the shop.

"Let me see the Bible in the window," he said to the clerk, with as much nonchalance as he could muster.

When the book was handed to him, Temple turned at once to the last page of the "Family Record." It was perfectly blank. He scanned the preceding pages and searched through those headed "Marriages" and "Births." He found merely a few conventional entries in faded ink. "Overwork," he thought to himself, as he went up the street, yet when he remembered every detail of the writing the explanation was far from satisfactory.

Two days later he stood again before the window. It was, perhaps, an hour later in the day than his previous visit. The sun shone from a cloudless sky. There were the battered books and the novels, and there was the Bible. It was with a queer thrill that he turned his eyes to the record page. He could scarcely believe his sight. In the same cramped hand he read these words:

—practiced on a large scale, cheaper than any known method, and for years I sought to put this knowledge in the proper hands. I distrust D. C., which makes it—

The words began a little lower on the page than before. There was the same indistinctness at the beginning and end. Again Temple sought the shop and asked to see the Bible, and again the page was blank. He went outside and waited until the Bible was replaced in the window. The writing was the same, save that the words "Impossible for me to" appeared at the end. He walked up the street and back again. When he stood once more before the window the sun had set. The page was again blank.

Far into the night Temple sat before his fire trying to solve the mystery. Had he called up, in his concentration, some psychic force? It would have seemed plausible, had he been possessed of any faith in such things. Yet, no better explanation presenting itself to his mind, he went to bed more disturbed than he had ever been in his life.

Many times after that he went to the bookshop. Always, when the sun shone, he read portions of that cramped handwriting. Sometimes it was the same text—sometimes new, and once words appeared on the margin of the first chapters of Matthew. He noticed that the position of the sun seemed to determine the portions he read and following up this clue he made an important discovery. The block next the bookshop was extended some four feet nearer the curb than its humbler neighbor, and this additional four feet had been utilized for an extra side to the show-window. The store next door was occupied by a drug firm and in the corner of the window nearest the book shop was a huge glass globe of red liquid. By careful measurements, Temple found that where the red light came filtering through the globe and fell on the record page of the Bible the handwriting became visible. He could have shouted with joy at his deductions. The rest was plain enough then.

Once more he asked to see the Bible and inquired its price.

"We ask $4.75," said the clerk, tentatively, "its age—"

Temple listened as patiently as possible, handed out a five-dollar note and had to be called back for his change as he hurried from the shop with his possession to hail a cab. On the way up town he stopped at a photographic

Again He Stood Before the Window.

supply store and purchased a ruby lantern. Then he sped anxiously homeward.

He took the Bible and lantern into a dark room and turned the red light upon the "Family Record." Instantly the pages and the margins through several chapters of Matthew teemed with that handwriting he knew so well. And this is, in part, what he read:

September 3, 1853.

My Dear Son: I write this at the house of David Clark, who has advanced the capital for my experiments. I am sick—I fear with mortal illness. I write this that you may share with me the knowledge that my experiments have been a complete success and that he shall be [illegible] you may have the upper hand of this man Clark, whom I do not believe has any intention of dealing fairly with me. He has made several moves which have shown his low motives of greed. I can plainly see it is his intention to find out the secret of the process and then to turn all the profits to his own ends. I shall write down all the data for you today on these pages and destroy all other copies. This to guard against Clapp, who I believe, has no scruples as long as he can accomplish his ends. I write this in a spectrum ink visible only in a red light. If [illegible] your journey abroad before I pass away, I can tell you in person. If not, I will only bring your aged sire to [illegible] my meaning in these pictures in the notes I leave you. "Let your light so in the Bible—Matthew 5:16 especially. See that it is read." I trust when you read them your mind will turn to the time when, a little boy in my laboratory, you were content for hours with the little pieces of cardboard and the bit of red glass which made the letters come and go at your will. God keep you, my boy! May you reap the harvest of your father's life work.

Then followed a complete description of a process for making, coloring and annealing glass, which is jealously guarded by John Temple, treasurer of the Allglass Company. How the son failed to fathom the hidden meaning of his father's note—if he ever received it—is still a mystery, for to this day the man who discovered the process is unknown.

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Sunday School every Sunday 10 a m
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METHODIST Church holds services at 11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. on First and Third Sundays of each month
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Elbert Pope..... Vice Grand
John W. Brazeal .....Secretary
James Coday,..... ...Treasurer

REBECCAH Lodge meets 1st. and 3rd Wednesday nights of each month
Mrs J. D. Reynolds Noble Grand.
Miss Maude Reynolds, Secretary.

M. W. A. Mansfield Camp No. 3148 meets 1st. and 3rd. Saturday nights of each month.
Joe W. Brazeal .....Consul
Tom State..... .....Advisor
Henry Dennis, Clerk. N. S. Miller, Banker

ROYAL NEIGHBORS meets every 2nd and 4th Tuesday evenings of each month
Maggie Reynolds, Oracle.
Laura Miller, Vice Oracle.
Grace Bonnell, Recorder.
Belle Brazeal, Receiver.

A. F. and A. M. Mansfield Lodge No. 543 meets every Wednesday night on or before the full moon of each month.
J. A. Hylton, W. M.
N. N. Nichols, Secretary.

R. A. M. Mansfield Chapter meets 2nd Saturday evening of each month.
J. A. Hylton, High Priest.
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