

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 broad 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 encyclopedias, 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:

September 3, 1856.

My Dear Son: I write this at the house of David Clapp, 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 by sharing it (the knowledge is yours and mine alone), you may have the upper hand of this man Clapp, whom I have good cause to believe has no intention of keeping faith with me. He has made several moves which have shown his low motives of greed. I can plainly see it is his one aim to find out the secret of the process and then to turn all the profits to his own uses. I shall write down all the data for you to-day on these pages and destroy all other papers. This to guard against Clapp, who, I believe, has no scruples which will not be accomplished. His end is to make this in a spectrum ink which will be a red light. If you return from your journey abroad before I pass away, I can tell you in person. If not, I can only trust your quick wit to fathom my meaning in these phrases in the note I leave you. "Let your light be in the Bible—Matthew 5:13 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 piece 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 rest the harvest of your father's life work.

—this method of annealing gives a toughness which will resist 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 "Deaths." He found merely a few conventional entries in faded ink. "Over-work," 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:

To justify payment so steep,

Excepting an intimate knowledge

Of all that pertains to the deep?

Such knowledge Eve wouldn't have

wanted.

Her glories and pleasures to dim;

Assuming the guise for the place,

Now, if he can accomplish his end,

Eve wouldn't have fallen from grace

And brought such assortment of troubles

Upon her unfortunate race.

For what could a sea serpent offer

The devil is cunning and wily.

Assuming the guise for the place,

Now, if he can accomplish his end,

Eve wouldn't have fallen from grace

And brought such assortment of troubles

Upon her unfortunate race.

To make such a sacrifice cheap?

What lure and temptation attractive?

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