

An Impromptu Affair.

Sidney
Alexander.

It was a paragraph in the Morning News that did it. When I reached the office that morning excitement was rampant. The boys in an animate cluster at one end of the room were discussing it. I was at once hailed with, "Miss Harry, did you know," "I believe she did," "Tell us all about it." At my amazed glance, Simms put a paper into my hand. "Read."

"This afternoon a marriage will be celebrated between Miss Jennie Garland of the News office, and Mr. A. P. Hill, editor of the Toronto Adviser, and brother of Mr. A. P. Hill of this city. The young couple will tour through the Western States and Japan, before taking up residence in Toronto."

To say I knew naught of it was needless, and the boys continued the speculation. Wonder if Rube knew? To think Jen worked yesterday. Oh that's nothing for her she's as like to work again to-day. Well talk about lobsters, they're nothing to Miss Garland.

"Well there's one thing about it." It was Bissitt who spoke, "Jack Hill is just the man one would credit with an affair like that. For taking people by surprise, and gaining his ends in the oddest possible manner, there couldn't be another like him made. Ever hear how he got on the Adviser first?"

"Search me!"

"Well it was an original idea. There was a large bank robbery to cover. Hill walked into the office, put his name down on the assignment book for it, covered it, and handed in the best report of the matter that was published. Then before the game came out he went to the old man, told him the whole story, got round him in some way, and was engaged on the spot. It was a tight game, but if any man could, Jack Hill was the one to play it. They tell lots of stories about his coolness and determination. Unmitigated cheek I call it."

"Well it seems to have worked O. K. with him."

"That is so. Not another man in Toronto got there in the time he did."

"Got on the good side of Masson didn't he? Guess that helped. Wonder how he managed it?"

"Oh, dead easy for him." Charley Hartin broke in, Charley came but lately from up there. "He went to interview Masson, who was busy and growled out, 'I've no time to spare to-day, young man,' going on with his writing all time. Hill fired up. 'Just like the rest, piling money hand over fist, and don't care whether a poor devil starves, so he doesn't bother you,' turning on his heel and marching out, not waiting to see the effect of his words. Not long after, over the phone came a message. The old man's not a bad sort of genius you know, and he doesn't often get such plain talk. Well Masson wanted Hill. He went, got the interview, a good one at that, and has been upsides with the old fellow ever since."

"Why, here's Rube. Hy. Rube, come tell us all about it."

"Rube" was the pet cognomen the office had bestowed upon Mr. Arthur Plantagenet Hill.

"Oh, it's O.K. though I don't know any more about it than you fellows. Jack just teases me, looks wise and says little boys shouldn't poke their noses too far, even if there are reporters, and have such fine pokable noses as mine. Who got it anyway?"

"Simms took it." "It came by phone last night. I thought it a fake till I saw your brother. Miss Garland couldn't be found. It is so all right."

"Say when did he meet her, Rube?"

"Boys, I don't know any more than you do. But it's just like Jack. Oysters ain't in it with him when he likes. She won't make a bad sort of sister-in-law, though, eh Hank? She promised to be a sister to you once, didn't she?"

Poor Hank. It was hard lines, but he laughed. "She's just the kind of a sister to have, let me tell you. If some of you had sisters like her, you wouldn't be where you are to-day."

"How about yourself, Hank?" "Oh, he's an example, a shining light?"

"Never mind boys, she had a tough hill to tackle, and started rather late. Why here's a go," and in blank amazement we stood as Jennie Garland, calm, unconcerned as ever, passed into the private office.

She was proof reader for the News, I was typewriter. The only girls, our footing with the boys was entirely different; I, friend of all, comrade, confident, she—charming admired acquaintance, dignified, reserved, Soon I went in to the office too.

Under the influence of the unusual circumstances, I began, "Well Jennie Garland, if that isn't a nice way to treat people. Why even Rube did not know." Jennie looked up. "Know what?"

"Oh that's all right—but it doesn't go now, Jen. Its all out," and I handed her the paper. Four times, she might have read it before she spoke.

"How did it get in?"

I laughed. This was interesting. "Well, it came over the phone first, I guess, but Mr. Hill said it was O. K. Yes" as she look slightly surprised—"You cannot expect a man to keep a secret, though I own he kept this one pretty well."

No answer coming, I began my work. An hour later she came to me. "Could you get a message to Mr. Hill for me Leda? I wish to see him." My slightly amused glance brought no sign of embarrassment to her face. Of course I could, and did, for soon his tall figure filled the open doorway.

"Please remain, Miss Harrison," as I arose, then in iciest accents—Will you, sir, kindly tell me the meaning of this?"

"Of what?" The unwarrantable effrontery of the question seemed to stagger even Jennie Garland.

Her eyes flashed. "This item," impatiently flickering the paper. "You authorized it they say."

"Well?" still with a lazy drawl.

The red blood coursed wildly through her veins, her voice was not steady. "Have you nothing to say?"

A moment they stood, eye in eye—Greek met Greek—her face, set, tense, his, half mocking, half laughing, wholly bored.

Then it changed. In his eye came the flash of determination, of serious intention, his face hardened, his lips tightened. At last he spoke.

"Yes, I have to say," now his voice was earnest. "But won't you please sit down, my story is a long one?" "No, a slight shrug." Well, some years ago—not a few—on a