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Arkona at 9 a.m., Watford at 10.10 a.m., Returning leaves Watford at 3.45 p.m. Passengers and freight conveyed on easement to me.—THOS WILSON

**Beth's Hero**  
By COLIN S. COLLINS  
Copyright, 1906, by Homer Sprague

Beth looked curiously at the hall. Behind the scenes had always been a domain of fairyland to her. The thought that she was to witness a rehearsal, and a dress rehearsal at that, overpowered her.

It was not at all as she had pictured it. The long, low ceiling hall was very unlike the stage, and the mass of properties and scenery thrown about in apparent chaos bewildered her. A huge boulder lay against an Italian fountain, and flower beds, stacked one above the other, looked very unlike the flower beds she knew.

Over in one corner a group of men were pulling and hauling at a girl dressed as an Indian. In the center of the hall half a dozen men were struggling through some unfamiliar music, and not far away a heavily built man was deliberately slitting a new leather coat into shreds and rubbing it on the dirty floor to take off its aspect of newness.

Other girls were going through dancing steps at the behest of a stocky little man, who beat time with a thick pole he carried when he was not using the stick to threaten some unruly girl. And over all presided a thin, nervous looking man, who seemed to have the faculty of being in three places at once.

Tom Seaton detached himself from the group about a cage in one corner and came toward her. "It doesn't seem much when you see it close to, does it?" he laughed.

"It is a little disappointing," she admitted, "but I find it very interesting."

"They are going to dress soon," he said carelessly, "and then run through the pantomime. It's a pity that they cannot get the hall upstairs, where they can get the scenery up. There's a wedding or something going on up there."

"It was awfully good of you to bring me," she said impulsively.

"It's good for you to come," he laughed. "A glimpse of a dress rehearsal is



TOM HEADED THE BRUTE INTO HIS CAGE JUST AS HERMES RUSHED IN.

the best cure for the stage fever that I know of. It was lucky that Hermes was in a good humor last night when I asked him if I might bring you over."

"Is that Hermes?" she asked, pointing to a tall, handsome fellow who posed in one corner.

"That's the man who made the costumes," he laughed. "Hermes is that little fellow who is all over the place. He and St. Elmo, the ballet master—that little fellow with the stick—are doing about half the work."

Beth glanced with new interest at the flying figure. She had seen him on the stage dressed in mystic robes and with all of the advantages of scenic environment. He looked vastly different as he flew about the place in an old pair of trousers and a tattered flannel shirt.

Even when the players who had slipped out of the room began to come back in gaudy costumes, the illusion was not restored, for the nervous little ballet master kept jumping into the space outlined by chairs to represent the stage and, roughly throwing some one aside, took her place to show what he wanted done.

Not until they came to the trick to which the pantomime worked up did Beth regain her interest. The beautiful white girl was supposed to be thrown into a lion's den, but an Indian maiden, by virtue of a talisman, took the place of the infuriated beast.

The others crowded about the cage to see the trick worked, and Tom dragged Beth over, with a whispered, "You mustn't tell the trick to any one."

She nodded assent with a delightful feeling of mystery and watched with interest the elaborate working of a trick that seemed simple enough from the audience.

Half a dozen times the trick was tried before Hermes straightened up with an "All right! Dress for the next act," and the crowd of fantastically dressed players rushed off to the ante-room.

Tom led Beth back to the tiny platform that formed her seat of vantage. "Disillusioned?" he said, with a smile. "Entirely so," she shuddered. "Of course I knew it was all play, but I never dreamed it was such hard work."

"You should have been to one of the early rehearsals," he laughed. "There was one afternoon when St. Elmo got so excited at the way one of the stupid girls behaved that I had to jump in and catch his arm to keep him from striking her. He's a genius, but his temper is something awful. It's no worse, though, than with some of the big companies."

"I don't think I shall want any of it," she shuddered. "It has cured me completely of my desire to go on the stage."

"Do you think you could settle down to being just Mrs. Tom Seaton?" he pleaded. "I want you so, dear."

"Don't, please," she begged. "You know how I feel."

He turned away. He knew all too well how she felt. That same romanticism that urged her to the stage acted against him. He was just Tom Seaton, big, good natured and a faithful friend, but entirely too unromantic to appeal to her heart. He had destroyed the glamour of the stage for her by bringing her to rehearsal. Only a miracle could work the other change.

He had slipped his coat off when he had come in, following the example of the rest, and now he turned to a cigar for solace. He was carefully selecting one from his case when a cry from Beth caused him to turn.

There just below the platform stood King, the lion used in the trick. In the excitement some one had neglected to fasten the door of the cage, and while they had been talking he had slipped out and started on a tour of investigation.

All of the players had gone to change their costumes, and the property man had taken advantage of Hermes' absence to slip out to the corner for a glass of beer. They were alone. Just below him on the edge of the platform were a couple of revolvers loaded with blank charges. With a bound he caught one of these up and discharged it into King's face. With an angry snarl the brute turned and charged toward the other end of the room.

Tom caught up the other revolver and slipped it into his pocket. Then he

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seized St. Elmo's wand and followed the retreating form. Back and forth they went, up and down the hall, until at last with a quick turn Tom headed the brute into his cage just as Hermes rushed in.

It was he who latched the door of the cage, for now that the danger was over Beth was clinging to Tom, murmuring praises that sounded sweet to his ears.

Hermes came forward, but Tom, disengaging himself from Beth's clasp, went toward him and whispered in his ear. Hermes smiled knowingly and darted out. Presently he was back again.

"There is a carriage at the door," he said. "I am sorry that Miss Albright should have had so unpleasant an experience while my guest."

"All's well that ends well," laughed Tom. "Good night, Hermes, and many thanks for your courtesy. I'll see you tomorrow."

In the carriage Beth clung to Tom as though the danger were not yet over. "And to think," she sobbed penitently, "that I did not realize what a brave man you were! I do love you, Tom, but somehow—"

"I know," he said gently as she faltered. "You wanted a hero, and I was so dreadfully commonplace."

"You're not!" she cried indignantly. "Only I—well, I never realized before how big and brave you were."

"All's well that ends well," he chuckled. "Tomorrow morning you will be wearing the biggest solitaire that an engaged girl ever had."

"I don't deserve it," she said meekly. "You're awfully good, Tom."

Some hours later Seaton sat in his little den absorbing a brandy and soda in absolute content. He looked up at Beth's picture on the mantel.

"I guess you've had a lot of ideals smashed tonight, little girl," he mused, "but it was good for you, and if any one ever tells you that that poor old brute was a darned sight more scared than you ever could be I'll knock his blamed head off."

**Penalty of Politeness.**  
The "tradesman" has his troubles as well as his next door neighbor, the "business man." One day last week a wholesale fish dealer in Fulton market was approached by a fashionably dressed woman, who, after asking the price, decided to buy a pound of smelts. Although it was not customary to cater to retail trade, to be congenial he decided to oblige her.

"I would like to have them cleaned, if you please," she said.

"The fishman cleaned them."

"Oh, yes," the woman considerably remarked after looking them over, "will you kindly take all the bones out?"

"Certainly," said the man. But he said things to himself as he went behind the icebox and extracted the bones.

After fifteen minutes' labor he wrapped the smelts in a neat parcel, which he handed the woman.

"I am so much obliged to you," she said. "You see, my cat absolutely refuses to eat fish if they are bony."

As the fashionably gowned woman walked out the fishman said some more things.—New York Press.

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