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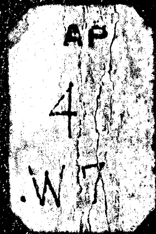


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FOR MEN AND WOMEN

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# THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE.

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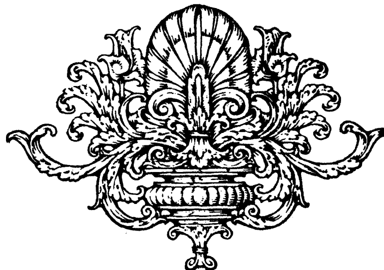

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# THE CHRISTMAS WINDSOR

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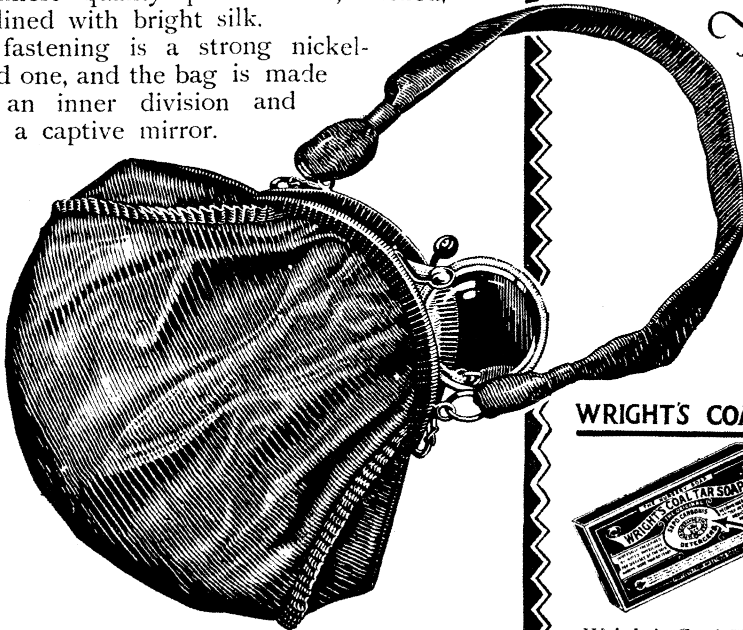
# Do you use WRIGHT'S Coal Tar Soap

—then here is a wonderful gift.

## This beautiful handbag Free!

This beautiful HANDBAG is free, and can be quickly obtained by following the instructions below.
We are confident that all ladies will be delighted with this bag, as it is made of the finest quality poult-de-soie, ruched, and lined with bright silk.
The fastening is a strong nickel-plated one, and the bag is made with an inner division and holds a captive mirror.

*This fine black silk bag adds distinction to the smartest toilette*



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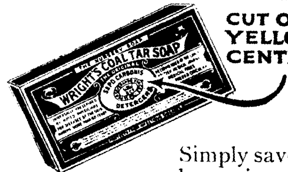


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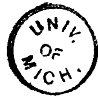
Simply save the boxes in which Wright's Coal Tar Soap is sold (1/6 per box of 3 tablets) and also the printed wrappers round the soap itself. When you have collected 20 boxes, cut out the yellow oval picture of the soap on each and send with 60 wrappers to "HANDBAGS," Dept. 10, Wright, Layman & Umney, Ltd., Southwark, London, S.E. 1.

*A Lady from Gloucestershire writes:—*
"Please accept my sincerest thanks for the charming bag which arrived this morning and which surpassed all expectations.
"We have used Wright's Coal Tar Soap for years and shall certainly continue to do so after this."

*These Bags are British Made*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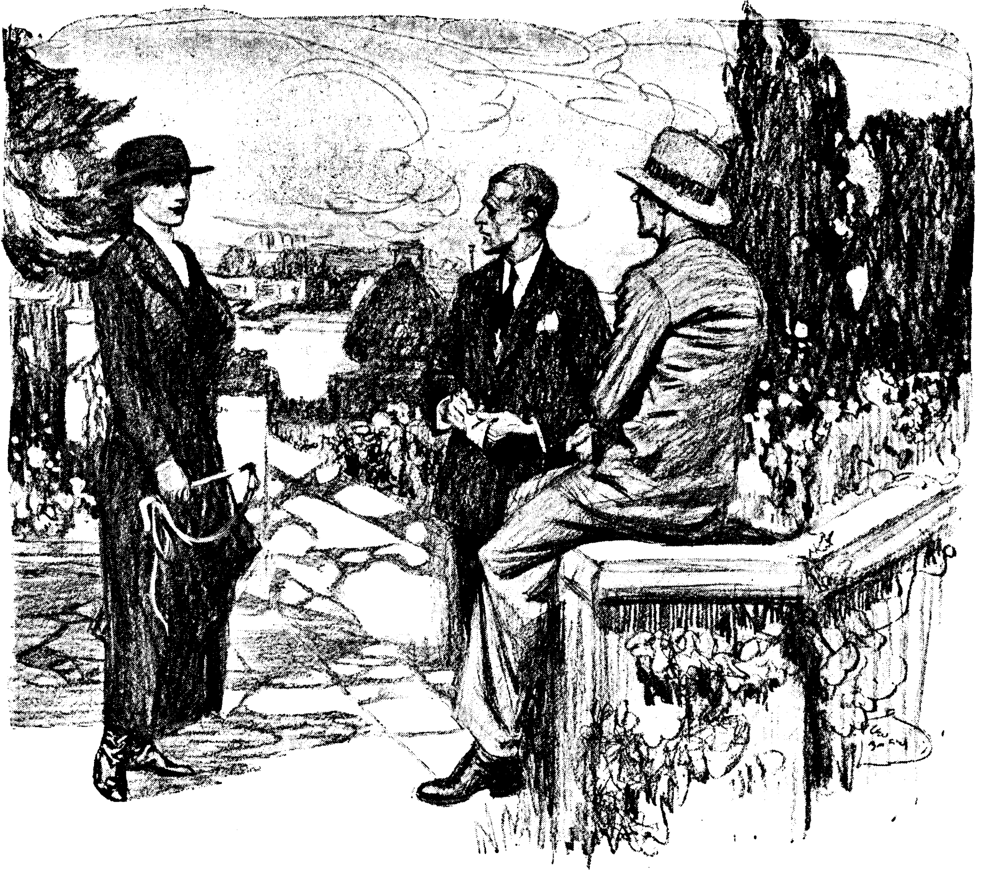

"'I never believed the ridiculous stories myself. Give a house a bad name——'"

# THE STORY OF AN ENCHANTED GARDEN

## By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

### ILLUSTRATED BY LEO BATES

MY brother Henry and I were on our way to Sherton Abbas in Dorset, when we took a wrong turning after leaving Belminster, and crawled on through deep, winding lanes in the hope of "wriggling," as Henry said, to our destination.

Spring was dancing into West Dorset, and to our eyes more joyously at home than in East Devon. Outside of the beauty spots and the eerie splendours of Dartmoor, we had not felt too happy in Devon. We saw jerry-built houses eyeing impudently dear old cottages even as smart youth looks at shabby age, seeming to say: "This is our day, not yours. Away with you!" That morning we had stopped the car to admire a fifteenth-century manor house, still habitable, but abandoned. A stout yeoman farmer, whose family (so he told us) had

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lived in it for many generations, had built on the other side of the road a slate-tiled, plate-glass-windowed, pretentious monstrosity of which he seemed inordinately proud. We had a word with him. He said indifferently: "The old house is falling down." My brother, blinking at the new house, replied pleasantly: "I'm not surprised."

This incident saddened us. Half of the money spent upon the new house would have restored the old. However, humming along through a charming pastoral country, with the quick breathing of spring distinctly audible, we became happy again. Presently we stopped to ask the way in a quaint village. A stream of clearest water bordered this village street, and each thatched cottage had its own tiny bridge. Here we discovered that we had indeed wandered far from our right road, and more lanes, apparently, had to be traversed. A dear old gammer, actually wearing pattens, was sure we could not miss our way.

"You do 'zactly as I tells 'ee. Fust turnin' to right after you passes church; second turnin' to left till you comes to Sandyball pond; and there, to be sure, bang atop o' Springhanger Hill, you sees—Salutation."

*Salutation!*

The name wooed my fancy. "Salutation" might well be an old inn with old wine in its cellars, smiling a benediction upon tired wayfarers. She rambled on:

"'Tis the notablest house in these yere parts."

"It must be. Who lives there?"

"There be what they calls a caretaker livin' in gate-house. You leaves that on right, see, an' keeps on an' on till you strikes the Lunnon road."

We passed Sandyball pond and climbed Springhanger Hill, stopping the car opposite the gate-house. That alone would have arrested the attention of any lover of good architecture, being solidly built of Ham stone, with a high wall of the same stone running to right and left of it. The gateway was beautifully arched, but the gate itself, or, rather, door, of solid oak and iron-studded, was not more than six feet high. We could see over it, through the arch, a delightful forecourt and part of the main house. It is as difficult to describe a house as a person, and charm in either is indescribable. Salutation struck both my brother and me as did the chapel at Amboise in Touraine, a tiny gem of Gothic architecture, suggesting, not a chapel, but a cathedral. Salutation seemed to us a stately house in miniature. This was due to its perfect proportions. Henry said: "We lost our way to find this."

Upon the gate was pasted a notice: "For Sale."

We were sensible that this was more than coincidence. For a month I had been touring through the West of England, looking, and looking in vain, for just such a house. The few that appealed to me were prohibitively high in price; the many that did not appeal kindled a futile rage. One real estate agent remarked acidly: "You will never find what you want at your price."

We stepped nimbly out of our car and read the notice. An order to "view" the property could be obtained from a firm of solicitors in Sherton Abbas. No price was mentioned.

"Let's ring the bell," suggested my brother.

We had to pull it. A deep note boomed upon the air, and then a civil middle-aged woman opened a side-door and asked what she could do for us. We told her that we were on our way to Sherton Abbas, that we had no order to look over the property, but were anxious to save a return journey, if she could strain a point and oblige us.

"I shall be only too pleased," she replied.

She left us inside the forecourt whilst she fetched the keys of the house. The north front was facing us with its three gables, its mullioned windows, its lofty, delicately moulded chimney-stacks. A flight of broad steps led up to a porch, quaintly pilastered. We judged the building to be late sixteenth century and in perfect preservation. And it justified its name, seeming to salute us with grave dignity and pleasure.

The inside of the house was as satisfying as the outside. We were captivated by what our guide called the oak parlour, which originally must have been the entrance hall, running across the house from north to south, with a fine fireplace at one end and a glorious oriel window at the other. The porch, probably an addition, was not in the centre of the house, but at the side, and you passed from a small hall, with a staircase leading to a gallery, under the stairway into the big living-room. We noticed two interesting screens with fluted pilasters and a ceiling which my brother pronounced to be Jacobean, not Elizabethan. The escutcheon on the stone chimney-piece, so the caretaker told us,

blazoned the Coryton arms, but the name told me nothing. In a few minutes we learned that the property had passed out of the Coryton family in the early 'seventies. We wandered from room to room, more and more delighted with this wonderful "find." It is true there was no electric light, but the bathrooms and kitchen were up to date.

By this time the caretaker had told us her name, Sarah Covel. She was the wife of the gardener, and she had served the owners of Salutation—two elderly spinsters—as cook. She looked what we discovered her to be later on, an old-fashioned family retainer. Finally she left us to explore the garden by ourselves.

The garden was delightful, but on the formal side. Tall elms flanked a lawn sloping gently to a bowling-green which would serve as a tennis court. The pleasaunce was surrounded with clipped yew hedges, undulating, with here and there remarkable specimens of topiary work. Over and beyond the south hedge we could see one of the famous vales of Dorset. The upper portion of this garden was protected from the north and east winds by a spinney, and, looking along a grass path and through a wrought-iron gate, we caught glimpses of narcissi and daffodils. We passed through the gate and into the spinney, where we made a notable discovery.

## II.

High red sandstone rocks stood between this spinney and the road. Ferns, moss, lichen, and many familiar saxifrages grew on these rocks, and out of one bubbled a glorious spring, feeding a long deep pool. At the lower end of this we found a rivulet feeding another pool encircled by irises and sweet-smelling rushes. Following the rivulet, we came upon a succession of pools, much overgrown by the commoner weeds, and a cascade. Below the cascade, again, was a pond with an islet in it. You could cross to the islet over an ingeniously constructed stone bridge. This water garden was designedly wild. At the right season fox-glove, bluebells, oxlips would bloom amongst the bracken and grass.

Henry exclaimed : "What a paradise for children ! "

I agreed. And it must have been created for children, a long labour of love. In my quest for a home I had to consider my own child and grandchild. What I had to leave would pass at my death to my daughter, who had married a soldier, a lover of country life and country sports. I stress this point because it has bearing upon my story.

At the head of the first pool, in a niche, we found a leaden *Amorino*, almost hidden by ferns and creepers. My brother was much interested, and waxed sarcastic at the expense of some former owner who had placed the tiny god in such an inappropriate spot. He carried a broken bow and an empty quiver.

"He belongs to the formal garden," said Henry. "Where are the other *Amorini ?* This little chap is most exquisitely modelled. I feel quite sorry for him."

We passed on. Presently we returned to the gate-house, where Mrs. Covel had prepared tea for us, another surprise. We sat down in a snug parlour and bombarded the poor woman with questions. We had made certain that the price of Salutation would be beyond my means. Did Mrs. Covel know what her ladies were asking for it ? She did.

Four thousand pounds !

I nearly fell off my chair. The price seemed incredibly low. Eager questions followed. Mrs. Covel answered them discreetly. It occurred to me afterwards that she didn't volunteer information. But why should she ? Certainly we could detect no wish on her part to deceive us or to hide disabilities. Apparently Salutation had passed from owner to owner during the past fifty years. Why ? Well, it was remote from the travelled roads ; no chars-à-bancs roared past the gate-house ; tradesmen did not call for orders ; the nearest railway station was seven miles away. Her ladies had moved to Weymouth because they had been unable to afford a car. The place was dull in winter-time.

To all this we agreed, and to me, a writer seeking sanctuary, the disadvantages were alluring. In a word, I had fallen head over heels in love with both house and garden.

We journeyed on to Sherton Abbas, where we passed the night. Next morning, betimes, we called upon the solicitors and saw the head of the firm, a cheery old fellow who looked as if he appreciated a glass of sound port. He seemed to be as honest as Mrs. Covel.

"Cheap, gentlemen, yes—the biggest bargain in the county—but the servant question—— I have a client who will hand over to you a large house for nothing, if you will keep it in repair. I can only assure you that Salutation is in excellent condition ;

the title is perfect; there is an abundance of water; rates and taxes are low; drains were thoroughly overhauled two years ago."

"Would your clients let the place to me for a year with option of purchase?"

"No, no." He made a deprecating gesture. "My clients are elderly and infirm. Their medical attendant lives at Weymouth. They want to buy a house there. I'm sure you understand."

I was not quite sure that I did, but his manner was reassuring.

I bought the place within a fortnight.

## III.

THE cautious will say that I should have paused at a big bargain. Possibly. I left the matter in the hands of my solicitors, who were astonished at the low price, as I was. They conjectured that dry-rot might be found in ancient beams. On their advice a capable London man was despatched to Salutation. He overhauled everything and reported favourably.

I took possession.

For many years I had been a collector of old furniture. My brother, who is a painter by profession, loves a garden. He is an old bachelor. He promised to see me comfortably "settled." My daughter could not leave her husband and child, but she hoped to come to us as soon as we were ready to receive her. She appeared to be even more excited than I was.

The servant problem, which had worried me, settled itself. I had my own faithful manservant, who would have followed me to Timbuctoo, and I engaged the Covels as cook and gardener.

"I heard a laugh, and presently I saw a little girl in pink gingham hiding from me, finger upon lip."

Mrs. Covel had a niece in our village who would help in the kitchen and sleep "over home": she found in another village an elderly housemaid, who occupied a room in the gate-house.

"The boy was hiding in a clump of bamboo. . . . He ran forward, saying: 'Don't you want to play with us?'"

A delightful month followed, so pleasant, indeed, that a man of my age and experience should have sacrificed to the gods. However, "I tremble in sunshine" is a tag that I hold in contempt. We get little enough sunshine in England; let us enjoy it while it lasts. My brother and I moved in as soon as two bedrooms and the oak parlour were furnished. The parson called, and we made the acquaintance of our nearest neighbour, whom I shall call the *malicious* lady. She happened to be a sporting widow, and (to use her own word) "knowledgable" about matters that wise men leave in the hands of women. She managed her own household admirably. She regarded us with the kindliest eyes.

Nevertheless, as will be seen, she deserved the adjective which I have chosen carefully.

She rode over on one of her hunters, a big, cock-tailed beast that looked a "customer." And so did she. I heard afterwards that she could "show the way" to some of the young fellows of the Blackmore Vale Hunt, and it is my opinion that a woman who rides hard to hounds will hunt anything; the ardour of the chase is in her blood.

As soon as I saw her I marked a malicious twinkle in her eye, as she sat bolt upright in her saddle, looking down on two elderly adventurers.

"So you two have been bold enough to buy this lovely old house?"

My brother laughed, indicating me.

"*He* is the hero."

She was good enough to say that she had read and liked my books, whereupon, being still a fool, I asked which of the many novels she liked best. She couldn't remember the name of one. Covel took her horse to the stables, and she strolled into the garden with us.

"Why," said I, "do you think me—bold?"

She never craned at what some women might have considered a stiff fence. "Oh, well, I applaud boldness. I wanted to buy Salutation myself, but I funked it."

"Funked—what?"

"Surely you know?"

Her tone was incredulous. I inferred that she knew everything that might be reckoned of local importance. As I remained silent, she added, with slight confusion: "On my honour, I never believed the ridiculous stories myself. Give a dog or a house a bad name——"

I pretended to misunderstand her. "But the name is so exactly right."

"Salutation—yes. I see you don't know. As you must know sooner or later, I had better tell you that in the village it is believed that your house is haunted. Rubbish, of course, but it means bother and trouble."

We asked for details, the more the merrier. At the moment I was amused. It might have occurred to us that such a house could not be of its period lacking a ghost, but, somehow, ghosts had not entered our commonplace minds.

She enlightened us. Half a dozen previous owners, most reluctantly, had resold the house, generally at a slight loss. The spinsters—who were friends of hers—had never seen or heard anything to disturb their peace, except their own servant maids. And these, one little fool after another, had given notice. Our huntress, again with a spice of malice, said truthfully enough:

"We are so dependent upon the natives, who have not been spoiled yet. My house is not haunted, but I can't keep a well-trained London servant. We are remote from the 'picture palaces' and the shops. I don't think my younger maids have ever strayed as far as Sherton Abbas. No complaints! I have had a little trouble in training them. And the supply exceeds the demand. They won't come to you. If they do, they won't stay. Don't you hate me?"

We laughed at her jolly voice and face.

"If we hate you," said my brother, "it is because you are exciting our curiosity and not satisfying it."

"I can't satisfy my own curiosity. I have never been able to get my teeth"—she displayed an honest row—"into reliable information. The house was Coryton property, and regarded as a dower house. Coryton widows lived here in the odour of sanctity quite peacefully. But since——"

"Yes?"

"It is a fact that subsequent owners have never been able to stick it for more than three years. Shall I give you three years?"

"Without the option of a fine?"

"The fine has been a slight loss over what seemed to be a good investment."

Then she apologised handsomely and needlessly. She was in the right of it. We were bound to hear of the "trouble"; we thanked her for being so candid. When she rode off she left us relieved in mind.

Henry said to me: "We guessed that there must be a fly in our amber, and the fly, apparently, is not visible to her sharp eyes."

"A good sort. All the same, she will be disappointed if—if we do stick it out; and, of course, we shall."

## IV.

I REMEMBER we had a word or two with Mrs. Covel, who, as cook and housekeeper, was giving more than satisfaction. Unfortunately old-fashioned servants have a trick of saying what they think will please the "quality." Our good Sarah was no exception to this pre-war rule. But we squeezed something, not much, out of her. She blamed, not the gaffers and gammers of the village, but the young people. Indeed, we

pinned her down to a sort of indictment against the children. She affirmed that neither money nor sweeties would coax a village child into our garden. Having no children of her own, she spoke with slight acrimony of "mischeevious" boys and girls. They, years and years ago, had seen "something" and heard "noises."

What had they seen? What had they heard?

To be honest, I have forgotten what Sarah told us. I decided at the time that she was repeating, under pressure, a farrago of inconsequent imaginings. But she made it plain why Susie (her little niece) slept "over home," and why the elderly housemaid had insisted (unknown to us at the time) on sleeping in the gate-house.

My brother said: "We must hunt for this 'trouble' in the garden."

I had not begun my regular work; Henry was not painting. We had installed electric light and central heating, and were busy from morning till night either in the house or the garden. We had set to work in the spinney, weeding and cutting down the undergrowth, restoring it, so far as we could, to what it must have been in former days. Springhanger Hill well deserved its name. We discovered several springs of beautifully soft water. Our rivulet was named the Niger; the cascade we spoke of as Victoria Falls. Inevitably the big pond was marked on the map of fancy as Lake Nyanza.

Our first task, I remember, was to free the *Amorino* from the amorous embrace of ivy and ampelopsis. And here we had to reconsider hasty judgments. Obviously the spot where we found the little god had been chosen deliberately. A niche had been made for him in the sandstone. He stood upon a square block of Ham stone. Scraping away moss and lichen, we found a date—nothing else—1870. This date kindled my imagination. Love had designed this water garden. Might we infer that love, as symbolised by the *Amorino* with his broken bow, had been driven out of it, that it had remained neglected for fifty years?

Who could answer this question? Nobody in the village. So it drifted out of our minds.

And now I must set down the first intimation—if you can call it that—of the presence in the spinney of something uncanny.

I had a wire-haired terrier, Snudge, an old and tried friend. In his youth Snudge, in moments of exuberance, would go "mad dog," careering round me in circles, too excited even to yap. As he declined into the vale of years, he abandoned these exercises, following me about with grave dignity, mending his paces to suit mine. Snudge approved of Salutation. We made together a visit of inspection, and he would stop now and again, with uplifted paw and head, to survey critically his new home. It is said—with what truth I know not—that dogs are sensitive to evil influences. It may be so. I affirm that Snudge was happy at Salutation, and that he investigated—on his own initiative—every inch of the property. When Henry and I started work in the spinney, Snudge accompanied us, watching our labours with unflagging interest. There were no rats or rabbits to distract his attention, and no flirtatious lady friend to tempt him to "show off." To our amazement, and apparently without rhyme or reason, he would go "mad dog," circling, not round us, but round the pools and trees, behaving, as we told him, exactly like a tipsy puppy. My brother insisted that the spring which fed the ponds and rivulet was the Fountain of Youth. Snudge slaked his thirst at it. I must add that after his attacks of seeming inebriety he would return shamefacedly to me and cock his head, as if to say: "There's no fool like an old fool, is there?" We told him that he was growing senile.

Once he went "mad dog" in the house. We had begun to furnish the upper part of it. At the south-west end two small rooms had evidently been used as nurseries, because iron grilles, ornamental as well as useful, could be swung against the windows and the main door that led to the gallery and staircase. Sarah Covel told us that the spinsters had never furnished these rooms, and they were the only rooms in the house that needed painting and papering. We decided that these should be done up for my grandchild and her nurse. Henry charged himself with designing a suitable scheme of decoration. Leading out of the end room was a powder-closet, and the old wig and powder chest, a fixture, proclaimed it to be so. We were taking measurements when Snudge went "mad dog" in the powder-closet. I supposed that a rat might be lurking under the oak chest. None of us was too old for a rat hunt, but no rat was there. We ordered Snudge out of the powder-closet, and he obeyed reluctantly. And then, entirely ignoring us, he sat down opposite the closet, staring at it and wagging

his stump of a tail. I was so impressed that I said to my brother: "I believe he sees something."

To this my brother replied brutally: "What rot!"

V.

Our parson was a youngish man, a good square peg in a square hole, and we liked both him and his wife. They had two children of six and eight respectively, Wiggles and Peter Paul. The parson had wished to baptise his boy Peter; his wife insisted on Paul. They had compromised on the double name, and used it. We became firm friends with these children, bespeaking ahead their agreeable society for my grandchild. They were jolly little dears, neither blessed nor cursed with too lively imaginations. I'm afraid that some of our quips were wasted on them and their parents, but Wiggles accepted my brother as a "joky man," and grinned at his jokes even when she didn't understand them. We regarded the rosy, sturdy pair as the right playfellows for Bambine, my grandchild. Bambine refused to answer to her own name of Dorcas (and I don't blame her); she had assured us solemnly that she was too old to be called "Baby," so we fell back on Bambine. The child had been born under unhappy conditions. My son-in-law had been terribly wounded in 1916 and was in France. Joan, my daughter, nearly died, and the child looked for a couple of years like a snowflake out of a blinding storm. She lay, I recall, in her mother's arms with never a whimper or wail, and that far-away expression in her great dark eyes which seemed to say: "Yes, I have seen you; I belong to you, but I'm going to melt away soon." However, she lived and thrived. Still, we detected in her something eerie and elfin, and it was a grief to my daughter that Bambine had no brother or sister to play with. Wiggles and Peter Paul would teach her how to climb trees and lead her—we hoped—into wholesome mischief.

Neither the parson nor his wife ever mentioned to us that Salutation was supposed to be haunted. From my knowledge of them, I imagine that, being new-comers and matter-of-fact persons, the story, if it reached their ears, was dismissed as preposterous. Their children, at any rate, were easily tempted into our garden, and became frequent visitors. The water garden delighted them, and the names we gave to the rivulet and pools were chosen by Henry to stimulate their interest in geography.

VI.

Before we knew where we were, flaming June stole startlingly upon us. Meanwhile other neighbours had called, eyeing us, so we decided, with more interest than we as strangers could reasonably hope to inspire in them. They were too polite to ask questions. And our malicious lady was away. Superabundant vitality, after a season's hunting, had whirled her to the Riviera and thence to Paris. From these neighbours we gleaned a few ears of wheat. There had been a hunting couple—we wondered why the stables were in such sound condition—a Lady Sophia McFadden, a brace of Rumfords, and a K.C. whose name has escaped me. From the testimony of the ladies, all these persons had "adored" Salutation.

To our visitors we admitted that we "adored" our house and garden. I particularly dislike the verb, but as a solid possession Salutation had a stranglehold on my affections. Many of my friends set an inordinate value upon what belongs to them, and my brother and I have always envied them this sense of overvaluation, because we stray in the opposite direction. The fact that a coveted object becomes mine arouses in me hypercriticism.

Still, I repeat that I was superlatively happy as the owner of this ancient house and garden. And from all I could learn, former owners had experienced the same joy and pride. Also I was beginning to hope that my brother would be beguiled into living permanently with me.

Just before our malicious lady returned to Dorset I had a strange experience. I suffer occasionally from pain which attacks relentlessly the fifth cranial nerve. The pain spreads to ear, eye, teeth and throat, and while it lasts is agonising. Fortunately I can deal with it. My doctor prescribes a sedative. As I have never taken drugs, I am, I suppose, responsive to it. I swallow a tabloid, lie down, and am asleep in a few minutes. As a rule, when I wake up the pain has gone.

About the middle of June, upon a heavenly day, severe pain came on after luncheon. I swallowed my tabloid, seized a rug and a pillow, and laid me down in the spinney close to the first pool. With the tinkle of the rivulet in my aching ears, I glided into the suburbs of slumber. I was not yet fast asleep. Above

the lullaby of the tiny brook I could hear the fluting of the warblers, and smell the pungent fragrance of camomile, which grew thickly on the grassy bank where I was lying.

And then I had a sort of dream within a dream. I seemed to wake out of untroubled sleep to find myself free from pain and free, gloriously free, from fleshly trappings. In this my dream I could see myself, a discarnate spirit, gazing down upon the tired body which had served me faithfully enough for sixty years. And I was acutely conscious that it was mine, and little more than a bundle of shabby clothes to which I had no wish to return. At this moment I heard a laugh, so fresh, so spontaneous, so mirthful, that I turned my head away from my own body. And as I did so, the thought came to me: "Hullo! I am out of my body, but I'm still in the spinney, and how lovely it looks!" This impression of sharpened vision was intensely vivid. But not, as an experience, entirely new. As a boy, after a dangerous illness, during which I drifted about as near as mortal can drift to the farther shore, I came back to an entrancingly new world. I recognised it as the old world incomparably renewed for me. For many years afterwards I remained inarticulate, unable to put into words my impressions, but I spoke of this singular experience to my mother shortly before she died. I was then a man of fifty, but time had not blurred my vision of what I had seen forty years before. My mother listened to me attentively as I attempted to describe how a boy who had been raised almost from the dead saw with clearest definition scenes familiar to him from childhood, but transformed into unearthly beauty. I told her that my senses had been quickened, so much so that I became intoxicated with life. The fragrance of the flowers, the crystalline sparkle of the dew upon their petals, the fluting of the birds, the conviction that I could see beneath the surface of things what I had never seen before, that my sense of touch was so delicate that I could, if I chose, play with a soap bubble without breaking it—these imaginings I told to my mother, ending upon a personal note: "I saw you, mother, coming to me across the lawn, and you floated to me. You were my mother—I knew that—but you were transfigured. It seemed to me that you were the same age as I, and yet neither child nor woman. But it was you, really you."

My mother smiled: "It may be like that with all of us," she whispered, "when the mists roll away."

I have said that I heard a laugh, and presently I saw a little girl in pink gingham hiding from me, finger upon lip. She glanced at me roguishly. So vivid was the dream that I made certain some child from the hamlet had strayed into our garden. Both my brother and myself had made friends with the children belonging to our neighbours, and although our privacy was dear to us, I could not but regard this little trespasser as a welcome visitor, because, obviously, she made so sure of her welcome. Yet I failed to recognise her. What struck me first, and with astonishment, was the fact that she wore old-fashioned clothes, a Victorian frock bunched out at the waist, with short sleeves and low neck. At that moment I saw the boy, who looked much the same age, six or seven. The boy was hiding in a clump of bamboo. And he, too, wore just such a tunic as I had worn fifty years ago, and reminded me most uncommonly of my own robustious self. He ran forward, saying: "Don't you want to play with us?"

Oddly enough, I did want to play with them. He seemed to put into words an unformulated wish, and more than a wish. In a jiffy we three were darting all over the garden. In our vagabondage we came upon Henry hard at work under his sketching umbrella. As soon as we saw him, the little maid took my hand.

"Shush-h-h!" she whispered. "We mustn't awaken him."

Awaken him? Yes, in my dream I felt as she did. Henry was asleep; we were awake, uproariously so. I found myself laughing as loudly as they did. But—and this was the strangest part of my dream—I seemed to remain myself. I had the activity and resiliency of a child, the joy of a child in mere movement, and with it my own mentality. And they knew this, because, when we had romped till we were tired, the little girl said shyly: "Aren't you a story-teller?" When I owned up, each seized a hand and led me, pulled me, to a leafy sanctuary. "Tell us a story," they said. I sat down, with the children, cross-legged, in front of me.

"Once upon a time. . . ."

But this indeed was a story without an end, for I awoke suddenly to find myself clothed in the tired flesh and shabby clothes I had regarded with such disdain.

## VII.

I SHRANK from telling Henry this curious dream. Two words drop often from his lips —" punk " and " tripe." He applies these nouns, which are not in my vocabulary, to pictures, plays and current fiction " pot-boiled " to tickle the palates of the many. I made certain that he would say to me: " You were doped, old chap." Indeed, before the week was out I had wandered regretfully to that conclusion. The impression made upon my mind began to fade away.

Some ten days later Henry came to me when I was at work. We have always respected each other's hours of work, and, looking back, I recall an uneasy conviction that Henry was neglecting his work in my interests. My garden seemed to allure him irresistibly. He painted in it when he ought to have been painting out of it, and he worked in it.

" Look at these," he said.

He laid upon my desk a tarnished silver penny, a musical box, a tiny sailing ship hermetically sealed in a small bottle, a Nailsea paper-weight, and an oblong cake of something or other enclosed in tin foil.

" Treasure trove," he added.

The " treasure " had been found by him on the islet in the middle of Lake Nyanza, buried some two feet underground in a tin can. The silver penny, so we decided, had never been in circulation. It was dated 1869. The Nailsea paper-weight, if you turned it upside down, produced the illusion of a miniature snowstorm. When we wound up the musical box, it tinkled out protestingly the hackneyed air from " Il Trovatore," " *Ah, che la morte*." The last—and least interesting—object proved on close inspection to be a bit of Callard and Bowser's toffee.

My brother filled a pipe. " Children buried these," he said. " But—what children? The question bites."

" I can tell you. A boy and a girl played in our garden just fifty years ago. They buried this treasure. The girl had corkscrew curls, a pink gingham frock with short sleeves and low neck, blue eyes, fat, rosy, dimpled cheeks, and a delightful laugh. The boy wore a tunic with buttons down the middle, and he limped slightly."

" Really? Now, how on earth do you know all that? "

I told him my dream, noting that he allowed his pipe to go out. When I finished he made no comment, and began to pace up and down the oak parlour. We had made it our living-room because it happened to be big enough to hold all my books and my modest collection of early English porcelain. The oriel window, too, was exactly the right place for my big desk.

Henry came back to me as I was winding the musical box, which may have cost a shilling in 1869. I perceived at once that he was incredulous. And how could I blame him? But he wanted to spare my feelings. We have much in common. He seeks from Nature, painting out of doors, what is beautiful to him, reproducing faithfully delicate colours and entrancing curves; and I, according to my lights, have tried to set down the more gracious curves of life, shrinking from what fails to appeal to me. But the essential difference between us is this: he paints what he sees, whereas I, as an imaginative writer, am more captivated by fancy than fact. The two are not irreconcilable; the ideal animates the real.

Henry began tentatively: " We decided, didn't we, that the water garden had been laid out for children? Children interest us. I want to find out more about the children who played here fifty years ago. But—the other thing—these dear little spooks of yours——"

He picked up the Nailsea paper-weight and turned it upside down. The miniature snowstorm obscured the tiny landscape.

" A savage," he continued, " would be confounded by a trick."

" You think my imagination is playing tricks with me? Perhaps. Let's leave it at that for the present."

We did.

However, what happened next was not so summarily pigeon-holed. Dismissing my dream, our thoughts turned again to the former owners of Salutation, and, in particular, to the two spinsters at Weymouth, living not a dozen miles away.

Henry agreed that it would be interesting to call on them.

We did so, a delightful excursion to the sickle-shaped bay, with the prospect of a dip into blue water and an invitation to drink tea with the two ladies afterwards.

We found them slightly agitated, and I wondered whether conscience was pricking them. They had just moved into a new house overlooking the sea. The elder of the pair admitted that leaving an ancient house had been a trial and tribulation. She said firmly: " We loved the place; we were happy there." I was tempted to mention our malicious lady, but refrained, saying

instead: "You had trouble with your young maids." The spinsters nodded, glancing at each other.

I plunged.

"The garden is reputed to be haunted. Did you see or hear anything?"

"Nothing that frightened us."

"Or our guests," added the younger sister.

"We paid no attention to village gossip, apart from the fact that it made the servant question difficult."

After a pause I essayed another by-path to fuller confidence.

"We found the formal garden and fore-court in good order, but the water garden had been neglected——"

A shot, this, into the "brown," which ruffled a few feathers.

"We had only one gardener," said the younger sis er.

The elder sister flushed, conscious that our eyes demanded more than this.

Henry murmured: "And the *Amorino* with the broken bow—he was not placed in his niche by you?"

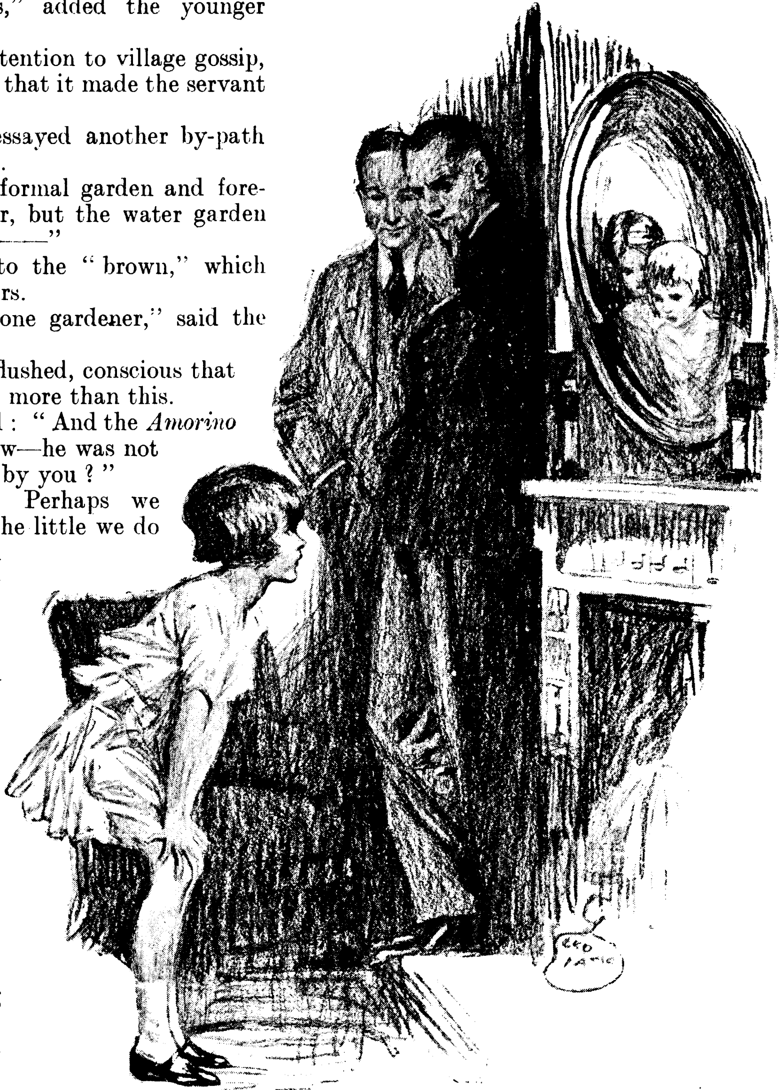
"Oh, dear, no. Perhaps we ought to tell you the little we do know, so little and—and so bewildering."

"We should respect," I hastened to assure her, "any confidence that you placed in us. We, too, are bewildered."

In a few words I told them about Snudge and my dream, being careful to avoid comment or explanation. They listened quietly, showing sense and sensibility. When the elder began to speak, I supposed for an instant that she wished to change the subject. Her first words were disconcertingly irrelevant: "My sister took up photography many years ago. May I show you some of her work?"

She rose from her chair and fetched a large album which she laid upon my knees. I could see at a glance that the "work" was first-rate, and said so as I turned page after page. Here were studies, admirably selected, of "still life" as it is found in the gardens of England. I recognised a clump of fern mirrored in the *Amorino's* pool.

"I often worked in the water garden,"



"'Yes, it is me, but such a funny me.'"

said the younger sister. "I never saw any children, but I heard little gusts of laughter, so faint, so unreal, that I discredited my own ears. Always it came unexpectedly. I never heard it when I wished to hear it. Twice, at least, I fancied that light footsteps were audible. My

sister, when I told her, said that I imagined things."

I looked at Henry, but his attention was fixed upon the speaker. She went on:

"I was glad to imagine them. Still, it distressed my sister. I have never been very robust. And then an extraordinary thing happened. I prepare my own plates. I have experimented much with them. Nobody touches my camera except myself. Nobody, so far as I know, ever went into my dark room. One afternoon I developed a photograph which I will show you."

She left the room and returned within a minute or two, carrying an unmounted photograph and a magnifying glass. She placed both in my hands, and I noticed that her fingers trembled.

"Do you see anything?"

"Yes," said I. I passed photograph and lens to Henry. "Do you see anything?" I asked.

He took his time, as is his habit, slightly frowning.

"I can make out what might be a small boy peering out of some reeds. The features are hardly distinguishable. It is possible, I suppose, that a child might have been there?"

"No, no—quite impossible. You must take my word for that."

"I do," said Henry.

"My sister raised your question. I—I think that I satisfied her. I had been in the glade below the pool for an hour at least. I had wandered about it and stood near those reeds, which are sweet-scented, as perhaps you know. I had picked one and crushed it up in my hand not two minutes before I took the photograph. No child could have slipped into the reeds or out of them without being seen by me. That is really all we have to tell you, but I must admit that this strange experience preyed upon my mind. I—I wanted to see that child again."

The elder sister broke in: "I insisted upon our leaving Salutation. We said nothing to our neighbours. You may accuse us of being cowards. We had other reasons."

Soon afterwards we took our leave. Both my brother and I agreed that the ladies were fashioned out of sound Victorian stuff, no shoddy in their make-up. We asked a few questions about other owners. Had they gleaned anything from them? No. Salutation had been bought, as we bought it, in the good faith that it was what it appeared to be—a bargain.

As soon as we were alone, Henry said to me: "I believe that your dream was a sort of revelation. I wonder——"

He paused, looking hard at me.

"Yes?"

"I suggest an experiment. You and I have put from us any suspicion that evil lurks in the garden. Most haunted houses are shunned because there is something presumably malefic about them. A new-born child is hurled into the fire. The child haunts the room where it was murdered. It becomes what Bretons call a *revenant*. Personally I have thought that if there is any truth in these stories, it is hard luck on the hapless victim. Why should he or she be earth-bound? According to theosophists, elementals hover about this plane for sheer love of it. I can't understand an innocent child hovering about a fireplace where it was burned alive."

"I think as you do. But this—experiment?"

"Take another tabloid, lie down in the spinney, go to sleep, and see what happens."

It is annoying to record that nothing happened. I can only suppose that what my brother designated vaguely as "revelation" may come to us under conditions of which we know little or nothing. Sceptics scoff because the more remarkable materialisations recorded by spiritualists take place in the dark. I am not a spiritualist, nor is Henry, but as an honest man, carrying an open mind, I think that the scoffers are illogical. They might as unreasonably demand that photographic plates should be developed in sunlight.

However, for the moment we let the matter sink into abeyance.

Next day Joan and Bambine arrived in high health and spirits. Purposely, I had said little about the house or garden, and nothing, need I add, about the misadventures of former owners. Joan's husband was coming to us later on.

We took our guests to the freshly-decorated nurseries, where I had given my brother a free hand. He is so devoted to children that I regard it as little short of tragedy that he has none of his own. Secretly I am of opinion that he ranks higher than her father in the affections of Bambine.

He had painted in the garden, upon coarse canvas, a series of scenes from the old nursery books, using as a background the water garden, but, in his own whimsical fashion, bringing familiar characters into

the twentieth century. Puss-in-Boots, for example, was driving a high-powered car, certainly at excess speed, along the path which led to Victoria Falls. Unless Providence intervened, a watery grave awaited Puss in Lake Nyanza. Mother Goose was in an aeroplane just above the reckless cat's head. The Marquess of Carabas, smoking a gasper with aristocratic nonchalance, surveyed through a monocle the impending *cat*astrophe attired in a one-piece bathing suit. Bluebeard's wives displayed shingled pates. Little Red Riding Hood, in a hunting kit worthy of Melton, was astride the Wolf, leaping an obstacle which suggested to me Becher's Brook. These scenes formed a deep frieze round the day nursery. Below, the walls had been distempered a red amber. Both nurseries were small, which accounted possibly for the fact that they had not been occupied for many years, and my brother had designed for them miniature furniture painted dark blue. He expected the glad acclaim and got it. Above the mantelpiece of the day nursery he had hung a beautiful oval frame of carved and gilded wood which held a sheet of dull steel. Presently this challenged attention.

"Nuncle, what is that?"

I accuse my brother of talking "at" children, but never "down" to them. His tricks are of his own devising. He treats youth with courtesy, talks to it as he talks to me, and seems to take for granted that every word he says is understood. When he talks "at" them, he addresses his remarks to me, as if they were not present. I shall try to indicate his methods, with the premise that they are not mine and cannot be annexed with any success by me.

Bambine stared at the sheet of steel, which served as a dim and shadowy mirror. Henry spoke to me, not to her.

"Children," said he, in a grave voice, "ask such silly questions. Are they born with brains? Or do you think that they pick 'em up as they go along?"

Bambine grinned.

"Now, that looking-glass," continued my brother, "answers the fat-headed question which has just been asked. If Bambine looks into it—and it is carefully placed at an angle so that she can do so—she will see herself as she really is."

Bambine surveyed herself.

"I suppose it is me." She stuck out her little tongue. "Yes, it is me, but such a funny me."

"The poor child," continued Henry, in the same reflective tone, "has no idea how funny she is. Probably she will be astonished to hear that this magic mirror came from far Cathay. It is not flattering. It is the only looking-glass in all the world which reveals the truth."

During this talk Joan and the elderly nurse were in the night nursery. This was fortunate, because the mirror, cunningly placed by my brother to stimulate the imaginations of children, was destined to confound our own.

Bambine went to my brother and gripped his hand. "I saw myself, but who is the other little girl?"

She showed no surprise or alarm at seeing another child. Curiosity, nothing else, prompted her question.

She continued: "A pretty little girl, so funnily dressed, all in pink. And she smiled at me and beckoned. Who is she?"

Henry, in emergencies, rises to his full stature. I was dumb with amazement, but back of my mind I was thinking of Joan and the nurse, and thanking God that they were out of the room. I heard my brother say calmly:

"You saw little Miss Nobody from Nowhere. She is rather a nuisance, Bambine. I often see her myself. Sometimes she sits next to me at tea. It is nearly time for tea. And, by the way, you will never guess what we are going to have for tea. You shall be allowed three guesses, and the right guess will earn this sixpence."

Three guesses were made. Henry slipped the sixpence back into his pocket as he turned to me. "Children," said he, "are, as I feared, singularly brainless. It doesn't seem to have occurred to Bambine that at tea we shall have, as we always do—bread-and-butter."

I thought he had saved the situation, but Bambine said in a loud voice: "May I ask Miss Nobody to sit next me at tea?"

"If you like. Perhaps she has had her tea. By the way, I heard to-day that a circus is coming to Sherton Abbas."

"Nuncle!"

"I may have been misinformed. If it comes, we must on no account miss it."

Bambine said dreamily: "I fink the smell of a circus the most d'licious smell in the world."

She had forgotten, temporarily, the little girl in pink.

*A further instalment of this story will appear in the next number.*

*Photo by*] [*Sport & General.*

MISS GLADYS COOPER DEALING WITH THE BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE OF THE DAY AT THE THEATRE.

# THE WORK OF AN ACTRESS IN MANAGEMENT

## By GLADYS COOPER

IT is more than probable I should never have ventured into the world of managership had not the War, with its added responsibilities, been declared; had I not had the future and education of my children as a first thought, and had not my good friend Mr. Frank Curzon brought the suggestion before me. Until then I had always acted under contract, but the practical certainty of a settled income, at a time when the world was thrown into chaos, decided me, although at first I dreaded the undertaking. Now the managerial side of the theatre appeals to me so strongly that at times I almost wish I could concentrate on that work alone. Until the War I had been looked upon as a "picture postcard queen," and therefore my setting out on those new troubled seas, from the safe harbour of playing under contract, was at first hardly taken seriously by the critic world in general.

Although the youngest actor-manageress, I was undaunted, and out for big things. Hard work and real slogging, together with a keen sense of theatrical and artistic ambition, led me to such productions as "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," already made famous by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, "The Sign on the Door," "Magda," etc.

It was upon Sir Gerald du Maurier's advice that I revived "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," for which production we anticipated a short season; but it ran for nearly a year. It was again upon Sir Gerald's suggestion that I revived "Diplomacy." This was the fourth revival of the play, which is nearly fifty years old, and in which I acted with Sir Gerald du Maurier eleven years ago. Again, as with "Tanqueray," we prepared for a short season's run; but although we were housed in a theatre with a much larger seating capacity than any other in which "Diplomacy" has been staged, we played to capacity at every performance for forty five weeks.

Among the difficulties of managership, the greatest of all is, I think, the choice of a play. My readers are being continually bombarded by playwrights and would-be playwrights, and I myself always make a point of reading one play every night before going to sleep, and take three or four away with me during each week-end. I pride myself upon the fact that the only play I ever refused which has ultimately succeeded is "Our Betters"; but that I did, not on account of the play itself, but on account of the fact that the *rôle* which I should have played would have been too much in the same key for me to wish to be seen in it immediately after "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray."

I have always maintained that an artist must concentrate on contrast in work, and that it is absolutely essential that every actor and actress should change their type of impersonation from time to time. Always to follow the same fashion, always to listen to the same music, always to read the same books, to remain in the same environment, never to exchange viewpoints with those who think differently from us, is bad, physically and mentally. Without the equalising balance of the law of opposition there can be little advancement and only a limited sum of achievement.

Why should the art of the theatre alone demand an unbroken routine, which requires its exponents of tragedy to be continually and utterly tragic, and its comedians perpetually funny? Our most dramatic authors are allowed to indulge in a light element to break the continued sense of gloom; even our composers do not concentrate on the composition of fugues. Such a condition is not true to life. Shakespeare himself realised the need of light and shade to define a character or establish a climax. When an actor or actress persistently portrays parts that are one long heartbreak from the rise to the fall of the curtain, play in, play out, the different *rôles* must gradually become merged in the personality of the exponent, and an ultimate sameness be the result. Little tricks and mannerisms must creep in, until finally each part becomes the player. Change and a saving contrast of *rôles* are the great remedy against mental and bodily "heaviness."

*Photo by*] [*Sport & General.*

MISS GLADYS COOPER LEAVING HER DRESSING-ROOM FOR HER WORK ON THE STAGE.

This is one reason why I enjoyed playing "Kiki." I found it invigorating in every sense, and by this I do not merely refer to the small athletic feats the part demanded, but to that great freedom of being out on the hillside of comedy after living so long in the slough of tragic despond such as surrounded "Magda," "Anne Regan," and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," the woman who cried in the bitterness of her soul: "I

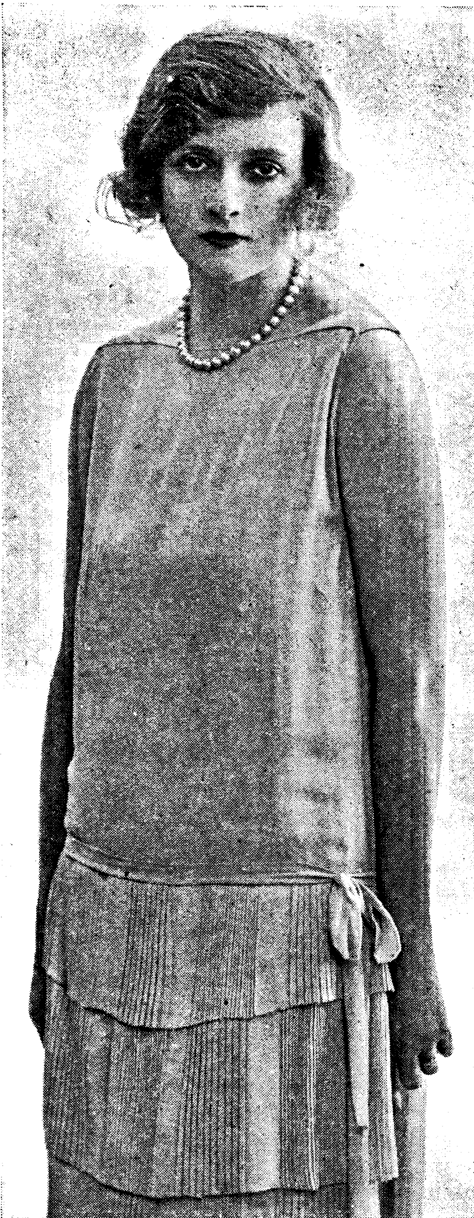


*Photo by*] [*Rita Martin.*

MISS GLADYS COOPER AS DORA IN "DIPLOMACY."

am a ghost, a wreck, a caricature, a candle that gutters."

In choosing a play there are several pitfalls to be avoided. For example, often a production which has had a tremendous success in America or some other country will fall flat in England, and *vice versa*, and this is, I think, mainly due to the fact that references which are local and national in the country of the production fail when the play is transplanted. Also a nation's character is defined in its personal appreciation of the humorous or the tragic. The modern German comic paper joke is generally pathetically senseless to the average Briton, and the effort to translate a Scotch funny story into French is a task that would make a Hercules turn faint and dizzy.

Similarly, translations of plays, however great their success in the original, are always risky. However excellent the actual rendering may be, the atmosphere of the play and the outlook of the audience are changed when it is in any way detached from its natural environment and birthplace.

Although there is always a public for costume period plays, the expense entailed in wardrobe and setting, etc., makes a management very chary in risking this type of production unless a certain success is sure—and how difficult such a certainty is to gauge! It is extraordinary how much of the success of a play, especially with the general public, depends upon the title.

"Casting," on the contrary, is not nearly so difficult when once the play is chosen; the characters seem to fall into their position naturally, as final pieces of an intricate puzzle. Of course, when a leading *rôle* has to be changed in mid-run, it is an infinitely more difficult matter. Before Mr. Owen Nares had to leave "Diplomacy," in order to fulfil a previous contract, I cannot say how many young actors, both known and unknown, after watching the play from the front, assured us that they felt convinced that they, and they alone, knew exactly how to interpret the part. But this is not the right spirit. No true artist, watching a finished piece of work, should feel "I can do better than that," but, rather, "I should like to do as well as that, and perhaps, by hard work and criticism, come nearer the standard."

On the whole, however, I think the acting profession is the least conceited of all professions. Its members must be critical of themselves, even as they are of others, and it is only by concentration, by exercising the power of observation to the uttermost, and by a willingness to accept advice, that one can get right under the skin of a *rôle*. That is, to my mind, the main explanation of the fact—which is so frequently acknowledged—that stage people are always so keen and anxious to help charitable causes and one another, although their time is

MISS GLADYS COOPER AS PETER PAN.

*Photograph by Curtis Moffat & Olivia Wyndham.*

absorbed by rehearsal, study, and theatrical work far more than the public realises. Self-criticism naturally produces a generous outlook on the world in general, and generosity is the keynote to the understanding of others.

I always feel that the actor's real self must finally glimmer through, in spite of the assumed character of the *rôle* portrayed. Therefore a villainous part, played by an artist of high ideals, must contain an undercurrent of lovable qualities, while the opposite would equally apply to a mean soul continually endeavouring to portray a noble character.

The characters of a play, in my opinion, by the light and shade with which they are drawn, by the appeal they present to the human sensibilities, count more than the finest plot that has ever been evolved. There must be sympathy between the artist and the public, and the character must be interesting to the audience. The hero and the heroine must get across with a strong human appeal in order that understanding and appreciation can be established.

One final word on casting. It is useless to place a few first-class artists in a mediocre company; the contrast shows too vividly the technique of the advanced actor and the hesitancy of the beginner. Many an otherwise good production has been utterly ruined on tour by just this fault in casting.

Finally, while considering casting, there is the matter of understudies. Some artists work with the same understudy through all their productions. Personally I found it impossible to have the same understudy for "Kiki" as for "Magda" or "Peter Pan," because it is so difficult to find another personality that will follow your own during the course of such complete transformations of part and character. The understudy is the reproducer, the specialist in the art of following and translating gesture, tone, facial expression, and the workings of another's mind in the conception of a *rôle*. Theirs is a separate branch of stage work, and is of real importance.

Ever since I have been in managership I have tried to instil a sense of friendship between myself and all those who work with me, so that my staff have often been called "one big family." I think it would amaze the general public to know how big a family I have. For example, in the recent production of "Diplomacy," although there were only seventeen artists, including under-

*Photo by*] [*Dorothy Wilding.*

MISS GLADYS COOPER IN HER LATEST RÔLE IN "THE LAST OF MRS. CHEYNEY."

studies, wardrobe mistresses, secretaries, check-takers, programme sellers, electricians,

dressers, etc., we were over one hundred and thirty strong.

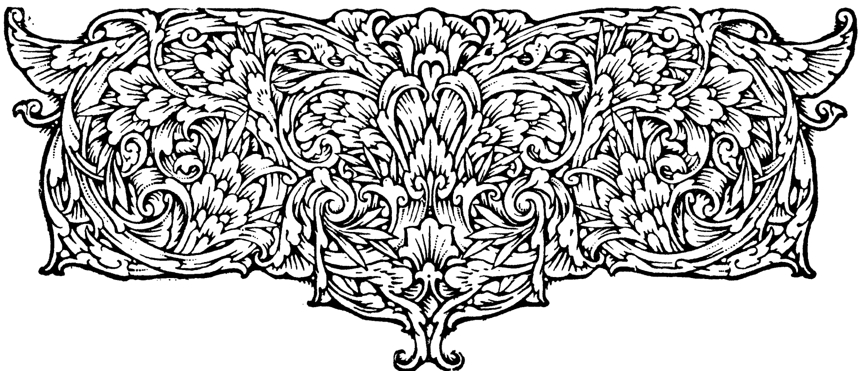
I have been asked to give an idea of a typical day of my life, and sometimes, when the weather is wet, on Mondays, or other days of that type, I almost feel inclined to define it as a "dog's day." For example, to-day I am selling my flat. I must leave and find another flat in a week. I go to my beauty preparations business house every morning, and here I go through the books, transact the business of the firm, and visit the laboratory where our toilet preparations are invented, made and tested, for I take this work as seriously as I do my theatrical work. I interview visitors; some plays are brought to be read. Then comes the best part of the day. For the first time in all my life I have been separated from my son John for a long three weeks, and I shall motor down to see him on the first day the authorities allow at his school. Not a little lonely and depressed at leaving him, I return to London, for I am sitting for a portrait with Sir William Orpen. There are more visitors, letters to read and to answer, telephone talks, friends who call, and a reporter who so drags my soul from me in an interview, while I am waiting between acts, that I rush on to the stage with "managership" stamped on my mind, and say in the wedding scene, "It is so nice for a girl to see all her admirers at her theatre" instead of "at her wedding!" This day, of course, does not include the special rush of a *matinée*, and in addition, as I said, I read on the average eight or ten plays every week in my search for the ideal production. Indeed, when night comes, I often feel, as I go down to the stage, that the time I am playing before the public is the greatest rest of the day.

Sometimes I am asked if I do not feel worn out by this life of so much activity, and I can honestly reply "Never," for I have reached the point when it would be impossible for me to fold my hands, close my eyes, and give myself up to a bovine peace. When I am in Switzerland I take up every sport of the winter season, and when in the summer I go to the sea, I rise early, I play golf and tennis, bathe three times a day, take long walks, and am ready to dance at night. I attribute my health and my vital enjoyment of life to thinking about healthy things and loving the open spaces of far horizons and hills and seas.

I believe, too, in eating plenty of fruit and sleeping in good fresh air, even if it does entail a motor journey after the work of the theatre is done, and, finally, the cultivation of the sense of humour helps to kill fatigue quicker than anything I know.

This latter quality is somewhat forced upon me at times, especially in going through my letter bag. Here, for instance, is a postcard which I received when it had been announced that I was about to appear as Peter Pan. "Gladys Cooper as Peter Pan! What a ghastly farce! You must be getting on for fifty!" The name and address were carefully inscribed, though I will refrain from stating them; but should the writer ever read this article, I should like to thank him or her for the great amusement given by that postcard to my friends and me.

One of England's best-known publishers once said of me: "When *we* come to the end of a perfect day, there is still her night's work to be done for the public." I should like to misquote the words of a great politician and say: "The finest recreation is a change of occupation."



# BUNTINGFORD JUGS

## By E. F. BENSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

MRS. AYLWIN was having tea very comfortably all by herself on a dark, inclement afternoon early in October. The fire was prospering, the windows had their curtains drawn to shut out the depressing prospect of the dripping wind-swept garden of Brompton Square, and she, between sips of tea, was indulging in the only sort of literature which had any attraction for her, namely, catalogues of forthcoming sales at the London auction rooms. Pictures did not interest her—in fact, she hated pictures, having once bought a magnificent Romney which proved to have been painted over an atrocious daub of William IV. in naval uniform—and she turned over, without looking at a single item, two pages of Mortlake tapestries shortly coming under the hammer. She threw this sumptuous catalogue into her waste-paper basket, but the next, which was issued by a very modest firm of auctioneers in East Street, Hampstead, seemed to merit considerable attention.

Mrs. Aylwin was certainly comely; she could also have been called buxom. Her age might have been forty-five, but it was fifty, and she found fifty a very pleasant age to be. She had been a widow for ten years, and these ten years had been the busiest and far the happiest of her life. Her husband had been a small spider-like man with a passion for second-rate bric-à-brac and a pathetic belief in his own taste. He had a furniture and curiosity shop just off the Brompton Road, and his judgment as a purchaser was invariably deplorable. He was convinced up to the last day of his life that heavy mahogany Victorian sideboards and wardrobes would shortly be in great demand, and at his death his widow had parted with a forest of these gloomy receptacles at staggering loss. He had held the same mistaken conviction with regard to steel engravings and many other unmarketable objects. Mrs. Aylwin, in consequence, at his death, had been left badly off; but the constant environment of her husband's purchases had given her a great shrewdness as to what *not* to buy, and she had learned to see at a glance, even if she knew nothing about the fabric in question, whether it had distinction and character. Character was the great thing: a piece might be hideous, but if it had character her purse was open.

The shop "Aylwin & Sons"—though she had never had either son or daughter—still did a good trade, but it was not there that she made her best deals. The shop, in fact, was rather a blind for what went on in this comfortable little house of hers in Brompton Square. It was here that she made her "collections." Sometimes she collected Aubusson carpets or Persian rugs, sometimes Queen Anne furniture, sometimes Crown Derby china, sometimes even globular paper-weights with curious decorations of glass flowers or objects that resembled confectionery seen under water embedded in them. For Mrs. Aylwin—and in this lay her genius—had discovered a fact as yet not sufficiently recognised by the trade, namely, that there are many rich people (and she cared now to deal only with thoroughly rich people) who would not think of buying one piece of Queen Anne furniture or one piece of Crown Derby, but who would eagerly pay twenty times the price of one for ten collected specimens of it. Just now the collection appeared to be ornaments made of shells. There were a clock and a pair of candlesticks under glass shades made of shells, a couple of baskets of shell-flowers on the table, and a cabinet by the window was full of boxes encrusted with shells.

Though Josephine Alwyn was at present alone, she rather expected a visitor, namely, her old friend Anthony Coleham, for whom she entertained a strong regard. She also rather expected that before he left her he would introduce a certain subject, namely, that of matrimony. Of late he had been alluding to the woes of loneliness, and had asked her if she was not conscious of the same. But though she lived alone and saw

few people, she was not the least conscious of loneliness, for she was invariably busy with that pleasant work of buying and selling in which she was so successful. Also for other reasons it would never do, for he, though not a dealer, was a very ardent collector, with ample means to indulge his hobby, and if they were married he could hardly help exercising a certain influence on her dealings, and she much preferred independence. But, after all, he might be coming in, as he often did, only for a chat. The other alternative, however, had vividly occurred to her, and, though she meant to refuse him, she had, with a feminine instinct which would not be denied, done her hair in a very becoming fashion and put on a dress which he much admired.

She had barely finished going through her catalogues when he appeared.

"You look charming to-day," he said, "but then you always do!"

This made it seem probable that she had been right about the object of his visit. But she wanted to have a chat first. If he proposed to her straight off and she refused him, it would be difficult to chat quite at ease afterwards; there would be an awkwardness.

"Nonsense, my dear. I'm an old woman," she said, "and old women are invariably hideous. What a day! It was good of you to come out in such a deluge."

The same train of thought had perhaps occurred to his mind, for he did not combat her pessimistic view about old women, but sat comfortably down. He was a large man, pleasantly furnished with flesh, and filled a chair beautifully.

"And how have things been going?" he asked. "Business prosperous?"

"Of course; it always is with me," she said. "Collections! That's the secret of successful dealing, and, like all true philosophies, very simple. If I, for my own satisfaction, buy a Chinese Chippendale chair, what do you suppose I want next? Why, of course, another Chinese Chippendale chair. And when I've got two, I want a set, and after I have got a set I want another set. That's human nature."

Anthony Coleham had been looking round the room. "And I suppose that's why this room, which used to be so nice when it was empty, with just your beautiful rugs on the floor, is now an abominable array of shell ornaments," he said. "How a woman like you, who really has taste, can surround herself with such artificial and Victorian monstrosities, I cannot think. Look at those awful candlesticks encrusted with the meanest objects of the sea-shore!"

Josephine Aylwin felt that she was quite right in her determination what to say in a certain eventuality. It would never do to have a husband like that: he would discourage her, he would cause her to doubt her own judgment. Also there was something to be said for shell ornaments.

"Yes, my dear, I knew you would think them hideous," she said. "But they have character—bad character, perhaps, but that is so much better than no character. They mean something; they are a fine reflection of the mind of the persons who must have taken years in making them. I don't say I admire them much, but they are a unique collection."

"I regard them with suspicion," he said. "I have known you make a collection for purely business purposes, and then, by degrees, get so fond of it that you could hardly bear to part with it. Chelsea figures, for instance! How you cried when you got so large an offer for them that you couldn't refuse it!"

"Yes, that was an awful morning," she said. "But you needn't be frightened about these shell ornaments, though they are ingenious little things."

"I hope you'll sell them at once," he said. "They make me feel rather unwell; I feel as if I was in a lodging-house."

She laughed. "Well, you won't be uncomfortable for long," she said, "for I've had an offer for them, and I shall take it. There won't be a single shell ornament left when next you come to see me."

"And what will the next collection be?" he asked.

"You ought to know very well that I shan't tell you," she said. "I never let anyone know what my collection is till I have got together a good quantity of it. If a dealer in London knew what I was collecting, it would be all over the place in no time, and the prices would go up. As soon as I've got together all I think I want, I let it be known, and up go the prices, and my little lot becomes far more valuable. But I like to get a good start first."

"I hope you're doing so," he said.

"I am indeed. I've got quite a lot of my new collection already."

"But haven't they found out what you're after?" he asked.

"Not a bit of it," said she. "I'm being very cunning over this, for there's not very

much of it about. I pick up a piece now and then in a shop, but I never myself attend an auction where there is any of it. I send my maid instead."

"With *carte blanche* to buy?" he asked.

"No. But the price never comes near the limit I give her. A couple of pounds is as much as I've paid for any piece yet. Of course I go and look at the—the things before the auction begins, to make sure that they are all right, but if I'm seen examining fifty lots with a perfectly blank face, who's to tell which is the one I have got my eye on?"

"I wish you would tell me," said he; "I might find pieces for you."

She shook her head. "No," she said, "it would do me no good. Dealers would begin to see that there was a demand for it. And I like doing a thing quite on my own, too."

He had already begun to fidget in his chair; there was something on his mind, and this speech of hers bore on it. He was silent a moment.

"Josephine, I wish you didn't like conducting life on your own," he said at length. "I wish you would let me have a hand in it. I believe you're fond of me, and I should love to be allowed to take care of you. I should account it the greatest privilege and joy. Josephine, will you marry me?"

She was suddenly touched. She had expected this, but she had not known what a delightful companion he was till she had to refuse his permanent companionship.

"Oh, Tony, my dear," she said, "I'm sorry, but I won't marry you. I like you immensely—quite as much as you like me—but it wouldn't do. We're not in love with each other, of course, in the least. We'll leave that out, for it would be nonsense to pretend it. We'll continue to be very good friends, just as we are. If any other man in the world offered to marry me, I should laugh in his face. But I'm sorry, really sorry, that I can't marry you. I don't laugh—I am sorry."

"But why?" he asked. "You say you like me immensely."

"And that is true. But I am so happy *as* I am. I'm busy, I'm successful."

"I should help you to be more successful," said he.

"No, my dear, you wouldn't. You would be a handicap to me. I should try to bring your ideas in line with mine, or you would try to bring mine in line with yours. We should have jars and bickerings every day of our lives if we were one firm. You've told me already that my room is like a lodging-house and makes you feel ill. I should hate to have you feel ill all the time I was amassing shell ornaments, and I should hate to give up my collection, whatever it was, in order that you might feel better."

Anthony Coleham was seated opposite the door while she made these depressing remarks. Even as she spoke it opened and there appeared a maid carrying, carefully in both hands, a china jug. It and she were vividly illuminated, and he saw the jug pretty distinctly. It was of white, fluted ware, and in front, under the spout, it had as decoration a wreath of flowers in blue.

"The Buntingford jug, ma'am," she said.

Mrs. Aylwin got very nimbly to her feet, and, as Mr. Coleham distinctly noticed, her eyes lit up with pleasure. But she kept the pleasure out of her voice.

"Put it down anywhere," she said, and turned to Anthony. "It's just a little nothing. Rather pretty, though. A jug for water when I'm arranging flowers."

She had taken the jug from the maid, and herself put it down in a rather remote corner of the room.

"That's what I feel, dear Tony," she said. "We should quarrel, we should bicker, and I should so hate that. As for your feeling lonely, you know quite well that I am always so delighted to see you. You can't come here too often or stop too long. But as regards the other, no. Do you forgive me?"

He got up. "Not till you consent to marry me," he said. "You're unforgiven at present."

"That's rather horrid of you. And are you really going?"

An idea had begun to bubble in Mr. Coleham's brain. He had noticed that her eyes kept wandering to the remote corner where stood the Buntingford jug. He therefore carefully avoided looking in that direction or making any allusion to it. It was part of his idea not to appear to take the slightest interest in it.

As he sat at his solitary dinner that night, the idea matured. He believed that he had guessed what her new collection was, and the name of it was Buntingford ware. He guessed, too, that Buntingford ware was already dear to her, the collection she was making had got a place in her heart, and it would wring her heart when the day came for selling it, as had been the case with her Chelsea figures. But it would be even more heart-breaking, he thought, if she could not get on with her collection. Of course he

might be wrong about it all, but those lover-like glances she cast towards the obscure corner. . . .

He went next morning to the Victoria and Albert Museum, and after some search discovered in a show-case of miscellaneous English china two jugs exactly similar to the one he had seen last night, with the label "Buntingford Ware." The curator of the section was a friend of his, and he learned from him that little was known about this obscure factory.

"It was one of those small industries," he was told, "that have never attracted any attention. It is coarse stuff, of no interest. Pieces come up occasionally at auction, and are knocked down for thirty shillings or so. Who would want a collection of those things? A couple of specimens are enough for the Museum. There's no beauty about them, as you can see for yourself."

Mr. Coleham's heart leaped inside his fine fur coat. "No, ugly stuff," he said. "But it was new to me, and I take an interest in anything new. Bitter cold morning, isn't it? Come and see my Heppelwhite card-table some evening, and have a bit of dinner. It's a peach, that table."

"'The Buntingford jug, ma'am,' she said."

Mr. Coleham's catalogues of sales were as numerous as Mrs. Aylwin's, and he hurried home to study them. He found that out of a dozen approaching sales there were two which contained an item of Buntingford ware, and in each case these were jugs. He consulted his large-paper edition of Fountain's "English Porcelain," and turned up the page relating to Buntingford ware. There were only a few lines devoted to it.

It gave the mark of the fabric, a capital B in a circle, and informed the reader that only jugs, of coarse and uninteresting workmanship, were known as a product of that factory. It suggested that these were possibly inferior Salopian ware, not up to the standard of the Caughley Works, and contemptuously dismissed the subject.

This delighted him; it was so like Josephine's cleverness to have taken up a class of porcelain about which nobody knew or cared, and he felt convinced of the correctness of his guess. Proof, if proof was needed, came a few days later when he attended the sale in East Street, Hampstead, and saw Mrs. Aylwin's maid there. He had taken his valet with him, and instructed him, while he himself kept prudently out of sight, to bid and go on bidding for Lot 217.

An insignificant duel took place, but he knocked the opponent out at four pounds, which his valet paid on the spot. He returned home with a Buntingford jug. A fortnight later he got his second Buntingford jug, but he had to pay five pounds for it.

Anthony Coleham was getting very stout, but, preferring that to taking exercise, had long acquiesced in Nature's obese decrees. But now he had an object, and day after day he used to go from shop to shop, not asking for Buntingford jugs, but scrutinising with the collector's eye the contents of the most unimportant and frowsy stores. Every now and then he came across one of these ugly jugs and bought it for a song, while at the larger dealers in porcelain, where he was already well known, he confidentially told the proprietors that he was looking out for specimens of this ware, and would be much obliged if they would send him any such that came into their shops. After a month of incessant walking in slummy places, he had purchased half a dozen of these jugs, and dealers had sent him half a dozen more. The price was rising a little, but, being very rich, he did not mind that. All he minded was the coarse appearance of his purchases; but he put them on the table in his billiard-room, which he never used, and turned the key on them.

On Christmas Day Josephine, as usual, came to dine with him. In spite of the festival she appeared dejected, but nothing was said on either side about her last collection. Prudence (for she put two and two together with remarkable quickness and accuracy) dictated reticence on one side, depression on the other. But she congratulated him heartily on his slimmer appearance and briskness of movement, and he confessed that he had taken quite a lot of walking exercise of late.

He continued to see her with his usual frequency, but her dejection not only continued, but deepened. It was particularly marked on one bright afternoon in the early spring, when there had been a sale in a well-known auction room, and three Buntingford jugs had come up. The price she was willing to pay had evidently risen considerably, though no one but his valet and her maid bid for these treasures, and he had to give an average of twelve pounds for each. But he had, of course, obtained them, and his billiard table was getting crowded.

She sighed heavily as she gave him his cup of tea, and he asked her if anything was the matter.

"Yes, I've been having a check," she said. "I don't know if I told you, one day in the autumn, that I had made a good beginning with a new collection."

He made a face as if trying to recollect. "I rather fancy you did," he said. "I can't remember what it was; perhaps you didn't tell me."

"Naturally I didn't," she said with a certain asperity, "and I'm not going to tell you now. But I can't get on with my collection. If a piece turns up in the auction room, I never can secure it. I've raised my limit, but it's no use. There's somebody else making a collection."

"It sounds rather like it," said he.

"Whom do you think it can be?" she asked.

He was perfectly on his guard. "My dear Josephine," he said, "as you have not allowed me to know what you are collecting, how can I possibly tell who else is collecting it? Now, I don't ask to know; I don't want to know. It may be waste-paper baskets or walking-sticks."

"But I'm not going to be beaten," she said with energy. "I like opposition: I fight it; I overcome it."

"Bravo!" said he. "It does me good to see your spirit. And you've not been able to get on with your collection? Too bad! And is your annoyance only professional, so to speak, or had you, as in the case of your Chelsea china, got to love this new collection?"

"Ah, I adore it!" she said. "I go and gloat over the few pieces I've got. I love it more than anything that I've ever collected."

"Poor Josephine!" said Mr. Coleham with much feeling.

Her energy waned; she sank back languidly in her chair.

"It's a wretched feeling never being able to get what one so much wants," she said.

"Horrid, isn't it?" said Mr. Coleham. "Especially when you know that it is in somebody's power to give it you."

"What's that?" she said. "Oh, you mean the horrible person, whoever it is, who always outbids me."

"No, I was thinking of myself," he said, "and of you who could give me what I want."

"Oh, that!" said she. "Yes, I'm sorry. I said I was sorry before. But really I can think of nothing else except what I want so terribly. It has become an obsession with me. If I could only get together a fine number of these pieces, I should be so happy."

He rose. "Do you know, Josephine," he said, "that it's rather dull for me hearing you talk about something the very nature of which you refuse to divulge to me?"

"Well, I can think of nothing else," she said. "I can't talk about anything else. Only to-day three pieces were sold in London, and I couldn't secure one of them."

"Bad luck," said he.

It was still light when he left her, and he strolled along the Brompton Road, looking into the shop windows. He was sorry for Josephine, who clearly was very unhappy, but her spirit was still unbroken, and he wanted to reduce her to despair before he disclosed his plot. She must be in a condition to realise that it was no use fighting him either in the field of matrimony or in that of Buntingford jugs. She must learn that he was stronger than she.

He had turned into a side-street where there were many curiosity shops, and his progress was slow. Then he gave a gasp of amazed wonder, and his eyes started from his head. There in an inconspicuous shop facing him was a tea-set—tea-pot, sucrier, milk jug, bread-and-butter plate, and six cups and saucers—all of Buntingford ware. And the foolish experts knew of no such thing; they had never heard of anything but Buntingford jugs.

It was impossible, of course, to be certain without examination, and he entered the shop and in a trembling voice asked to be allowed to see the tea-set in the window.

"Very sorry, sir," said the proprietor, "but I'm keeping that for one of my customers. It oughtn't to be in the window at all."

Mr. Coleham had one of those inspirations which are the hall-mark of genius. He was convinced also in his own mind that the apparently outrageous lie he was about to tell was literally true.

"You mean Mrs. Aylwin, of course," he said. "That's all right; I am buying it for her."

There was that quiet conviction in his voice which always produces its effect. The man hesitated, but only for a moment.

"Well, in that case," he said, "I suppose I am right to let you have it."

"Certainly, certainly," said Mr. Coleham. "And what price are you asking for it?"

The price was moderate enough compared with those he had been paying lately, and presently it was packed and paid for, and he took it home in a taxi, hugely exulting. He felt sure that Josephine could not possibly resist a Buntingford tea-set.

She was coming to lunch with him in a few days, and he arranged his collection to the utmost advantage. All round the billiard table, nicely spaced, was a row of Buntingford jugs, and in the middle the tea-set. He inspected it just before she came, and locked the door.

Mrs. Aylwin was in excellent spirits again, all her dejection had passed, and she was her cheerful self.

"I've been making myself miserable, Tony," she said as they lunched, "and I'm tired of it. I've been beaten. I don't like being beaten, but when you are beaten, the best thing to do is to acknowledge it, and begin on something else."

"Oh, your last collection," said he.

"How unfeeling you are! I've never cared for anything so much in my life. The only consolation is that the price has gone up immensely, and I have no doubt I shall sell the pieces I've got at a great profit."

"Perhaps, then, you might tell me what it is," he said.

"Why, I forgot you didn't know," said she. "Naturally there's no secret about it now. I sent my pieces down to the shop this morning. Buntingford jugs. I suppose you've never heard of Buntingford ware?"

"Tell me about it," said he.

"Well, it is an English fabric of which nobody thought anything six months ago. I got hold of one piece, and tried to find out something about it, but nobody knew. Nothing, in fact, is known about the ware, but it entirely consists of jugs; they only made jugs at Buntingford. You saw one once, though you never knew it,

and heard the name of it, but you weren't attending."

"When was that?" he asked.

"My maid brought one in when you were sitting with me. I whisked it away, because my collection was young then, and I thought you might guess what it was. But my collection hasn't grown any older, so I am making a clean sweep of it. Come round to the shop afterwards and look at it. I sent it down this morning."

He rose. "I've been making a collection, too," he said. "Come into the billiard room and see it. It has been getting on beautifully."

He unlocked the door and she entered. For a moment she stood stricken to stone, and then turned to him.

"So it was you?" she said. "You beast! I'll never speak to you again!"

"I'm sorry for that," he said. "I hoped to give it you all as a wedding present."

She stamped her foot. "Never, never!" she cried.

"Very well. Then as soon as you have gone I shall smash it, piece by piece, with a hammer."

She had taken a step nearer the table, and now her hand closed round one of the beloved objects.

"You can't, you can't," she said. "It would be murder!"

"Indeed I shall. You may as well have a look at them, for no one but the dustman will ever see them again. And there's a Buntingford tea-set there. Unique, of course."

"A tea-set?" she said in a trembling voice.

"Yes, there it is. I got it only the other day."

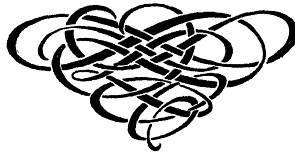
Her eye fell on it, and she drew it towards her and examined it.

"Oh, Tony," she said, "oh, Tony! And you'll give me this, too?"

"As a wedding present. Otherwise——"

She threw her arms round his neck. "Oh, my dear, how lovely of you! How perfectly wonderful of you! When shall we be married?"

Suddenly, with a scream, she let go of him. "The telephone," she cried, "the telephone! Ring up the shop, Tony! I must tell them to take all the jugs out of the window. Heavens, I hope none of them have been sold yet!"



# YULE MIDNIGHT.

**THE frostbound day has died, and lo!**
**In swarms the legions shine—**
**The constellations wheeling slow,**
**Changeless, divine.**

**A man may watch, this holy night,**
**Those twinkling suns afar,**
**Until the stars to his blurred sight**
**Seem one huge star,**

**And think, maybe, ere darkness dies**
**How three Kings journeying lone.**
**Seeing a host of stars, had eyes**
**For one alone.**

**ERIC CHILMAN.**

# WHEN THE BLACKBIRD CALLS

## By E. TEMPLE THURSTON

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK WILES

THERE is this about a woman—necessity, experience, and a certain native wisdom all contrive to gather men about her before and while she makes her choice. In these matters a man is a fool beside her, partly because he never realises in advance what a serious undertaking marriage is.

But usually with a man who has the qualities of his sex it is one at a time. The time may be short. His fancy may soon veer or back, as happens with the wind in this variable climate. However it may befall, a man has this resemblance to a weather-cock—he does not point in two or more directions at the same time. A woman does. So wisely. How can you tell from what point of the compass your golden day is coming? The weather prophets watching the depressions over Iceland and the Atlantic, with wireless and every conceivable invention, know little or nothing about it. At least a woman is honest. She admits her ignorance.

If young Jenny Pendred, assistant in a big London draper's shop, was considered a flirt, it was only because she frankly did not know her own mind, and pursued the usual course of young women under these circumstances in her efforts to understand it—she collected and compared.

She served in the stockings. This means that from nine o'clock in the morning till six in the evening she handled those garments in a certain department of that draper's shop. Now, whether it were mercerised cotton, or cotton and silk mixed, artificial silk or that pure silk which some women dream about, and others run into ladders after one day at Goodwood and throw away, her hands, to Jimmy Punnett at the linen counter opposite, gave just the same thrill when they were thrust into a pair of stockings to display the excellence of these materials. But whether she were serving a lady who will look at nothing but the pure material, or one of those who spend a quarter of an hour deciding whether the lisle thread shall commence above or below the knee, made all the difference to Mr. Gossage.

Mr. Gossage, in a black frock coat and striped trousers and a high collar, full tie and boots that were a trifle big for him because of his constant moving about, was a shop-walker in that drapery business. He controlled the destinies of agitated customers who were looking for this, that, and the other—usually at the same moment.

A woman will say: "I want to get to the glove department, please." And before the shop-walker can help in what she wants, she will say: "And where is the ironmongery?"

It sounds very silly, but it must be natural, or women would never do it.

By reason of a manner, a mode of speech, and a deportment learnt in a school whose curriculum is one of the mysterious documents of industrial life, Mr. Gossage was recognised as being a pattern amongst shop-walkers. In surroundings where colours and materials are always being matched, this word "pattern" has vital significance.

As shop-walkers go—and anyone who has watched them knows how they go—he was young. If you had guessed Mr. Gossage's age as thirty-four, which was right, he would have been entitled to look surprised at your accuracy. He was tall. He had a good figure. That black frock coat fitted him suspiciously closely in the waist. To have said even as much as that is to do him an injustice. He would only have known a man's corset, had he seen one, from his acquaintance with corsets in the ladies' department.

He was clean-shaven, good-looking, and the way he put out a chair for a lady, or

indicated a distant department, or signed the flourish of his initials at the foot of a bill, was a pleasure to watch, always assuming that it is your pleasure to take an interest in these things.

The difference in Mr. Gossage's attitude towards Jenny, according to what class of customer she was serving, was apparent both to her and to Jimmy Punnett from his linen counter.

If, as has been said, she were serving a lady who did not know the meaning of mercerised cotton, and would feel like a princess with a pea under thirty mattresses if plain cotton touched her delicate skin, Mr. Gossage was then so distant that you would be surprised to realise he knew Jenny's name when, in unemotional tones, he said:

"Miss Pendred, forward."

Seeing all this from his linen counter, whether he were disengaged or bouncing a bale of linen as he unwrapped it for a customer, Jimmy would mutter fiercely, but under his breath: "Swank!"

Were it, however, one of those modest but impecunious young ladies who are spiritually exercised about the length of silk that is likely to be seen when they are getting on a 'bus, Mr. Gossage's voice would take upon itself a certain familiarity. It was as though he did not mind it being thought there were romances that went on in these large business establishments which girls in offices never dreamed about.

"Miss Pendred," he would say, "this young lady"—for all ladies are young to a shop-walker except those who would make him look positively ridiculous if he called them so—"this young lady wants"—whatever she did happen to want, and then he might go so far as to lean on the counter and, in an undertone, say: "You're looking O.K. this morning"

If Jimmy detested the one attitude, he fumed at the other. It was more than he could bear. Frequently he had to measure his linen all over again, for fear he had made a mistake.

It will be seen from this that to say Jenny had collected Mr. Gossage is not strictly accurate. To be collected, a man must be pinned down, a specimen of his kind. With his black frock coat and striped trousers, it can hardly be supposed that Mr. Gossage would let anyone pin him down, and certainly not one on Jenny's side of the counter.

He had been known to unbend, to suffer himself momentarily to be collected once by one of those ladies who seem to take a pleasure in conversing with assistants in shops, with waiters in restaurants, and policemen at their stations. Work had almost stopped in the department on that occasion while the assistants watched the play of the various expressions on Mr. Gossage's face. His pale, carved countenance had become strangely animated. He was another man. And it was that other man, so far removed from her approach, that Jenny Pendred wanted for her collection.

As yet she had only seen him on that one occasion. Even when she went to tea at his house out Blackheath way and met his mother, he was more the unapproachable Mr. Gossage than ever. Undoubtedly there was something significant in his asking her there, but his manner robbed that significance of all its thrill.

"May I have the honour," he had said, "of taking you home to tea next Saturday afternoon to meet my mother?" But it was quite plain, as he said it, with whom the honour lay.

Some weeks had passed since that adventure, and though she had used all the allurements she knew, Jenny had come no nearer to pinning Mr. Gossage down for a close examination.

It was a very different matter with Jimmy Punnett. He laid himself out, as it were, for this process of collection and comparison. He came, it might be said, with the pin in his hand. It was a positive joy to him to feel the pain of his liberty being taken from him. After the demands of linen, all time at his disposal was hers to dispose of as she willed.

If it can be said that women are cruel over this process of selection, you may as well abuse the whole process of Nature and have done with it. Whatever you do, the Jenny Pendreds of this world will go on selecting so long as they have that something, generally in the eye, which attracts men.

Blessington's had what they called an "athletic ground" near Enfield. There, nearly every Saturday afternoon through the summer, Jenny played what is called tennis with the other assistants in the shop. Jimmy was always there, ready to play with her, if she wanted him; ready to pick up the balls for her when she played in those interminable contests known as ladies' doubles.

Occasionally Mr. Gossage put in an appearance on the athletic ground. He sat

on a chair and watched. There was something Mr. Gossage possessed—probably his dignity—which nothing short of a cataclysm could make him part with. This, together with his good looks, gave him a sense of desirable mystery to Jenny Pendred. He was unattainable. That was his power. Yet he gave her just enough encouragement to make her feel that one day, in some unexpected wave of emotion, he might ask her to be Mrs. Gossage.

Of Jimmy she was absolutely certain, but until she could pin Mr. Gossage beside his prostrate body, there seemed no sense in making up her mind one way or another.

Only one thing there was about Jimmy which she could not quite understand and had never forgotten. There was nothing she could see or construct with her imagination in Mr. Gossage to put beside it. He had taken her one Saturday afternoon in late spring out into the country. They had gone in the train to Halstead in Essex, and from there, across the fields by a stream that wound in and out through incredible adventures, they had walked to Sibyl Headingham.

The suggestion had been his. She was a town-bred girl and knew nothing of the country. Setting out, she had fancied that, like as not, it would be a dull affair. But the tennis courts at the athletic ground were not quite ready for play, owing to previous rains, and there was nothing else to do.

Before they had left the train she was surprised at his knowledge of the country. He told her which were the crops of winter-sown corn. He knew the different kinds of cattle that were grazing in the meadows. He pointed out a bull to her in a field, and she nearly fell out of the carriage window looking after it as the train turned on a curve of the line.

But all this information was nothing to what he knew and could tell her of Nature, once they were out in the fields.

If she said she knew what butterflies were, she meant those white or brown things she sometimes saw near the athletic ground. But he showed her a brimstone, an orange tip, a hibernated peacock, and made them seem like creatures with lives and adventures separate from her own. If she said she knew anything about wild flowers, she meant she knew the poppy, the wild rose, and, of course, primroses and daisies and buttercups. Anyone knew those. But he showed her lords and ladies, veronica speedwell, lover's eyebright and spotted orchis, which until that moment she had thought was an exotic flower first grown by Joseph Chamberlain and since then by wealthy gentlemen, mostly Jews, in expensive hot-houses. She had read in one of those magazines that set out to teach you everything and leave you very ignorant that an orchid bloom might be worth a hundred pounds. A fact like this is worse than ignorance.

"Never knew it grew wild," she said in amazement.

"Everything grows wild," said Jimmy, and had a feeling, as he said it, that his love for her was of the wild and common variety, whilst that of Mr. Gossage—if, indeed, he was in love with her at all—was like the cultivated orchid in Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's coat. But the whole thought was too complicated for him to pursue it further or put it into words.

She asked him why he lived and worked in London when he seemed to love the country so much, and for one instant felt that soul sense of desirable mystery in him as she felt it always with Mr. Gossage. There came a look of such deep longing in his eyes, as he stared out across the fields before he answered, that for a moment she had a desire to understand him better. It was as though for the moment he had borrowed from Mr. Gossage his charm of elusiveness. As soon as he began to explain, it all disappeared behind material considerations, just as the intrinsic value of the orchid in Nature was lost for her behind the bloom that cost a hundred pounds.

"I was brought up in the country," he said, "and one of the diseases you catch in the country, some time or another, is a fever for the town. I got it badly and came to London."

"To work in Blessington's?"

"Not at first. I went from one thing to another. I had to earn my living. I'd burnt my boats."

"What boats?"

"My boats in the country."

There was a sort of underlying chuckle in his voice which had deterred her from asking any more questions on that score. She assumed his father had kept boats on a river, something like they did on the Thames at Hampton Court, that one or two of them had belonged to him, and that, before leaving for London, he had burnt them. Her opinion of him as a practical young man fell considerably, yet at the same time there was something of a grand gesture in

his burning those boats. She did not actually dislike him for it. But if ever he was her husband, there was certainly nothing he would burn like that unless it was of no material value. She had undoubtedly caught the classical flavour of his story, but it was as a modern young woman she judged him for it.

"I did all sorts of things before I got into the linen," he went on. "I've got to stick at that now. It's the best job I've had. But I'm saving a bit. Some day or other I'm going to live just outside London—Epping or something like that—in one of those little houses with a bit of garden, where I can grow my own flowers and my own vegetables."

She looked at him with a sideways glance. There was an ecstasy in his face. She could not have said what an ecstasy might be, but whatever it was she saw stirred her to some unaccountable excitement. He had made her see a little house with a garden near Epping Forest. She prompted him with what she thought were subtle little questions to paint his picture more vividly.

"What vegetables?" she asked.

He told her the best way to grow peas, how to tie up lettuces.

"To give 'em a stomach," he said, and she laughed and laughed.

Within a few minutes he had put up a little greenhouse at the bottom of the garden. She had helped him put the putty on the panes of glass. Before they knew where they were, there were the plants of tomatoes growing there, flourishing English tomatoes at a shilling a pound. They liked salads and regarded them as a luxury to be indulged in only on the rarest occasions, so those tomatoes and those lettuces bursting their waist-bands—"Cos, not cabbage," he interposed—all had the aroma of a fairy tale. His enthusiasm had the quality of making her see everything about that garden very vividly. As for flowers in the front of the house, having learnt nothing of them through her appetites, she let him say what was best. A clump of Madonna lilies, two standard roses at the gate, a border of Mrs. Simkins pinks round a flower-bed filled with stocks and various things he would raise in boxes in the greenhouse at the bottom of the garden. It all seemed more beautiful than the gardens at Hampton Court Palace. And when, having arrived at Sibyl Headingham, they had something to eat in the parlour of a little cottage which had a garden he told her was just like the garden he was going to have—only that it had no greenhouse—she felt that dreams were so close to realities that there was nothing to choose between them.

But Monday morning, when they regarded each other over their respective counters in Blessington's, it was hard to believe it had ever happened. Seeing him measuring out his yards of linen, it was impossible to believe he would ever have a cottage and a garden like that. Observing Mr. Gossage place out a chair for a lady who wanted pure silk stockings and hearing his distant "Miss Pendred, forward, please," it seemed that there, in the grandeur of his deportment, was a romantic state of life that was a tangible reality. She let Mr. Gossage see the admiration in her eyes, and then went to the glass-fronted drawers where the best silk stockings lay in all their pure finery.

Then an extraordinary thing happened in the hosiery department. For the whole of one day, not only Blessington's, but Miss Pendred, one of its assistants, became the talk of the London papers.

A gentleman had come in with a lady and bought her twelve pairs of best silk stockings. That was exciting enough in itself. Jenny, who attended to them, saw herself contributing to a trousseau. There was, too, a commission for her on an order like that. Tragedy followed that romance. He came back with the whole lot the next day, and said, on examining them at home, the lady had not liked the material. Could he change them for something else in another department? In one fell moment the commission she had been counting on at the end of the week was snatched out of her hand. He had seen the droop in her eyes.

"Does this mean you lose commission on that order?" he had asked.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," she said bravely, and smiled.

There must have been something nice about him, because he did not offer to compensate her with money, which, of course, she would have refused. Instead, he pulled a letter-case out of his pocket and, drawing out six tickets, he gave her one.

"Never mind," he said cheerily. "You take that—better luck next time."

He was gone before she could refuse it. She showed it to the other girls. She showed it to Mr. Gossage.

"Half-crown ticket for a Derby sweep," said he, "at his club. Cheap way of getting out of cheating you of your commission."

Mr. Gossage knew about these things.

"It was a cheque for two thousand pounds."

She assessed its value accordingly. She put it away in her bag and forgot all about it. Even when the odds for the race came out day after day in the papers, she never thought of looking at it again. And after the race was run she did actually consider the need for tearing it up, but, looking in her bag, she could not find it. Two days went by, and the sensation of the Derby was all over. The third day the gentleman walked into Blessington's shop and went straight to the hosiery department.

"I want to see the young lady who served me with a dozen pairs of stockings a few weeks ago."

Orders for best silk stockings by the dozen are not easily forgotten.

"Miss Pendred, forward, please."

Before a gentleman customer the distance in Mr. Gossage's voice was immense. Jenny came from the other end of the counter.

"Good morning," said the gentleman. "Do you remember that ticket I gave you a few weeks ago?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you happen to have it with you?"

"I had it in my bag, but I'm afraid it's lost. I looked for it the other day to tear it up, and I couldn't find it. I certainly put it there."

"Have you got your bag here?"

"Yes, it's in the dressing-room."

"Would you mind going and getting it? And if you find the ticket, don't tear it up in a hurry."

There was a funny sensation, not exactly in her heart, but as though the blood it was pumping all turned to water before it reached her extremities. She felt weak in the legs as she walked to the assistants' dressing-room. She had sometimes read notices in the paper informing people of a particular name that if they called at the offices of a certain solicitor they would learn something to their advantage. She had tried to imagine what those people must feel like, reading that unexpectedly in the paper. Now she knew. They felt weak in the legs. They laughed foolishly at the sound of their own names as she laughed when, turning her bag inside out, she discovered the ticket tucked away in one of the folds.

When she returned to the counter the gentleman had not vanished, as she had thought quite probable Instead, two or three of the girls were doing useless things near by, and Mr. Gossage was lingering effectively in the vicinity.

She handed the ticket over the counter. The gentleman took it, examined it, and consulted a letter which he held in his hand. Then, with a suppression of all emotion which conveyed itself electrically to Jenny's already agitated nerves, he handed her a slip of paper.

"It's as I thought," said he quietly. "This belongs to you."

The slip of paper was folded. She looked at it. It had a perforated edge. She looked at the gentleman.

She opened it. It was a cheque for two thousand pounds She giggled. The next moment she found her eyes were hot and wet.

"Steady," said he, and she steadied. She did not know how it happened or where they came from, but in another moment every assistant in the shop was round about her. She pushed them aside to look for her benefactor, to tell him she could not take it, that it did not belong to her, that the commission on a dozen pairs of stockings, even with the present price of silk, did not amount to two thousand pounds. But he was gone.

The rest of that day was like a dream. Reporters were asking for interviews every five minutes. Autocratically, Mr. Gossage kept them ostensibly at bay at the same time that he surreptitiously gave them access.

"You might say, if you're writing about it," he said, "that I was the first to tell her what the ticket was. She did not even know she had a ticket for the Derby sweep. My name is Gossage—Mr. Gossage. I'm a shop-walker here. Yes, I'll let you talk to her for a moment, if you want to."

By the time the early evening papers were out, Blessington's in the hosiery and linen departments was doing a huge trade. People were jostling each other as at a sale to see the girl who had won two thousand pounds in a Derby sweep in lieu of commission on a dozen pairs of silk stockings. Jenny moved to and fro like one in sleep, and, close at hand, as though to protect her from any false step that might endanger her, hovered the black-coated and striped-trousered figure of Mr. Gossage.

From the counter of the linen department opposite, unable to catch a glance from her agitated eyes, Jimmy Punnett saw Jenny disappearing from his ken as a ship sails towards the horizon and dips away out of sight.

"You'd better let me take you home," said Mr. Gossage, when the shutters of

Blessington's were rattling against the windows.

She had an instant's thought of Jimmy Punnett at that moment, but he was nowhere to be seen. Mr. Gossage taking her home! It was scarcely believable. She looked up at him submissively, and Mr. Gossage experienced a reflection of that weakness that comes over one at the sudden and unexpected sight of two thousand pounds.

* * * * *

Jenny Pendred came of solid stock. No one in the Pendred family had ever been known to make an absolute fool of themselves. None had ever had such opportunity as Jenny. There were two whole days when she thought of all the things she could buy. There was no one dependent on her. She shared rooms with one of the other assistants in Hackney. Who was to prevent her from spending that two thousand pounds just as she liked? Yet for those two days a fundamental common-sense came to her rescue. She cut a piece of material and sewed the cheque inside the band of her skirt, and outwardly went on with her work at Blessington's as though nothing had happened. Inwardly she was still walking in a perturbed sleep, oppressed with the semi-consciousness of a belief that she might wake up at any moment and find it nothing but a dream.

That which slowly opened her eyes to a waking realisation was the number of letters she received, begging for money. Five thousand pounds would not have been enough to meet the requests that were made of her by complete strangers. One of them began: "Surely you can't want all that money, having come by it in such a lucky way?"

On the third day she was convinced it was no dream, and the fear of losing it drove her into the premises of a bank in a street near the drapery business. She asked to see the manager. A quarter of an hour later she came out with a deposit balance of one thousand nine hundred pounds, a current balance of one hundred, and a cheque-book at the bottom of her bag. She stood for a moment on the steps of the bank and took a deep breath of relief. She realised she had had a narrow escape. Looking back at the bank building, she knew that little piece of paper was safe at last. The manager had complimented her upon being a sensible young woman. She felt she was. But the greatest test lay still before her.

Many a woman's greatest extravagance is romance. That unattainable quality in Mr. Gossage had made him an essentially romantic figure in the eyes of nearly every girl in Blessington's. And now not only on the pretext of protection from the crowd had he seen Jenny home that first evening of her good fortune, but his manner had completely altered since.

He did not now exclude her with an unseeing glance from the presence of his most select customers. Often as he put out the chair for a lady, he would smile as he said: "Miss Pendred, forward!" He included her.

When she informed him what she had done with her two thousand pounds, he placed his hand protectively on her shoulder—on her shoulder and in front of the other girls!—and he said, not for their hearing: "Miss Pendred, you're one in a thousand!"

Had he said she was one with two thousand, it might have been a closer expression of his sentiments.

She came instinctively to the knowledge that Mr. Gossage at least was collected. He would now, she was quite confident, adopt at her wish that supine and recumbent position necessary to the process of pinning down for comparison. She would be able to probe that enfolding sheath of mystery in which he was concealed.

It must be understood that in none of these delicate, though apparent, operations of the mind are women deliberate, or conscious at all of what they are doing.

When Jenny conceived the idea of a picnic for her friends in Blessington's, to celebrate her good fortune, she was in no way aware that it was to be a definite opportunity for comparison. She did not say to herself: "Now I shall see these two men, side by side, in identical conditions entirely foreign to both of them. Under these circumstances they will react in accordance with their real natures. In Richmond Park—which is an excellent place for a picnic, and won't cost too much in rail fares—Mr. Gossage cannot possibly feel what he feels in the hosiery department or even what he does at home. The same applies to Jimmy. There is something a man pretends to be when he is doing his business or when he's at home which is only a part of himself. You can see the real part only when you take him right out of his surroundings. I'll take these two out of their environment. I'll plump them into Richmond Park and I'll see which one I like best."

There was not one definite thought of this nature that passed through Jenny's mind. Still less had Browning taught her that a man has two soul-sides, one to face the world with, another to show a woman when he loves her. She had never heard of Browning.

All she did was to think she ought to celebrate her good fortune, and that a picnic in Richmond Park, while it would not make a big hole in that current balance, would be the most appropriate way of doing it. Most conspicuously in her mind, no doubt, was the thought of inviting Jimmy and Mr. Gossage. But that was inevitable. She attached no more importance to it than that she wanted them to be there.

So it was arranged. There were nearly thirty of them. She did not realise she had so many friends in Blessington's. But everyone had been so nice to her since her good fortune that she found herself compelled to ask girls whom, before, she would have looked upon merely as acquaintances.

She had first thought of taking them all by train. The sense of importance and responsibility was tremendous. She felt like a public benefactor on the scale of a Carnegie. In all these preparations she saw nothing of Jimmy. Since her good fortune he had kept conspicuously out of her way. He seemed afraid of her. When she invited him to the picnic, he said: "Are you sure you want me to come?"

But Mr. Gossage was a real help. He placed himself unreservedly at her disposal. A sense of dependence came upon her with all the thought and organisation he displayed in his counsel.

She gave up the idea of the train and decided on a motor charabanc because Mr. Gossage had thought that in the journey down to Richmond she ought really to travel first-class, whereas the others, of course, could go third.

"I think," said he, "you ought to do that. We could travel in a first-class together—just you and I." To which he generously added: "I don't mind paying the extra for myself. I'm not going to put another expense on you like that."

To avoid that, she decided on a motor charabanc. She sat on the front seat, with Mr. Gossage on one side of her and Jimmy Punnett on the other. She was making comparisons all the way, but did not know it. There they were on either side of her in the scales of her comparison. She was the agate upon which they balanced.

The weight was all in favour of Mr. Gossage on that journey down to Richmond. He was in holiday mood. He wore white flannel trousers, a blue kind of yachting coat with brass buttons, and brown-and-white shoes with black socks. It was hard to believe this was Mr. Gossage of the hosiery and linen departments, whose manner and deportment earned respect even from those customers who turned up their noses at the best cotton sheets and would not look at an artificial silk stocking.

He was even jocular. He laughed at the efforts of people in motor-cars who could not get past their charabanc. He criticised the occupants of passing vehicles with a pompous irony which in that holiday spirit was meant to be amusing, and often succeeded in making Jenny laugh. It was not so much because it was really funny as that it was so unexpected. It was so unlike Mr. Gossage. She weighed it out as agreeability on his part and set it down to his credit. She could not understand what was the matter with Jimmy. He was monosyllabic. In the company of Mr. Gossage he was a dull dog. By palpable degrees the scales weighed down in favour of Mr. Gossage, who, after all, whenever she could realise it, was Mr. Gossage, the unapproachable shop-walker in Blessington's.

They arrived in time for a mid-day meal. Everyone helped to spread it out on the grass—everyone except Mr. Gossage. It was perhaps natural in that company that he did not quite feel it to be his job. But when he proposed to Jenny that she should come with him for a little walk—"Just while they get ready for your ladyship," he laughed, and meant to please her—she was surprised to find herself feeling no pleasure at all. The scales registered nothing in his favour then. She looked across at Jimmy. He was laying out the plates in a circle on the grass. It looked as though he felt himself merely to be a servant. What had become of the assurance he had shown that day when he took her into the country and told her all he knew about Nature? She felt she could never marry a man who was subservient. Was it to be Mrs. Gossage? She experienced a sensation of annoyance that it was deciding itself so easily.

It was after the meal, when the plates had been cleared away, that someone suggested kiss-in-the-ring. There was a shout of excited dissent from the girls.

"Why not?" said Mr. Gossage unbendingly. "I've got a clean handkerchief."

Again the scales swung in his favour. At least he was trying to make the picnic a success.

It all began very mildly. Blindfolding was genuine. Everybody played the game. The most inappropriate kisses were given. The chases were decorous and proper around the immediate vicinity of the ring, and, when ever, the victim, willing or otherwise, was brought into the ring's centre for everyone's amusement to see the salute.

But by the time Jenny was caught for the process of blindfolding, it had become little less than a farce. They were all peeping under the handkerchief. Every one of them knew she could see.

Who was it going to be? They all guessed right. Even Jimmy Punnett, with his heart leaping for an instant from the dead weight in his breast, knew the result of her pretended gropings round the ring.

It was Mr. Gossage she touched, and, turning in his white-and-brown shoes, with his white trousers flapping over his black socks, Mr. Gossage ran like a hare. Snatching the handkerchief off her eyes, Jenny was after him.

Here was a test of him, a holding of the scales for almost the last point in his favour. Was he really going to try and get away, or was he going to let himself be caught? Was she going to like it when he kissed her, or was she not?

He circled once round the ring, then broke away under the trees. She followed him. All the others, laughing, went on with the game without them.

When at last she came up with him, she found herself beyond a little spinney of birch trees, out of sight of all the others. There he turned and, as she reached him, he caught her in his arms.

Somehow or other, this was not her calculation. He had kissed her a dozen times before she could struggle out of his hold. Then, in obedience to some impulse, she smacked his face.

* * * * *

A few weeks after Jenny's picnic Jimmy Punnett gave in his notice to Blessington's. The news ran round the shop. When it reached her ears, Jenny sought him out.

"Why are you going?" she asked.

"Because I want to get back."

"Where?"

"To the country."

"But those boats—I thought you'd burnt them."

The chuckle came back for a moment into his voice.

"I'm going in someone else's boat. I answered an advertisement. I'm putting the money I've saved into a small chicken farm a man has down in Sussex. He wants a little capital and a working partner. I'm chancing it."

This was at nine o'clock in the morning. Blessington's had just opened. There were no customers as yet. But the eyes of Mr. Gossage were upon them like a hawk upon two sparrows twittering.

"What's your lunch hour?" she asked.

"Half-past twelve."

"So's mine. Let's have it outside."

There was a room called the restaurant in Blessington's where the assistants could have their meals. It was not obligatory. They met outside the tradesmen's entrance at half-past twelve and went to a tea-shop in a neighbouring street.

He had to disillusion her about the boats. There seemed to be no common ground of understanding till he had done that. With some difficulty in giving up the picture in her mind, she substituted chickens for boats, and could then listen to Jimmy Punnett's dream and the business. It was the poultry farmer's dream, every bird bringing in a profit of fifteen shillings a year. Five hundred birds, three hundred and seventy-five pounds a year. He was putting in a hundred pounds, all his savings, into an established farm down in Sussex. In return for that and his labour, he was to have a share in the profits.

"Pity you haven't got it all yourself," she said.

He laughed. That was a dream beyond the reach of business.

"Do you remember that little cottage at Sibyl Headingham?"

He nodded. London was fifty miles away.

"That cottage," she said, "with a little bit of ground."

"Four or five acres," he murmured.

"How much would that cost?"

"About three hundred pounds."

"And the chickens?"

"Houses, wire netting, birds, an incubator, p'r'aps another two hundred."

"Could it be anywhere you liked?"

"Anywhere."

"Have you seen this place in Sussex?"

"Yes, I went down there two Sundays ago."

"What's it like?"

He described a little village under the

Downs, where instead of the motor horns the sheep rang their bells, and instead of the hawkers' cries in the street outside, the blackbird rang his call. When he told her it was called "Didling," she laughed. She began saying to herself: "Didling—London—the Downs——"

"If he can't find a little capital," said Jimmy, "he's got to sell the place as it stands."

"Why?"

"He's tried to do too much at the start—spent more money than he's got—thought he was going to make a big living straight away. Lots of 'em do that."

Jenny was thinking almost too fast to speak. She leant across the marble-topped table with her eyes glittering.

"When are you leaving Blessington's?"

"Saturday."

"What are you doing on Sunday?"

"Going down to Sussex."

"I'll come with you."

He stared at her as she looked at her watch. It was half-past one. They were half an hour over their time.

Mr. Gossage's eye fell sharply upon Jenny as she entered the hosiery department.

"Miss Pendred!" he said.

She came up to him smiling. All the mystery had disappeared from Mr. Gossage ever since that day in Richmond Park. She saw him no longer in his black-tailed coat and striped trousers. Her picture of his deportment was of a man in blue yachting coat with brass buttons, his white flannel trousers flapping over black socks and brown-and-white shoes as he careered before her.

"You're over half an hour late," said Mr. Gossage, looking at his watch.

"Yes," said she.

"May I ask where you've been?"

"It makes no difference to the fact that I'm late," she said, "but I don't mind telling you."

"Oh, where have you been, then?"

"To Didling."

"And where's that?"

"Under the Sussex Downs."

He asked her if she had taken leave of her senses. She was inclined to admit that she had. She was still saying to herself: "Didling—London—the Downs——"

Then across the noise of the shop and the distant roar of 'buses she heard Jimmy's voice saying to a customer: "Four-and-eleven-three a yard, madam, that is the best. But there is a cheaper quality, if you like."

Then she knew she was quite sane. She had made her selection, that was all. She had chosen the best.

It is a considerable moment in any woman's life.

# A CHRISTMAS SONG.

**OH, here's to the holly that hangs on the wall,**
**That loveliest folly, the Christmas-time holly,**
**And here's to the parlour, the kitchen, the hall!**
**For ev'ry red berry let one heart be merry,**
**For ev'ry red berry good fortune befall.**
**Oh, here's to the holly that hangs on the wall!**

**Oh, here's to the holly that hangs on the wall,**
**Fantastic and jolly, the Christmas-time holly,**
**And here's to the master, and mistress, and all!**
**Of each scarlet berry let some ill be chary,**
**For each scarlet berry some care dwindle small.**
**Oh, here's to the holly that hangs on the wall!**

**Oh, here's to the holly that hangs on the wall,**
**That loveliest folly, the Christmas-time holly,**
**And here's to all houses, capacious and small,**
**With green leaf and berry rememb'ring and merry!**
**For ev'ry red berry some gladness befall!**
**Oh, here's to the holly that hangs on the wall!**

**AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.**

# THE CHRISTMAS CUP

## By EDGAR WALLACE

*Author of "Sanders of the River," "Bones," "The Keepers of the King's Peace," "The Fellowship of the Frog," "Jack o' Judgment," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

COLONEL DESBORO was an easy-going man, and, for himself, did not greatly object to patched carpets, an odd-handled knife or two, and chintz covers that had faded and thinned through over-much washing. But he had no desire that Joan should go through life in an environment of patches and makeshifts.

"He's a very nice fellow, Martin, but——" He shook his head.

The big "but" about the Great Sham of Sunna Lodge was put more definitely by Miss Æthel Morsel later in the day, when Joan Desboro called at Matte Hall, a little too early for the "club," but in nice time to absorb from experienced twenty-six the wisdom so vitally necessary to twenty-one and three months.

"Men," said Æthel, with an air of finality, "are naturally children. They boast and they lie, and mean no harm by it. Children. They never grow up." She said this in the manner of one who had wrapped a clever thought in a gossamer of paradox.

The girl who was perched on the fender of Æthel Morsel's sitting-room sighed and knit her forehead in a tremendous frown. She was more than pretty even in the searching light of a March morning. Her figure was slim, every movement revealed a new and pleasing grace; but she was no philosopher, and her views about men were too concentrated to be of any use in a broad and general conspection of their merits.

To rich people like Æthel philosophy comes as natural as purring to a cat, but with the poor, philosophy is a painful exercise. And the Desboros were so poor that they could not afford to hide the fact.

"Mark is a little difficult," she admitted reluctantly, "but I don't think you quite understand him, Æthel."

"He's American," said Æthel significantly, and when Joan murmured "Canadian," she ignored the distinction.

"He's a boaster and, of course, quite impossible," said Æthel. "We don't even know that he has any money. And he's not 'county.' We had better be very careful." She nodded ominously.

"Why?"

But the warning obliquely flung was not amplified, and there was really no reason why it should have been.

"Martin must be well off—he paid a thousand pounds for a horse," said Joan with some spirit. A thousand pounds was an awful lot.

"Money for horses means nothing," said the practical Æthel. "Quite dreadful people buy horses. Of course he must have money—he does no work. Papa says he is probably living on his capital. And that can end only in bankruptcy."

Not by candle-light or moonlight could Æthel Morsel be described as pretty. She had been "Ethel" in the baptismal register, and "Ethel" she would have been to the end of her days but for the advent of Ælfred Burdenlast, a young man of considerable musical attainments, but with no especial gift for earning his daily bread.

The association was of a transitory kind. He came, made love with a certain delicacy, was figuratively thrown on to the ash-pit by Mr. Morsel, and faded from human ken. Some say that he went to Hollywood and became a cinema star. He left an additional vowel in Ethel's name, and a heart which

never again glowed to the music and banners of romance.

The Morsels were the Morsels of Braystone, in the County of Westshire. There was another branch in Northumberland, but nobody knew anything about them; how they ever got to Northumberland is a mystery.

Arthur Persimmin Morsel was very rich, an owner of ten thousand acres, a deer forest, a trout stream, a tract of territory in Angola, a ranch in Canada, and a flat in Park Lane.

He was a large pink man, who rode to hounds with the greatest care, and knew every gate and safety path in Westshire. He had never seen a live fox, except at the Zoological Gardens, for he was rather short-sighted. Nevertheless, his picture appeared in certain illustrated weeklies with great regularity as "Mr. Morsel, the well-known fox-hunter." Thus he was depicted on his horse and off, or else with a very black face (flashlight photographs produce that effect sometimes) in a very white shirt and his pink jacket (which also photographed black) at the annual hunt ball.

It is a copybook axiom that riches do not necessarily bring content, and this was the case with Mr. Morsel. He was a hard bargainer, a shrewd buyer, and the sight of money flowing past his golden reservoir, untrapped by the many channels which maintained its height, made him a very unhappy man. And money came easily to him: his luck was phenomenal. He invariably returned from Monte Carlo with an addition to his capital; he never played at the Paddock (of which exclusive club he was one of the most respected—or, at least, one of the oldest members) without rising from the table a winner, though it was uncharitably suggested that he chose his table judiciously, preferring the society of callow and monied youth to the competition of hard-faced men to whom the playing of poker was a natural instinct. And when he had a house-party at Matte Hall the male guests were chosen as carefully.

He once won four thousand pounds at a sitting from a youth named Jones, and derived great satisfaction from his coup, for by so doing, as he said, he "knocked the infernal nonsense out of the young cub."

All foolish young men were "young cubs" to Mr. Morsel, just as all gentlemen who never went beyond half-crown bridge were "old foxes."

Jones is a very usual name sometimes borne by unusual people. Ferdie Jones, for example, was an unusual youth. He had been desperately in love with Æthel, and had advanced the impossible suggestion that with the four thousand pounds left over from his patrimony he should turn Sunna Lodge into a poultry farm, marry Æthel, and live happily ever after.

Long days had passed since Æthel lost her heart to an impecunious violinist. She had acquired balance and a sense of what was due to wealth. Important people had looked wistfully at her, a rackety peer had once kissed her. She consulted her father about Ferdie. Mr. Morsel frowned at his cigar and invited Ferdie to spend a week-end at the Hall.

It was a fair game, if anything is fair when one player of *ecarté* had learnt the game only a few weeks before, and the other could draw cards in his sleep.

So Ferdie Jones went away, and Sunna Lodge appeared in the back page of *The Times* as:—

"A desirable hunting box in a good hunting district. Two packs. Company's water, own electric plant. A bargain. . . ."

Once a week during the winter it was the usual thing to drop in at Matte Hall for tea. Nobody knew how the practice started, but Matte Hall on Thursday afternoons became a sort of county club.

The big oak-lined banqueting hall, with its huge fireplace piled with blazing logs in the colder weather, was crowded with people between the hours of five and six-thirty. They sat on the ancient settles, or (if they were young and "rheumatics" was one of the missing words of their bright lexicons) they perched on the window seats or leant against the panelled walls, adding new lustre to the polish.

And everybody talked at once.

"We got on to a new scent at Figgerty Farm—a vixen, and she gave us a run for two and a half hours, my boy! Killed at Reverly Copse . . . went to earth near Crawford's place. . . . He's a half-brother to Bachelor's Fancy—a fine 'lepper' with legs as sound as a bell of brass. . . . You can't do better than go to Critchfords; the breeches I bought there four years ago are like new. . . ."

They all talked at once—all except Mr. Mark Martin, who drifted from group to group, listening with a smile on his good-looking face.

Nobody took much notice of Mark. They were too polite to roast him, too satisfied

with the possession of his guilty secret to pursue inquiries any further. And when he found an opening, as he sometimes did, they listened with extraordinary courtesy.

"You don't get hunting in this county that any way approaches the sport we have in Canada. I remember an old hunter of mine. . . ."

They listened, not looking at one another, interjecting in the proper places a conventional expression of their surprise and wonder. But everybody knew that he couldn't ride!

Whether Mark Martin was an American, a Canadian, or plain English, he was certainly an amiable man. His age was something under thirty, but not very far under, and it was he who purchased, from the agents of the departed Jones, Sunna Lodge, that desirable residence.

He was not "county" in the strict sense. You could not be "county" unless you had an immediate interest in a family vault, or could claim part proprietorship in one of those commemorative tablets which adorn the walls of so many parish churches, and which usually start off with a coat-of-arms and end with:

Also the wife of the above
Sir Thos. Smithington, Kt.

But hunting breeds a sort of democracy. Stout men and women, hard-riding and wind-bitten (as they are described by local reporters) grow tender towards one another in the common bond which unites all who go forth on horses to the destruction of *vulpes alopex*.

Mr. Martin had a stable of horses in training, and was a member of the hunt, and he had often appeared in the field, but generally on foot. Sometimes he would come to a meet in his expensive car, but never had he appeared on horseback. It was regrettable, he explained, but he had ricked an ankle, or he had bruised a knee, or he had one of those fearful headaches which made riding a positive torture.

He had also been photographed in hunting pink, and his picture had appeared alongside of Mr. Morsel's. He had been photographed at the hunt ball sitting side by side with Lady Mary Seprals (that hard-riding, wind-bitten woman). But nobody had ever seen him riding a horse.

There was an occasion when he turned up at the Highcliffe Point-to-Point wearing jockey's breeches and top boots, and it had been announced, not only in the local newspaper, but in those stately metropolitan organs devoted to the sport of kings, that he would ride his own horse Ripple Along in the Highcliffe Handicap.

But this time he had a sprained shoulder, and with great regret handed over his mount to a professional rider, who won. Indeed, many of Mr. Martin's horses won races, though in other hands than his.

When it was given out that he would ride Lumber in the Hunt Gold Cup, people remembered the sprain and gave him another chance. But this time he cut his finger (and there was the hugely bandaged digit in proof). Some talk there was of asking him to resign from the hunt, but nothing came of it.

And then came the supreme bluff of the Great Sham. He entered Lumber in the Christmas Cup at Wolverston Races. The Christmas Cup is to hunting people the blue ribbon of steeplechasing. It is the "paramount and Olympic prize" which brings the shires in full force to Wolverston.

Moreover, it was publicly announced that Lumber would be ridden by Mr. Martin himself. Colonel Desboro heard this news at first hand, and wriggled uncomfortably in the deep and none too comfortable armchair.

"What a weird beggar you are, Martin!" he said, becoming frank in his irritation. "Enter the horse by all means, but why tell people you're going to ride it?"

Mark looked at him thoughtfully. "I don't know, I thought I would," he said. He tapped his long riding-boots with his hunting-crop—he never went abroad without this evidence of his horsemanship. "I rather like to see fellows riding their own horses."

"But, Mark, is it necessary you should ride at all?" broke in Joan. Her voice was troubled, and that frown of hers had become almost immovable in the past few days. "People are so horrid about—things."

His look of astonishment was badly simulated.

"And the Wolverston course wants an awful lot of riding, Mark. Captain Burnley, who won the race last year, told me there wasn't a course in England, not even the National course, that took so much out of a horse and a rider."

"In Canada——" began Mark.

"This isn't Canada," interrupted the Colonel shortly. "This is Wolverston, and the Christmas Cup isn't a point-to-point affair. You'll have to compete against men like Ridley and Burnley and other fellows

who are as good as the best professionals. I think your horse has a big chance—I was telling Joan just before you came—and I suppose in the end it will win. But why on earth commit yourself to the statement that you will ride ?"

He glanced across at his daughter and signalled her to leave the room, and when they were alone he said: "I'm going to talk straight to you, Martin. Joan and you have developed rather a friendship in the past six months. What is there in it ?"

The younger man eyed him steadily.

"Lumber was leading by a field."

"There's a lot in it, Colonel," he said quietly. "I love Joan and I'm hoping that you will give her to me—one of these days."

Colonel Desboro filled his pipe with great deliberation. "It comes down to a question of your prospects, my young friend," he said gruffly.

It required a physical and spiritual effort on his part to mention so mundane a subject as money, but he braced himself.

"You have an income, I suppose ?"

Mark Martin nodded. "I have three thousand a year," he said.

The Colonel looked up quickly in surprise and fingered his chin. "That's a pretty good income," he admitted.

"So Mr. Morsel seems to think," replied the other gravely.

"Morsel ? What has he to do with it ?"

The young man studied the bone crook of his crop as though he had only just discovered its use.

"He's been making inquiries about my position, fortunately through a friend of mine in London. He happens to be a commercial agent, and inquiries of that character come to him."

The Colonel sat upright, pipe in hand. "The dickens he has!" he said softly. "Do you play cards, Martin ?"

Mark Martin shook his head. "No," he said. "I like an occasional gamble, but not on cards. Why do you ask, Colonel ?"

But Colonel Desboro was too charitable to give expression to his thoughts. Instead: "Do you mind if I speak plainly to you, my friend ?"

Mark shook his head, guessing what was coming.

"You are not really a very good rider, are you ?"

Gently as the question was put, it was

blunt enough, and the young man resumed his study of the hunting crop.

"I'm one of the best riders in Canada, he said doggedly, and the Colonel smiled.

"We've all got our little weaknesses, my boy," he said kindly. "I remember when I was a kid I distressed my poor dear mother—who'd rather have died than tell a lie—by describing a dog fight that I hadn't seen!"

He waited.

Colonel Desboro considered this matter. "No," he said slowly, "there is no desperate hurry. But why the Christmas Cup?"

"Until after I've won it."

Mark was avoiding the questioning eyes of the older man.

"Till after you've won it, eh?" The Colonel pursed his lips,

"Joan stood by her father on a farm waggon, open-mouthed, amazed."

and then: "All right, let it go at that. Jackson trains the horse, doesn't he?"

Mark nodded.

"I'll come over one morning and see you do an exercise gallop," said the Colonel, not without malice, and had the satisfaction of seeing the young man start.

"I'd rather you didn't," he said; "I'm really fearfully nervous—that's my only weakness. If I knew anybody was looking on, I should feel terrible. It's a sort of stage-fright," he explained lamely. "I don't know whether you ever had it?"

"I've never been on the stage." The Colonel was usually blunt that morning. "In fact, I've never pretended to be anything else but what I am, and I think other

"I've never seen a dog fight, either," said Mark simply. "If you want me to say that I am a bad rider, I'm afraid I must disappoint you. I'm really awfully good. And, Colonel—I'm very fond of Joan and everything, but I've not asked her to marry me—yet."

Colonel Desboro looked at him sharply. "Is there any special reason?"

The other nodded. "A very good reason. Nothing discreditable to me, but—well, I don't know. Would you mind very much if nothing was definitely settled until after the Christmas Cup?"

people would be happier if they followed my example."

"I must tell Morsel that," said Mark innocently, "for he is pretending that he has taken a violent liking to me!"

Mr. Arthur Persimmin Morsel was a gentleman who had many of the attributes of the eagle. He could hover on extended pinions and, to the uninitiated eye, appear to be motionless, when in reality he was planning a devastating swoop.

It was the news in *The Westshire Gazette* that made him hover a little more tensely.

"Lumber is a certain runner in the Christmas Cup. He will be ridden by his owner, Mr. Mark Martin, the wealthy young Canadian who a year ago purchased Sunna Lodge, which has been unoccupied since Mr. Ferdinand Jones went abroad. Mr. Martin is an enthusiastic fox-hunter, and is certain to take a lot of beating in the Cup."

Amongst the many channels which drained into the golden pit of Mr. Morsel was one labelled *Westshire Gazette,* of which he was the principal shareholder and chairman of directors. He rang up the editor, a civil and obliging man.

"Where did you get that paragraph about Martin?" he asked.

The editor begged him to wait one moment whilst he interviewed the chief reporter, who was also the chief sub-editor and all the other sub-editors there were. After a while he came back.

"It was written by Mr. Martin himself," he said.

Morsel smiled into his trim white moustache. "I thought so," he said.

The training of Lumber for the Christmas Cup was taken in hand during the month of November. Every morning Mr. Martin could be seen driving in the direction of his trainer's stables, and invariably he was attired in riding breeches and most business-like leggings. And every day, a few hours later, he would alight from his car at the end of the village and come walking briskly up the street, his boots splashed with mud.

And at that hour there were quite a number of people to be met with in the village. Joan met him twice. Mr. Morsel saw him on several occasions and was rather amused. To Æthel one evening he said:

"What are you doing about Christmas, my dear?"

Æthel was doing nothing about Christmas.

"You might ask the Desboros to dinner, and ask that fellow Martin over. And, in case I forget it, I'd like you to put the Desboro girl next to this young cub."

"Good Heavens—why?" asked Æthel.

Mr. Morsel was lighting a cigar, and she had to wait till he stopped to breathe. "A whim of mine."

"Is he really training his horse?" asked Æthel. "The vicar told me that he had seen him come in, his boots and breeches splashed with mud."

"He does that half-way between here and Jackson's place," said Mr. Morsel, without smiling. "Breaks off a twig, dips it into the nearest puddle and flicks it round. I've had a man watching him for a week."

"But has he been riding the horse?" insisted Æthel.

"He hasn't been near the horse," replied her father. "All the riding has been done by Jenkins, the stable jockey."

"Is he mad?" demanded Æthel, who could find no other explanation.

"No, my dear—vanity, just vanity. Not a bad fellow apart from that infernal nonsense of his. I suppose these Americans like to be thought well of, and cut a dash with their money. Don't forget the Christmas Eve dinner. Write pretty soon in case they make another engagement."

It was the practice of Mr. Morsel to go to London once a week to a board meeting. He was methodical in his habits. He usually walked from the terminus to Piccadilly, where his town car was waiting for him. This walk supplied the constitutional which was denied him by his early departure from Matte Hall. He knew Priggins's Riding School very well, and passed its gates every morning he came to London. Indeed, he had a friendly feeling for Priggins's Riding School, because over the office entrance, by the side of the gate, was a small sign, supported on wrought-iron brackets, depicting a noble-looking fox-hunter in a beautifully fitting pink coat, jumping a huge fence with a confident smile on his handsome face. Once he had taken Æthel that way and had pointed out the curious resemblance between the handsome, smiling gentleman and himself.

He had turned into the street which holds Priggins's establishment, when ahead of him he saw a familiar figure. It was Mr. Mark Martin, and he was hurrying along, evidently having left the taxi which was turning as Mr. Morsel came into the street. He moved furtively and, with a nervous glance round, disappeared through the

gates of the riding school. Mr. Morsel's jaw dropped in astonishment, and then a curious gleam came to his eyes. He stopped opposite the open gates and looked into the sand-covered courtyard. It was empty. Without hesitation he turned into the little office, and gathered that the gentleman in riding breeches and highly-polished boots who was writing a letter as he came in was either Mr. Priggins himself or someone in authority. It proved to be both.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Morsel," said Priggins respectfully, when the visitor had cautiously revealed himself, with a request that the object of his call should be treated confidentially, "I know your name very well, sir; I saw a photograph of you in *County Sport* the other day."

"Very likely, very likely," said Mr. Morsel, with a grand air of indifference. "Now, I want you to tell me, Mr. Priggins, in the strictest confidence, do you know that young man who came into your yard a few minutes ago?"

There was a little window above the desk which commanded a view of the courtyard, and Mr. Priggins had duly noted the arrival.

"Oh, he?" He chuckled as at a good joke. "He's a gentleman from the country—Martin by name."

"What does he do here?"

Again Mr. Priggins smiled. "Well, to tell you the truth, he's rather a source of income to me, Mr. Morsel. He's been taking riding lessons off and on for the past month, but I've never been able to get him out of the school."

A slow smile dawned on Mr. Morsel's pink face.

"A good rider, is he?" he asked almost jovially.

"Good rider! If I only could get him to sit on a horse properly, I'd be happy! I've given up trying, and have handed him over to one of my assistants. There are some people you can never teach to ride: they haven't the gift for it."

Morsel considered. "Is it possible to get a peep at him?" he suggested.

Mr. Priggins nodded, took down a key from the board-lined wall, and, leading the way through a door, traversed a harness-room and conducted the inquirer up a steep and narrow flight of dark stairs. At the top he paused, his hand on a door.

"If you don't want him to know you're here, you'd better not speak," he said, and Mr. Morsel nodded.

The riding-master opened the door cautiously. They were on a small wooden balcony overlooking the school, which was a fairly large hall, its floor covered deep with peat moss. Riding at a jog-trot was Mr. Mark Martin. His back was towards the observer, but even if he had faced the other way it seemed doubtful whether he would have noticed anything but the extreme unsteadiness of the large roan horse he was riding. He swayed in the saddle like a drunken man, and bumped up and down at the psychologically wrong moment in a manner which was curious to see. And all the time there was an exchange of instruction and protest between the rider and a sad young man in gaiters who directed the lesson.

"Keep your elbows down, sir. Your toes in, sir. Put your shoulders back, sir. No, sir, don't hold him by the mane. Walk!"

"Can't walk! Beastly thing jolts. Whoaa, you brute! Am I doing any better to-day?"

Even the riding instructor, inured as he was to the habit of praise, would not answer in the affirmative. Mr. Morsel shook with laughter and his face grew purple.

"Now, sir, just try trotting again. Keep your elbows down by your side. Your hands up—that's right, sir. Now, sir. . . ."

The indignant horse broke into a steady trot. Mr. Mark Martin rolled like a ship in a heavy gale. He lost an iron and clutched at the mane. He slipped forward on the horse's withers, he pushed himself back on to the horse's quarters, and finally he slipped ungracefully from the horse's neck to the tanned floor.

"Good Heavens! Phew!"

A touch on Mr. Morsel's elbow and he withdrew through the door and down the stairs. A few minutes later he was walking away, swinging his umbrella, a beatific smile upon his face.

Christmas Eve at Matte Hall: the countryside still white with the heavy snows that had fallen on the Monday; cedar logs burning in the great fireplace; holly wreaths decorously hung on the panelled walls; and a gay company about the generous board of Mr. Persimmin Morsel.

And everybody (except one) was happy, for the very season was as a vintage wine, and Mark found himself, to his comfort, placed next to Joan Desboro. There was a whisper that Æthel's engagement to Lord Winderley was to be announced, but this proved to be premature, though his lord-

ship (who was a fawn-coloured man with a heavy yellow moustache) was seated next to her, and from time to time they looked at one another understandingly.

There was no talk but of the Wolverston races and the Cup. The redoubtable Captain Burnley was there, an apple-faced man who regarded all public meals as tiresome preliminaries to the consumption of old brandy, and Lady Mary, who had bought a new hunter at Tattersalls' and had discovered unsuspected values in her purchase. The Rev. Walter Affelow, the famous hunting parson, who was famous rather for his prowess over a country than for his other Christian qualities, was there, and Gonnington-Drake, one of the leading lights of the Paddock Club; even Boultby Malcolm, the hunting banker, and, facing Mark, Colonel Desboro, a very uneasy man, but not quite so uneasy as the nervous girl who sat by Mark's side.

"Oh, there'll be racing all right," said Burnley confidently. "The course dries up easily and gets most of the sun that is going. I went round the track this morning. By Jove, those fences will take some jumping! A horse has only got to touch them and you're down—stiff as a park wall!"

"The water kills them," said the Rev. Walter Affelow complacently. "After weather like this the take-off will be like batter pudding!"

"Riding yours?"

It was Mr. Morsel's careless inquiry that cut through the conversation.

Mark nodded with a smile. "Yes, I shall be riding mine. What is more, I shall win. Don't any of you people miss Lumber! I went down into Wolverston yesterday and had a look at the Cup—it's a beauty! Of course, I've got dozens of 'em," he went on, and with one accord the whole table stopped talking, "but, curiously enough, I've never had a gold cup."

"I don't remember seeing them on your sideboard," said the vicar.

"I've got a packing-case full of 'em. I haven't troubled to get them out," said Mark carelessly.

"How's the horse?" asked Burnley.

"Never better," replied Mark complacently, as he sipped his wine. "He gave me a wonderful ride this morning. I'm a little worried about the water jump, too, but I think I can get over that. The wretched people who bet at Wolverston would scream if you asked them for the odds to fifty pounds."

Everybody agreed as to this, for the poverty, or parsimony, of Wolverston bookmakers was notorious.

The girl by his side was groaning inwardly. She tried ineffectually to turn the conversation in another direction.

"I thought of keeping Lumber for the National," Mark rattled on. "One could win a fortune there."

"You can win a fortune at Wolverston," said Mr. Morsel slowly. "Come now, Martin, to oblige you I will turn bookmaker for your especial benefit!"

There were eight people at that table who saw the fly thrown and waited breathlessly for the fish to rise. And he rose nobly.

"By Jove, would you?" said Mark.

"He will be at least six to one against," said Morsel, "especially if you ride him yourself. Now, I'll make you an offer. I'll lay you twelve thousand to two that Lumber doesn't win the Cup."

"I'll take you," said Mark, half rising from his seat.

"Wait a moment. This is the only condition—*that you are the rider*."

They saw the change that came to the younger man's face. The girl was looking at him appealingly, and her heart sank as she saw the smile fade.

"That—er—that isn't necessary, is it?" he asked. "I mean, suppose anything happened to me—and I had rather a twinge of rheumatism this morning."

"You say you're going to ride the horse, you're the best rider in Canada, and I'm offering you a wager that you couldn't get and will not get on the course."

And now the company knew just why Mr. Mark Martin had been invited to dinner, and why the girl had been placed by him. He must either refuse, humiliate her hopelessly, and be completely and finally exposed, or he must save his face at the cost of two thousand pounds. He looked left and right as though seeking a way of escape.

"I'll take your wager, Mr. Morsel," he said loudly.

"You can make it eighteen thousand to three thousand, if you like," suggested Morsel.

He leaned back in his chair, his eyes never moving from the face of the Great Sham.

"I'll take that!"

"There you are," Mr. Morsel beamed, "there you are, my boy! You've made eighteen thousand pounds! If I don't pay you," he said jovially, "you can post me at the Paddock Club!'

And that, for the girl, was the tragedy of the evening.

Mark drove her back in his car to the little cottage. Colonel Desboro sat behind and brooded on the vanity of youth. As for Joan, she did not speak until he helped her to alight from the machine.

"Why did you do it, Mark ?" she asked, and he knew from her voice that she was really hurt.

"I am awfully sorry, but I had to do it, my dear."

When Colonel Desboro had gone in, she lingered.

"Mark, why did you tell father——" She did not finish the sentence.

"About not asking you until the Cup was run ?"

She nodded; her face in the moonlight was very pale, and he thought he had never seen her look so eerily beautiful.

"Is there some reason—why I should not —bear your name ?" she asked.

"There is—yes," he answered awkwardly. "But I think that reason will not exist after Boxing Day."

* * * * *

The authorities invariably drafted large forces of police to Wolverston for Boxing Day, and they were needed to control the crowd which flocked up to Knights' Field, where the races were held. An unclouded blue sky, an invigorating, frosty morning, and the little stands and paddock were crowded; the field where the motors were parked was black with shining roofs.

Joan did not see The Sham until after the second race, and then, with a groan, she noted that, although he was wearing his jockey breeches and boots, he walked with a limp.

"It's nothing," he said almost savagely. "I knocked my knee getting into the car."

"You won't be able to ride ?"

"I think so." He was almost brusque.

Mr. Morsel, in his big tweed coat with the fur collar, was also an amused observer of the limp. He saw Mark disappear into the stewards' room, and laughed softly.

Æthel was never at her best on a cold day —her nose had a tendency to redden in the northern breezes—but there was a very good reason why she, who never went even to point-to-point meetings because of this disability, which even a powder-puff would not overcome, should have an interest in the Christmas Cup. For Mr. Mark Martin was to give her an additional wedding present. It is true he did not know that his three thousand pounds would be invested in the most luxurious and expensive of motor-cars, but that, indeed, was its destination. Moreover, she had a very natural and proper desire to be present on the occasion of the great exposure.

"He has gone in to tell the stewards he can't ride, and, by Jove, he's only just in time !" said Morsel, for already the riders were coming from the weighing-room, their gaudy caps showing incongruously above heavy overcoats and turned-up collars.

But Mr. Martin said nothing to the stewards about his inability to ride. He interviewed the three stewards, and they accepted certain alterations which he suggested.

"It's too late to alter it on the card or even on the number-board. You'll have to go out as you are," said the senior steward. "Have you notified the change, in accordance with the rules, to the Hunt Committee ?"

"Yes," said Mark, and showed the letter he had received from the august secretary of National Hunt racing.

"That's all right," said the steward. "You'd better hurry up: the saddling bell will be ringing in a few minutes. Have you weighed out ?"

Mark smiled. "Yes, I've weighed out," he said, and, to the everlasting amazement of Mr. Morsel, he came out from the weighing-room swinging his whip, limping a little, but showing no other sign of perturbation.

Mr. Morsel watched like a man in a dream, and saw him get up on to the back of the big chestnut. He cantered down to the post and did not fall off. When the flag fell he was the first away, heading his field by half a length. The preliminary fence was an easy one, but it was sufficiently difficult to make an inexperienced rider fall. So far from falling, Mark seemed part of the horse. He overleapt his protagonists at every fence, and took the water jump in his stride.

Joan stood by her father on a farm waggon, open-mouthed, amazed, dreaming, she thought, so that she pinched herself. But she was wide awake. Lumber was leading by a field. He hopped the two last fences like a bird and cantered up the straight, an easy winner by a distance.

Mr. Morsel said nothing. He was incapable of speech. He could only stare, in a mad kind of way, as, with a smile on his brown face, Martin touched his hat to the applauding fox-hunters, and then he said hollowly:

"I've been caught."

But he sent his cheque that night. The cheque had been cleared when he met Mark Martin, and would have passed him with a glare, but Mark stopped him.

" I think you ought to know, Mr. Morsel," he said, " that I raced in an assumed name."

" Eh ? " said Morsel, suddenly alert. " That isn't allowed under the rules."

" The horse was not nominated in my name, but in the name of my trainer," said Mark quietly, " and at the last minute I notified the Hunt Committee that I was not Mark Martin, but Mark Martin Jones, and received permission to ride."

" Jones ? " The name had a familiar ring.

" You knew a brother of mine—Ferdie. He's on my ranch now in Canada, Morsel. He had the effrontery to fall in love with your daughter, and you cleared up that entanglement by taking four thousand pounds from him at a card game he knew nothing about. I'm not saying it wasn't a straight game: I'm merely stating a bald fact. I am sending him four out of the eighteen thousand you so kindly gave me." He emphasised " gave." " And it was a gift, Mr. Morsel." There was a smile in the eyes that met the glare of the infuriated man. " You see, I *am* the best amateur rider in Canada. By the way, did you enjoy your morning in the riding school ? That was the fourth occasion on which I tried to lure you in—you hadn't noticed me before. Four is my lucky number ! "

Mr. Morsel waved his hands wildly, gurgled something, and passed on.

* * * * *

" I still don't realise," said Joan that night, " what was the dreadful secret you had to tell me. Why shouldn't I bear your name ? "

He shook his head with gentle melancholy.

" Jones ! " he said.

" And a very nice name," she said with conviction.

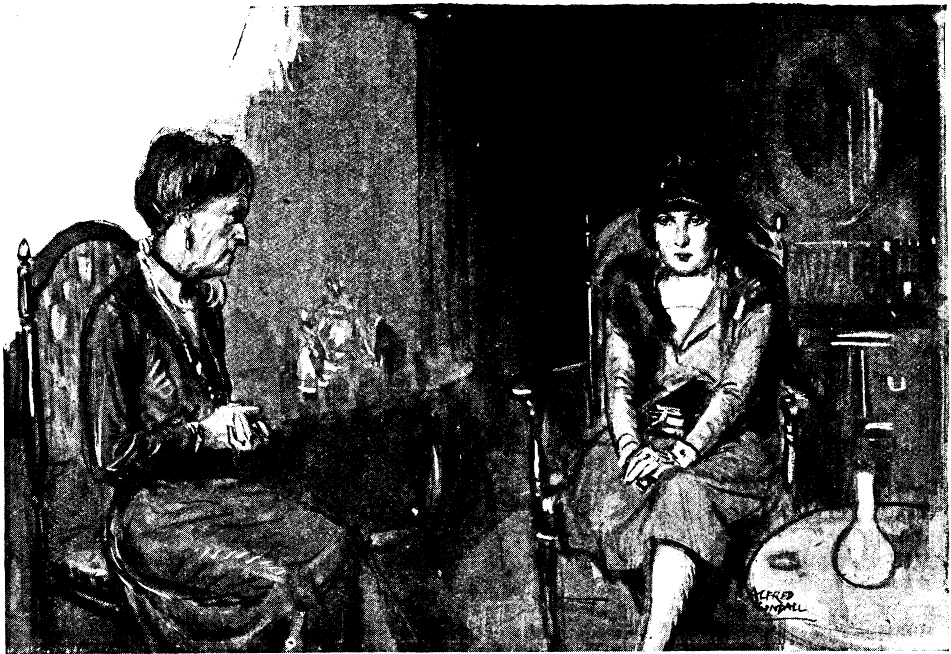
# THE HEART OF THE SWINGING FIR.

**CRADLING the birds when cold nights set in**
**Over the bennets, the moss and whin,**
**With stem as ruddy as a robin's breast,**
**Her babes-of-the-wood she rocks to rest,**
**All with the hush-a-bye songs that stir**
**From the sheltering heart,**
**The motherly heart,**
**The warm heart of the swinging fir.**

**When breaths of couch-grass, bramble and briar**
**Rise from the smoke of your fallow weed-fire,**
**And the driftwood is gathered in from the shore,**
**And your faggots bring fragrance in at your door;**
**When white with rime hangs the gossamer,**
**Glows the berry-red heart,**
**The robin-red heart,**
**The sweet heart of the swinging fir.**

**For the resin, the sap, the honey o' the moor,**
**She has taken them into her own heart's core.**
**And may her spruce-green boughs delight**
**Your children dear of a Christmas night,**
**When candles deck the dark leaves of her—**
**Oh, the merry, merry heart!**
**Oh, the songful heart!**
**The red heart of the swinging fir!**

**ALICE E. GILLINGTON.**



"Honoria was talking of that tree—just that old elm tree."

# ANCIENT LIGHTS

## By MRS. HENRY DUDENEY

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED SINDALL

THEY were walking up and down their garden, arms tucked together, and he reaching slightly up, which was emblematic.

Their delight was new and, to her, without flaw. They were planning improvements, and about them was a faint, fussy excitement and a great deal of bluster; for they were not used to being what they called independent. It was hard to realise that at last they could please themselves.

"We might," he said, "make a bricked path from the French window in the sitting-room to the chicken-run, here at the bottom. Then you wouldn't get your feet wet."

The look they exchanged was romantic. She squeezed his arm and whispered:

"You are always thinking out little things for me, Sam. And a bantam cock, did you say, with a bantam hen for his little wife? That would be ideal."

At every improvement he suggested she comfortably returned: "Yes, that would be ideal."

"Do you mean that it would be an idea, Jane?" he asked at last.

"No, dear, that I don't." She looked down at him with benevolent amusement. "Ideal's the word."

"Never heard you use it till we came here."

"Why, you old silly"—she squeezed up closer—"this is a different life. Didn't we make up our minds, when we retired from business and bought the place, that it should be different? New words, new ways of looking at things. We've got everything to learn."

They went lovingly walking up and down the wide path of this garden in the old country town—a garden that was prim and stately, a garden that for centuries had only grown shaved green lawn and old-

fashioned flowers. Their chicken-run was really a distressing and a vulgar innovation. She, with her quick feminine sense, had divined this, yet said nothing, for she really was set upon the bantam and his wife.

She was a large, slow woman, with little grey eyes that could change startlingly from fierce to tender. She was queerly dressed in fashionable clothes chosen haphazard from drapers' catalogues. Sam, now that they were gentlefolk, liked her to spend lots of money on her back.

He was a little, fussy man, with a way of looking up to her and a way of quickly boiling over in his temper. She treated him as she had treated her children—those grown-up boys and girls, all gone away—with strictness, tenderness, and a calm, business-like skill. It was her cool head that had made the money.

It was her commercial sense—just, yet unrelenting—which had got them out of more than one difficulty that might very well have swamped him. For he was volcanic and blundering.

"Funny, isn't it"—she looked quizzically at him as she padded up and down the wide path like a benevolent mother bear—"that we should be here, I mean? Ten o'clock in the morning, and nothing to do but enjoy ourselves. Do you remember how we used to talk about it at night, after the shutters were up? And we never quite felt it would come true."

He nodded and grinned, wiping his happy, round face, for it was a hot morning. And he hooked his hand more firmly through her comfortable, fat arm; their idea of affection was to keep close.

"Here we are"—he puffed out a breath of ample content—"gentlefolk!"

"Gentlefolk! That party next door wouldn't say so."

"The woman next door!" He at once boiled over. "Why, I could buy her up three times over!"

"Bless you, Sam"—Jane Stidworthy was tender and sage—"money doesn't count with her sort. Hard for us to understand, but there it is! And the town's full of women like her. Oh, civil enough, friendly, if you like, but—keep your distance, please! That's what they are. And take that ugly look off your face, Sam, for nobody's snubbed me, dear."

"They'd better not try, Jane!" He was fizzling.

"Why, she came in to see me and left cards. Calling! That's the way they make new friends. I've got lots of cards—for they've all been, because this is a big house. I've took that punch-bowl Cousin Eliza left us in her will, and stood it on the hall table to keep cards in. That's the way it's done."

She sounded peaceful and amused. She glanced at him in her reflective, maternal way. Samuel was her idol, now that the children were out in the world.

To outsiders Jane Stidworthy was a grim woman, in spite of her rosy fatness and her streak of humour. But the inner heart of her demanded something to worship without stint, and the gospel of her life now was that Samuel must never be crossed. He must have everything he wanted, and it would go hard with anyone who got in his way.

"You seem to know all about it, Jane—card leaving and that sort of foolery. You've got it all pat. I've been watching you with the servants. What a woman you are! And yet you say we're not gentry."

"Never shall be, love." She strolled him up and down. "I don't see that it matters one brass farthing."

"Matters this—I reckon I can pay for anything I want, and——"

"Don't get excited, old man. There's some things money won't buy. And don't you think that flower beds—heart shape—cut in this bit of grass would be ideal?"

"You're precious fond of that new word—ideal. Tell you what *mine* is, then—to put an extra couple of feet on the top of that wall, so that the woman next door can't spy on us. She's at it now."

His voice rose queerly, then bleated. Jane Stidworthy knew that voice and that look. Sam had got a grievance, and when this happened he fretted himself sick.

How many, many times had she deftly cleared up the path before his feet!

"You'll have a stroke if you don't take care." She was stern. "Didn't the doctor tell you to take things easy?"

"But look here, Jane, I've bought a big house and paid big money for it, and my idea of a garden—my ideal, then"—he laughed savagely—"is a place where you can do—well, anything in reason that you fancy. Yet there that woman sits, morning, noon, and night, overlooking us from that bedroom window. You must have noticed."

"'Tisn't much that I miss. Of course I've noticed. But it never worries me. If it worries you, build a bit on to the wall, as

you say. Might offend her, but we can afford to do without them all. Tickles me, all these women calling! I don't want their friendship. I've got you."

She leaned against him and she looked plaintively into his shining, troubled face.

"Now, when you say that and when you look like that, I want to give you a whopping big kiss, old girl—and I can't."

"Then stick a bit on to the wall, dear, and we'll kiss indoors till it's done."

He took off his hat and irritably rubbed his head.

"Mustn't add an inch to the wall. That's the trouble. Ancient lights, Jane. You can't build up a wall and block another person's light. Law of the land. Lawyer told me so when I bought the place. I didn't say a word to you, but that woman at the window got on my nerves from the start."

"Nerves! Nonsense! We come here to be happy. I'm getting cross."

"That's right, bully me!" He looked ruefully into her large, perturbed face. "She's got two eyes in her head, Jane—and I don't like 'em."

"Didn't we say"—she turned earnest; in her loving, anxious way she rated him—"that when we retired from business we wouldn't have a care in life? How often have we said that? You might say we swore it. And yet you go grizzling because one old woman looks out of her window."

He looked at her with pleading melancholy, with an implied reproach, as if he felt that she ought to get him out of this difficulty, as she had got him out of all the others.

"Rum," he said, "what a little thing will get on a man's nerves! Women are different."

"They've got more sense," she said sharply.

"But I've been treated for my nerves."

"Stuff and nonsense, Samuel! The doctor said that if we came and lived here—beautiful air, sea air, mountain air—you'd never know the meaning of nerves."

"I shouldn't if she'd go and sit somewhere else."

"I wonder"—Jane Stidworthy squinted craftily up—"why she does sit there? I wonder whether——"

"I can see what you're at," he interrupted. "Women—all over! Making up a story in your head. She sits there because she's confoundedly inquisitive, and that's the long and the short of it. Looks to me as if I *ought* to be able to make conditions——"

"Conditions! You want to be the Shah of Persia. Too much money's turned your head."

She looked at him drolly, then burst out laughing.

"Money won't do everything, Sam."

He stared with that bewildered, boyish glance which was one of the many things that made her little man so dear to her expansive heart.

"You're right—I'm a fool." He nodded quickly, looked up at the window where the neighbour sat, then nervously averted his eyes. "Does she think me mad, Jane, old girl? I do feel, now and then, as if my legs looked crazy when I walk down the path. And—well, there you are! Ancient lights! S'pose I've got to put up with her. Yet I'm not the man to be done, and you're not the woman. We proved that in our business life."

"That we did." She turned meditative, and he took heart. For he knew that look. It meant that she was thinking.

"Let's have a look at that extra bit of garden, Sam."

They turned. He opened a door in the high flint wall and they entered a second garden walled all round and with an elm tree in the middle. It was like a little bit of lost forest land pinioned between four walls—just the great elm tree patched with rooks' nests, just the old grey walls, in whose crevices snapdragons grew.

"Can't do anything with this," he grumbled. "That tree takes every bit of goodness out of the soil."

He lowered his voice, for now they were close under that upper window where the neighbour sat. They divined rather than saw her—the long body with the prim dress and the outlandish effect of a small waist, the high-bridged nose, the large, cold eyes, the two hands folded on the ample inner ledge of the window, bony knuckles just glistening.

The frigid sense of all this—its enmity, its mystery—they sourly absorbed.

"Do you think," he whispered in the awed tone of a child, "that it would help—be more natural-like—if I looked up and just nodded?"

"Or kissed your hand," Jane whispered back with rasping wit.

He returned with a whimpering giggle: "I haven't been far off that—now and then. Felt I must do something."

"Don't be a fool. Don't look at her, Samuel. We just don't know she's there."

"You're right, you're always right," he whispered back, and gripped her hand.

It was she who pulled him out and shut the door. They left this clammy garden. They went down to the south border where the bantam cock and his wife would live. They warmed their frightened bones in the sun.

"Seems as if that bit of garden ought to belong to her house and not ours," Jane said. "She overlooks it."

"You're a sharp woman; it did once. Her grandfather got hard up and sold it to the man next door. The lawyer told me that."

"It's a Naboth's vineyard, then?"

"You've got your Scriptures the wrong way round, for we don't want it. But I say, Jane, would she buy it back, do you think?"

"Wouldn't help. She'd look out of the window just the same."

"So she would. What a woman you are!"

"I wish," Jane said, as they walked about in the sun and recovered themselves, "that I knew why she sits there. Must be a reason. Perhaps it's the tree. Why not cut down the tree?"

He seemed impressed.

"Yes, we might cut down the tree."

"Then if she sat there we could pull down the walls."

He laughed.

"What are we to be up to next?"

"There wouldn't be any next. You'd have to get used to her."

He said that night, as they sat drinking coffee in their dignified drawing-room—for coffee after dinner was the thing to do—"S'pose you know it costs money to cut down trees?"

"I don't. Why, any man with an axe——"

"Knew you'd say that. I made a few

inquiries this afternoon. I found a woodman, and he won't cut that elm down, not if I give him the wood. 'Tisn't worth cutting down. Chap laughed and said elm wood was only fit for coffins! And I've got enough there to coffin the town."

Her ample placid glance, yet shrewd and twinkling, dwelt upon his irritable face.

"Why not go to an undertaker, Sam?"

"I'm hanged if I'll go to an undertaker! And—listen to me—you shan't, either."

"Why not cut it down yourself? Grand work. Mr. Gladstone cut down trees."

"Gladstone's dead and his times are dead. The world's changed. And you don't suppose that after slaving all my life I'm going to start wood chopping? You'll ask me to go round the town with a barrow next."

"Well, I'm sorry about that tree." She frowned. "It's a nuisance. We shall have a pretty mess of leaves come the autumn. And those rooks make such a row."

"'She's there, Jane. Look!'"

"I could get a gun and shoot the young ones."

"You'd want a gun licence."

"Think I can't run to a gun licence?"

"You'd pepper your own legs, Sam, sure as Sunday."

"I'll just stroll down to the bottom and see if she's at the window now. Coming?"

She shook her large head and glanced up reproachfully; but he was gone. He stayed away so long that she went after him, and found him in that gracious garden, standing stark.

The grassy terraces, the flights of shallow stone steps, an absurd bit of statuary here and there, the tall blossoms in the wide borders—all of this took on terror in the wan moonshine. Samuel, his head bare, his finger pointing, the front of his dress shirt glossy and dead white, frightened her. She actually paused before she went to him, for this man, her man, seemed a stranger. She clung to his arm and shook it, whispering:

"Come along in!"

He whispered back: "She's there, Jane. Look!"

But she would not look. She took him indoors and she pushed him down, as if he'd been a naughty boy, on to the brocade-covered sofa with the brilliant fat cushions—colours which looked all wrong, but were sure to be right. For the house had been entirely decorated and furnished by a big London firm—a firm with a *name,* mind you!

The fretful horror of his weak face shook her nerve. She said, with a catch in her voice: "We must get to the bottom of this, Sam."

He returned, putting his fingers to his eyes, and she pulled them down:

"We should have done better if we'd gone into the open country—some place with not another window near for miles."

"Should we?" She recovered and chuckled. "The country! Buried alive! Not for me, thank you. Think of the long winter evenings!"

"We could have turned on the gramophone. Or there's wireless."

"I don't care a bit about listening-in. You know that, Sam."

"It's beyond a joke." He gave a fixed stare, the troubled, begging look of a dog. "I saw her long nose in the half light. She's always on the watch. I—I can't so much as scratch my head if I want to."

"It seems a pity, dear, that after all the real troubles we've had, you should go and make up a fancy one."

"So it does, Jane, and I'm sorry to worry you. But I expect it's the way we're all made."

"Too much money's turned your head."

"Money! Do you think she'd sell me that house?"

"Tch! She'd sell her soul first. I know what the women in this town are. If you offered her twice what it's worth, she wouldn't take it."

"Mind if I try?"

"You'd be wasting your breath. And, Sam, don't stare like that. You'll have a stroke."

He was sprawling and panting in one corner of the deep sofa.

She flumped along to him in her heavy way and wiped his shining face with her own dainty handkerchief.

"You leave everything to me—as very often, when we were in business, you did leave things to me," she whispered.

"Oh, you've got your head screwed on the right way." He squeezed her hand.

"And I can see as far through a brick wall as most people, Sam."

"They're flint walls, old lady."

"Don't you be silly! But I can't see through this affair. She doesn't care for us; she doesn't even look at us. That's my belief. Do you suppose it's a crime—a murder—for anything might happen in a one-eyed town like this—a skeleton, and money buried under that tree?"

She looked afraid, then laughed, adding wisely: "We're frightening ourselves for nothing."

"Hold on!" He looked startled at once, for he was always ready to take fright. "If it's a skeleton, we'll let him stop there. I won't have that tree touched. Why, any talk of murder would affect this property! Send its market value down with a run."

"We're frightening ourselves for nothing," she repeated, and looked at him in her soothing way. "I expect it's only a love story."

He laughed. He seemed himself again.

"Rot, Jane! Does she look like being in love?"

"Does anybody look like being in love? Do we?"

Their eyes met with tender shyness, as if they were young again. Their commonplace faces were irradiated as he kissed her.

"If everybody in love looked like it!" she whispered.

Next day Jane Stidworthy secretly called on the neighbour next door. She first

persuaded Samuel to take his deck chair into the one corner of the garden where he could not be watched from the window.

"Though why should I skulk on my own property?" he complained. "Didn't I plank down thousands for this place? And haven't I a right to expect privacy?"

This word "privacy" had become a favourite word with them in their ferment and rebellion.

The house next door was smaller and older than theirs. A door with a glass upper part opened into a narrow yard, and at the bottom was the locked door leading into the flint-walled garden. Above the wall were outflung the vast green arms of the elm tree. They seemed to cuddle up the little house that had no garden of its own.

She was taken upstairs. Honoria Shoosmith, the neighbour, rising from behind her small tea-table, said precisely: "This is kind of you, Mrs. Stidworthy." And she looked afraid.

"I thought I'd pop in for a chat, Miss Shoosmith."

"So kind! I'll ring for another cup."

"Don't you bother; I've had my tea."

Jane Stidworthy was furtively looking round. Her mind was cool, but her body got hot. She had what she called the creeps. For her life had been a daylight, plain affair, plenty of hard work and with one steady ambition shining before her—the ambition to retire from business. She could not understand this queer old maid who sat so listless, looking at nothing.

The room was large, with two windows facing the street and one at the other end, rather smaller. It was from this one that she watched.

"I didn't know you had this room furnished as a sitting-room."

"You wouldn't." Honoria's inscrutable glance nettled her. "It used to be the nursery. There were thirteen of us."

"Dear, dear! That's a long family. And you the last one left?"

Honoria nodded vaguely, and she was thinking of those lost days, so crowded up, so full of happy noise. And here she was now, with one old servant, in a house that seemed hollow.

"I constantly sit in this room," she said with gentle bravado, and her face violently changing; "I can see the tree."

Those wild eyes in a face so wan, frightened Mrs. Stidworthy and yet touched her heart. But her inflexible aim remained—to give Samuel what he wanted, so long as it was good for him.

She went suddenly to the window.

"See the tree! Law! So you can," she said noisily. Samuel had come out of his corner so soon as her back was turned. She knew he would. There he sat, in full view, but fast asleep. His plump little body had sagged, his old straw hat was over his eyes.

She nearly cried. There he was—her man! They had slaved together all their lives and made a fortune, and Samuel might be as happy as a king now if it hadn't been for that old fool looking out of a window.

She turned round sharply. Honoria was close behind. Their eyes met in a cold glare.

"We're thinking, Miss Shoosmith, of cutting down that tree."

Honoria's white mouth slowly said: "That tree!"

She retreated to her chair by the summer-decked fireplace. Mrs. Stidworthy followed and sat down close. She put on that receptive pose which, in her business life, had accomplished many things.

"Is it the tree you sit and stare at, my dear?" she cooed.

The dingy head—so grey to pale brown—of Honoria Shoosmith just nodded.

"Then you tell me all about it."

There was a queer moment of anguished silence, when they sat close together and not venturing to look at each other—Mrs. Stidworthy with her knees wide apart and her sunk lap so motherly, Honoria with her timidity and mystery, with her queer clothes, so shabby, so helpless, looking like rank weeds, as if they grew there.

"You'll feel better with it off your mind. Just tell me."

And Honoria told her. She, who had never said a word, now started talking, as shy people sometimes do. She stared into the wholesome big face. She met those twinkling little eyes, so intent and kind. She did not intercept, with agonised embarrassment, the averted glance of a bored listener. She was met by the bland, shrewd stare of this kind, big woman from next door.

Jane Stidworthy listened, a little hard and suspicious at first. That was her business training. She listened to what she could not understand. She was made dizzy by those little poetries, confused, vivid, spurting from between such passionless

lips. Once she said soothingly, as the voice opposite her rose and squeaked:

"Don't get hysterical, my dear."

She thought: "I've never heard anything so cracked in my life."

She'd go home and tell Sam, and how they'd laugh!

Then she thought again and shivered. No, to laugh would be like flinging a broad grin into a coffin. For all this nonsense was real enough to her, poor soul!

Honoria was talking of that tree—just that old elm tree. There was a rapt flush on her face.

"You must have been pretty as a girl," thought Mrs. Stidworthy compassionately.

With garrulity, with enormous relief, with passion and vigour, Honoria told all that she felt. There was nothing to tell, yet everything. That big elm was her religion, her lover, consoler, companion. All that she had to give—and all that nobody else had wanted or dreamed of—that she had given to this green giant on the other side of the wall.

She spoke of her quivering waiting each winter for that day when the elm again got rosy and blossom was born. First there was that cold time of lace-like, twiggy blackness. Then came the time of thickening leaves; nesting time, too, and young rooks hatched.

When she spoke of rooks, Mrs. Stidworthy remembered that Samuel had meant to get a gun licence. She felt confusedly:

"Are we brutes, or is she mad?"

This was her first peep into the intangible. Elaborate fancy, delicate desire—all of it ignorant and inordinately fine, all of it a blind craving for expression—this she sat listening to.

Honoria was talking, talking. In wet weather how the elm wept and dripped; in late autumn the last leaves hung on its branches like fruit—vivid, foreign fruit which had no name for an English tongue.

"I've never been abroad. I've only left this town three times in all my life."

At this startling plunge into fact, Mrs. Stidworthy aroused. She said uncomfortably and half to herself:

"I s'pose a woman's got to love something."

Yes, that was it. Old maids had feelings like the rest of us.

"Everything that happened—as it came—I told to the elm tree. I've done that ever since I can remember. If I was going to a funeral or dressing for a wedding, I'd just slip into the nursery first. Waited a bit, collected my thoughts—a kind of prayer. There are such people as tree worshippers. I must belong to them. Seems heathen, doesn't it?"

She never waited for an answer. She had forgotten her stiffness and her shyness, forgotten her dislike of this bulky woman, whose figure seemed to grow dim and whose fashionably bedizened body became just a patchwork of colour in the chair.

She had never said a word to a soul, and now she was suddenly set going by this great terror which had been growing in her mind—the terror that the new people next door would cut down the tree.

She spoke with blushing tenderness of tiny baby elm trees that insinuated themselves into the cracks of her bricked yard.

The things that she was saying—things that she had not known were there!

Leaves blown backward in hot July gales, so that the tree lifted sightless sockets to the brilliant sky.

Its voice—that talked to her.

Its leaves—love letters tossed secretly over the wall. The sound of rain, the sob of wind. Great bustle when baby rooks were put to bed. Immense excitement when they learned to fly.

Her strange face dimpled. Jane again remembered that gun licence.

That time of the great thunderstorm—did Mrs. Stidworthy remember? A horror that the elm might be struck.

"If it had fallen! If I ever lived to come in here and see a cold, blank space of sky where branches had been! I've imagined it all so often, and since you bought the place I've hardly left the window. It's been like sitting by a sick bed."

"But business is business," said Jane Stidworthy, her voice slightly aggressive. "And we have bought the place—at a stiff price, too." Her large face, with the keen eyes and incompetent snub nose, was resolute, yet pitiful, with some comical dash to the pity. She was amused, yet upset. This single woman, who said such strange things, flurried her. The weird face, now bleached, now purpled, she could not take her eyes off it. She stared, but she had left off listening. She was thinking of her own life, so full, so sane, bringing up a family, building up a business, and always with that steady idea of retiring some day and buying a house big enough for all the children, with their children, to come and stay as often as they liked.

Through those long years, so jolly, so bustling, so anxious, all that this other woman had for wife and mother feeling was one old tree and a lot of noisy rooks!

"I've been saying queer things, Mrs. Stidworthy—things I've never said before. I'm afraid you'll think me a little mad. Perhaps being alone so much makes one singular."

The voice was cold, apologetic, uneasy. The glow died out.

Jane Stidworthy, with a gulp, seemed to step from a vapour bath. She thought, "I couldn't have stood one word more," and she said, in her homely way:

"Don't you bother about that, my dear, for it goes in one ear and out of the other."

She stood up. She felt more sure of herself upon her feet.

"Would you," she asked, with a sharp glance, "give Mr. Stidworthy three hundred pounds for that bit of garden with the tree on it?"

Honoria's mind was at once travelling wildly through her resources. She was poor. She must write to her trustee. She might sell something. That Worcester dinner service, never used nowadays, would fetch ninety pounds. She'd been offered that. There was more silver in the house than she ever used. And what was the good of old-fashioned jewellery?

"Not half what it's worth, in the heart of the town, Miss Shoosmith."

Honoria was swamped by the sheer glory of this amazing idea. To buy the garden with the elm tree in the middle! She might be ruined, but ruin was worth while.

She was afraid of money; her affairs had always been managed for her.

"I must write to my business man," she faltered.

"Of course!" snapped Jane Stidworthy. "Everything shipshape. The only thing is, my husband would make conditions. You may not like it, but he'll stand firm. I know he'll never sell the garden unless you, as owner of this house, would consent to have that window blocked." Her tightly-gloved hand pointed dramatically. "For we value our privacy and we strongly object to ancient lights."

Honoria understood.

"I'm afraid you've thought me intrusive, Mrs. Stidworthy."

"Well, to be plain, my dear, everybody likes their privacy."

She said this, and she was nearly choked by the triumphant beating of her faithful heart. Samuel was going to get what was good for him.

"Three hundred pounds and the window blocked—it's a generous offer as between neighbours."

The smooth smile stood thick upon her face; her sharp, small eyes were unswerving.

Honoria, faintly screaming, asked: "Is it settled, then?"

Mrs. Stidworthy was perturbed by the lack of haggling. Perhaps this woman wasn't such a fool as she looked. The business side of her distrusted and bristled. But a promise was a promise, and Samuel must hold Miss Shoosmith to her word. He must stand firm.

It did not seem credible that anyone would give such a lump sum down for that dirty bit of garden.

She suspected a catch somewhere, and, with a brisk nod and steely stare, she said: "You may take it as settled, and Mr. Stidworthy will drop in and see you after supper."

They were standing near the door. Honoria, enwrapped in some curious silence, at once opened it. She politely stood aside for Mrs. Stidworthy to go downstairs. She was eager to be rid of this woman. She could no longer endure that big face with the high colour and happy smile.

Honoria was light-headed and prepared to think of anything. That thick, jocular mouth looked ready to bite. Those fat hands, bursting out of tight new gloves, looked like patting you. She would hate to be touched. She was dreading the moment when she would have to shake hands.

Mrs. Stidworthy, always sage, was thinking as she padded down the shallow stairs, her hand carefully on the balustrade, for she was a heavy woman:

"She'll hate me—for a bit, because she's told me things. That's the way with us women."

But she didn't care a brass farthing. She'd got Samuel.

Across the stone-flagged hall a barrier of elm leaves made greenish lights, the biting green of tarnished copper.

"The elm tree's like a curtain against the sky—a ragged curtain, isn't it?" Honoria asked gleefully.

Her moment of distaste was past, and she only had room in her heart and brain for the beautiful fact that she was going to buy that garden with the tree in the middle—the elm tree, her god, her true love and her

king. All sorts of poetries, every kind of hunger, stirred her empty breast.

"I shall be able to touch it," she said childishly.

"Oh you'll touch it right enough," gurgled Jane, half turning round to look at her. But she could no longer bother herself with the half witted whim-whams of an old maid. She was going home to Samuel.

The rapt content of that approaching moment filled her soul.

"What a woman you are!" he would say, when she told him what she had accomplished, then give a long whistle, a long stare, then hug his old girl tight.

Honoria, looking at the broad, satin-spread back, feeling a dimly delicate disdain of such vulgarity and bulk, was reflecting:

"How happy I am!"

Yes, she was happier than that clumsy, spread-about woman in front of her had ever been or ever would know how to be.

She had bought a bit of garden with an elm tree in the middle.

When the street door stood open, the steady faint hum of the little market town reached them.

Jane Stidworthy, raising her voice and smiling broadly, said very emphatically:

"You may take it all as settled. We dine late, but Mr. Stidworthy will pop in after coffee. He'll put you in touch with his business man. For there must be a deed, of course. Everything ship-shape, Miss Shoosmith."

She laughed, shot out her fat hand, felt that it was faintly touched, then went away to Samuel.

# THE PIONEER.

'TWAS very dark and late,
And a dim haze had hidden all the stars,
When a small angel lifted up the bars
That fasten Heaven's golden gate.

Earthwards, his path unknown,
Shy, somewhat scared, yet eagerly he sped,
And poised at last above a cattle-shed
And listened there alone.

He heard an Infant cry,
He heard a mother's soft contralto croon,
Like running rivulets in a night of June,
A sweet, sweet lullaby.

Stealthily did he creep,
And through a crevice in the broken roof
He saw plough-oxen standing, grave, aloof,
And a white Babe asleep.

Soon great archangels soared,
And mighty seraphs, like a thunder-burst,
Filled Heaven with song. "But I," said he. "was first,
Adventurer to the Lord!"

And so down all the years
The cohorts come with splendour of light and song,
But oh, the secret glory and joy belong
To God's poor pioneers!

MAY BYRON.

# ALL ON A SUMMER'S DAY

## By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of " As Other Men Are," " And Five Were Foolish," " Berry and Co.," " Jonah and Co.," " Valerie French," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

THE four travellers stared at the castle, and the castle loomed back. Odd lights were burning on the battlements, and here and there a window was faintly illumined as though the room it served was lighted but the curtains were drawn. Such sounds as might be expected of a great establishment came floating out of the pile—shouts, the neigh of a horse, laughter, the clang of a powerful gong and, once, a chorus of voices singing a stave. The steady plash of water falling upon water suggested the presence of a fountain or else the gush of some spring which fed the moat.

Presently Pomfret sighed.

" Lost," he said quietly. " That's what we are. Lost. Not lost in Ken Wood or Gascony or any civilised state, but blinkin' well lost in Etchechuria, which from what I've seen of it to-day seems to be a sort of magnified New Forest without any roads —or inns. I don't wonder they call it ' The Lost Country,' " he added bitterly. " Twenty soul-shaking miles on a draught of crystal water. . . . I wish I could lose it myself. And I suppose that if I were to suggest that our guide (*sic*) was a more perfect specimen of the complete wash-out than anyone I've ever had the misfortune to encounter, much less rely upon, I should be reviled."

Simon let the bundle he was bearing slide to the ground.

" I don't know that I should put it as high as that," he said, " but, considering I was careful to ask him if we could possibly miss the way and got a back answer for my pains, I must confess to feeling rather murderous."

" Are you sure we have missed the way ? " said Patricia. " Perhaps this is where we're to stay."

" I never heard of a castle called *The Crumpled Horn*," said Pomfret. " Or of an inn that looked like Windsor about three times life-size."

" He never actually used the word ' inn,' " said Eulalie.

" Well, he said he was going to see the landlord and insist that our rooms faced South. If that doesn't suggest an inn, I don't know what does."

" He also volunteered," said Simon, " that it was spotlessly clean. You don't talk like that of a castle. Oh, we've come wrong all right."

" Wrong ? " said Pomfret. " We must be miles out. Nothing was said about even discerning a castle in the middle distance, much less finding Mont-St.-Michel in the middle of the road. However, here we are and here, if we can bluff the owner, we'd better dine and sleep."

" That's right," said Simon. " We must say we're benighted—I think that's the proper term—and hope for the best. Of course, this is just where Gog would have been rather useful."

" The really inspiring reflection," said Pomfret shakily, " is that that treacherous hunk of Heaven is carrying my clothes. . . . Of course I know it's foolish to b-bother about the b-body—the soul's the thing. But I hate sleeping in the shirt I've worn all day almost as much as I loathe wearing the shirt I've hated sleeping in all night. Then again a toothbrush has its points. . . ."

" I've got a new one," said Eulalie.

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"'The bride's presents to the bridegroom included a bone-handled toothbrush and a foot of floss-silk.'"

"Oh, you darling," said Pomfret. "I suppose you couldn't run to a night-gown. Or would that be familiar?"

"We're not there yet," said Simon, swinging his bundle. "Let's try and find a drawbridge."

"Well, keep well away from that moat," said Pomfret. "We shouldn't be able to reach you, and I don't want to hear you drown."

"I like to think," said Simon, "that you would follow me in."

"Yes, I like to think so too," said Pomfret. "Let's indulge ourselves with the thought, shall we? It can't do any harm. Oh, and what about this fardel? It only weighs about a hundredweight, so it's not worth talking about really, but if we left it here the servants could——"

"Not on your life," said Eulalie. "When I'm travelling light I like to keep my things with me—till I know the hotel. And Pat 's probably the same."

"'Travelling light,'" said Pomfret brokenly, heaving a bale of clothes on to his shoulders. "Never mind. 'If *labour* be the food of love, *carry* on.'"

They proceeded to compass the moat in single file.

Almost at once a light leaped into vision. This was low down and clearly without the moat, and, as the four approached, they could see that it came from a lantern apparently suspended in mid-air—an illusion which was due to the darkness, for when they were standing beneath it they could see that it hung from a small wrought-iron gibbet which was planted close to the moat and almost opposite the drawbridge. This was raised, and, though the great gateway was lighted, its mouth was shut by the timbers so that only thin streaks of light were escaping on either side to flash and quiver upon the water below.

On the shaft of the gibbet was a hook suspending a serpent-shaped trumpet which seemed to be of silver and was polished until it shone again: four or five feet of silver chain connected it to the ironwork, so that while it could be lifted from the hook upon which it hung, it could not be taken away.

Above the trumpet was a notice.

*WARNING.*

*One of the least valuable possessions of the Castle is an ear. This originally belonged to a visitor who, after using this horn, failed to restore it to its hook and threw it down upon the ground.*

"Well, that's very much to the point, isn't it?" said Simon.

"It's most illuminating," said Pomfret. "I wonder what happens if you forget to wipe your feet. Half an hour with the bears, I suppose."

"'Spotlessly clean,'" said Eulalie uncertainly. "Pat, when are they going to see it?"

"And those two sages," said Patricia, "had the nerve to jump upon me."

"And on me," bubbled Eulalie. "The wiseacres."

After a prolonged stare, Pomfret turned to Simon.

"Deranged," he said shortly. "How shocking. They're abusing their dear ones. Should they become violent——"

"I said," said Eulalie, fixing her eyes upon the trumpet, "that he never used the word 'inn.' All he said was that if we went straight ahead we should come to. . . ."

She left the sentence there, and the men turned, frowning and puzzled, to follow her gaze.

Then—

"Moses' boots!" cried Simon. "*The Crumpled Horn.*"

There was an electric silence.

"Produce the landlord," said Pomfret, "and I'll——"

"Don't you dare," said a voice. "I won't be produced. Besides, my person is sacred."

The four swung about to see a queer-looking man some fifty years old. His hair was grey, his face was red as fire, and he was immensely fat. His stare, his expression, and the lift of his generous chin were clearly intended to embody a fierce and compelling haughtiness, but geniality had inhabited his eyes and his mouth too long, while the absurd angle at which he wore his headgear was inconsistent with anything but the most affable humour. The headgear was a crown of plain gold, lightly and beautifully fashioned about a cap of scarlet silk and somewhat resembling the coronet of an earl without the strawberry-leaves. A voluminous scarlet gown fell almost to his feet: its skirt was edged with ermine and slit upon either side to the middle of his thigh, while enormous bell-shaped sleeves enveloped his arms. His black silk hose were gartered below the knee with golden

garters, and on his feet was a pair of scarlet velvet shoes, the points of which were stuffed and projected for quite eight inches beyond his toes.

"So you see," continued the King, "any such attempt would be of the nature of sacrilege as well as assault. And that's that. Who and how are you?"

"Strangers and full of beans," said Pomfret promptly. "And you?"

"Bursting, thanks," said the King. "Let's go in, shall we? Does everyone like venison?"

"What, not cold stuffed venison?" said Pomfret brokenly.

"The same, gossip," cried the King, slamming him on the back. "And goose-pasty and gooseberry-pie and beer."

"Brother Simon," said Pomfret, swallowing, "operate the bassoon."

"That's right," said the King, taking his arm. "Blow a fanfare. Blow several fanfares." He turned to Patricia and Eulalie. "My dears, how lovely you are. Sunset will dote upon you. And why's the young noble called 'Simon'? He doesn't look simple at all."

"He isn't a noble," said Patricia, "but——"

"Then he should be," said the King. "I shall elevate him to-morrow." He turned upon Simon, who had taken the trumpet down. "Can you blow 'Hot and Cold,' cousin? Or don't you know it?"

"I'm afraid I don't, sir," said Simon, who in the old days had been able to wake a post-horn to melodious activity. "I used to play 'Buy a Broom,' but——"

"Blow that old call you used to blow at Breathless," said Patricia. "You know. The seventeenth-century one."

"I'll try," said Simon, putting the trumpet to his lips.

It was a long call, slow and stately, full of the breath of kings. Simon sounded it royally and purely enough to make its forgotten composer smile in his long sleep. Might, majesty and dominion nodded upon its cadences: the pomp and circumstance of pageantry came swelling out of its refrain. . . .

As the last long note went floating into the darkness, the others crowded about him, crying applause.

"It's rich," declared the King. "And notable."

"That's right," said Pomfret. "They'll expect about eight emperors and a couple of army corps."

"It sounds so expensive," said the King. "That's what I like about it." He patted Simon upon the shoulder. "Consider yourself a Companion of the Order of the Broken Biscuit and teach it to my trumpeters to-morrow."

Here a head was thrust out of a window beside the gateway, and a hoarse voice demanded the countersign.

The King bawled back.

"Let down the bridge."

"Advance one," insisted the voice, "and give the countersign."

The King stepped to the moat.

"Let down the bridge," he roared. "I'm the King."

"Countersign, please."

"If you don't let down that bridge," said the King shakily, "I'll——"

"His Majesty's orders——"

"Oh, you bottle-nosed fool," mouthed the King, beginning to dance. "Haven't I said I'm the King? Burn it, as the landlord, I set the blinkin' countersign. If it wasn't for me you wouldn't be able to ask it."

"Then give it," said the voice.

"But I've forgotten it," screamed the King.

"It's a very easy one," said the voice. "Very simple. Now, last night's was a smeller."

"Of course, you know you're asking for it," said the King, breathing through his nose. "'Smeller.' It was a very beautiful phrase. Sunset chose it."

"I say, are you really the King?" said the voice anxiously.

The King laughed hysterically.

"Oh, no," he said wildly. "Not—not really. I look like him and I talk like him and I've got his clothes on. But I'm not really. And just call the Torturer, will you? I want to arrange about your death."

"Not here yet?" said another voice. "They're very late. I wonder——"

"Gog," shrieked Patricia. "Gog!"

"Hullo, my lady," shouted Gog. "Half a minute and we'll——"

"What's the countersign?"

"*Forget-me-not*," shouted Gog. . . .

When the drawbridge was down, the King was still feeling rather faint, so Pomfret and Simon supported him and helped him across.

His appearance was the signal for frantic activity.

Orders were yelled, a gong was beaten furiously, the guard turned out, liveried

servants began to lay a carpet, and six breathless trumpeters, gorgeously apparelled, fought and elbowed their way into a well-liking line.

From the other side of the portcullis grimly the King surveyed the preparations. As the Officers of the Household arrived—

"Are you all ready?" he shouted.

"Yes," roared everyone.

"Then give way."

With a crash the trumpets sounded, arms were presented and the portcullis was hauled up.

In silence the King passed in, and the four with him.

"Welcome," said the Master of the Horse, wiping his mouth. "Welcome home, sir. We were getting quite anxious about you."

"The four travellers stared at the castle."

"Yes, you look rather drawn," said the King acidly. "Where were you getting anxious? In the buttery?"

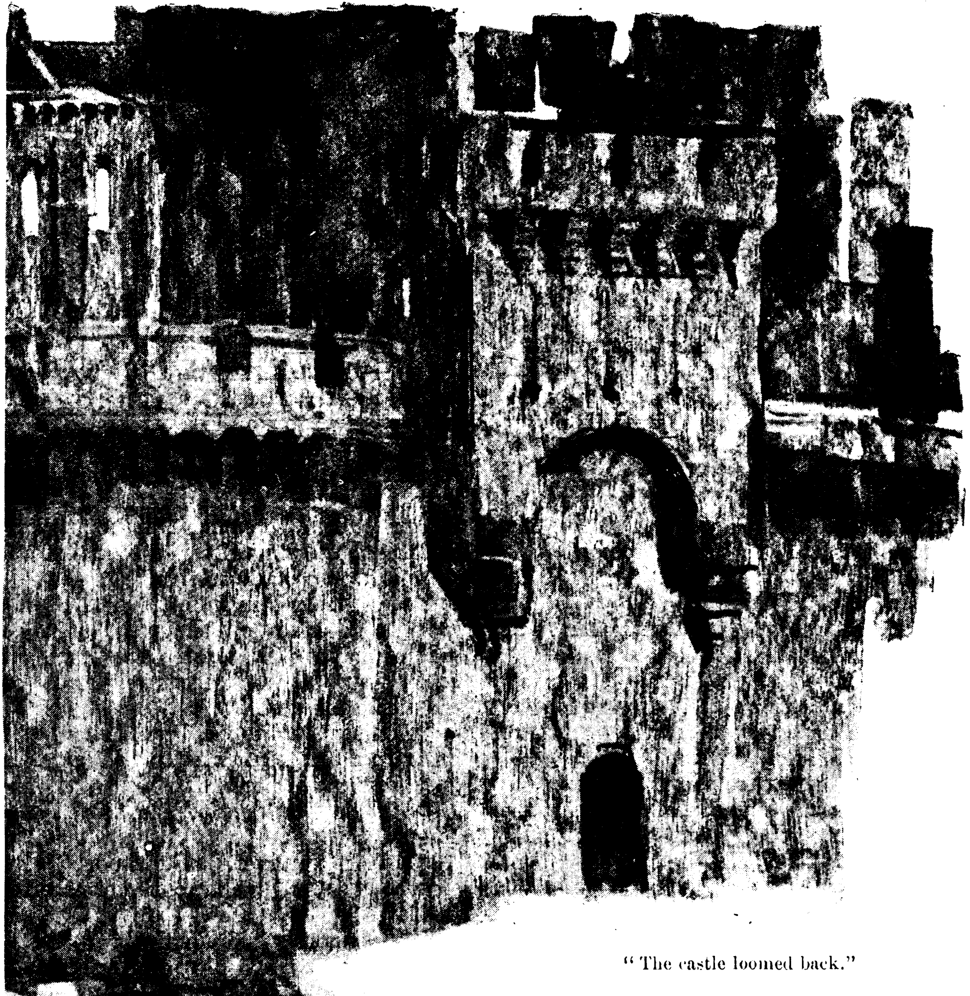
"You can be anxious in a buttery," said the Master of the Horse.

"You can be anxious anywhere," said the King shortly. "In a bear-pit, for instance, you can be worried to death."

Here the other Officers laughed very loudly as if in the hope of appeasing the royal ire.

The King turned upon them.

"Yes, I don't remember seeing you on



"The castle loomed back."

the battlements," he said. "Supposing I'd forgotten the countersign."

"We should have felt your presence," said the Comptroller piously. "We don't have to see you to know you have need of us. 'Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage.'"

"I see," said the King. "Well, what about a forty-foot moat? Is that any good?"

"None whatever," said the Comptroller. "Your personality——"

"Splendid," said the King. "Have a word with the gate-sentry, will you? After all, what is death? Bearward."

"Sir," said a deep voice.

"Starve the bears for two days. teward."

"Sir," said another voice.

"Is the bath-water hot?"

"Boiling, my lord."

"Good. Gold Stick."

"Sir," said a third voice.

"Conduct these ladies to their apartments and then tell Sunset they're here."

As Patricia and Eulalie moved off in the wake of Gold Stick, the King turned to his supporters.

"It is my practice," he said, "to visit the buttery-hatch and stay myself with a small flagon of ale before preparing for dinner. Could you bear to abet me?"

"Well, I'm almost a total abstainer," said Pomfret, "like—like the Master of the Horse, but of course if you make it a command. . . ."

The bare idea of associating the Master

of the Horse with abstemiousness threw the King into a paroxysm of mirth.

So soon as he could speak—

"I oughtn't to laugh like that," he said, wiping his eyes, "It's dangerous. How dare you?"

"Sir," said Simon swiftly, "Laughter is the head of Life."

"Write that down, someone," cried the King. "Write that down. 'Beer is the heart of Life.' That's a very beautiful thought. I'll have it carved somewhere. Where was I?"

Everyone was either dictating or inscribing or defending his version of one or other of the saws, so Pomfret filled in the gap.

"You were so kind as to suggest, sir, that my friend and I should subscribe to your, er, restoration at the buttery-hatch."

"So I was," cried the King. "Well, what about it?"

"Sir," said Pomfret, "I've a thirst like a waggon of cracknels."

"Then that's settled," said the King. "We'll have a quart apiece. And whichever of you two finds a noble at the bottom of his cup shall marry Sunset."

For a moment there was dead silence.

Then came the thud of timber against the wall, and a moment later the portcullis crashed into place.

* * * * *

"And there you are," concluded Pomfret gloomily. "Gog tried to explain that we weren't eligible, and got handed over to that earnest-looking wallah, the Bearward, for his pains. In view of his comparative failure it seemed foolish to pursue the matter, so we proceeded to the buttery-hatch, listening to an eulogy of the kingdom to half of which one of us will shortly become entitled. I don't think I ever enjoyed a quart of beer less . . . . As there was a rose-noble in each of our pots, Simon and I have got to have it out to-morrow in the lists. The loser is to be interred with military honours, and the survivor will marry Sunset on Thursday morning. Now you see why we only toyed with the venison."

His words were succeeded by a profound silence.

Seated upon the great bed, her little hands gripping the crimson coverlet, Patricia, tight-lipped and wide-eyed, stared upon the floor. One hand to her temples, Eulalie, who was sitting on a skin before the fire, gazed open-mouthed at her *fiancé* as though he had lost his wits. His arms folded, Simon was leaning against the arras, frowning at the opposite wall; while Pomfret, sunk in the depths of a gigantic chair, cupped his chin in his palm and regarded a mighty coffer with great malignity.

Eulalie moistened her lips.

"But he seems so kindly," she said.

"I think he is," said Pomfret. "I think if you asked for his boots, he'd press them upon you. But if you obstruct his will—well, that's where the bears come in. He can't help it—it's second nature. If you knew his beer was poisoned, and he was thirsty and you tried to stop him drinking, the net result of your interference would be that he'd predecease you by about twenty-four hours. And that's the devil of it. We've an excellent case which I'm sure would command his sympathy, but to attempt to state it is to commit suicide."

Patricia looked up from the bed.

"The thing to do," she said, "is to get hold of Sunset. She seems a very nice girl. If she says she won't marry either of you, the whole thing's off."

"Don't you believe it," said Simon. "If Sunset's feelings counted, she'd at least have been given her choice."

"She may be able to gain time," said Eulalie.

"For the survivor," said Simon. "But somebody's got to be buried to-morrow night."

"Pat's right," said Pomfret. "Sunset's our only hope. We must put her wise at once and——"

Somebody drummed with their fingers upon the door.

Pomfret rose to his feet, and Simon slipped to the door and drew the latch.

"It's me," said a girl's voice.

Simon opened the door, and the Princess came in.

She was a tall, handsome girl, with a very short upper lip and curiously bright blue eyes. Masses of golden hair hung freely over her shoulders, while a plain golden circlet rested upon her brows. Her dress was of emerald green, cut low and square at the neck, tight-fitting as far as the waist and sweeping the ground. Her sleeves, which were tight and buttoned from elbow to wrist, overran her beautiful hands beyond the knuckles. But for the crown, a heavily jewelled girdle was her only ornament.

"Just so," she said, looking round. "I rather thought that I should disturb a

council." She smiled at Simon and Pomfret. "I realise now why your appetites were so thin. And, first of all, let me apologise for the King. But he's very conservative. He killed a giant and four princes to marry my mother, and, though she was in love with the Almoner, it turned out extremely well. So he always counts me out. Then we've had very bad luck. For years we were never troubled: then at last a two-headed ogre got busy, and we thought we were off. The usual notice went out—my hand and half the kingdom to whoever did in the ogre. There was a great rush at first, but after three or four weeks the ogre's price got so short that people began to lose interest. To put the lid on, a sexton with a false nose pushed him into a well, and when father refused to pay up sued him for Breach of Promise. Naturally the sexton died before the case came on, but it was a great nuisance. Then I was betrothed to one of the Charmings, but he got across a witch and was altered to an egg. We marked him 'Not to be boiled,' and kept him in a nest on the terrace. Then one day we changed housekeepers and forgot to mention him. We're never quite sure what happened, but we think he was poached. So you see. . . ."

There was a pregnant silence.

Then—

"Poached," murmured Pomfret, wiping his brow. "What a thought. I do hope he ate well."

"Do sit down," said Patricia, patting the coverlet. "And of course we see, my dear. But what's to be done? I don't suppose you'd be seen dead with either of them—even if they were available."

"Oh, I don't know," said Sunset, sinking on to the bed. "They're a nice upstanding pair. But I should like to see them in hose." She glanced from Simon to Pomfret and back again. "I should think Simon's got the best legs. . . . Still, that's really beside the point, because, though the King doesn't know it, I'm not available either. I'm engaged to the Master of the Horse." There was a general sigh of relief. "But it's no good telling him that," continued the girl. "That would only benefit the bears. And it wouldn't really benefit them. Too much meat doesn't suit them. They like it, of course, but carrots are much better for them. Besides, it makes them smell."

"Poor — poor dears," said Pomfret shakily.

"The only thing I have done is to get the fight washed out. I reminded him of the Charming business, and said it was childish to go and eliminate one starter before the other had finished. He saw the force of that almost at once. So now I've got to choose. And until I'm safely married the one I don't choose will be spare man."

"Well, that's better than being buried," said Simon. "What's the next move?"

"It's up to you," said Sunset. "I warn you, my brain's in rags. Besides, it's your turn. I've saved you both a very strenuous day and I've added several years to one of your lives."

"For which," said Pomfret, bowing, "we are truly thankful. And please don't think that because we aren't anxious to fly at each other's throats we don't admire you. Personally, I think you're a most lovely sight. And I'm not at all surprised there was a rush on the ogre. If I'd been here and available I should have had a dart at him myself."

"They say there's another coming," said Sunset eagerly.

Pomfret started.

"But not with two heads?" he said.

"No. One head this time."

"Ah, then I shouldn't look at him," said Pomfret loftily. "Unless they've two heads they—they don't interest me."

Eulalie took up the running.

"When have you got to decide by, Princess?"

"To-morrow morning," said Sunset. "And the Abbot's been warned for Thursday, so we haven't much time."

"I suppose," said Simon suddenly, "I couldn't have a word with Gog."

"Is that your courier?" Patricia nodded. "Well, he should be outside your door."

"I know," said Patricia. "But there was a misunderstanding. The King . . ."

"That's right," said Pomfret. "He's for the bears."

Sunset leaped to her feet.

"You don't mean this?" she cried.

"It's the naked truth," said Simon solemnly.

The Princess stamped her foot.

"This is outrageous," she said. "First the gate-sentry, then the Comptroller, and now your servant. You know, I believe he's trying to kill them."

"Well, I don't want to be disrespectful," said Pomfret, "but it does look like it, doesn't it?"

"It's rank cruelty," cried Sunset. "If they had plenty of exercise it'd be different, but the pit's no bigger than this room.

Besides, they'll smell to glory. We shan't be able to sleep."

Pomfret put a hand to his head.

"Nor—nor we shall," he faltered.

For a moment Sunset regarded him, tapping her strong white teeth. Then she turned to Simon.

"If you want ten minutes with Gog, be at the apiary to-morrow at ten o'clock. He'll be there with the Bearward." She wrested a button from her sleeve and pitched it across. "Show the Bearward that button and he'll let you both out of earshot."

Wondering why they would be at the apiary—

"Thanks very much," said Simon. "I don't know what we should do without you, Princess."

"I do," said that lady. "Without me you'd——"

"I've got an idea," cried Patricia. "Listen. If the Master of the Horse wanted to marry, would the King mind?"

"Not that I know of," said Sunset, "provided I wasn't the bride."

"Well, tell him to propose to Eulalie at once. You can choose Pomfret, and the two weddings can take place on Thursday. I take it the bride's veiled."

"Heavily. But how——"

"You just change over. You wear her wedding-dress, and she wears yours."

"What about the banquet?" said Sunset. "You can't eat and drink in a veil."

"You change back again for that. And the four of you leave the Castle in the afternoon. Of course this is very rough and rather desperate, but something's got to be done, and we haven't much time."

"It's certainly rough, my dear," said Sunset slowly. "Still, I suppose it's possible. I could wear my hair in a caul, and we're about the same height." Eulalie rose, and the two stood back to back. "But it wants a lot of working out."

"There's nothing between you," said Simon. The two fell away. "I agree it's a desperate plan, but if you can trust your women, it might easily come off. And when it's blown over . . ."

"Exactly," said Sunset. "When."

There was an awkward silence.

"Whenever you marry him," said Eulalie, "it'll have to blow over."

"That's true," said Sunset thoughtfully, glancing at herself in a mirror. "All right," she added suddenly. "We'll settle on that. To-morrow I'll say I've chosen Pomfret, and you must go all out with Albert. I'll explain things to him, of course. You haven't met him yet, have you?"

"Not—not yet," quavered Eulalie.

"You will have to go, won't you? Never mind. He's very quick in the uptake. After all"—she turned to Pomfret with a dazzling smile—"we shall have to move too, shan't we? I think we'd better ride together to-morrow morning. Is eight too early?"

"Er, er, no," said Pomfret uneasily. "Eight—eight o'clock."

"Then that's settled," said Sunset with a comfortable sigh. "We'll ride towards Hay Hill. They said the ogre had been seen in that quarter." She turned to Eulalie. "You know, my dear, I should have chosen him any way. I worship bravery. Besides, he's so fond of animals. I only wish Albert was, but he simply hates the bears." She returned to Pomfret and stretched out a royal arm. "You may kiss my hand, sir."

With goggling eyes, Pomfret obeyed the command.

Then—

"Give you good night," she said.

The next moment she was gone.

The four stared at one another in dismay.

"Well, that's bent it," said Simon. "Pomfret's got off."

Pomfret wiped the sweat from his face.

"It does look as if I was going to have a busy day to-morrow, doesn't it? At eight o'clock—the ogre." He paused. "I'd better take a safety razor, I suppose. I don't want to be entirely unarmed, and we left the hammock-stands in The Dish."

Eulalie crossed to his side and put her arms round his neck.

"You must say you've sprained your wrist, dear. I'll bind it up for you. And then she'll probably take you another way."

"My darling," said Pomfret, "I'm between about seven stools. If we don't run into the ogre, that she-devil's going to molest me till I can't think straight. If I protest, she either goes to the King or she goes to the Master of the Horse. If she goes to the King—well, the bears'll smell worse than ever. If she goes to the Master of the Horse, it's battle for two and murder for one in the lists. I haven't got an earthly."

"I think we can wash out the ogre," said Simon. "To-morrow's only a reconnaissance. Even if you were to sight him she can't expect you to take him on unarmed."

"Yes, and supposing he sights us," said Pomfret. "He won't know it's only a

reconnaissance. Oh, no, I'd better take the razor. If I can't cut him, I may be able to square him with it. Wonder what sort of a horse I shall have," he added musingly. "I haven't been across one for seven years. Some haughty barb, I expect, that they're afraid to feed."

"Old fellow," said Eulalie, "I'm going to bind up your wrist. You must play that up for every cent you're worth. Say it's an old wound that occasionally gives you trouble. As for the lady, you must manage as best you can. If you keep the barb moving she can't do very much. But don't put her nose out of joint."

"I won't promise not to," said Pomfret, "because I've only one brain—and that's inundated. Still, I'll do what I can. If I feel very strong to-morrow, I might try to put her off me. You know. Speak callously of rogue-elephants, or make her suspect that Albert's the better man. Then——"

"My dear," said Patricia, "that's not the slightest good. She's fallen to you—flat. If you ran away from a dwarf, she'd have an excuse for your conduct before you had."

"That's right," said Eulalie. "Sunset's no fool. She knows what she wants when she wants it, and she's as hard as nails. If only we all could go riding I'd suggest that we cleared and chanced it, but they'd never let you and Simon outside the walls at the same time. Besides, we couldn't leave Gog."

Simon held up the button which Sunset had torn from her dress.

"At least," he said, "we've got this. What it can do besides getting me speech with Gog remains to be seen, but if it weighs with the Bearward it should weigh with others too." He slid the button into a pocket. "Besides, ten minutes with Gog may save us all."

"Let's hope and pray that she doesn't ask for it back," said Patricia. "If it can overrule orders it may occur to her that it's better to have it on her sleeve."

"It may also occur to her," said Pomfret, "that Simon's ten minutes with Gog won't help her case."

"I entirely agree," said Simon. "And if you can manage it, brother, without imperilling your life, will you try to keep her out riding till half-past ten?"

"Simon opened the door, and the Princess came in."

"Provided the ogre's not working, I'll do my best. But I'm only human, and I'm not going to hang about any lairs for anyone. It's too—too unsettling: I should lose the thread of my discourse."

"Incidentally," said Eulalie, stooping, "here's another of her buttons. I suppose it was loose and she dropped it."

"So much the better," said Simon, putting out his hand. "Yes, it's exactly the same. And now——"

Here came a knock on the door.

Simon was there in an instant and drawing the latch. . . .

From the threshold a pale-faced woman regarded him.

"Your lordship has a button, I think. The Princess has told me to ask for it. She has already instructed the Bearward, so that you need it no more, and I am to sew it back upon her dress."

"Why, certainly," said Simon. A button passed. "To tell you the truth, I was afraid of losing it."

The woman smiled faintly.

"Good night, my lord," she said and was gone.

Simon closed the door and set his back against the oak.

Three pairs of eyes met his in eloquent silence.

* * * * *

The Comptroller, the gate-sentry and Gog were standing, roped together, in a row at the end of the lines of hives, each with a bowl in one hand and a spoon in the other, listlessly eating honey and looking extremely miserable. Six paces away the Bee-master was conversing with the Bearward, who was leaning upon a club the head of which bristled with spikes about two inches long.

As Simon came up, Gog's eyes lighted, and the Bearward bowed.

"Good morning," said Simon carelessly. "I want a few words with my courier. Will you untie him?"

"Nothing doing," said the Bearward. "I'm responsible for his body, and in the absence of special instructions——"

Simon produced the button.

"Good enough," said the Bearward, uncovering. He stepped to loosen the bonds. "You'll keep round about, won't you?"

"Certainly," said Simon. "We'll walk round the apiary."

Before they had been round once Gog was in possession of the facts, and before they had been round twice his plans were laid.

"Listen," he said. "Most castles don't have apiaries. Sixty beehives inside your walls are no joke—if the bees get peevish. But they have one here because they've an antidote. You see that cistern there? Well, that's full of it."

"Full of what?" said Simon.

"Full of the antidote. Wet your eyelids with that, and for the next two days you can't be stung. No bee will look at you. Very well. That pipe there leads to a basin in the courtyard: if ever the bees get mad the Bee-master bangs that gong and opens the cock: everyone beats it for the basin for all they're worth, and by the time the bees arrive nine out of ten are invulnerable. Well, that's all right except for the Bee-master. He hasn't time to get to the basin—obviously. In fact, the last two died in the attempt. So now that tap's been fitted. You'll observe that it's two full inches below the cock. Very good. Just open it, will you? That's right. And now soak your handkerchief. . . . Splendid. And now let's stroll round again."

Slowly they sauntered into and out of earshot, while Gog explained lugubriously that condemned prisoners were fed exclusively upon honey in order that their reception by the bears might be as favourable as possible.

As they passed behind a riot of honeysuckle—

"Just wet my eyelids," said Gog. Simon did so. "And now your own. . . . That's right. Now, all you've got to do is to find the girls and Pomfret, wet their eyelids, go to the stables, wet the eyelids of the best five horses you see, and chuck your handkerchief down the nearest drain. Have you got a knife? Thank you. You see, I must be able to sever my bonds."

Here they came to the cistern. The stream which had gushed from the tap had sunk to a thread of silver.

"Ah, that's splendid," said Gog. "In another ten minutes it'll be dry, and the ground also. Nothing like a sandy soil and a hot sun. Now, all we've got to settle is where to meet. There won't be any hurry—for us. I think perhaps the stables would be convenient. Shall we do one more lap?"

With that, he assumed an air of the utmost despondency and began to descant upon the discomforts of the condemned cell, explaining with great bitterness that it was really an annex to the bear-pit, and so situated that the occupants of the several dungeons could see and smell one another with the acme of ease, while nothing but a

stout grating prevented the bears from anticipating their meal.

As they passed out of earshot—

"And now for the time," said Gog. "I see the cistern's just dripping, but in another ten minutes it'll be dry. Well, it won't take you ten minutes to do your bit."

"What about Pomfret?" said Simon. "We must wait for him."

"The moment he comes get hold of him and wet his eyes. I shall know when he's back because they'll blow a fanfare for Sunset. Five minutes after the fanfare I shall start in. You'll know when I've started in because—well, for one thing, you'll hear the gong. Directly you hear it get out of doors—anywhere. You'll have to leave your clothes."

"But if Pomfret isn't there?"

"Then he can't be stung," said Gog shortly. "And now I think that's all. Mind you destroy that handkerchief. What's twenty-five thousand by sixty?"

After a rapid calculation—

"Fifteen hundred thousand," said Simon.

"Thank you," said Gog. "Just wet my eyelids again, will you? I don't want there to be a mistake. If a million and a half of bees rage together for a day and a half, how long will they ask us to stay next time we come? Never mind. I'm sorry your first hours within The Pail should have been so exciting, but I'd never have brought you to Black Pepper in a thousand years if I'd known that Sunset was here. When I left she was going to be married to one of the Charmings. You know, she always was a snorter. Anyone she liked the look of had practically to be wired in. And now, so long." He began to weep uproariously. "What did you come for?" he howled. "If you can't obtain a reprieve, why did you come? And it's no good saying you'll wave to me on Friday. I don't want to be waved to . . ."

Simon shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

When he looked back, the Bearward was roping Gog to the Comptroller, while the Bee-master was replenishing the gate-sentry's bowl.

Ten minutes went by. . . .

As Simon emerged from the stables there was a sudden flourish, and Sunset and Pomfret came riding into the yard.

The Princess was laughing, but Pomfret was wearing a quiet, strained smile, while the set of his powerful jaw was full of purpose.

As he looked round he saw Simon, and the men's eyes met. . . .

Pomfret freed his feet from the irons, cocked his leg over the withers of his mount and slid to the ground. Then he stepped to Sunset and handed her down.

"In an hour's time, lady."

"In half an hour," said Sunset archly, "I shall be walking in the rose-garden."

Pomfret bowed, and the lady swept under an archway and out of sight.

Pomfret turned to the stables.

"Come inside," said Simon. "There's a horse I want you to see."

As they passed into a stall—

"This can't go on," said Pomfret thickly.

"It's not going on," said Simon. "Close your eyes."

* * * * *

Seated in the counting-house, with his crown on the back of his head, the King was staring upon a map and savaging his thumb. By his side stood the Chancellor, the picture of injured indignation.

"What do I pay you for?" said the King suddenly.

"I don't know," said the Chancellor. "I've often wondered."

"There must be some reason," said the King.

"You may search me," said the Chancellor. "I've never been given any duties. I certainly feed the fowls, but that's because I like the birds. There's a cuckoo-dorking called Gwendoline——"

"Oh, go on," said the King. "I mean, how dare you?"

"I don't," said the Chancellor. "That's my great failing. Now, Gwendoline——"

"If you're not very careful," said the King explosively, "your office will fall vacant. I sent for you to help me divide the kingdom—not to retail excerpts from Boccaccio." Here he swallowed with great violence and dabbed at the map. "If this scale is three square eighths of an inch to a rood and a half, what's sixty-nine perches?"

"Unheard of," said the Chancellor shortly. "That's what it is. Why, I've fished——"

"In your spare moments, I suppose," said the King with an hysterical laugh. "You're quite accomplished, aren't you? You can feed fowls and fish and you're a raconteur. D'you sketch at all?"

"I don't feed fish," said the Chancellor. "I——"

"Ah, but you're going to," said the King,

rubbing his hands. "I shall have you distributed about——"

The sentence was never finished.

The note of a high-pitched gong, frenziedly slammed into utterance, rose in a frantic whine of exhortation which compelled the ear.

For an instant the King and the Chancellor stared each other in the face. Then they evacuated the counting-house with great rapidity and resolution. . . .

It was always the same.

After every bee alarm fresh and more stringent orders were drafted, directing that when the alarm was raised the personnel of Black Pepper would 'proceed to assemble composedly in the courtyard, where they will then make use of the antidote in order of precedence,' insisting that haste was foolish, undignified and futile, and adding that the slightest contravention would entail quartering. These commands were settled, issued and received with pomp and reverence, and from time to time rehearsals had been conducted with complete success. But Nature will out. The knowledge that several hundred thousand bees had suddenly become hostile always suggested so forcibly the expedience of immediate inoculation without let or hindrance of any sort that everyone, high and low, always repaired to the courtyard at a speed which was convenient neither to himself nor to such as he encountered, while, as for honouring the rules of precedence, the possibility of future dismemberment was unanimously and savagely preferred to the certainty of being stung by an enemy whose approach was by this time hideously audible.

Since, however, the administration of the antidote took but a moment to accomplish, the panic was always soon over and the confusion, though indescribably hellish while it lasted, short-lived. The King, who had run as fast and fought as bitterly as anyone, said it was a disgraceful scene, declared that bees never stung those who had not personally irritated them, asked several provocative and unanswerable questions in a loud voice, and, after announcing his intention to enlarge the bear-pit, withdrew with such dignity as a profuse perspiration enabled him to command, while his subjects, secure in the knowledge that the bees with which the courtyard was by this time quite overshadowed could do them no injury, listened cheerfully to his denunciation and then went jovially about their business.

Upon this occasion, however, the procedure which had become almost traditional was rudely violated.

Since there was, in fact, no antidote, to leave the comparative security of interiors for the open air was to deliver oneself into the enemy's hands, but the Bee-master had beaten the gong before turning the tap, and to correct the deep-seated impression that everyone who failed to repair to the basin deserved to be stung was beyond his powers. Not that he made the attempt: indeed, he was inside the water-butt before the King and the Chancellor had reached the courtyard, while his dupes, like the Gadarene swine, rushed violently upon their doom.

The scene in the courtyard beggars description.

Nobody who could not see the basin would believe that the antidote had failed to arrive, interpreting the furious assurances of those who were better placed as malignant endeavours to avoid being crushed and appropriately resenting them, while those who were ocularly aware of the truth were torn between reluctance to abandon what might any second become a valuable station and an impulse to seek second-rate but unquestionable shelter within doors. Some of the latter sought to blow up the pipe in a wild endeavour to dislodge some possible obstruction: others urged all within earshot to run up to the apiary and see what was wrong—advice which was felt to be unhealthy and so ignored or transferred. All the time the ranks of the former were becoming more and more congested, and the emotions of impatience and disbelief, supercharged with an apprehension which was every second growing more intense, found expression in determined and aggravated assault. This injustice was bitterly resented by its victims, and such vials of misunderstanding as had not already been emptied were soon in flinders. Screams and threats and bellows of pain and rage, mingled with frenzied commands and exhortations, arose on all sides. The King could be heard yelling incoherent rulings, from which the words 'precedence' and 'bears' continually emerged. Sunset's voice was rampant, demanding way and furiously enjoining her helpless and heedless adherents 'not to push,' while a deep, steady hum, not unlike that of a squadron of aeroplanes in flight, argued that if the antidote was failing to arrive, to impute any such omission to the bees would be, to say the least, premature.

The first to decide to withdraw were, not unnaturally, those nearest to the basin, but the welter and press had now become so dense that it was almost impossible for them to move, while those who were upon the skirts of the throng, and had only to step into the house, saw in the attempt to emerge evidence that the antidote had at last been made use of, and flung themselves in the direction of the basin with renewed vigour. Indeed, there almost immediately arose two schools—one whose objective was the basin and the other whose sole idea was to take cover. Which of these the King adorned is not clear, for he was by this time in that state of mind which marches with Insanity itself, and was describing in a loud voice the intensive training to which the regiment of gorillas which he proposed to raise would be subjected. Indeed, but for the actual arrival of the bees, it would have been impossible to believe that confusion could be worse confounded.

Suddenly several people, including His Majesty, were stung. That this was no fiction was obvious even to the most sceptical, first, because the howls of the victims left no room for doubt, and, secondly, because a swirling river of bees was already pouring into the courtyard, and a unanimous move was made in the direction of the buildings. Such concurrence, however, proved unsatisfactory, first, because humanity in bulk, though commonly reputed to be able, if sufficiently alarmed, to represent a torrent with great realism, cannot in fact adapt itself, as can water, to the negotiation of narrows, and, secondly, because the seven doorways which served the courtyard were of but ordinary dimensions. These, indeed, became choked almost at once—a circumstance which, though manifest, many of those present appeared to ignore, to the great inconvenience of the several obstructions, whose protests must have been heard for miles. Others, sick of being stung in the hinder parts, hurled themselves out of the gate, over the drawbridge and across country or else leaped into the moat to escape their tormentors. The King himself was among those who sought the countryside, and ran well and straight into the forest, accompanied by a small but devoted halo of bees, which was clearly impatient of his activity and only waiting to settle, the moment his pace permitted the selection of a landing, while the Chancellor, who was similarly decorated and had chosen the moat, was surprising his escort and himself by an unexpected ability to remain under water for a period which both knew was not indefinite but was excitingly protracted. Meanwhile, that the mass disorder should continue was, of course, unthinkable. Before the onslaught of the bees, the expedience of movement somewhither became so painfully manifest that at length even the most stiff-necked abandoned all competition for the doorways and flung wildly in any direction which seemed to offer egress. . . .

"Admirable," said Gog, stepping into the deserted courtyard. "I like bees. They're so efficient." He nodded to Simon and Pomfret, who were sitting in the mouth of a loft. "Where's the King?"

"About five furlongs away," said Simon. "At least, he is if he can stay. And the Bearward?"

"I can't imagine," said Gog. "His first idea was the water-butt, but that had already occurred to the Bee-master, and there wasn't really room. They did try, but it would have meant standing up, and the Bee-master didn't want to do that. So the Bearward got out again. He's bad at climbing, and I was very much afraid he'd spoil the butt. So was the Bee-master: he said so quite openly. And now will you saddle the horses and get the girls. I'm going to the buttery to draw some rations, and if I should see some beer I might try to wash my mouth out."

* * * * *

"To be perfectly frank," said Pomfret some four hours later, "I thought that the ogre was a myth. I thought that if he had really been seen six statute miles from the Castle his presence would have been accorded the dignity of numerous and uncomplimentary references, not to say execrations, by everyone with whom we came in contact. But there I was wrong. Apparently Etchechurians say 'I wonder if we shall meet an ogre' in much the same spirit as we say 'I shouldn't be surprised if it rained.' However, I didn't know that. Consequently, when, upon fording a small stream, the Princess triumphantly indicated the print of naked feet about the size of a large Chesterfield upon the opposite side, my emotions included that of surprise. In fact, not to put too fine a point upon it, I precious near fell off the barb, while the impression that I had been recently eviscerated was most compelling. . . . Well, something had to be done. I pulled myself

together, moistened the lips, rode out of the stream, dismounted and, trying not to tremble, carefully examined the spoor, which was alarmingly fresh. That brute of a woman watched me with bulging eyes. I frowned, shook my head and did some measuring—all with my heart in my mouth. Finally I announced that the tracks were, as I had feared, those of a single-headed ogre, and—what was worse—of one no longer in his prime. I added that he was lame, short-sighted and suffering from Bright's disease, and that, since, in view of my reputation for slaying none but the most full-blooded and strapping giants, I had recently accepted the Vice-Presidency of the Homeless Ogres' Aid and Adoption Society, I felt it would be improper for me to kill him or even shock him by riding as if in pursuit. To my intense relief Sunset, who was immensely impressed, agreed out of hand, and we were just about to ride off in all directions when a voice like a fog-horn announced that it was a funny thing, but it could have sworn that it smelt horses . . . Of course the obvious thing to do was to sit down and ride like hell and a bit over, but, if you'll believe me, I couldn't do it. For only one thing, my legs wouldn't work. I just sat still on that horse, with what I imagine would be called a frozen grin, looking like a bishop who has been caught shop-lifting, feeling like a bladder of warm lard and wondering whether I should be eaten raw or seethed. . . . Suddenly Sunset whimpered 'I'm going to swoon.' . . . That saved us both. I was just in time to catch her as-catch-can before she fell. Then I hauled her aboard somehow and stuck in my heels. . .

"She's no feather-weight—Sunset, but that old horse didn't care. We just streaked down the glades, with her blue roan flicking along behind. I didn't know where we were going, and, what's more, I didn't care. The one and only idea was to get out of range. I confess it wasn't sporting, but there are moments in my life, and always will be, when the craze for big game becomes subordinate to the will to live—and this was one of them. I wouldn't have drawn rein for fifty million pounds. However, after about four miles the barb seemed to think he'd done enough, so I let him ease up, and asked my luggage how she felt. Her reply, if disconcertingly irrelevant, was brutally illuminating. In a word, she compared my eyes to those of a gazelle which has decided to defend its young, said that my nose reminded her of poor Charming's, and added that she believed in bull necks. With that, she surrounded me with her arms, called me her 'oak-apple,' and playfully bit my ear."

Here a roar of laughter from Gog interrupted the narrative. After bestowing a freezing look upon the author of this indecency, Pomfret proceeded with every circumstance of dignity.

"Repressing a scream of agony, I thought very fast. To reject such determined addresses seemed injudicious. At the same time, so far as I could judge, it was only a quarter past nine, and if I was to be wooed for one hour—cumulatively, it seemed certain that before the Castle was won I should be torn in pieces. I therefore smiled dotingly, compared her mouth to a vineyard, called her 'my hogshead' and, snatching a lock of her hair, tore it out by the roots. . . .

"There's no doubt about it. Etchechurians are hard as nails. Most girls would have smiled rather wanly and asked to be allowed to descend and back their own horse. But she only laughed, called me 'a fervent rogue,' and, seizing my nose, wrung it till I could have roared with pain. Wondering whether there is any real distinction between great love and aggravated assault, I braced myself for a supreme effort, dropped the reins and clasped her to my chest. . . .

"That did it. I fancy we were both rather blue about the gills before she gave in. I know she was. Her smile was still there, but it was a shade forced, and a timely attack of hiccoughs relieved her of the necessity of composing an appreciation of my ardour which I could well have spared. Indeed, the girl looked so shaken as I put her back upon her horse that I suddenly felt an unmitigated blackguard and asked her pardon for holding her so tight. Her reply was soul-shaking.

"'Tight be rotted,' she said shortly. 'I didn't feel it. But won't—won't your mouth work?'

"I kissed her then. I admit it. I thought she'd earned it. And she—she kissed me back. . . . Well, I suppose I'd earned it too. It was like the kick of a horse with rubber boots on. However, she seemed very pleased, and followed it up with a chuck under the chin that made my head ache. Of course I don't wonder Charming succumbed. I imagine betrothal to Sunset's rather like a street fight that never stops.

To cope with that woman's dalliance you want a skin of rubber, ferro-concrete bones and the constitution of a lion. However. . . . Except that in the circumstances to maintain the conversational pace which she set was rather a strain on my mental energy, the worst was overpast. She certainly approached me once or twice with a funny sort of glint in her eyes, but I kept the barb simmering and she sheered off again. I'm rather hazy about what we settled on the way home, but I know we cleared up a good deal. Eulalie and Albert were to be banished after lunch, my bathroom was to be hung in buck-nigger, and, pending the decease of the King, we were to lead the simple life. The simple life, as interpreted by Sunset, was indeed simplicity itself. In the morning I was to seek and/or slay ogres : at noon she would meet me with garlands and a light lunch : in the afternoon I should dispatch a few knights, and in the evening, whilst I gorged, she was to dress my wounds and set my prowess to the harpsichord. I agreed blindly. There was nothing else to be done. If she'd suggested sleeping in the bear-pit, I should have jumped at it. I wasn't in a condition to argue, much less oppose. In fact, we got on swimmingly, with the result that by the time we were back at the Castle I was her 'poppet' and she was my 'jelloid,' and if Gog hadn't subverted those beehives as and when he did, I tremble to think of the terms upon which I should shortly have been with a lady of the B-B-Blood Royal. Incidentally, I know you keep on saying we're safe now, but are you sure ? "

" Positive," said Gog, laughing. " Even if the bees had died down, we're outside the three-mile limit, and they couldn't touch us. As a matter of fact, we're outside the kingdom too, but three miles from the Castle's enough. A landlord has jurisdiction for three miles from where he lives, but that's all. We're on the high lands now."

" Perhaps," said Simon, " we're within someone else's jurisdiction."

" I don't think so," said Gog. " It's possible, of course, but I doubt it. Besides, if we were it wouldn't matter. Everybody's most friendly here, unless you do them right down. That's what's so sickening about Black Pepper. But for Sunset——" He stopped short there, threw up his head and snuffed. " There's a priest about somewhere. I can smell an odour of sanctity."

The four looked round, but there was no one in sight.

A mile away lay the forest through which they had come, and all about them was stretching a rolling moor, quilted with purple heather and studded with clumps of oaks. Stripped of their gear, the horses which they had ridden were slowly making the forest, grazing as they went. Fifty paces away a spring, schooled into a fountain, was playing beneath an oak : two deer were drinking at the basin, and a sleepy-eyed ox was standing, waiting his turn.

" There's a priest somewhere," said Gog. " And that's as it should be. There's always a priest about at half-past two." He turned to Eulalie. " Would you like to be married?"

" What, here ? " said the girl.

" Why not ? " said Gog. " We've half an hour to spare, and it's holy ground."

" Why is it holy ? " said Patricia.

" Because there's a priest about. A priest will hallow the earth wherever he goes."

Pomfret turned to his lady and took her hands in his.

" It can do us no harm," he said. " And if their form of marriage is not what you like—why, then, my blessed lady, it won't count with me."

" All right, dear," said Eulalie, looking up into his eyes.

As she spoke, the faintest scent of incense came stealing upon the air, and the note of a miniature bell floated into audience. . . .

From the East, a furlong away, three figures were slowly approaching, moving in single file over the sunlit moor. First came two little boys, with short white surplices and scarlet cassocks beneath. Their flaxen hair was clubbed, and their blue eyes were full of a childish dignity and pride of office. The first bore the bell, which he tolled slowly and evenly, picking his way between the hassocks of heather with tiny, decent steps : the second was swinging a censer, which moved with the easy measure of a pendulum, and exactly following his fellow, though his small head was uplifted and his gaze fixed upon the hills. Behind them walked a silver-haired prelate with a gentle face, wearing vestments of green and gold. His hands were folded, and his lips moved as he went, as though in prayer.

As the procession drew near, the sunlight began to fade and the air to grow cool, while the perfume of incense waxed and the voice of the bell was assuming a louder and deeper note. This seemed no longer to

spring from the acolyte's presence, but from some belfry above, that could not be seen. The sun, too, was changing into a circular polychrome, immensely enlarged, and the air—the air was still as death and cold as stone.

The procession advanced. . . .

The deer and the ox had fallen in behind the prelate, and the world was dim: great shafts of light streamed from a huge rose-window, badging the moor with glory, the place was full of incense and the bell was booming overhead. . . .

'Holy ground, holy ground.'

The four got to their knees.

The acolytes parted, the one passing to the right and the other to the left. Only the priest held on, with the ox and the deer behind. The cold, heavy-laden air quivered with each stroke of the bell.

The priest had stopped.

Pomfret and Eulalie rose and stood before him, while the ox and the deer passed on till they came—the ox to Pomfret's, and the deer to Eulalie's side. Then they turned.

As the bell stopped booming—

"What is love?" said the priest.

"Love," said the ox, "is understanding. Love lifteth up the heart and casteth out fear. Love is patient and kind and a foul-weather friend."

"What are riches?" said the priest.

The deer responded.

"There are no riches save love. But love is wealth that neither moth nor rust can corrupt nor thieves can steal: and man can take love with him out of this world, when he must leave his gold."

"What is life?" said the priest.

"Life is of love," said the ox and the deer together. "And without love there is no light nor life, but only darkness and weariness of soul."

The priest lifted his head.

"Who giveth this man?"

"I," said the ox. "I give him."

"Who giveth this maid?"

"We," said the deer. "We give her."

"Then are they mine," said the priest, "for me to do with them what I will. And I am pleased to give the one to the other and the other to the one, so that henceforth the man shall belong to the maid and the maid to the man, and each shall suffer this livery with a faithful heart."

"So be it," said the ox and the deer. And then again, "So be it."

The priest lifted his hands, and the bell began to boom. . . .

The flaxen-haired acolytes took up their old positions, and a moment later the three were proceeding on their way. The ox returned to the fountain, and the deer bounded out of sight. The sunlight began to return, and the air to lose its chill, while the booming of the great bell became less resonant. . . .

As the three figures dwindled, the scent of the incense sank to a memory, and the sound of the bell to a tinkle too slight for an ear to hold. Then at last they died, and the dots were swallowed by the shimmer upon the rolling moor. . . .

Patricia put her arms about Eulalie, Simon took Pomfret's hand.

"Any complaints?" said Gog, wiping his eyes.

"I can't think of any," said Pomfret. "It would have been nice to have had Sunset here—under restraint. She could have chosen some hymns—'Where the bee sucks,' for instance, and thrown rice. But otherwise it was perfect."

"And you, my lady?" said Gog, turning to Eulalie.

"It was like a lily of the field," said Eulalie Tudor gravely, "above criticism."

"Good," said Gog, turning a cartwheel with great deliberation. "And now let's stroll on our way. I want to get to Date in good time, because you must have some clothes."

"Not only garments," said Simon. "When I think of the personal property we've left in those rooms at the Castle I could burst into tears."

"Date," said Gog, "is an excellent place to refit. You'll find everything there from a trunk to a toothpick."

"But how can we pay?" said Patricia. "We've a certain amount of French money—not very much, but will they take that?"

"You won't have to pay," said Gog. "Within The Pail no stranger may ever pay. It's a law of the land. We only get about ten in a hundred years, so we make the most of them."

"D'you mean to say," said Pomfret, "that if I trip into a vestry and ask for a still lemonade——"

"They'll throw it at you," said Gog, "disguised as beer. You see. I tell you, but for Sunset, Black Pepper would have done us a treat. After all, before you'd been there three minutes half the kingdom was yours for the picking up," and, with that, he sat down by the simple expedient of leaping into the air and protruding his feet.

"That's all very well," said Pomfret. "But when I've tottered into the same chapter-house twice daily for eighteen months, the excitement of being hospitable will begin to wear off."

"Long before that," said Gog, rising, "you'll be on the Civil List." With that, he turned on his heel and began to saunter Southward across the moor.

As he took not the slightest notice of the requests to return or wait which were preferred by his patrons, but rather increased his pace, there was nothing for it but to follow or let him go, so Pomfret was hounded to his feet and the march was resumed.

After another two miles the moor came to a sudden and precipitous end, and the four found themselves on the edge of a yellow bluff, regarding a landscape more lovely than any they had ever seen.

Before them lay a park which man must have leased of Nature for four or five hundred years. For centuries landlord and tenant had slaved together at the countryside till at last their several labour had produced one exquisite flourish, due credit for which the most practised eye could not attempt to apportion.

For mile after mile the vivid turf stretched, fine and smooth as that of a bowling-green, up hill, down dale, by water and under trees, half-counterpane, half-jacket with a velvet pile that fitted earth so tight as to disclose each swell and ripple of her comeliness: with this for underlay, cool groves and avenues and terraces and dizzy belvederes couched and stood up and hung and peered, each in itself a monument of beauty: streams wandered in and out of sun and shadow, impatient falls leaped from the edge of crags, and here and there a pool rendered the elegance that hung above it. Cedar and cypress and cryptomeria grew in magnificent profusion: here was an avenue of poplars that dwarfed the world: a stalwart company of palms feathered that sunlit furlong, and a distant splash of purple spoke for a copper beech: gigantic solitary oaks spilled maps of shade upon the green: here was a pomp of chestnuts, and there a quire of elms: sweet-smelling limes filled up a sudden valley and a watch of grey-green firs steepled a hill, while an occasional birch, all delicate lace and silver limbs below, plainly declared the grace of its divine inhabitant.

Greatly astonished, the four would have questioned their guide, but the latter was already at the foot of the bluff and signalling to them to follow him down. By the time they had descended he was a hundred yards ahead, and since, when they quickened their steps, he did the same, it became apparent that he had guessed their intention and was resolved to defeat it.

As in a dream they passed into the pleasance and, presently bearing to the left, began to follow a stream which by gradually absorbing other waters slowly attained the dignity of a river and at length recognition of its state in the form of an aged bridge. This the four crossed in the wake of their guide, who then left the water and turned to a long slope flanked with parades of maples in all their glory.

At the top of the rise Gog halted and, as the others came up, pointed ahead.

Three miles away below them lay a little walled town, red and white and pert as a puppy-dog and looking just like a toy in the midst of a lawn. It was clearly astride the river which they had been following, for a streak of silver went winking under its walls, and no other stream of importance was anywhere to be seen.

"Date," said Gog laconically. "No one about, of course. There never is. All work and no play in Date. Labour's their god. And they turn out some lovely goods—it's a manufacturing town. All the best stuff's out of Date. River transport, of course—they never use anything else. Out of the shop, into the barge and down stream. The Mayor's a most charming man."

"Quite so," said Pomfret. "Quite so. Has he, er, any daughters?"

"Never a one," said Gog, laughing. "He's a bachelor. Let's go and tell him what we want for dinner."

"What, just like that?" said Simon.

"Just like that," said Gog. "He'll fall over himself to sew us up. It's The Pail to a postmark he's in our rooms now, arranging the flowers."

"But how can he know?" said Eulalie.

"Rumour, my lady," said Gog. "Rumour goes like the wind on a dirty night. Besides . . ."

"But if he does know," said Pomfret, "I don't see why he should have the carpet down. We're travelling incognito. If I'd confessed that I was the Baron Buggins of Blowitout, I should have expected to find the bath ready and the piano tuned, but as it is . . ."

Gog grinned.

"Don't forget," he said, "that you are within The Pail," and, with that, he bounded forward towards the town. . . .

As they passed in at the gate, a man in a plum-coloured habit was pinning a skin of parchment on to a wooden frame which was swinging from the arm of a post as the signboard of an inn.

"There's The Hearsay," said Gog. "Let's hear what it says."

The copper-plate writing was a little ragged, but very easy to read.

COURT.

*At Black Pepper the bees are out, and, since four-fifths of the personnel, including the landlord, have been stung all over, it is feared that the famous swarms may become extinct. The King and most of the Court have left the Castle, while the Princess is confined to a powder-closet. But for his vocation, the condition of the Bearward would give rise to anxiety.*

PERSONAL.

*This afternoon on the high lands Sir Pomfret and the Lady Eulalie were married by the passing priest. It was a love-match and solemnised as such. The bride, who looked the darling she is, was supported by two red deer. The groom, who was seen to be slightly over at the knees, was appropriately supported by an ox. It is understood that he will choose as his device a quart pot reversed. Sir Simon and the beautiful Lady Patricia were interested spectators, while an air was given to the proceedings by the presence of Lord Gog.*

"There now," said Gog unctuously, adjusting his liripipe. "D'you know I thought I saw a magpie sitting up in an oak. Just above the fountain. What a very intelligent bird."

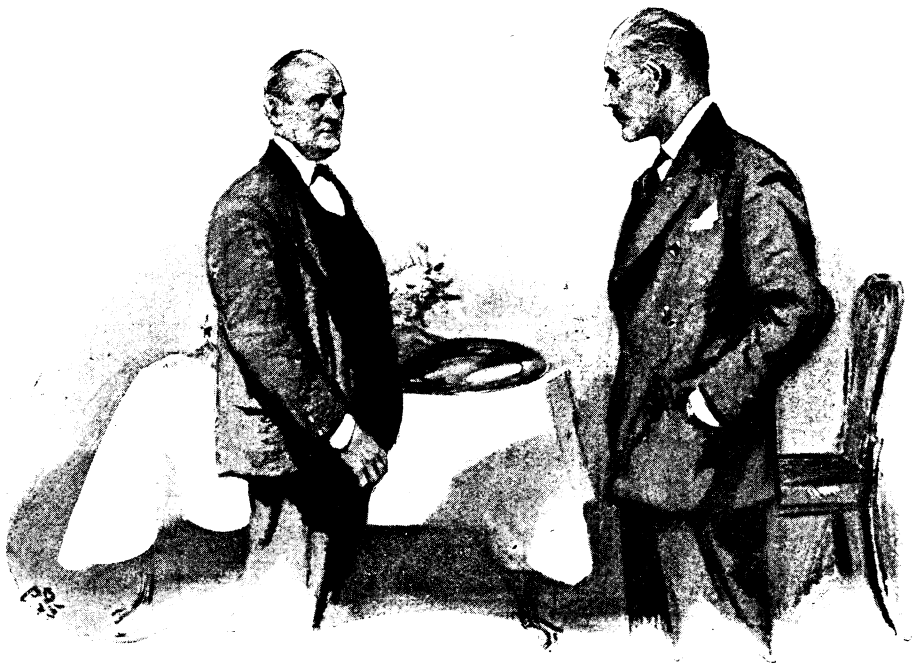
*A further episode in this series will appear in the next number.*

# THAT HOUR I KNEW!

**THAT night there curved above the winter fields**
**So new a moon that no man could have guessed**
**Her million centuries who seemed no more**
**Than sister to the gold pin at your breast.**
**And you and she, O lovely she and you! . . . .**
**I wondered as I waited, could there be**
**Two things more shining for the eyes of men,**
**Among all treasures of eternity?**
**So slender and so delicately bright,**
**She in her proud, dark chamber, you below**
**Moving as swans on water down your ways,**
**Or like a swinging branch of apple snow.**
**That hour I knew what hunger Beauty is,**
**And the fierce haunting that assails the heart**
**Till every tower is down and Love alone**
**Builds up his braver citadel apart.**

**And then, for envy, swiftly, noiselessly,**
**A cloud that was a dragon mouthing on**
**Swallowed the rare moon-maiden, and the dark**
**Enfolded you. And my two sweets were gone!**

A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.



"'Lady Mary, Miles, seems to be the one fish who has slipped through the net of adversity.' 'But if there isn't any adversity, sir? Just now you said——'"

# CHRISTMAS IN ADVERSITY

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT BAILEY

MR. MANNING'S man brought a smiling face into the luxurious bedroom with his master's morning tea.

"A merry Christmas, sir," he said, "and a long continuance of the prosperity which you enjoy and deserve."

He had thought out the last sentence carefully, but, nevertheless, it was sincere.

Mr. Manning sat up in bed so quickly that it was evident that he had been already awake.

"Good luck to you, Miles," he said, "but I've finished with merry Christmases and prosperity for some time. This is Number One of the Christmases in adversity."

"Ah," said Miles, "you'll feel better after the tea, sir. A little touch of the liver—that's what you've got."

He went round pulling up the blinds. Then he turned back to the room, and opened his eyes wide at the sight of several trunks and bags, some closed as if fully packed, others in nearly complete process of packing.

"Are we going down to Alderton, sir?" he inquired.

Lady Mary Janeson was staying there for Christmas. At the age of forty-four, Manning, who had been regarded as a confirmed bachelor, living in his office and at board meetings, had gone into Society, through his political friends, had met Lady Mary, who was a capricious widow of thirty-five, and had fallen to her. People regarded it as a "political engagement."

"We've reached the end of the 'we,' Miles," Mr. Manning announced. "I have

come a cropper, over stocks and shares and things you wouldn't understand. I am able to pay up my losses, and I have a trifle left to make a fresh start, but it will be as a man who has to valet himself. I shall be particularly sorry to part from you."

"You'll cut yourself shaving, sir," Miles protested. "Thinking of going abroad, if I might ask?" He nodded at the luggage.

"Abroad! I'm starting for Paris this afternoon—just to get away from here. I'll make up my mind afterwards where to go on to."

"Ah!" said Miles. "I don't see that you can do without me. You don't know your ways as I do. I've no ties, and it needn't be a question of wages, sir. I've a bit put by. I've been with you eleven years, you see."

"Shake hands, Miles," Manning offered. "Do you know, I believe you're the only friend I have in the world."

"Don't you talk like that, sir," Miles cried. "It wouldn't do for some of your friends to hear you. Lady Mary, that you're engaged to——"

"That will be off," Manning interrupted. "I have written to release her, as I ought."

"It doesn't follow that she ought to accept it," Miles protested. "A girl who was any good wouldn't. Say if you sacked me, I shouldn't look for my fiancy—if I'd got one—to give me up."

"If it was tacitly understood that she accepted you on account of your position, you would be bound to release her," Manning explained.

"By 'tacitly' meaning without saying it in so many words," Miles interpreted. "May be so. Well, the point doesn't arise, because I'm not going to be sacked, sir."

"I'm afraid you are," Manning said, with a sigh. "In plain English, I can't afford a valet, Miles. I shall give you six months' wages, in lieu of notice, and if you want a little loan to start a business——"

"Not me," Miles denied; "and if I take the wages, I'll stay and earn them for the six months, and see how we go on. You'll fall on your feet, sir. Don't be too proud to let your friends lend you a hand. There's Mr. Venning. After what you've done for him, he'll feel bound to stand by you."

"What I did for him" Manning stated, "was only repayment. He probably saved my life in France, and certainly risked his own to do it. What I lent him merely paid off his losses and enabled him to keep his business going. It left him nothing to give or lend. Anyhow, he knew I was in difficulties, and made no offer of help. I didn't want the help, Miles, only the offer. Adversity tries friends, eh? Well, it hasn't shaken *you* off. We'll see how we go along, as you suggest. Get packed up, if you're coming, you obstinate beggar!"

"I'm not the only obstinate one, sir," Miles stated, "and don't you be obstinate. Adversity makes friends as well as takes them, and you've some that will come out as they should. There's Mr. Mason, who used to be partners with you."

"He is thanking Heaven that he broke off," Manning said bitterly. "He cut me in the street yesterday afternoon."

"Are you sure he saw you, sir?" Miles asked. "A bit short-sighted, Mr. Mason is."

"Sure enough to write and tell him that he needn't have been afraid that I was going to try to 'touch' him, but that I wished that he'd let me remember him as a gentleman. He'll get the letter as a Christmas card this morning."

"Never any use sending that sort of card, sir," Miles objected; "and if I'd known what the letter was about, I might have forgotten to post it. . . . It isn't my business, of course, sir, but naturally I'm concerned over you, and notice letters and things. There were four letters you sent—one at tea-time to Lady Mary, and one before dinner to Mr. Mason, and two afterwards, to Lord Racington and to Mr. Levby. The 'b' was an 'e' in his father's time! Now, if he'd give you a backing——"

"Miles," Manning said, "you're a kind old fool. The letter to Levby was to tell him that he'd carried out his plan and smashed a man he was afraid of, but we might fight another round some day."

"Better chance if you hadn't warned him, sir," Miles commented.

"He was at the bottom of the whole business," Manning declared bitterly. "As to Lord Racington, I wrote to explain to him that I couldn't stand for Parliament now—or for matrimony. He will probably marry Lady Mary, with me out of the way. He's the best sport, I know, so I thought I'd give him the tip that the field was clear."

"Well," said Miles, "you know your own business, sir, but if I had a fiancy I'd make sure that she wanted to get free of me before I tried to hand her over, and I'd make sure that friends, or even enemies, weren't playing square before I rounded on them."

"Friends!" Manning growled, getting out of bed. "Adversity has cleared off all of them—except you. You're a deuced good fellow, Miles, and if ever I get back to merry Christmasses and prosperity, you shall share in them. I—— Here, don't make faces at me. Take this bally tray and clear off, and go and pack, if you must come. Remember that adversity tries tempers as well as friends. You know that I'm irritable at the best."

"Hasty," Miles corrected. "Hasty. It's no more than that." He moved to the door with the tray. "You be as hasty as you like with adversity, sir," he advised, "but remember that I'm no part of it. I'm the part that—that wished you a merry Christmas, sir."

"Merry Christmas be hanged!" Manning shouted as the door closed. "Well, I'm glad to have old Miles to finish the packing, anyhow. . . . 'But yesterday the word of Cæsar might have stood against the world.' It was good for a few thousand, anyhow. 'Now lies he there.' . . . I'm hanged if he does! I won't take a hiding lying down. I'll stand up and have another fight. This battle has only lost my possessions. It hasn't hurt the man. By Heaven it has! But it isn't my enemies who have scarred me. It's my friends. No, they weren't friends. Adversity has disproved them. . . . I'm like King Lear, deserted by everyone but my faithful fool. Not that old Miles is a fool, only an optimist. Perhaps that comes to the same thing. Well, it's no use wasting time ranting and philosophising. I'd better dress."

He was putting on his collar when the telephone bell rang. He answered it with his collar half secured.

"Manning speaking. Who is it?"

"Racington. I say, Manning, I'm deucedly sorry, you know. I had no idea you were seriously hit."

"Sporting of you to take the trouble to 'phone," Manning acknowledged. "Thanks! A merry Christmas to you!"

"Thanks. I don't know if I may wish you one, but—— I say, Manning, a chap's bad luck doesn't alter the chap himself or those who like the chap. Mary's a sport, you know. She won't give you the mitt just because you've had a biff."

"That's why I released her. I hope she'll find a better man. She easily might."

"Not so easily, my dear boy. Look here, Manning, what I'm 'phoning to say is this: if a bit of financing would pull you through—— I'm rather a useless beggar, you see, with rather a useless lot of money. Glad to be of use to—to the better man. Mary's a very old friend, you see, and—er—you think it over!"

Manning blinked. "Thanks, Racington, thanks! Not for the money. I can't take it. The thanks are for getting out of my head that all the people I knew were snobs and swabs. *You* aren't. . . . A merry Christmas and luck in everything that you wish. I——" Miles entered. "Here's my man fetching me to my egg and bacon. Good-bye, old fellow. Many thanks. Don't make me say any more. So long!"

He hung up the receiver and turned to the valet.

"Miles," he said, "you aren't the only friend to biff old Adversity. Lord Racington has 'phoned to offer me a leg up. I'm not taking it, but—adversity makes friends as well as takes them."

"I told you so, sir," Miles cried. "Now, didn't I? Breakfast is nearly ready, sir. Will you have it before I shave you, or after?"

"Before," Manning decided. "I thought I didn't want anything to eat, but Lord Racington has given me an appetite."

"Born and bred a gentleman, sir," Miles observed.

"Umph!" said his master. "I've always laughed at the old nobility, but they *do* come out all right as gentlemen. I noticed that in France. I'll be down in a few secs, Miles."

As he was getting into his coat, the telephone bell went again.

"Hullo!"

"Is that you, Manning? Venning speaking. I say, old man, I've only just heard that you were badly hit over that slump. Of course, I'll raise what I can on the business and repay as much of your loan to me as——"

"It wasn't a loan, Venning, and I'm not going to try to pull myself up by pulling you down. A few thousand would break your show and wouldn't re-start mine. It's no use arguing, dear boy. I won't . . . I said 'won't' . . . Oh, I shall fall on my feet again. The money's gone, but the man is left. I thought he wasn't—imagined that he'd lost his friends as well as his dibs."

"You can't lose friends in that way, Manning; only find out if they were merely acquaintances. If you'll let me——"

"Tut, tut! I've told you I won't. No, adversity only shows friends up for whatever

they are. I thought mine were all panning out acquaintances. Do you know I was ass enough to suppose that you knew I was down, and didn't offer a hand——"

"Manning!"

"When he roused and had rubbed his eyes."

"I apologise, old chap. You've given me a tonic. By the way, Racington offered me a leg up, too. . . . Just what you'd expect of him, eh? Well, *I* didn't. . . . I mustn't jaw now, because I'm packing up; off to France for a bit. Ta, ta!"

"Off to France? I thought there was a magnet to hold you at home for Christmas!"

"Right, dear boy. There *was*. I've released her, of course. Good-bye for the present. A merry Christmas. . . . Oh, well, you've made mine less unmerry."

He cut off.

"Breakfast is just being taken in, sir," Miles reported. "Glad to see you looking happier."

"Another friend has hit old adversity on the point, Miles. Mr. Venning."

"What did I tell you, sir?" the valet asked.

The telephone bell rang again just then. Miles answered it.

"Mr. Mason wants to speak to you, sir," he reported. "Strikes me as Adversity isn't having too good a time of it!"

Manning went to the 'phone. "Manning speaking," he announced.

"My dear old man," cried Mason's well-known voice, "has worry turned your brain? *I* pass you without a word when you were out of luck! You ought to have known that I didn't see you. Why, Eustace, I've sat up half the night, trying to work out a scheme for us to join up again. I know you can't put in any money just now—money of your own, I mean—but couldn't you borrow on our joint security? I'd pledge a bit of the business, as much as I can in fairness to the missus and babies. I——"

"Jack, old pal," Manning cried, "it's worth the knock-down to find that you're

—exactly what I ought to have known you were!"

"What less could I do after our ten years together?" Mason demanded. "It must make two men friends or enemies; and we never had a real row, Eustace, the whole time. If I'm not your friend, I don't know who is. Think it over, and when you come back from — well, I suppose you're off to be cheered up by your charming *fianceé*——"

"Haven't one," Manning denied. "At least, she'll receive my release this morning."

"You old chump! If she's anything like my missus, she'll box your ears for supposing that she'd give you up because you've had a knock."

"Ah, Mrs. Mason wasn't a Society lady, making a 'suitable' marriage! It's only fair to Lady Mary to say that it was distinctly that. The bargain is naturally off. There's no longer any 'consideration,' as the lawyers say."

"There's you!"

"Oh, me! It wasn't a 'you and me' engagement, you know, though we got on very well together—almost pally lately. It was an 'arranged affair.' I don't suppose she'd break the arrangement off at her own instance. I take her to be a very straight woman. But she'll be deuced glad that I'm making it easy; write a nice friendly letter thanking me for recognising facts for facts; make a point of 'much friendly regard,' etc., etc. I'm off abroad this afternoon till I've got over the pip. . . . My dear chap, it's no use arguing. I'm not going to let you risk what belongs to the missus and babies. . . . Oh, I'll be all right. . . . I won't be too proud to come to you for a job, if I can't find anything."

"The job will be a partnership with me, then. I say, Eustace, is there no chance of pulling through? If some of us clubbed together for

"'Well, Eustace,' she said, in her don't-care, doesn't-matter-you-know way, 'I thought I'd motor up and have it out.'"

a loan—— From what Racington said to me yesterday, he'd join in, and of course Venning would. You'd pay us back in a few years, and——"

"No, no, it's no use, old man. Nobody could save me but Levby, and you know how much chance there is of that! He's never forgiven me for going on my own, instead of taking the place in his show that he offered. If I carried on, I'd have to fulfil some contracts with him at a dead loss. It would drain up all the fresh capital you kind chaps could find. By closing down I get out by a forfeit which I can just scrape together. It will satisfy him. He only wanted to break me and get me out of the way. . . . You doubt it? Jack, you don't know that sort of man. I do. I've written and told him so. . . . What did you say?"

"Thundering idiot!" Mason shouted. "T for temper, H for hasty, U for ass, N——"

"Shut up, you silly blighter! Yes, I daresay I was a fool. Last night I felt like—say like Samson. 'Blind among enemies!' . . . Well, well, we'll see, old pal. I'll come to you, if I have to come to anyone. A merry Christmas! Remember me to the little missus. . . . Cried about it? Bless her! . . . Good-bye, old friend."

"Sir," Miles protested from the doorway, "the breakfast will be stone cold. . . . I was right about Mr. Mason, wasn't I, sir?"

"We're all right by accident sometimes," Manning laughed, and patted his faithful retainer on the shoulder, "but you were more right by accident than I was. Adversity is a net that all your friends don't slip through. None of them, perhaps. For Levby was an enemy, and Lady Mary a social arrangement!"

Miles shook his head sadly. He reflected that his employer kept several photographs of the "social arrangement" about the flat, and that he seemed to look interestedly at them.

"I don't know the ways of ladies," he observed, "only of women; but she had rather the look of one. Sir, when a man's in trouble it brings out the best in a woman that likes him. When I was up the river with you and her, at her Aunt's, I noticed her way of smiling at you, and——"

Manning held up his hand. "Lady Mary is the one subject which I should prefer not to discuss at any time," he said stiffly. "Understand that I have no complaint against her, and continue to regard her with the greatest respect and esteem. Don't think I'm ratty, Miles, but I'd rather that you left the subject of Lady Mary alone."

"I see, sir; I see! . . . I'll go and fetch the—anything else."

When Miles had left the breakfast room, Manning got up and moved Lady Mary's photograph from the sideboard in front of him to the sideboard behind, out of view.

"I always had the idea that I was meant for the domestic," he told himself, "but I've proved myself given to mistaken ideas, like my notion of Levby. I thought he was hard, but not malicious or underhand, and all the time he was quietly laying out to smash me. We live and learn. I've learnt to understand Levbys. . . . And Lady Marys. . . . Curious attraction about her, though. . . ."

He had reached the last half cup of coffee, and the last piece of cold buttered toast, when Miles bustled in. He was evidently distressed.

"You're wanted on the 'phone again, sir," he announced. "I've switched it on to the study. Sir, it's Mr. Levby. I made bold to ask him what he wished to speak to you about, as you were very busy. He said 'Just to wish him a merry Christmas.' He answered in a funny voice, sir. I'm doubting that being a Jew—well, his father was, and a Jew that's no Jew is worse—I'm doubting if he meant the words in their proper sense! I could say you've gone out, sir?"

"By no means," Manning declined. "I'll be able to say one or two things that I didn't like to put in writing!"

He clenched his hands and teeth and hurried to the telephone.

"Eustace Manning speaking," he announced. "I understand that you want to wish me a merry Christmas. Well, you've done your best to make it one! As I said in that letter——"

"You should not have sent that letter, Manning," Levby's quiet voice interrupted. "I am an old man of sixty-eight, and you are a young man of forty. You should not have written as you did, even if your suspicions had been well founded. They were not . . . I'll leave you to think that over. Now as to your business position. Understand that I can't name articles or people or prices over the 'phone. They might leak out. Speaking in general terms, you can carry out your contracts with me—certainly with less loss than paying forfeits, possibly with no loss at all. Given a little time, you will be able to make your purchases at much lower rates than you anticipate. Prices are about to drop considerably,

for reasons which I will tell you, if you care to call. I will give you an extension of time, and perhaps certain other accommodation. You are entirely mistaken in supposing that I bore or bear any malice against you, or tried to corner you. The recent flash-in-the-pan rise was as unsuspected by me as by you. . . . As to wishing you a merry Christmas, I am a Jew, as you know, but I am glad to join in any exhibition of general good-will. A merry Christmas to you. It need be no worse through me."

"Mr. Levby," Manning gasped, "sir, I—I——"

"That's all right," Levby said. "Come round and see me this afternoon, and we'll arrange things. I hope for a long and prosperous career for you."

"Sir——" Manning began, but the old man had cut him off.

"Miles," he announced, when he returned to the breakfast room, "he wanted—he doesn't want—well, the fact is that I don't seem to be 'broke' at all. He's a better Christian than some who call him an old Jew. . . . We shan't be going abroad this afternoon, anyhow. I'm going to——"

"To Lady Mary's, sir," old Miles asked eagerly.

"No," he said. "To call on Mr. Levby . . . Lady Mary, Miles, seems to be the one fish who has slipped through the net of adversity."

"But if there isn't any adversity, sir? Just now you said——"

"I know, I know! . . . But, before I can tell her that, she will no doubt have accepted her release, and—— Of course I shall let her know the changed conditions, when I am sure that they have changed importantly, but I don't think there will be a renewal of the engagement. You see, Miles, adversity especially tries friends who thought of getting married!"

Miles nodded several times, very sadly.

"Well, sir," he said, "you can't have everything, can you? . . . Are you ready to come and be shaved?"

Manning had his shave, and went to his study. He sat in an armchair in front of the gas-fire, and spent a quarter of an hour considering his talk with Levby. Then he tried to read some Christmas annuals, but couldn't get interested in them. Finally he reached out for a portrait of Lady Mary and looked at that.

"Somehow," he muttered, "other women didn't attract me, and she did. . . . If there was no loves-dovey business about it, we seemed to get on very well. I believe I'd have preferred that any other fish had slipped through the net. . . . I'd have liked to keep my idea of her. I might have, if she'd 'phoned a word of sympathy; but she hasn't. I suppose she's just annoyed. . . . 'Oh, bother!' That will be her epitaph upon our engagement."

He leaned back in the chair, still holding the photograph; closed his eyes; fell into a doze, tired out by the excitement.

He did not hear the door open or a petulant voice say, "No, no! Don't announce me. I'll go straight in," but something woke him. He thought it was just being stared at. At any rate, Lady Mary was regarding him fixedly when he roused and had rubbed his eyes. He thought he had never seen her look so desirable.

"Well, Eustace," she said, in her don't-care, doesn't-matter-you-know way, "I thought I'd motor up and have it out—you make yourself jolly comfy, you men!—so here I am. . . . No, don't get up. Come to your waking senses first." She pushed him back in his chair. "You needn't hold out your hand. I'm not sure yet if we shake hands. Now listen. You had to offer to release me, of course. Also, of course, I have to offer to stick to our bargain. Nasty word, but that's what you call it in your letter. That's what I call it to my people. That's what everybody calls it. Well, we made a bargain, you say. So much money for so much social position and political influence, eh? The money having gone——"

"I'd like to say——" he began.

"Now, do let me get a word in, Eustace! You flurry me, butting in before I've finished. The money having gone, there's none to bargain with. So the bargain's off. . . . So far as it was a 'bargain'. . . . *Eustace, why did you go to sleep with my photo on your knees!*"

"Because," he said hoarsely, "it *wasn't* just 'bargain' with me, Mary. I—I'd got fearfully keen on you. . . . I've something to tell you. Let me explain that——"

"You haven't anything left to explain," she interrupted, "and I really don't see that I have. You are down on your luck, and need bucking up, and so *here I am!*"

Miles peeped in presently, but closed the door softly and went away again.

"There's two," he said, "that may thank God for a Christmas in Adversity!"

STANCE AND ADDRESS FOR DRIVE.

# THE SURE SECRET OF THE GOLF DRIVE

## A STYLE THAT CAN BE RELIED UPON FOR LENGTH

By ARTHUR HAVERS, EX-OPEN CHAMPION

*In a chat with Clyde Foster. Photographs, for which Arthur Havers has posed, by Sport & General*

I NEVER tire of teaching driving, because when all is said of other shots in the game, the tee shot is the most fascinating.

"Put me on my driving" is the request most frequently heard by the professional. I am not belittling the shots that come between the tee shot and the hole. Far from it. I am not speaking comparatively.

My subject in this article is driving, and well I know that to put a moderate player in the sure way of adding fifteen or twenty yards to his drive on the average is to earn his gratitude for bringing a real joy into the game, and for removing a real source of unhappiness.

Driving that is just too short to carry hazards that ought to be carried from the tee, leaves the golfer in a perplexing position from which he craves to be delivered.

Obviously he has something to learn in the swing that he cannot arrive at by his own observations. Hence he comes to the professional for the needed assistance.

I do not promise miraculous results, but I can usually honestly guarantee ten or fifteen yards, which is more than it looks,

let me add. Twenty or twenty-five yards may come eventually, but half that added distance should serve very well for a start.

I believe in the full swing for players of both sexes and all ages and sizes; whether short or tall, stout or slim, makes no difference. I always set out to teach the full swing. Curtailments are ticklish things to adjust in golf.

Cases may arise in which the full swing seems hopeless, but I never come to this conclusion until it is forced upon me. Middle-aged beginners, who have not been addicted to outdoor ball games in their young days, may sometimes seem to be incapable of the full swing, owing to the set condition of their muscles, causing me very reluctantly to consent to a short back swing in their cases. But even with them there is no saying what persistent practice with the full swing might achieve.

By the full swing is meant the bringing of the club to the horizontal at the top; to take it back further is as bad as stopping

TOP OF SWING FOR DRIVE.

SIDE VIEW OF TOP OF SWING FOR DRIVE.

short, because the player must never find himself in the position of having to pull the club up to the horizontal in commencing the downward swing.

Some women golfers are rather apt to hamper their golf in this way, flinging the club upwards without maintaining control of it—a fatal mistake.

My experience has convinced me that the maximum of power is obtained by the full swing. The character of the shot is also better then. Short swinging looks stilted.

The half or three-quarter swing usually tends to restrict one's pivoting, with the result that the shot is almost certain to be

cut and sliced. Instead of the arms going out with the shot, they are apt to be drawn across the body—a radical and very common error in driving, whereby the club-head travels inwards rather than forwards.

Much has been said and written lately about the straight left arm in the backward swing. The theory is good up to a point. By this I mean that it must not be taken too literally or applied too rigidly. The left arm has an elbow in it, which must not be forgotten.

If the left arm is taken back as " straight " as if it were a jointless wooden limb, then the shot must be botched. By a " straight left " I would have you understand a very slightly " curved " left; not sharply bent like a half or three-quarters shut knife, but bent rather like a relaxed bow.

When the left arm is brought back too stiffly, you will find that the fingers of that hand cannot keep hold of the shaft.

And now about my bold claim to point the way for fifteen more yards on your moderate driving. Have I promised more than I can fulfil, like an election candidate? I think not. All I ask is that you give a fair trial to my system.

FINISH OF DRIVE.

To begin with, in general terms, feel that the club is being swung backwards by the extended and very slightly bent left arm, all the muscles of which are consciously tightened. The club is not " lifted," but " swung," while under perfect control. It is not taken round the nape of the neck, but round the point of the right shoulder, and five or six inches outwards.

So far the right arm is practically only a passenger moving smoothly with the left and waiting for the moment when it will come into the shot.

At the top of the swing the club lies level or " horizontal." The right elbow does not project outwards, but falls naturally to an easy downward position, eight or nine inches out from the side.

The left arm practically remains as it was, bending as little as possible.

There is a momentary, but distinctly conscious, pause before the club begins to descend. This pause is better overdone than underdone, but it cannot be safely dispensed with. I pay great attention to the pause in my tee shots, though, of course, habit makes it almost mechanical to a professional.

The left arm continues still to do the major part of the work in the downward swing, without perceptibly relaxing till the club-head has come within two or three feet—no need to deal in inches here—of the ball. If everything has gone right up to this stage, everything will go right beyond it.

The wrists now assume complete command of the shot, without the semblance of jerking. It is the right hand's turn to take the upper hand, so to speak, and without any pushing, it must be remembered.

The feet and shoulders are perfectly poised as the right hand takes charge of the follow-through, bringing the unwinding body with it. All should happen with a minimum of conscious effort, as the club-head carries the ball away, and chases it as far as the arms allow, without being thrust forward.

Now let me come to one or two important details in the nature of warnings.

(1) Be very careful not to hurry the back swing, as too great haste causes a jerk at the top when you cannot be sure of the club reaching the horizontal or pausing there.

(2) Let the pause at the top be equal to the period of time required to say "I am there all right." That should be long enough to wait and should also give you a feeling of confidence. It is better than counting "One, two."

(3) In coming down you must beware of unwinding the body too quickly, as that would throw everything out of gear. The effect of coming down too quickly is to slice the shot.

(4) Keep in your mind the thought of trying to increase the pace of the swing from the top gradually, not by spasms.

(5) Keep your eye a *little on the right side of the ball*, without actually taking aim at certain pimples. Don't stare or glare, but look straight at the little white object, and don't be frightenend of it.

ARTHUR HAVERS DRIVING FROM THE THIRD TEE IN THE PROFESSIONAL TOURNAMENT AT HOLLINWELL.

Well, now, you ask, where do the extra ten or fifteen yards come in? I answer: from the proper manipulation of the straight left arm; by paying particular attention to the fact that the left arm must not be any more bent immediately before the right arm takes charge of it two or three feet from the ball than when it took the club away from the ball at the start of the upward swing.

Pupils have sometimes looked incredulous when I have inculcated this sure secret

of the golf drive, and for a time their experience has confirmed their doubts.

But on persevering for some days, the secret has disclosed itself in a drive of greater length and beauty than they have hitherto known.

Thus encouraged, they have gone on till at last the desired additional length has become a permanent acquisition. I can truly say that at least nine in every ten have had this happy experience.

So far as I know, it is the last word in the formation of a golf style that can be relied on rarely to let you down. This may sound very optimistic. No doubt it is, but would you take lessons in golf, or in anything else, from a pessimistic coach?

I come now to other matters—minor matters, perhaps, but not to be neglected.

Golf is a very exacting game. It cannot be played while your wits are wool-gathering. For myself, my mind is never a blank in the playing of any shot. I dare not forget what I am doing.

Another warning note relates to those occasions when one greatly desires to add a few feet or yards to a drive in special circumstances, as when bunker requires carrying from the tee against a wind.

The danger is then very great of imperfectly tossing the shot, when the extra effort for length will have a very different effect. My rule is to play in the knowledge that I have a little unexerted power in reserve for emergencies, and when these come I keep the risks in mind.

So must you, for they are very liable to trip up any of us. Control of the club and oneself must in no circumstances be lost. One little thing going wrong may throw everything wrong. The mind invariably telegraphs to the player when his timing is upset, for without timing there can be no good golf.

To preserve timing, be careful not to bend the left or the right leg too early, as these errors involve dragging the club instead of swinging it. Timing has no greater enemy that the desire to do too much.

We all have our limits, though you may be in the happy position of not having yet reached yours.

I must not conclude this article on driving without dealing with two questions often put to me :— How to play the tee shot for a low ball, and how to play for a high ball? The answer is very simple. It is mainly a matter of stance. When playing for a low ball I put greater part of my weight on the left foot, and bring the left shoulder slightly forward.

In playing for a high ball, the stance is reversed. I throw the weight on the right foot and bring the right shoulder slightly back. If you will make these experiments, the proof of what I say will become at once apparent.

Lastly, persevere with that straight left arm exactly in the way I have described. Don't be easily discouraged, for what I tell you is right.

But be sure that the arm is kept straight for at least three-fourths of the entire swing. And don't hurry or flurry in making the shot. Experience will sooner or later satisfy you and establish for you a real length-getting style.

# SYMBOLS.

**THESE things make Christmas anywhere—**
**An open fire and one small room,**
**A candle, the laugh of a little child,**
**A poinsettia in bloom.**

**One bright red flower I ask of God,**
**And a leaping flame to warm me by,**
**A candle to light a child's dear face,**
**And a white star in the sky.**

**A red, red flower to keep me brave,**
**A fire for cheer in a lonely land;**
**One star for Faith to light my way,**
**And a child to hold my hand.**

**GRACE NOLL CROWELL.**

# PIE-CRUST

## By G. B. STERN & GEOFFREY HOLDSWORTH

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

"HER aunt is going to live with us," added Dermot Lawrenson. "Here, send me the wine-waiter." For he was host on this occasion to his vagabond friend, Richard Spurnville Carew, at the Funf-Mal, in Vienna.

Funf-Mal means five times, and indicates, perhaps, the number of vain oaths that you take afterwards to come back and dine there again. Vain, because five-times-five-times-five do you seek it before you give up for good; tell yourself, miserably defiant, that the Lachsforellen had been rotten (but oh, when is the retrospect of a perfect salmon trout, fresh, delicately pink within its shimmer of skin, when is it ever rotten in all Austria ?) and go to the Bristol instead, which is easy to find.

Derry could not afford to regale himself, on his travels, in the grand style of the late Earl of Bristol. His bump of locality, on the other hand, was super-developed. And a vision ending in a fish-tail, which Maeterlinck would have called The Soul of All the Salmon Trout, had bestowed upon him in his dreams the gift of following an invisible gleam which led him through winding mazes safely to the Funf-Mal.

Dick Carew mused on the infinite possibilities concentrated into that phrase, "Her aunt is going to live with us," while Derry, having watched the only waiter-proprietor obediently scuttle away and decorously return in the *rôle* of wine-waiter-proprietor, gave an order for a bottle of Jesuiten-Garten, liking the name.

"Do you really mean that Miss Ffolliott is willing to give up King's Rest, where you say she has lived all her life, to settle down somewhere with you and Roberta, when you marry ?" Carew asked at last, surprised at such a clumsy arrangement.

"Heavens, no ! She'd never budge from King's Rest. She's going to live with us there."

"I get you now. When you say, inaccurately, 'Her aunt is going to live with us,' you mean, 'We are going to live with her aunt.'"

"Same thing, isn't it ?"

"No, my cherub, it isn't. Three fat volumes might be written as a mere introductory preface to an enlightening treatise, in twenty-three tomes, analysing the difference."

Carew had been at school with Derry Lawrenson for a short time. Then they had inevitably parted, and re-met, several years later, under rather extraordinary conditions. He liked the easy-going, generous youngster, forgave him his remarkable good looks, which, after all, were not his fault, and even forgave him his nearly unforgivable habit of making two simultaneous appointments in Rome and Petrograd, and turning up to keep them in the Street of Swords at Toledo.

"Oh, rot ! Roberta's Aunt Venetia and I get on like—like——"

"Like a lawn and the lawn-mower. Yes. D'you know which is you ?"

"I hate symbolism," quoth Derry lazily; "let's come down to brass tacks. I always said, by the way, that when I had a house of my own I'd call it Brass Tacks. 'Come down to Brass Tacks,' when you issued your week-end invitations, y'know. Dick, out with it, old son. You're as conventional as the rest of 'em; I'm poor, so I oughtn't to think of marrying a rich girl. Is that it ?"

"But it doesn't seem to be a case of a rich girl, which would be bad enough, of course. If I follow you rightly through the fumes of Jesuiten-Garten that cloud my renownedly acute brain, it's a girl and her rich aunt that you propose to marry."

"You really are quite shameless, Dick. Where have you been, lately, to have forgotten to drop your voice and your walking-stick and your gloves when the talk turns on to people's incomes, and stammer and stutter and turn red and be overcome with nervousness and decent confusion ?"

"I have been to the mountains of the Caucasus, where you only drop your gloves, sometimes, overcome with nervousness, when you are twisting in a basket up and up the side of a mountain, but still a long dangle of the rope from the monastery at the top. So, being shameless, how much money has the aunt of the girl whom you propose to marry? Answer me in Austrian kronen, please!"

"About seventeeen thousand pounds English sterling per annum, I think, and the property of King's Rest, where you'll be invited for some shooting one day, if you stop making yourself objectionable for the rest of this meal. Shooting, my dear vagabond, is a sport to which country gentlemen are greatly addicted. You wear a morning coat and spats for it, and repeat this story morning and evening till you know it: A lady-grouse and a partridge met and fell in love on August twenty-first, but they could never marry, because the grouse was a ghost, and the partridge wouldn't be for another ten days, by which time he'd have fallen quite vainly in love with a hen-pheasant. . . . She's allowing Roberta two thousand a year, by the way, so we're right as rain."

"*Allowing* her or *settling* it on her? Don't say 'same thing' again. You used to be an intelligent lad, though it's a pity, as your school reports must have frequently said, that Dermot allows himself to slump so easily into idleness."

"Look here, Dick—seriously now, fair and square—yes, come down to brass tacks—don't you think that the traditional young man is a selfish blighter, preferring his own pride and noble sentiments and what d'you call 'em, to the girl he pretends to be in love with, if he gave Roberta up—oh, renounced her and all the rest of it—just because she happens to have a spot of cash and he doesn't? I'd be sorry if Roberta and I didn't care for each other enough to survive that slight discomfort," declared Young-Love, winged and scornful.

Now, Carew was a meddler by disposition, but give him credit for the fact that he rarely interfered on foresight only. Nothing had yet begun to go wrong with the Derry whom he knew and the Roberta who was a stranger, and he could not explain the elusive discomfort within his prophetic soul—discomfort born, perhaps, of recognition that Derry's most famous quality was a rich streak of indolence . . .

"By the way, does she know about——"

"No," retorted Lawrenson curtly, "she doesn't—if you mean Aunt Venetia. Roberta does, of course. She says it's the sort of thing her aunt wouldn't forgive."

* * * * *

Carew heard nothing of Derry Lawrenson for three years. His motley collection of friends were wont to drop out like this, however, and then suddenly to reappear, mostly without any explanation of what their experiences had been in the interim. Himself a traveller minus a goal, an adventurer, a pedlar of good help who needed no fee for his wares, this sort of behaviour suited Carew and rarely surprised him. Derry, no doubt prospering and well looked after, slipped from his memory. And then came that invitation to spend a week-end at King's Rest. The note-paper was expensive and decorous. Carew smiled as the Sardinian equivalent for a postman handed it to him, with a genial apology, in the *patois*, for its battered and smudged condition. "I gather, not very clearly, that it has unavoidably lain among the sardines for a day or two. Good; you are forgiven. I am always ready to encourage the flavour of local industries. . . ."

King's Rest.

Nearest station: Market St. Dunstans, Surrey.

And Derry, forgetful already of their half-mocking burlesque of What Was to be Expected from a Country Gentleman, before his marriage, in Vienna, was suggesting that Carew might enjoy a day with the partridges: "Saturday is the First, you know."

Curious, and rather apprehensive, for you never know what evil has befallen a pal who has mislaid both memory and a sense of humour, the Happy Meddler quitted Sardinia, spent a day in London, discarding one personality and assuming another, and arrived at King's Rest complete with gun, old—but not too old—tweeds, the right sort of boots, and his long, thin, brown face screwed to the traditional impassivity which King's Rest would be sure to demand of him.

It demanded that, and more.

If Carew had found Dermot Lawrenson wasted with illness or haggard with secret sorrow, it is questionable whether he would have been as shocked as he was at the spectacle of Derry in his sleekness; Derry with a somnolent brain and a lounging, indolent figure; self-drilled to dependence on a man-servant; deferential to a code

and a jargon that had acquired a patina from the frequent handling of thousands. Content to do nothing—content, yes, worst of all, most exceedingly satisfied with his position.

Worst of all, because the position and existence of a country gentleman, an honourable one if you are born into it and it is indeed and rightfully your own, becomes despicable if you hold it only at another's will and bidding.

Derry was country gentleman on sufferance. His wife's aunt, Miss Ffolliott, Christian name Venetia, was the owner of King's Rest and all that it contained. And she let it be known that this Englishwoman's house was her castle. Oh, not vulgarly. Carew could not but concede admiration to his hostess's technique. For she was quite terrifying, and most charming. The grim old Victorian aunt is well known in legend and in fact; but Miss Ffolliott neither scowled, nor was she menacing. At first she impressed you as a very gracious lady, slim and upright, not old yet, nor even elderly, without any obnoxious prejudices, quick-witted—almost, as it were, of your own generation. But try her—try her, for instance, with a dash of impudence or with one of the broad-minded actions of a post-war generation—try contesting a decision that she has just made over some trifle in the day's arrangement—there's your snub, subtly but deliberately planted where it should hurt most. There's your head quite inexorably held down to kiss the dust in front of Venetia Ffolliott. You are so dazed that you don't quite see how it has been done.

But Carew, a neat and brilliant psychologist, realised this lady from the very beginning, and never once exposed himself. She, suspecting, perhaps, the moral vagabond in him, brought forth all her prejudices to tread a stately gavotte in front of him. She may have hoped to draw forth a sudden rapier of opposition, and thus be given her chance to show him of what metal her own blade was fashioned. But Carew retreated, step by step, without giving the autocrat a single opening. Even his eyes, when they met the cold blue challenge in hers, were blank of their usual twinkle.

Yet, naming her silently the Gracious Autocrat, he could not forbear from liking her immensely. She had character and she had breeding, except in one particular—her treatment of her nephew-in-law. She had grown too pleased with the sensation of her power at King's Rest; the coming of a man to the house, who was yet not master, emphasised this. She snubbed him, not only because he needed it, but, Carew felt, with a shiver of distaste, because it amused her, especially in front of other people—his wife, his friend. . . . No, not the servants; her manners were too good for that. On the surface, Derry was a being of importance.

But now and then—he had to be shown.

And he? He took it.

Carew had no means of telling yet whether he were even aware of being shown his place in the *ménage*, so padded and engrossed was he in prosperity and comfort. But there must have been a few stinging occasions at the beginning. Remembering how generous, happy-hearted, gaily impudent, young Derry Lawrenson had been before marriage, quickly responsive to kindness and as quick to resent an insult, Carew was conscious again of a dislike that approached hatred for the atmosphere of ease and money which had resulted in this swamping of a boy's manhood.

"He was always inclined to be a lazy young devil, though, and this marriage has got him on his weakest region."

He began to wonder what the third in this interesting grouping of three felt in the matter—Roberta. For Roberta Lawrenson was no nonentity. Only Carew had not quite made her out as yet. How much did she care for Derry? A love-match, yes, but they lose their first easy gloss after three or four years, and show whether gold is beneath. But Roberta was not unlike her aunt, in that she rarely—indeed, never—displayed emotion. She was one of those girls who are always well-dressed and beautiful to look at, never tousled. She had a cool, slim voice, and wrists and ankles shaped like one of Herrick's lyrics. She could tease and be teased without losing her temper; she took luxury for granted, and good form. Because she was of a younger generation, with a more wide-set vision than her aunt's, she could not be shocked, and did not need to be cruel. She was tolerant and imaginative where Miss Venetia Ffolliott was—old-fashioned. Yet undoubtedly she admired that lady's clean-cut, disdainful style. And she did not champion Derry. Why? Had she grown weary of doing it? Did she despise him for acquiescing in the state of things? Or did she simply not perceive that all the time, all the time, he was kept under a gentle pressure: "King's Rest is mine; my

favourite niece will inherit it. And—the Prince Consort must be kept in his place!"

"Does your aunt like Derry?" Carew asked Roberta casually, quite early in their acquaintance.

"The few inches she knows of him—yes, very much indeed. Haven't you noticed how surprisingly well they hit it off?"

It was true. Charm and courtesy, deference and consideration, all took part in the surface relations between Derry and Aunt Venetia. But: "The few inches she knows of him?"

"Oh, Aunt Venetia has her limitations. She prides herself on them quite openly: 'Thank Heaven, I have my Victorian prejudices!' Perhaps she's right, you know, Mr. Carew. Our generation—we're too slovenly to have any prejudices, and call it tolerance. But if Aunt Venetia knew about——"

"Me, to begin with. She takes me for an English gentleman in a dinner-jacket—sometimes in plus fours."

"And aren't you?" She studied him amusedly. "She sees an egoist in plus fours, anyhow," was her verdict. "And she's right! Men! You begin talking about one to another until another can't bear it, and cries out: 'Yes, but look at mee-eee-ee!'"

"Now you shall be punished," cried Carew most wrathfully. "In my infinite tact, and noticing that you had impulsively begun to confide in me and then were regretting it, I dashed in and helped you cover it up. My noble motives were misunderstood. So you shall be firmly led back to the point where I interrupted you. If Aunt Venetia knew about——? Yes? Knew about what? Something about Derry? Yes?"

Roberta said slowly: "I suppose our callous generation would call it 'all in the day's work'! And he says he was sober at the time, but that, to me, makes it rather worse, because nobody sober driving a car would run over a man and kill him, unless he didn't know his job. And that's what I always find unpardonable."

"And yet" — softly — "you married him!"

"Ah, but he had served his redemption. Six months. But Aunt Venetia would banish him if she ever got to know—banish him actually on account of the redemption instead of on account of the crime. I mean" —seeing Carew was puzzled—"that she'd never forgive him for having been to prison for it. Never. It wasn't done, to go to prison—that's the last generation. The

"With a loud and foolish laugh that at once gathered in everybody's attention to the joke.

things that aren't done. And the generation before that, talked about sin: Thou shalt not sin. And next: Thou shalt not commit bad form. And nowadays: Do your job decently."

"So you believe that Derry's period in jug would stick in your aunt's gullet?" demanded the Happy Meddler irrelevantly, and letting his phrasing lapse from true elegance.

"She'd quite simply and quite certainly turn him out of King's Rest and never see him again. And as the poor boy hasn't a penny of his own, and neither have I, except what Aunt Venetia allows me——" Roberta shrugged her shoulders. "Besides, I love the place," she added. And then, as a matter of course: "You'll promise never to tell? Perhaps I oughtn't—Derry never told you about it?"

"No."

A queer inflexion in his voice caused Roberta to look up apprehensively.

"You—*won't* ever let out a word of all this to Aunt Venetia, will you? It would be fatal."

"Fatal?"

"Promise me you won't?"

He nodded.

"You solemnly promise?"

He solemnly promised. Her insistence, born, perhaps, of some queer premonition, irritated him. She would have done better, when handling Carew, to have relied upon his fidelity to her unspoken confidence in him, than have fastened down his discretion by a piece of verbal mechanism.

Nor did he agree with her in applying the word "fatal" to any hap that might lead to the drastic banishment of Dermot Lawrenson from the enervating luxury of King's Rest. On the contrary.

Here was an impending tragedy that might still be averted, none the less urgent for its elusive quality. The boy Derry was being ruined. If the ruin had been through drink, through dope, through gambling, any of the traditional ways—women, even—then a man with a rich gift for—let us call it benevolent meddling—would have been justified in taking any sort of action. And Derry *was* being ruined by a woman, but the woman was his wife's spinster aunt! He was being ruined by dope, but it was the dope of an easeful English country house existence, which is the best in the world for a man to come back to near the finish of his day's work and his life's work, but not before. Let him not dare to settle down in it before.

Thus Richard Spurnville Carew argued with himself, feeling, as was his wont, frenziedly responsible for the subtly perilous state of young Dermot's soul, because he apparently was the only person to perceive such a peril. Roberta, who ought to have been acutely aware of it, was still, with all her charm and with all her broader, more tolerant, more reckless vision of a younger generation, the niece of Miss Venetia Ffolliott. She resembled her aunt in certain of her acquiescences, and she had been brought up at King's Rest.

One night Miss Ffolliott gave a small dinner-party—an elderly couple and a father and daughter, besides their four selves resident in the house. For some reason the Gracious Autocrat was in her most bland and feline mood that night, as far as Derry was concerned. He must, unknowingly, have stroked her fur backwards some time or the other during the day, and now she was having her revenge. Carew was conscious of a vibrant atmosphere that thrilled him, even while it rendered him uneasy. Surely Dermot must be conscious of it, too? No, that gentleman advanced step by step to the scaffold, with the firm step and peaceful mien of one who believes he is of his own accord walking to the golf club-house.

The conversation was about wine, and Derry, who rather fancied himself as a connoisseur in Bordeaux, remarked that he had been offered a chance of purchasing Haut-Brion of a vintage grown remarkably scarce, which was to be sold privately from the cellars of a restaurant about to fail, and that he purposed laying down three or four dozen bottles of it—as much as he could get, in fact—for their future benefit at King's Rest.

"Lucky beggar!" quoth Colonel Villiers wistfully. "Wish I had your chance."

And then Miss Ffolliott's clear and well-bred voice broke in and created a silence:

"As I do not happen to drink any wine at all, Dermot, such thoughtful provision is quite unnecessary." She turned markedly to Colonel Villiers. "So if you would really care to take this wine off my nephew's hands, he would, I assure you, be very grateful, and so should I."

After a moment's uncomfortable silence, Dermot said in a tone of jocular argument that jarred across Carew's apprehensions:

"Oh, come, Aunt Venetia, don't be too

reckless with the gifts of the gods! One must think of the future, you know, in laying down a cellar."

"But Roberta does not care for claret, either," replied Miss Venetia Ffolliott.

It was impossible to misunderstand her intention of signifying clearly to Dermot, in front of his wife, of the guests to whom he stood for host that night, in front of his own friend, and of the servants who were handing round dishes, that he had no right to order wine on his own initiative; for Miss Ffolliott paid for the wine that was ordered, and Miss Ffolliott's niece, Roberta, would reign as mistress of King's Rest after Miss Ffolliott—and did not care for claret, either.

"I'll be very glad, of course——" began the Colonel lamely.

Miss Ffolliott, for all her breeding, had acted like a cad. So Carew told himself, in a rising of savage, choking anger that ought certainly to have been in Dermot's breast rather than his own. Would Dermot resent this carefully directed humiliation? Had he turned red? Had he turned white? Did he, at least, feel how finally impossible was this situation into which his indolence had floated him? Hardly daring to look at him and find the answer to these questions, Carew was at last impelled to glance towards the foot of the table.

Derry's expression was entirely placid. That he should restrain himself in front of guests would have been to his credit, but Carew had no hope that this was restraint which kept him quiet. Derry was simply and genuinely regretting the loss of the excellent wine. The spiritual shaft had glanced obliquely off his layers of comfortable contentment without piercing.

"Well, you'll find me pretty constantly at your dinner-table, Colonel!"—with a rueful laugh. "Don't ever bother to bring out the barley-water when you see me. Haut-Brion's good enough!"

And then the Happy Meddler flung caution to the winds, and with it decent behaviour and his own solemn promise to Roberta. He saw one way, and one way only, of saving Derry's manhood, and he took that way instantly, because it had been a shock to him to discover that manhood so far rotted as symbolised by this incident just now.

What was left of Dermot must be violently and permanently wrenched asunder from King's Rest.

"I say, Derry"—with a loud and foolish laugh that at once gathered in everybody's attention to the joke—"was it barley-water or '99 claret that you'd been drinking when you got six months in jug for running over some poor devil that dark night?"

He heard Roberta draw in her breath sharply.

* * * * *

Miss Ffolliott's visitors left King's Rest early that evening. It had not been one of her most successful dinner-parties. The scene of explanation with her niece's husband, which followed their departure, was not witnessed by Roberta nor by Richard Spurnville Carew. Roberta had gone straight up to her bedroom. She knew quite well what would result from Carew's clumsy treachery, so she did not wait.

Half an hour later Dermot went to his dressing-room and packed all his belongings. He did not ring for Hamilton, the man-servant, to help him, because he was rather anxious not to make use of Miss Ffolliott and her money ever again, directly or indirectly. "I've had my bellyful of that!" was his curt and inelegant summing-up, when she, in frosty politeness, offered him any aid her well-trained household could give in expediting and rendering pleasant his departure from King's Rest.

Derry was awake now.

Towards 11 p.m. he strode down into the sitting-room and found his wife there alone, calmly smoking a last cigarette in front of the fire. Roberta glanced up at his face once and reflected that she hadn't noticed Derry so undeniably handsome for years. But Roberta did not lightly display any emotion whatsoever. Her remark, "Not going to be melodramatic about it all, are you, Derry?" sounded too flippant to be sympathetic. "You look terribly as though you were going to say 'The game is up!'"

"You needn't be afraid, my dear. Our Aunt Venetia doesn't care for melodrama!" He somewhat bitterly emphasised the "our." "We've both behaved like characters in a thoroughly gentlemanly play."

Roberta raised her eyebrows. "And the upshot?"

"Oh, well, naturally she can't be expected to retain a gaol-bird, a drunkard, and a murderer at King's Rest. It simply isn't done—especially the drunken part. I agreed with her that she ought to have been told of that disgraceful episode long ago. You'll miss your pretty little luxuries and coddlings, Roberta! Can't be helped, of course. Do you know, by any chance, how to lift your

own evening-dresses out of the cupboard?" He was in a bad mood, having been well flicked across his hitherto dormant self-respect by his interview with a contemptuous and unsparing Miss Ffolliott. To find Roberta apparently so cool and well-arranged had not improved his temper.

And Roberta? Two thoughts had flitted irresistibly through her mind—that her husband had, to say the least of it, been quite as dependent upon pretty little luxuries and coddlings as ever she herself, and might have been generous enough to own it, and that her husband was also rather taking it for granted that she meant to accompany him into banishment.

"I dare say I *could* manage that much, if I tried." And she added musingly: "And *if*, after all, it should be necessary. But your persuasions may not be eloquent enough to lure me from King's Rest."

Dermot stared. Then he said slowly: "You mean—that I was a fool to believe that you would stick to me—is that it?"

Roberta, who adored him, but who could not altogether suppress her Ffolliott blood, answered back: "King's Rest *is* my home, you must remember."

"And not mine any more—yes, I certainly must remember." And Derry felt that he had had enough of being hurt for one evening. He wanted to get away, to get out of it for good. A man must have been mad to have borne with such a situation—nay, to have been content in it—for so long. He told his wife courteously that she need not be at all doubtful as to the ultimate force of his persuasions to accompany him, as he was not going to use any; she would be more comfortable remaining in her own home. "So good-bye, my dear. No, don't bother to see me out; I know my way about the place."

"'He laughed cynically, with a curl to his white, set young lips!'" Roberta burlesqued his elaborately casual farewell.

She was being thoroughly naughty, and knew it. But if only Derry had come in and just been—nice; shown that he needed her, shown that he realised she *was* giving up something, instead of being all haughty and cutting and mannish! Oh, hang—hang everybody, but mostly one Richard Spurnville Carew!

"Good night, Roberta!"

"Good night, Derry!"

He had told Hamilton to have his luggage sent down to the inn ("Sensation in servants' hall!" would have been Roberta's comment—cold-hearted, scornful little ruffian!), and now had nothing to do but walk out unobtrusively through one of the garden entrances.

In the hall he met Carew.

"Hullo! Going?"

"What do you think? You're a thick-headed, blundering fool, Dick——"

"Yes. Go on. Express yourself clearly on the subject; I'm quite submissive!"

"Just what I'm trying to do," growled Lawrenson. "You couldn't know what a good turn you were doing me, of course, but I jolly well wish you had come along and sloshed your walloping, great, clumsy foot in it four years ago. I'd have been grateful; so would Roberta."

"Roberta?"

"Yes. For ridding her sooner of a parasitic husband. Cheerio!" Derry brushed past, and was soon out of sight.

"He's much better already," reflected the Happy Meddler cheerfully. But he rather wondered exactly what had gone wrong where Roberta was concerned. So he went forthwith in search of Roberta, and found her where Derry had left her, her daffodil slenderness almost buried in a vast armchair drawn up close to the drawing-room fire.

"Did you know," Carew told her, his assured manner masking the fact that he was still quailing within from memory of the one look she had flashed him after his revelation at the dinner-party, "did you know that Derry had gone? To 'The Bell and Dragon,' he said."

"Oh, yes!"—indifferently. Then she roused herself to apply the lash of irony. "You must be feeling very pleased with the din and row and upheaval you've managed to create, Mr. Carew. Like a waiter who has dropped down the stairs a large trayful of most precious and quite irreplaceable glass. I always suspected the poor clumsy fellow of a sort of dreadful glee, in the midst of horror, at his achievement!"

"You can leave out the horror." Carew leant up against the chimneypiece and twinkled tolerantly down upon her. "And you can leave out the 'poor clumsy fellow' part of it, too. In fact, I dropped the glass, I smashed the pie-crust, on purpose!"

"That's going to make it rather hard to forgive you," Roberta said slowly. She was bewildered and most dreadfully unhappy, but did not choose to unmask either of those emotions for him to gloat over.

"My dear little, haughty little, sorrowful infant, I'm not exactly begging for

forgiveness. You are, naturally, a frozen image of wrath in yellow crêpe-de-chine. I broke my solemn and sacred promise to you. Promises are, like pie-crust, made to be broken. As it were the succulent pastry, brown and crisp, that conceals beneath it the unctuous purple plum swimming in its own syrup, thus and so and wantonly did I break it. Which places me as an outsider and a cad, worse even than a mere bungler who gives the whole show away because he cannot control his tongue. Worse—shall we say?—than a lady of gentle birth and impeccable ancestry who insults a dependent in front of her guests and her servants."

Roberta flushed scarlet. "What's the good of dragging Aunt Venetia in?"

"Leave her out, then. I'm wondering, at the present moment, by way of a change of air on a heated subject, whether *I* shall ever be able to forgive *you?*"

She did not answer. Clearly Derry's friend was a lunatic.

"Undoubtedly Dermot was as charming and decent a boy as ever breathed, four years ago," continued Richard Spurnville Carew, transformed suddenly to an accusing angel in evening-dress. "How dare you let him be slowly ruined, slack body and corpulent soul, for want of hauling out from this enervating, poodle-fed existence? What sort of a husband was that who politely acquiesced to-night when your generous aunt rubbed it in that she, and perhaps you, but certainly never he, was boss here at King's Rest? Why, I was watching him—he never even turned a hair! You must have been proud of him! And you're responsible, you and no one else, dragging him into this lily-pond and letting him remain, year after year, a flat decoration on the stagnant surface. He was all but lost, the last spark gone out, when I came crashing in. D'you imagine I wouldn't rather have kept my word to you, as a mild matter of honour? But Derry had got to be parted somehow, quickly and violently, from King's Rest and Aunt Venetia, if he were ever again to walk about in self-respect, a man with men. Derry was born indolent; anyone but a blind wife would have seen that. He wouldn't budge of his own accord, and you'd never have budged him, so it was left to me. And now—you'd better join him at the inn, hadn't you?"

Roberta whispered, her disdain of him in atoms, and her icy indifference of Derry: "I can't. I want to, though. But we've quarrelled. He's angry. He was too sure that I was coming with him, whatever happened, so I pretended that I wasn't."

Carew smiled at the halting childishness of the explanation, and his smile seemed very warm and companionable to this new Roberta Ffolliott who had admitted herself in the wrong.

"I'll give you a message for him, dear, that ought to put that right in a moment." He scribbled a few lines at the writing-table, enclosed the sheet of paper in an envelope, and handed it to her. Still she hesitated.

"Aunt Venetia——" she began.

"Leave Aunt Venetia to me, and drive along to 'The Bell and Dragon.' Now. Good luck, Roberta!" And six minutes later he heard her sounding the horn of her two-seater as she flashed down the avenue.

This is what the Meddler had written:

"She was, of course, packing her trunks at the same time as you were packing yours, directly there was any question of your leaving King's Rest. I saw them, passing her open door, while you were both making idiots of yourselves downstairs. Compliments and love.—Dick."

Remained Aunt Venetia, resting behind innumerable barriers of courtesy and good form, in her own sitting-room. Carew was a courageous man, and the prospect of a bout with the Gracious Autocrat inflated him more with exhilaration than it depressed him with dismay. Nor did he intend to be beguiled into a lengthy interview; he felt, and, indeed, with justice, that he had already been talking a great deal that evening.

"With regard to that unfortunate incident of a motor accident, Miss Ffolliott——"

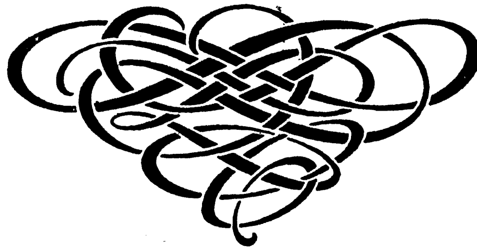
"That disgraceful incident, Mr. Carew. I had often wondered why he would not drive any of the cars. In fact, I put it down to a form of nerves—war-nerves—the truth being, apparently, that he would not have been granted a license. Drunkards who race along to the public danger are not at all desirable on the roads. I am, in a way, grateful to you for telling me. It's all quite unforgivable. Now, would you care for a little game of picquet before we retire, or is it too late? Roberta has gone to her room, I gather?"

"You gather wrong," Carew declared, establishing at once a bellicose spirit. "Roberta has not gone to her room; she has gone to her husband's room, at 'The Bell and Dragon.' And Dermot was *not* drunk that night when he ran over a man."

She lifted her finely-drawn eyebrows, incredulous at his credulity.

"I happen to be sure, because he was driving my car at the time, and I was sitting beside him," Carew went on patiently. "The poor devil whom he ran over *was* drunk, though, otherwise it would probably never have happened. It was a dark night, and he lurched straight into our headlights. We were going at a good pace—about thirty-five to forty—but nothing dangerous. And Derry *could* drive, mark you! I'd sooner he had the wheel now in a tight place than any other fellow I know. You are sufficiently shrewd, Miss Ffolliott, to be aware that the first thing he should have done, after the accident, was to buzz along to the nearest doctor and get himself certified sober, and the next thing, at the trial, to let his lawyer and myself—I was the only witness—establish between us that the other fellow was drunk. But the other fellow had a wife, you see, and Derry thought he'd done her enough injury without damaging her man's reputation. So he shut up, and took the verdict of manslaughter, and took six months in jug, and came out of it a far decenter human proposition than after four years at King's Rest. It's not for me to dictate your last will and testament, Miss Ffolliott, but you can take it from me that Dermot may one day return here as master of the place, but never again as a sort of mildewed and fossilised lackey to its mistress, as I found him on my arrival. And now, as you suggest, it is really not too late for a little game of picquet."

*A further episode from the career of "The Happy Meddler" will appear in the next number.*



# BY CAESAR'S WELL.

**DOWN there the sawmills scream and fret;**
**Red flames illume each purpling deep**
**Of virgin woodland never yet**
**So anguished in its ancient sleep.**

**The combe shall vanish—tell me why!—**
**Where the grey druids hid from Rome.**
**Perhaps ancestral things must die**
**That modern motors may shrill home.**

**This mystic circle of dark firs**
**At least no woodman's axe may fell,**
**Nought here through wintry sunset stirs**
**Save the curved jet from Caesar's Well,**

**And, in the golden gloaming frore,**
**Viewless, with low mysterious sound,**
**Among the tree-tops evermore**
**The lone wind travelling round and round.**

**VICTOR PLARR.**

# THE GIBSONS' GARDEN-PARTY

## By ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT BAILEY

THAT there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy, I am quite ready to believe—at least, I have been ready ever since the Gibsons' garden-party, though I confess that before that event I did not believe it at all, but accepted what I saw, and consigned the rest to the realm of nonsense. There comes a turning-point in the lives of most of us when suddenly our eyes are opened and we see the invisible, or, at any rate, we catch a fleeting glimpse of it, which leaves us not quite the same—never quite the same—as we were before. For me that turning-point was reached at the Gibsons' garden-party.

To make a short story long—as one is so prone to do after the first fleeting rapture of youth is past—it is necessary to retail something of my life prior to the aforesaid entertainment, or else what is now called "the true inwardness" of the Gibsons' garden-party cannot properly be grasped.

By nature my name is Wilding, but was changed to Shipton many years ago, thanks to my own somewhat ordinary attractions and to the extraordinary appreciation of them displayed by Edgar Shipton. My father was a country doctor with a large family and a small practice, and to us girls marriage was the only key which would open the door of our narrow world to admit us into the wider and more exciting one beyond. Therefore in our philosophy marriage was simply a glorious adventure, which would enable us to have a better time than we could possibly compass at home. So we one and all undertook the holy estate quite unadvisedly whenever we had the chance, and I cannot truthfully say that our respective marriages turned out any worse than many more leisurely and well-considered unions. So it came to pass that when Edgar Shipton, the captain of a Gurkha regiment, fell in love with me on one of his leaves, and asked me to go out to India with him as his wife, I jumped at a future which seemed to be compounded of a dazzling mixture of sunshine, gaiety, pagodas, and elephants, and said "Yes" without a moment's hesitation. Out to India I went in the glorious panoply of youth and inexperience, and there I stayed—with occasional home leaves—until it was time for Edgar to retire on his pension, settle down in England, and there occupy a well-earned and long-anticipated rest by continually grumbling at the present and hankering after the past.

We had no children, and therefore were spared those heart-rending separations which are the curse of Anglo-Indian life; and we are now likewise spared the curtailment, by the all-seeing wisdom of the rising generation, of those grumblings and hankerings which afford us both such infinite and innocent pleasure. At least, that is how our childlessness appears to me; but then I am one of those tiresome and commonplace people who always like their own things better than other people's, and are convinced that every grape beyond their reach is as sour as an unripe gooseberry.

My real Christian name is Anne, but as a child I was called Nancy for short (Nancy being only one syllable longer than Anne), and that name has stuck to me like a burr during later life. I cannot help feeling that Nancy is a somewhat inappropriate name for a middle-aged woman, but it is so difficult to change one's Christian name, though fairly easy to change one's surname. So Nancy I remain to those few—and alas! increasingly few—persons who do not call me Mrs. Shipton.

I was wrong in saying that marriage with Edgar was the only way of escape provided from the dulness of my early

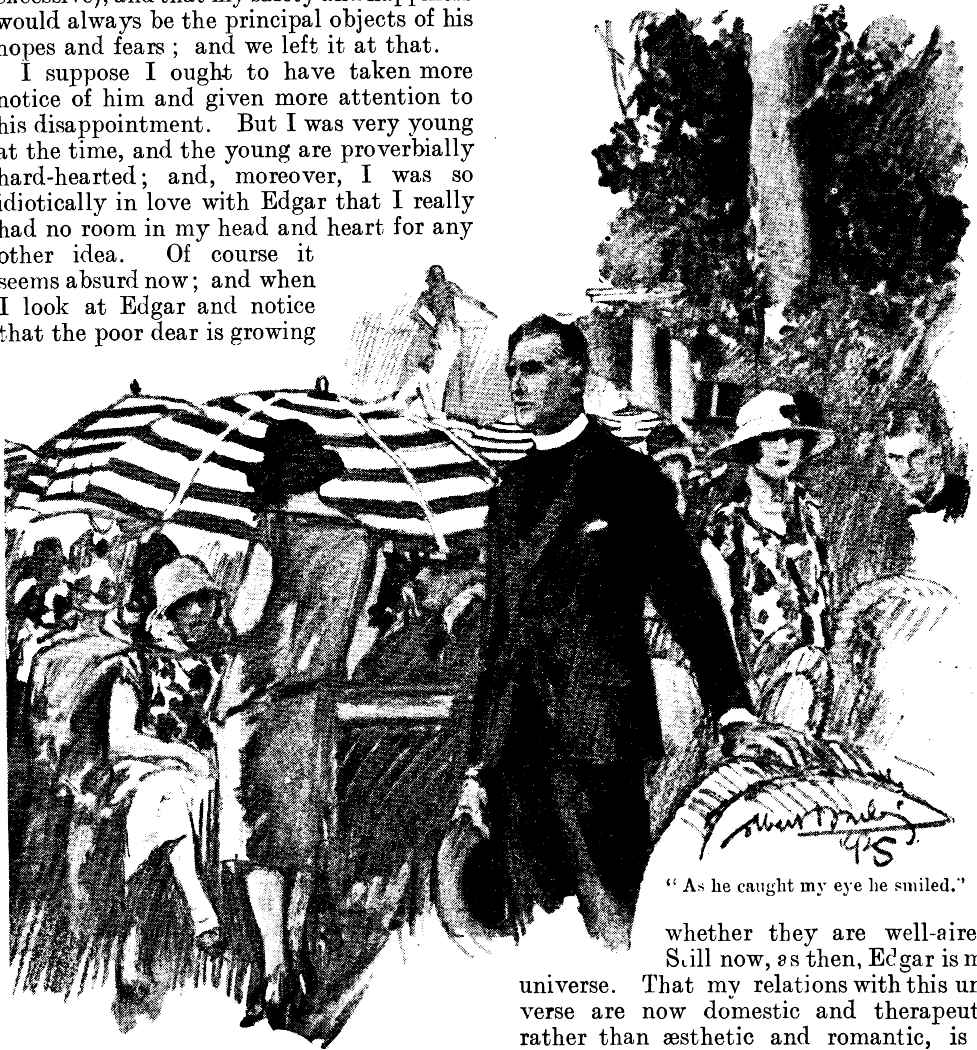
village life. I did have one other lover—Clement Reed by name—the curate of my native parish. He was a very good young man and a very devout lover; but the future he offered to me was furnished with parish work and district visiting instead of pagodas and elephants, and also he lacked that touch of magic—at any rate, as far as I was concerned—which glorifies its possessor, and which we call charm—a magic which, at that time, dripped from every one of Edgar's finger tips. So I married handsome Edgar Shipton, and left Clement Reed to do without me as best he could.

Clement was very nice about the whole affair. Some men make a fuss about things like that, and render themselves disagree-

"'There he is himself!' I exclaimed. 'Come, let us go and speak to him.'"

able; but Clement did nothing of the kind. He told me—quite kindly, if sorrowfully—that he should never cease to love me in time or in eternity (I particularly remember the eternity touch, as it struck me as rather excessive), and that my safety and happiness would always be the principal objects of his hopes and fears; and we left it at that.

I suppose I ought to have taken more notice of him and given more attention to his disappointment. But I was very young at the time, and the young are proverbially hard-hearted; and, moreover, I was so idiotically in love with Edgar that I really had no room in my head and heart for any other idea. Of course it seems absurd now; and when I look at Edgar and notice that the poor dear is growing bald and stout, it is difficult to believe that I ever was so crazy about him. But I was, and it is no good blinking the fact. It is ridiculous, when one is middle-aged, to forget that one has once been young, and it is ridiculous, when one is wise, to forget that one has once been foolish; to do so is to lose the benefit of life's experience. To me Edgar is still the most important person in the world, but it is such a different sort of importance from that which distinguished him in our young days. I used to adore him as the handsomest and best-dressed man I had ever met; now my mind dwells upon his digestion rather than upon his appearance, and I no longer meditate upon whether his clothes are well-cut, but whether they are well-aired.


"As he caught my eye he smiled."

Still now, as then, Edgar is my universe. That my relations with this universe are now domestic and therapeutic rather than æsthetic and romantic, is a functional and not an organic change.

To be quite candid, for years and years I never gave a thought to Clement Reed; but as I grew older, and consequently less attractive, and as Edgar gradually faded and dissolved as the lover, and resolved more firmly and substantially into the married man, the memory of Clement's romantic devotion assumed larger proportions in my mind than the actuality of it had done when it was a plaything ready to my hand. I thought of him quite frequently, and wondered what had become of

him, and whether he ever thought of me. In short, I picked his portrait out of the waste-paper basket of my youthful recollections and established it in one of those funny little shrines which the least romantic of women are prone to erect in their own hearts for the men who unsuccessfully wooed them. The lover who was never anything except a lover always remains a lover in his lady's imagination, while the lover who developed into a husband stepped once for all out of fiction into fact, out of romance into reality; and though reality and fact may be far better and more desirable than romance and fiction, no one can pretend that they are the same thing. There is a sort of old lace and lavender flavour about bygone lovers which is very attractive; but if any woman maintains that there is anything of the old lace and lavender spirit about husbands, one can only conclude that that woman has never been married.

I wonder if men feel the same about us; I expect they do, and that we, too, in our turn gradually fade from treats into habits. And as we grow older it is far easier to forego a treat than to break a habit, though, of course, the treats mattered most when we were young.

All which preamble brings us to the Gibsons' garden-party. It was not long after Edgar had retired on his pension, and we had made a nest for ourselves in a pretty suburb within easy reach of London friends and London fogs, that we were bidden to a large garden-party at the fine old manor-house which had formed the nucleus of our suburb. The house and the gardens remained as they had been in the days of William and his Mary, but the surrounding part had exchanged its avenues for streets, and its plantations for modern villas. The family who originally owned the estate had long gone the way of the avenues and the plantations, and the house was now occupied by a large and charming family named Gibson, with whom we had become very friendly since we settled in those parts.

It was a real garden-party—not just an ordinary tea-party with the garden thrown in, but one of those large, delightful functions with a band, and ices, and plenty of hired chairs all over the lawn; the sort of party that not only justified one's very best clothes, but demanded them.

The Gibsons were ideal hosts and hostesses, and I was already thoroughly enjoying myself, when my happiness was completed by the appearance on the scene of Mabel Summers, a playfellow of my childhood, a friend of my girlhood, and a near neighbour of my old home. She married soon after I did, and settled near to the spot where she was born; but as my father died not long after I left home, and my family then migrated to London, Mabel and I had not met since our respective marriages. But we recognised one another at once, and—with the freemasonry of old friends—set about sharing ancient memories and bringing each other up to date. She told me all about her children and how well they had done, and I told her all about Edgar's liver and how badly it had done during the latter part of our time in India.

We sat side by side, I remember, upon a wooden bench which was planted right under a huge elm tree at the far end of the extensive lawn, and in this pleasant and shady spot we rapidly ran through those back numbers of our chronicles which had come out since last we met.

After we had chatted pleasantly for some time, it came into my mind that Mabel—now no longer Summers, but Wilson—would be able to give me news of my quondam lover, Clement Reed. At this particular instant she held the field with a long story about her eldest daughter's matrimonial affairs, and Edgar and his digestion had for the moment retired into the shade, so I had to wait until Mabel paused for breath before I could rush once more into the conversation, carrying Clement with me.

"By the way," I began, when at last exhausted Nature on Mabel's part constrained her conversational organs to stand aside for a moment in favour of her respiratory ones, "there is a mutual friend that I particularly want to ask you about, as I have heard nothing of him since I was married."

At that moment one of those coincidences occurred which ought to teach even the most material amongst us that there is some sort of wireless communication between kindred spirits which so far science has failed to explain. We speak of a person of whom we have not spoken for years, and within a short time we see that person face to face; we write to a friend to whom we have not written for months, and our letters cross. Such experiences are common to us all.

The name of Clement Reed was on my lips when, to my surprise, I suddenly saw him on the far side of the wide lawn, standing

alone close to a small covey of unoccupied chairs in a shady spot. As he caught my eye he smiled and beckoned to me to come across to where he was standing. As the empty chairs certainly offered a more comfortable resting-place than the hard wooden bench on which Mabel and I were sitting, and as I was more than delighted to see my former lover again, I sprang up at once and began to cross the lawn, seizing Mabel by the arm and dragging her along with me.

"There he is himself!" I exclaimed. "Come, let us go and speak to him."

But Mabel had not had time to ask me what I was talking about, when the most awful sounds of rending and crashing and tearing arrested our steps, accompanied by cries from the spectators; and as we turned round to find out what was happening, we saw the great elm under which we had just been sitting split right in two, one half remaining where it was, and the other hurling itself to the ground, smashing to pieces in its fall the little wooden bench and burying it in the ruins.

Naturally in this sudden catastrophe I forgot all about Clement Reed, and rushed, with the rest of the garden-party, to the scene of the disaster to discover what actual damage had been done. Fortunately, no one except Mabel and myself had been anywhere near the tree, and we had left the spot a second before the accident happened, otherwise we should neither of us have been alive to tell the tale.

It was some time before peace was restored and the party returned to the normal. Edgar came rushing across the lawn, with a face as white as a sheet, to see if I was hurt; but as I wasn't, his face gradually resumed its natural hue and his manner its cultivated calm. Mabel's husband also approached upon a similar quest, and he and Edgar, having shared a common relief, retired to the refreshment tent to share a common cure for the shock they had received. They also fulfilled the oath, which they had taken so many years ago, to cherish Mabel and me as their own flesh, to the extent of dosing us each with a draught of champagne-cup; and then they retired further to restore themselves by a quiet smoke, leaving their wives to continue our interrupted conversation. I looked round for Clement, but he had disappeared.

"You were just going to ask me about somebody when that awful tree fell," Mabel said. "Who was it?"

"It was Clement Reed," I replied, "who used to be curate at the parish church at home when we were girls." (Such ecclesiastical officers are now known as assistant priests, but they were called curates in my young days.) "Don't you remember him?"

"Of course I do, and he used to be violently in love with you. In fact, if the truth must be told, I thought you behaved rather badly to him in throwing him over as soon as Edgar appeared upon the scene."

"Perhaps I did. But, in excuse for me, think of the shape of his nose and the shape of Edgar's."

Mabel nodded. "I know. Still, after one has been married a good many years, I think one ceases to think of the shape of one's husband's nose."

"But I hadn't been married for a good many years when I what you call 'threw over' Clement Reed, and the shape of Edgar's nose was still new to me," I urged in self-defence. "Now, I admit that in my mind Edgar's profile is entirely swallowed up by Edgar's digestion, and I no longer take heed to the beauties of the former; but it was not so in my young days."

"I suppose not, and there is no denying that Edgar is still very handsome, though his complexion is not what it was before he had lived so long in India." Mabel had always been just and impartial, and never prone to give anybody more commendation than was righteously deserved.

"Besides," I continued, "I never threw over Clement, as you call it, because he never was in a position to be thrown. We were not engaged or anything of that kind, and I was absolutely free to select Edgar's nose in preference to his, if I thought it would suit me better."

Mabel laughed. "How you do go on, Nancy! You aren't a bit changed from what you were as a girl, except, of course, in appearance." Once again Mabel was true to type. She was prepared to admit that custom had not staled my infinite variety, but she was not going to let me run away with the erroneous idea that neither had age withered me. Not she!

"I was just going to ask you if you knew anything about Clement Reed," I continued, "when I suddenly caught sight of him standing beside that group of empty chairs.

Isn't it funny how often you see people just after you have been thinking about them, even if you weren't expecting to see them at all ? "

Mabel looked puzzled. " I don't understand how you could have seen him here, Nancy."

" But I did, I tell you. And I not only saw him, but he saw me and smiled at me, and beckoned to me to come and sit on one of the chairs by which he was standing, which looked a good deal more comfortable than the little hard bench on which we were perched. And it was a very good thing for us that he did, otherwise we should both now be lying in fragments underneath the broken half of the elm tree. So, my dear, don't argue, but pull yourself together and tell me exactly what happened to Clement Reed after I got married."

Mabel obeyed. Even as a girl she could always obey, even if she couldn't do anything else. I suppose that is why her married life has been such a success. " I think he fretted a good deal over your marriage, Nancy," she said, " and he seemed as if he could not settle down after you left. Anyway, he looked very pale and thin and miserable."

" Then you think he cared a good deal ? " I asked. Vanity—even in a middle-aged married woman—dies hard.

" I'm sure he did. He looked as if his heart was broken."

" Then no wonder he cheered up when he saw me again. He was looking anything but ill and miserable when he smiled at me across the lawn. On the contrary, I have never seen him looking so well or so happy, not even when he was a young curate at home. And he is several years older than I am."

An obstinate look, which I remembered of old, brooded over Mabel's pleasant, rosy face. " But you couldn't have seen him, Nancy, because——"

" Why not ? " I interrupted her. " What became of him after I went away ? "

" He did not stay long. He seemed as if he couldn't settle down after you had gone. So he went out to the South Seas as a missionary."

" Well, that's no reason why I shouldn't see him here this afternoon. Missionaries come back from the South Sea Islands."

" Yes, but Clement didn't. After he had worked as a missionary for some years, he died of typhoid fever, or blackwater fever, or some other fever that people do die of out there. And among his few treasures, which a fellow-missionary sent back to Clement's mother, there was an old photograph of you. I wonder she did not write and tell you. But I suppose she hardly liked to as you were married to somebody else. And she's been dead for at least a dozen years, and the whole affair is over and done with."

Over, perhaps, but not done with, or else Clement would not have made such a point of coming to the Gibsons' garden-party just in order to save my life.

But I didn't say this to Mabel : she wouldn't have understood. I merely said that I must have been mistaken, which I had been when I ignorantly doubted that there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamt of in Horatio's philosophy.

# LIFE AND MAN.

**LIFE is as a tide which creeps**
**Over sands as yet untrod,**
**Till at last it overleaps**
**Time's high sea-mark, unto God.**

**Man is as the wave which breaks**
**Here and there as creeps that tide,**
**Till the surge, thrown forward, takes**
**Yet one more immortal stride.**

**WALLACE B. NICHOLS.**

# SAMUEL DODSLEY'S DOG

## By BARRY PAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LENDON

THE stranger, a young man on his holiday, had finished fifteen of the twenty-five miles that he intended to walk that day. The sight of " The White Horse " suggested to him that he had earned a pint.

In front of " The White Horse " was a bench, and at one end of the bench sat an elderly man of some presence. He had a white beard, pointed and neatly trimmed. His face was dignified and handsome. His velveteen coat, breeches, and gaiters were well worn, and the coat had been repaired, but they were not ragged. He was broad and deep in the chest, and would have stood, erect, close on six feet in height. On the green-painted table before him was a large blue-and-white mug designed to hold one quart.

The stranger glanced at the man as he passed into the bar.

" That's a fine-looking old chap sitting on the bench outside there," said the stranger.

" Yes," said the landlord bitterly. " And if I could afford to turn away custom, Mr. Samuel Dodsley wouldn't be sitting on my premises. He's not so old. He's not done half a day's work for the last three years, but he's ten years younger than I am. His hair went white early, and he trades on it. He's the biggest liar in this village, and I should think he's the biggest liar in the county, is our Sammy."

" How does he live, then, if he doesn't work ? "

" Well, at one time he was one of Sir Henry's keepers. He was a poacher before that. In those days Sir Henry had big shooting-parties, and Sammy did well out of them, for he don't let anything get past him that's in his reach. Then twice he got badly peppered in the lower part of the back, and each time he was given compensation out of all reason. His niece married well, and she lets him have ten bob a week—more fool she ! He's got one of Sir Henry's cottages rent free. He lives as well as I do. Better. Heart-breaking it is to see the luck of some bad men."

" I think I'll go and have a word with him. Would he mind ? "

" Oh, no ! It'll cost you a quart or so, and he'll do most of the talking. But I've warned you."

Mr. Samuel Dodsley received the stranger's approaches with affability.

" Yes, sir," said Samuel, " it is a warm day, and that always gives me a heaviness in the legs. My niece, passing my cottage door this morning, said : ' Uncle, you ought to go for a nice walk.' And I said : ' My dear, if my poor old legs will take me as far as The White Horse, that is as much as I can expect.' "

He raised the blue-and-white mug from the table, looked inside it, and with dignified resignation set it down again.

" You must take one with me," said the stranger.

" I thank you," said Samuel, and rapped twice on the table, summoning the landlord.

" Mr. Purfit feels the heat, too, don't you, Purfit ? " he continued, when the landlord had taken the order.

This received a sulky grunt of assent.

" And that's how it is he leaves the window of his bar wide open, and that, again, is how a customer sitting here can hear Mr. Purfit slandering him inside."

" I said no more of you, Samuel Dodsley, than I've said to your face before, and may do again," said the landlord stoutly.

" I wasn't troubling about it. The thought did cross my mind, when you spoke of picking and choosing your customers, whether you knew the terms on which you hold your licence. But don't let me keep you from fetching that beer."

Not till the beer had been fetched and sampled did Mr. Dodsley resume.

"It's a strange thing," he said, "what malice and enmity there can be in a so-called Christian village. This is but a little place. But Mr. Purfit don't actually like me. Mrs. Crutwell don't speak to me, nor does Miss Jenks of the post office. At least, they don't unless I provokes them into it, as sometimes happens. Parson Bootle made a nasty allusion to me in one of his sermons. Binder, our policeman, fairly hates me."

"Yes," said the stranger, "but how do you account for it?"

"I think you might say it started over a dog. It was years ago, when I was working for Sir Henry—and he's a gentleman, he is—and it's not forgotten yet. I'll tell you.

"Mrs. Crutwell saw me making my way to the station, to catch the twelve-ten.

"'Going by train?' she says.

"'Yes, Mrs. Crutwell,' I says. 'But no further than Hagnett.'

"'Then I suppose you'll be having some business in Hagnett,' says she. She likes to know everything that's going on, does Mrs. Crutwell.

"'Just buying a dog and taking him back with me,' I says. 'I shall be home again this afternoon.'

"So we parted, and I didn't see the old girl again till next morning in the street here. She'd got her hand all bandaged up.

"'You're the man I wanted to see,' says she. 'You'll have to get rid of that new dog you bought yesterday, or else keep him on the chain.'

"'I don't keep dogs on the chain,' I says. 'What's the matter?'

"'I was passing your cottage last night, and that great yellow beast came leaping over your wall, and pretty near made his teeth meet in my hand.'

"'I've no doubt you provoked him,' I says.

"'Nothing of the kind. Luckily Binder came along, and threw stones at him and drove him off.'

"'He'll get into trouble for cruelty, will Binder, if he ain't careful.'

"'I tried your cottage, and there was nobody at home. So Binder took me straight off to Dr. Jebbut, to have my hand seen to. And what I want to know now is what you're going to do about it?'

"'Well,' I says, 'what do you want me to do?'

"'Get rid of the dog, pay my doctor, and give me two shillings compensation.'

"'Shan't do any of them,' I says. 'Good morning.'

"I think it must have been the parson that Mrs. Crutwell went to first, for he came to see me two days later. Very fresh and open and hearty in his manner, he was.

"'Look here, my good friend,' he said to me, 'you've got to pay this. You're responsible. I don't say you're to blame. The dog had been taken from its home that day, travelled by train, and been set down in a new place. That would be quite likely to make it a little short in its temper. If you just keep it under control till it's settled down again, that's really all Mrs. Crutwell expects. I've seen her hand, and it really is badly bitten, and I don't think two shillings any too much to ask. Now, then, can I tell her that you've listened to reason?'

"'You can tell her anything you like,' I said. 'I'm not going to chain up that dog, and I'm not going to pay Mrs. Crutwell one penny.'

"He argued for a bit, but he didn't move me. And when I got a letter next week from her solicitor, that didn't move me, either. It wasn't the style of letter I liked. Too pompous altogether. I never answered it.

"And about that time I noticed that Mrs. Crutwell and the policeman and Miss Jenks of the post office were getting rather thick together. Two or three times I found Binder hanging round my cottage at night. I thought I knew what he'd come for, and I saw to it that he got it. One day it struck me he was following me in the street. So I turned into our store and ordered dog biscuits, speaking loudly.

"'Well, Mr. Dodsley,' he said to me when I came out, 'what have you been buying?'

"'Soap,' says I. 'Wouldn't be a bad thing if you did the same.'

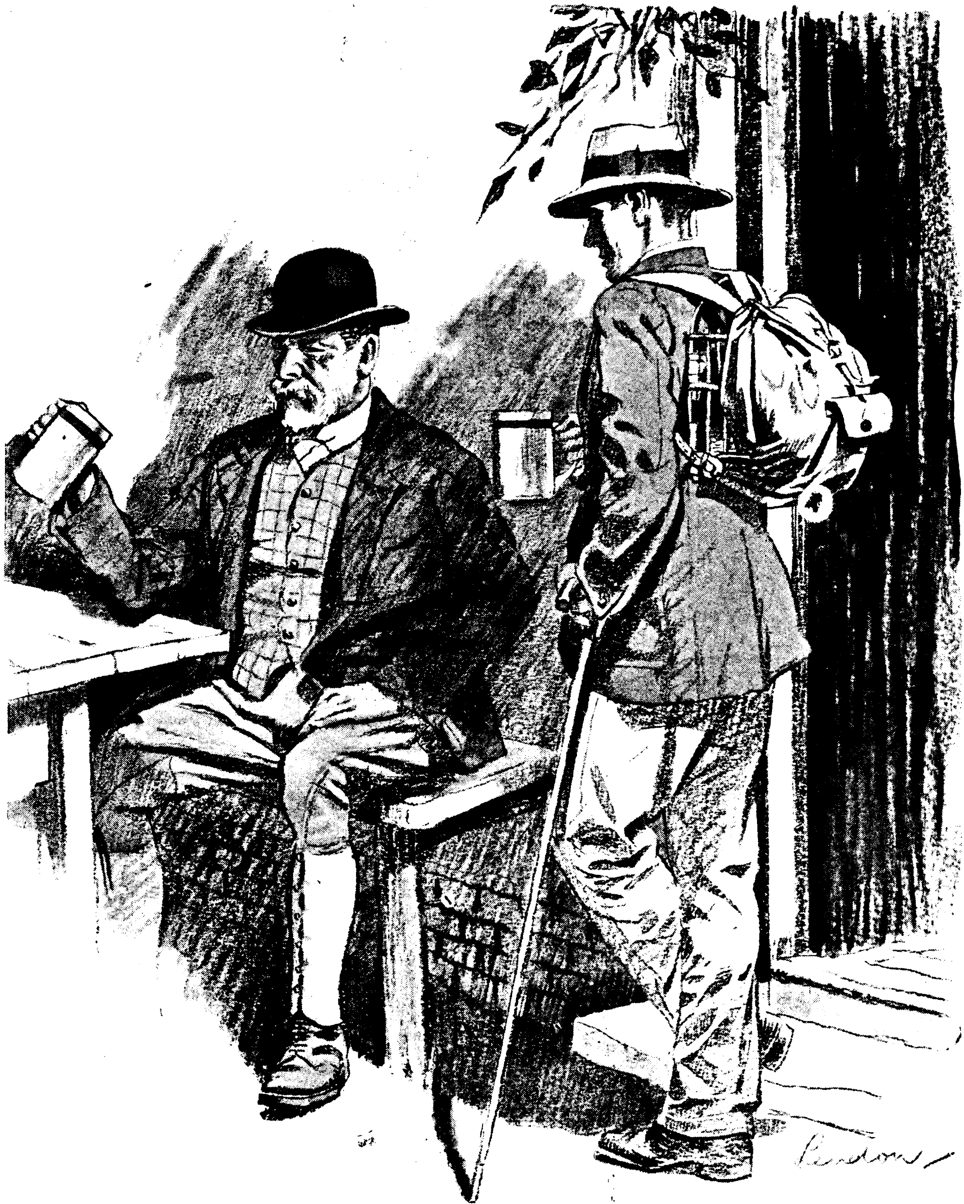
"'Look here,' he said, 'I don't mean any harm to you, but you can take it from me that if you don't get a licence for that new dog of yours, you'll find yourself in very serious trouble. I know when you bought him. I've been round to your house at nights and heard him. I find you here buying dog biscuits for him. You'll have to get that licence.'

"'Binder,' I said, 'I didn't know you was the Inland Revenue. I always took you for some sort of a policeman. But, however, I'm not going to take out any licence for anything, so don't let it worry you.'

"And on reflection I let that finish it

"Next day was the day when the solicitor

came into our village from ten till three, and I went to see him. I hadn't got a dog. I'd never had a dog. The day I met Mrs. Crutwell I was going to buy a red setter for a gentleman staying up at Sir Henry's, which I did and took to him. What the dog was that bit Mrs. Crutwell I've never found out exactly, but I'm inclined to think it was a stray yellow lurcher that I found working one of Sir Henry's covers that same evening. I loosed off my gun at him and blew his head to bits. I can imitate the growling of a dog quite well enough for any silly policeman that's hanging round and listening for it."



"He raised the blue-and-white mug from the table, looked inside it, and with dignified resignation set it down again."

Much talking had induced a dryness of the throat. Mr. Samuel Dodsley applied himself once more to the blue-and-white mug.

"And," he resumed, "you can have no

idea how in a small place like this a little incident of that sort is remembered and brought up against you. There is but little charity in the world and but little feeling of Christian forgiveness——"

"All very well," said the stranger. "But why couldn't you tell them at the start you hadn't got a dog?"

"Why couldn't they ask? People that takes everything for granted are only making trouble for themselves, and it's my view that it's no kindness to shield them from it. Well, it's time I was getting back to my dinner. No, sir, no more for me, thank you. I find that if I take more than two quarts before a meal it's as likely as not to blunt the edge of my appetite."

# A SONG FOR OLD YULE.

WHEN winds are a-whistle by chimney and rafter,
  Now under the eaves and now over the roofs,
A-waning to whispers, a-waxing like laughter
  With sound that comes after like galloping hoofs;

When snow is a-drifting by barn and by furrow,
  And roads there are none that are safe for the wain,
Then bring ye the flagon to drive away sorrow,
  And bid ye good morrow to Winter again.

And let all your voices together go swelling,
  With glasses held high to the sound of your glee,
And heap on the hearth-stone the logs of your felling,
  Still sweet and foretelling the springtime to be.

Though year after year hurry by ever faster,
  With hope in your heart you shall mock at their flight,
For Courage and Faith are together Time's master,
  Whom hidden disaster shall never affright.

And though the wide skies be all sleety and sable,
  And though on a day your old bones may be rackt,
While Yuletide brings joy and good cheer to the table,
  Your age is a fable, your youth is a fact.

So frost shall not chill you nor make you grow sadder,
  No heart-ache shall follow the songs you have sung;
But dauntless of spirit you'll mount the long ladder
  And yearly grow gladder until the last rung.

WILFRID THORLEY.

CHRISTMAS PUDDING POSSIBILITIES.

Little Girl to Brother (who has asked for a third helping of plum pudding): Oh, you money-grubber!

# THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### CHOOSING THE PRESENTS.

*By T. Hodgkinson.*

It has often been pointed out that there is more pleasure in giving than in receiving, and, indeed, there are occasions when few of us need to have so self-evident a truth pointed out at all.

When, for example, we have given the man next door a piece of our mind, we experience a joy that the reception of an even larger piece of his could never bring us.

But it is at this time of the year that the joy of giving comes home to us with especial force. We are all busy choosing gifts for the friends we love, the retainers we don't want to leave as soon as their month's up, and the relations for whom the buying of Christmas gifts has become a habit.

Strong men are taking half a day off, meeting the wife at lunch, and spending the next fortnight explaining how they came to be so careless as to arrive home with only seventeen parcels, seeing there were eighteen when they left the shop, and they had to change 'buses only four times.

It is a wonderful time, as we dream in some crowded emporium of the pleasure our gifts will bring. We think how Father will like lending us the new niblick we are giving him, and how glad Mother will be that we have not added to her household litter of fishing-tackle, which is the only thing Father really cares about.

We picture dear little Horace's joy as he peppers cats with his new air pistol, as he trudges sturdily to the children's lecture on kindness to animals, and words fail us to describe the ecstasy with which our only sister will greet the powder puff in an artistic

camouflage which we have chosen—a camouflage, by the way, which will be betrayed by the publicity with which she will probably use it.

But great as is the pleasure our presents will bring to everyone except, perhaps, the bank manager who is getting anxious about our overdraft, it is the benefit which they will bring to ourselves that we have really set out to consider.

As a trainer of memory, present choosing is second to none. There are, we know, weak people who carry a list of all the people whom they must on no account forget to remember, but to the brave soul who relies upon memory alone this season of present choosing not only brings an added brain power (as shown by his forethought in buying a dozen assorted calendars at the last minute in case of accident), but also a certain amount of family pride, as gradually it dawns upon him how many relations he has got.

His family tree may be a bit shady, but that is hardly to be wondered at when you consider how many branches it possesses.

### THE ENGLISH YEAR.

**Ten months cold and two months winter,**
**Twelve months grey and one week's sun,**
**Brave north-easters strong and steady,**
**So the English year rolls on**

**January is cold and muddy,**
**February is cold with showers,**
**March is bleak, but still we garden,**
**Planning rows of future flowers.**

**Freezing through the April blizzard,**
**Dreaming yet of azure sky,**
**Thinking June will bring the roses—**
**English hope will never die!**

**August comes and then September,**
**Thunderstorms now going strong,**
**"Soon the days will be more settled:**
**Summer can't be very long!"**

**Rain falls softly in November,**
**Frost with fogs that follow fast;**
**"Stir the fire and draw the curtains**
**Christmas—and we're warm at last!"**

***Dorothy Dickinson.***

SEASONABLE CAUTION.

MURIEL: Are you going to announce your engagement?
MARJORIE: Gracious, no! Not until after Christmas. It would choke off quite a lot of presents.

"How are you getting on with your French maid?" he asked, in order to make conversation with the wife of a newly-rich neighbour.

"Oh, something splendid," was the flattered reply. "Me and Harry is learning 'er to talk English as good as us."

A MEMBER of Parliament has suggested that something might be done to improve sandwiches for travellers. The use of ham instead of leather would not be a bad idea.

JUST AS THE SHOP HAD SOLD RIGHT OUT OF TURKEYS —

— LITTLE JONES, WHO'D WON ONE IN A RAFFLE, ASKED THE SHOPKEEPER —

— TO TAKE BACK THE TURKEY HE'D BOUGHT!

### THE MISTLETOE FAIRY.

**A spirit haunts the mistletoe,**
**An airy-fairy Cupid, O!**
**A frisking, feather-whisking sprite,**
**A gossamer delight!**

**A dancing, saucy-glancing fay**
**Around the clustered pearls at play,**
**As light as Summer's wanton breeze,**
**A wilful, skilful tease!**

**A tipsy, gipsy rogue is he,**
**A joker, impudently free;**
**He muddles maids and fuddles boys**
**With undiluted joys!**

**He tickles, tantalises too;**
**Such pixy tricks he plays with you!**
**He mocks the modest, shocks the staid,**
**Gets kisses all miss-laid!**

**A fairy haunts the mistletoe,**
**A laughing chaffing rascal, O!**
**A smiling, leer-beguiling elf;**
**Beware! Beware! 'Tis Puck himself!**

***Fred. W. Bayliss.***

Two well-known actors were playing golf, and every stroke proclaimed that they were novices at the game. Several fair-sized pieces of turf had been sent skywards, and when one unusually large piece departed from its native soil, one of the accompanying caddies turned to the other and whispered:

"Did yer tell me they were actors, Bill?"

"Yes," answered the other.

"Well," was the reply, "all I can say is, they ought to be scene shifters."

JOURNEY'S END.

FRIENDLY CHILD (to neighbour in Tube): Where do you get out?
OLD GENTLEMAN: Oxford Street.
FRIENDLY CHILD: We get out at Pantomime Street!

HOW UNCLE GEORGE WOULD LIKE TO SPEND CHRISTMAS AND—

HOW HE WILL SPEND IT.

### A CHANGE OF CONDITION.

I FIND it far from easy to write moderately of the good fortune that is so soon to come to me. The difference it will make is too great to permit me to regard it dispassionately.

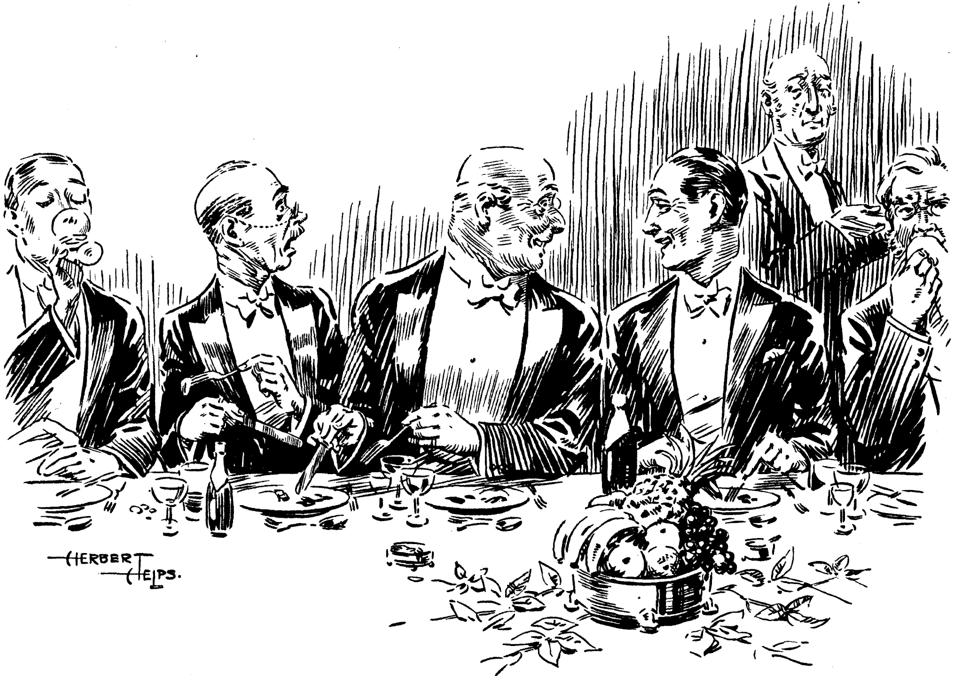
I am counting the days that divide me from the affluence that throughout long years of penury I have always hoped some time or other to attain to.

When it comes, I shall not make any ostentatious display. That is not in my nature. A slightly larger house must be sought without delay, one with a garage and enough garden not to be entirely dominated by the dustbin, as is our present one, and, possibly, we may have some cigars that are not more conspicuous for their abdominal belts than for their aroma. Wealth, I must not forget, has its responsibilities.

I have not yet told the wife of the coming change. I am keeping it as a surprise for her, although, as a matter of fact, she, as much as I, is responsible for the improvement in our fortunes. She it was who encouraged me to make the great effort.

For it was her Christmas pudding I stirred when I wished for another five thousand a year, and I made the wish only on her assurance that, made at that ceremony, it would invariably be fulfilled.

*Theta.*




A PROTEST.

LITTLE JONES (at very crowded dinner): Hang it all, sir, are you aware that you're eating *my* dinner?

new curtains in the spare room, but, as I say, no ostentation.

On the whole, I think a two-seater will be best. So many relations will expect to be taken for a drive that it will be a great convenience to feel that, if it should happen to rain, the dicky will be quite unprotected.

It will be pleasant, too, to be able to help a friend in need. I doubt if I shall ask Brown many more times for the five shillings I lent him four years ago. Dear old chap, his need is greater than mine — I'm a teetotaler — and, anyway, I don't suppose he would have paid it.

But perhaps now I shall not remain one. In my new position it may behove me to lay down a cellar containing three of everything, like a trousseau. And, of course, I shall have to get

THE clergyman leaned back in his chair after supper on Sunday evening.

"There were more people than usual at church to-night, my dear," remarked his wife.

"Yes," replied her husband, "and there was a stranger there, but I didn't see him."

"How did you know, then ?" inquired his wife.

"I found half a crown in the collection," was the reply.

BROWN: Our greenhouse stove smokes something fierce. I wonder what I can do ?

JONES: Give it one of the cigars you gave me yesterday; that'll stop it, if anything will.

### BRIGHTENING THINGS UP.

*By Gilbert Davis.*

OURS is a very nice little poultry farm, but somewhat remote. The nearest railway station is seven miles away, and the nearest village almost three. We found it rather quiet at times, until we installed the wireless.

It was after we returned from a week-end visit to my brother-in-law that I suggested the idea to Moira.

"Splendid!" she agreed. "It will brighten things up a lot."

"Of course," I warned her, "I can't afford a big set, all covered in knobs and lights and things, like Henry's. We'll have a crystal set and two pairs of head-phones."

"That will do us nicely," said Moira.

I wrote to Henry to buy me a reasonable crystal set, and he brought it down with him in his car one afternoon. He also brought the aerial. We had a strenuous time fixing that aerial. Moira said that if Henry and I would wear out-size dress suits, with a loose dickey, and redden our noses, we should undoubtedly be a great success on the stage

Henry said he didn't care if the stories about music hall stars' big salaries *were* true; he wasn't going to fall out of a tree again for anybody.

However, we had our reward when we connected up the set and heard the gentleman telling us all sorts of things that were copyright by the Press Association, Central News, and Exchange Telegraph.

Henry went back to Town with our blessings and half a bottle of arnica distributed about his person, and we settled down to enjoy our new facilities for intercourse with the outside world. The chickens were fed rather hurriedly that evening.

The next night the local constable leant his bicycle against our gate and hailed me.

"Ev'nin', sir. I hear as how you got a woireless now."

I informed him that the rumour was correct,

POT *v.* KETTLE.

"I DON'T care for the way girls dress nowadays, do you?"
"They follow the fashions too slavishly, I think, without studying what suits 'em!"

and also assured him that I had taken out a licence.

"Gracious, sir," he said, "I weren't worryin' about that! I was wonderin' if you'd let me have a listen."

I let him have a listen. The representative of

law and order occupied our living-room and one pair of headphones for just over an hour. When he rode away he announced his intention of returning later to hear " them jazz bands " he had heard so much about. He returned later, and after an hour's test pronounced himself enchanted with " them jazz bands."

The following evening Mr. Perrett looked in. Mr. Perrett is our nearest neighbour—half a mile away—and a very good customer of ours for eggs.

" Good ev'nin'," said Mr. Perrett. " Jabez was tellin' me you got a woireless." That will show you that Mr. Perrett is an important man

The following day George came alone. Mr. Perrett, it appeared, had company. George evidently wanted to make sure his cousin had showed him properly. By the end of the evening he felt fairly certain.

We saw a lot of Mr. Perrett and his cousin after that, also the constable. It seemed a pity there was only one bed in our spare room —I could have offered to put them up.

They say wireless annihilates distance. Quite a number of residents in the surrounding district proved it during the next few weeks.

It was after a little unpleasantness between several neighbours, over the possession of the

THE USEFUL VEHICLE.

PROUD FATHER: I want a pram, please.
RURAL SHOPKEEPER: Aye—for washing or just for ordinary use, sir?

in the neighbourhood. He calls the constable by his first name.

Jabez had taken down particulars of our wireless and used it in evidence against us. Mr. Perrett stayed late. Moira and I shared the other pair of headphones between us.

" Thank 'ee," said Mr. Perrett when he left. " Maybe Oi'll be lookin' in t'-morrow evenin'."

Mr. Perrett called the next evening and brought his cousin George from "The Dun Cow." over at Warbleswick, with him. Just to " show 'im, loike."

The demonstration occupied the whole evening. I didn't like to read because it looked rude. Moira sewed.

headphones, that I decided to sell our wireless set. I gave Mr. Perrett the first opportunity of purchase. Mr. Perrett, it seemed, never bought anything but eggs. Finally I disposed of it at a market stall in our nearest town.

I am now thinking quite seriously of learning to play the cornet.

" Is she a good dancer ? "

" My dear, she hasn't the faintest ! Why, when she went to the Animal Ball as an antelope, the reporter described her in the paper next day as a kangaroo ! "

THE FIRST WIRELESS LOUD SPEAKER WAS A Brown

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## —the new Brown "hornless" Loud Speaker

THE new "hornless" Loud Speaker further exemplifies the fine spirit of progress which has always dominated the organisation responsible for the famous Brown H.1.

It will instantly appeal to those who require an article of furniture which will readily harmonise with the appointments of any room. In addition to this superb Loud Speaker your Wireless Dealer can show you several other types of Brown Loud Speakers ranging in price from the popular little H.4 at 30/- to the magnificent Q—a de luxe instrument costing £15-15-0 See them—and above all, hear them. You will immediately sense their superiority and realise that for purity of tone and truthful reproduction the Brown has no competitors.

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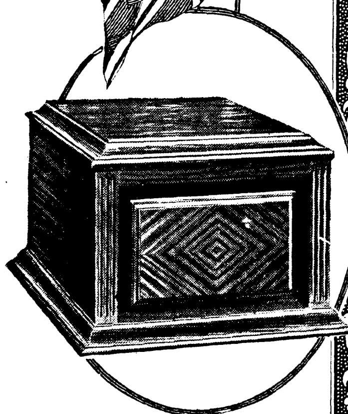

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A BEAUTIFUL Cabinet instrument of pleasing proportions, made from best quality polished mahogany. Lid lifts up to expose adjusting screw. Quartered sounding board enhances appearance and enriches the tone. 2000 or 4000 ohms. **£6 6 0**

BRITISH Brown THROUGHOUT

*Gilbert Ad.* 3814.

## THE THREE-FOURTEEN.

*By H. F. Frampton.*

THERE is a place in Regent Street where good coffee is served at any hour of the morning after cockcrow. There are few more convenient places for a matutinal encounter—say, about eleven o'clock—than the pavement in front of this establishment.

"If you prefer a cup of chocolate," I told my niece, "you may have it. People of my age brisk up only towards the evening. For me, therefore, coffee. I am suffering from a complicated series of emotions. I require sanctuary in order to sort them out and select the one I shall eventually be mastered by."

The glad light in Joyce's grey eyes was an announcement of that particular emotion by which my companion herself was held in willing thrall. She was evidently very happy, though not boisterously so, for that condition would not quite become a young lady so recently contracted to the serious step of marriage. At least, I infer the step is serious.

"I know you would like to hear all about it," Joyce said as we entered the *café*, "but can you keep a secret?"

"No. Its only by squandering the secrets of other people that I am able to hoard my own."

"Well, I must tell you how it happened, because I want your advice."

"'It' means the engagement, I presume? What can you possibly want advice about? And if you want advice—do you really *want* it, or do you merely wish to see whether it counsels the course you have already decided upon?"

Joyce selected a table near the centre of the room.

"I really do want your advice. I'm sure you'll counsel the right course. The other course seems so—so—— Chocolate, please."

"And coffee for me," I informed the waitress.

"It actually happened a fortnight ago," continued Joyce. "Gilbert—Mr. Carslake, you know—happened to be staying with the Milsoms, too. I was to go home on the Thursday—the twelve-ten from Paddington. At eleven-thirty I was all ready, but nobody else was—except Gilbert. You see, I was under the impression that the Milsoms were coming to the station to see me off, but apparently—well, they had assumed——"

"Gilbert would do so," I anticipated intelligently. "And you were naturally surprised, because he was not 'Gilbert' then—merely Mr. Carslake?"

"Something like that," acknowledged Joyce. "At all events, I spent too long over the 'Good-byes,' with the result that we just missed the twelve-ten, and as I knew there wasn't another train until the afternoon, we left the luggage labelled on the platform and went and had lunch in Oxford Street. After lunch we had a look at the shops. It was really a relief to do so, because Mr. Carslake had become very taciturn, and I had pretty

A QUESTION OF TASTE.

"I WANT a box of cigars for a Christmas present."
"Yes, madam. What brand would you like?"
"Oh, I'm not particular, but have you any flavoured with violets?"

*By Appointment to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.*

**NEW STANDARD**
in genuine leather case purple velvet and satin-lined. Comprises New Improved Gillette Safety Razor: 20 shaving edges (10 double edge Gillette Blades) in metal box - - - - 21/-
With Gold plated Razor and Blade box - - - - - 25/-
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# *The*

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GILLETTE BLADES:
**4/6** packet of 10 (20 shaving edges).
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# Gillette

TRADE MARK Gillette KNOWN THE WORLD OVER

**Safety Razor**

**NO STROPPING NO HONING**

well exhausted all the subjects I could think of to talk about."

"He must have been nervous about something," I murmured, as my niece stirred her chocolate and reflected.

"However," she presently resumed, "I saw something I wanted in one of the shops—Lucienne's—and by the time I had chosen it and joined Gilbert outside, his watch said three-ten. I had previously told him quite plainly that my train went at three-fourteen, so it was very obvious that he had allowed me to dawdle in the shop deliberately."

"Four minutes to get from Oxford Street to Paddington," I calculated. "You can hardly have managed it."

"Of course not. We didn't even try—it was hopeless. The next train was five-forty-seven, so I sent a telegram home for the second time that day and remained in Oxford Street for tea. We chose a table where I could see the clock."

"But did Mr. Carslake offer you no explanation or apology for causing you to miss the three-fourteen?"

Joyce hesitated. "Not until we parted," she answered. "Then, on the platform, just before the whistle blew, he apologised and admitted he had done it on purpose. He said he had been trying all day to bring himself to tell me something, and had wanted time to—to think out how to tell me. He looked at me, after saying that, as though he had no need to say anything further, and, of course, I simply didn't know what to reply. But at that moment the whistle blew, and he—he——"

"Brought himself to tell you. I quite understand. So that was how it came about. It isn't often that trains are missed with such happy consequences."

"The consequences weren't entirely happy," added Joyce pensively. "Aunt Adelaide had been staying for a day or two with mamma on one of her flying visits, and had put off going in order to see me before she went. You know how busy she always is. And when they informed her that I should be home without fail by the twelve-thirty, she wired to her mission home—or whatever it is—and postponed a committee meeting, thereby offending a prospective donor and losing a large donation to the fund. But that only transpired later. In the meantime my telegrams kept arriving, putting off my return later and later. They tell me my last telegram exasperated her so much that she refused a cup of tea before leaving. They were quite unable to convince her that I was not doing it purposely in order to avoid seeing her."

"One moment—you have two Aunts Adelaide. Which——"

"The crotchety one."

"Incidentally, the affluent one. Well, well, pray proceed."

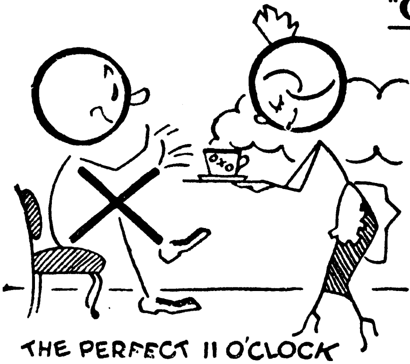
"That's all, except that since he learned about Aunt Adelaide, Gilbert has been very upset. He says if he had not been the cause of my missing the three-fourteen I should not have offended Aunt Adelaide. He says his selfishness has ruined my prospects—as if my prospects, as he calls them, are at the whim of Aunt Adelaide! He is inconsolable and deaf to reason, and that is why I want your advice."

Joyce clasped her hands together and, placing her elbows on the table, gazed at me very earnestly over the sparkling ring which encircled one of her fingers.

"Do you think" she solemnly inquired, "that, in order to ease Gilbert's mind, I should be justified in telling him that I missed the three-fourteen on purpose—that I knew the time all along, and stayed in Lucienne's till it was too late to catch the train?"

THE RIGHT TOUCH.

LANDLADY: Do you know anything about music, sir?
NEW LODGER: Oh, yes, I worked at it for some years.
LANDLADY: Well, would you mind giving me a lift with the piano?

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**GRANDPA'S CHRISTMAS.**

**Now, Tommy dear, attend to me!**
**Come, sit upon my gentle knee**
**And listen while I make it clear**
**That Christmas Day is drawing near,**
**Though possibly you've heard, by chance,**
**Of this impending circumstance.**
**However, let me quickly say,**
**Before your patience flits away,**
**That while delights around you sweep**
**In storms of joy too wild for sleep,**
**I hope that you will do your best**
**Not to disturb your Grandpa's rest;**
**For recollect I'm one of those**
**Who love to have a Christmas doze.**

IT was growing late when the hostess at the evening party requested the eminent baritone to sing.

"It is too late, madam," he protested. "I should disturb your neighbours."

"Not at all," declared the hostess, beaming. "Besides, I owe them something. They poisoned our dog last week."

A CIVIL action was being heard in a certain court, and counsel, having opened the case, called the plaintiff, whereupon a member of the jury rose, left the jury box, and made his way to the witness box. Asked what he was

POETIC JUSTICE.

"HOORAY, a cheque for my poem!"
"From whom?"
"The Post Office—it has been lost, and I insured it."

**The lights were burning bright and gay**
**In Grandpa's house on Christmas Day,**
**And anyone who listened-in**
**To catch the season's wildest din**
**Would soon have known the tumult loud**
**Was caused by Grandpa's happy crowd,**
**Not Tommy! No. With shrinking heart**
**And shielded ears, he sat apart,**
**Watching with smiles, sedate and shy,**
**The jovial beam in Grandpa's eye,**
**Hearing his voice above the throng**
**In peals of laughter, rolls of song,**
**Till forced to sigh, with soul aquake:**
***"Oh, Grandpa, what a noise you make!"***

*John Lea.*

doing, he stated that he was the plaintiff.

"Then what are you doing on the jury?" said the judge.

"I was summoned to sit on the jury," said the man, producing the summons.

"But surely," said the judge, "you know that you cannot help to try your own case?"

"Well," said the baffled one ruefully, "I did think I was in luck."

"OH, yes, my dear, the new tenant at the Hall is a most cultured woman. No slang, you know. She even refers to the crazy pavement path as an 'insane approach.'"

THE JANUARY

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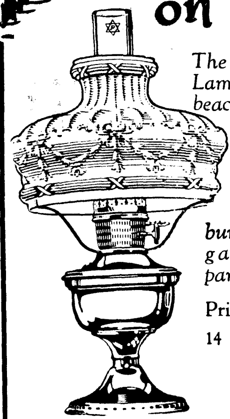
# Like a beacon on the hill



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AN UPLAND WINTER DAY.

***A** Photographic Study by Judge's, Limited, Hastings.*

# THE STORY OF AN ENCHANTED GARDEN

## By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

### ILLUSTRATED BY LEO BATES

MOTORING from East Devon to Sherton Abbas in Dorset, the narrator of this story, a successful novelist, and his brother took a wrong turning after leaving Belminster, with the result that they chanced upon a beautiful old country house known as "Salutation" which was for sale, and within a fortnight the author had bought both the house and its formal garden, together with an outer water garden and an adjoining spinney. After settling in to their new home the two men learned from their nearest neighbour that half a dozen previous owners had resold the house, generally at a slight loss, and soon afterwards the behaviour of the narrator's wire-haired terrier, Snudge, gave the first intimation of the presence of something uncanny in the spinney. Then one summer day the novelist, reclining in the spinney, "in the suburbs of slumber, but not yet fast asleep," saw two children, a boy and a girl of about six or seven. The boy ran forward, saying, "Don't you want to play with us?" and "in a jiffy the three were darting all over the garden." But while the novelist, at the children's request, was telling them a story, they vanished as suddenly as they had appeared. His brother subsequently found some children's treasure-trove buried in a tin can on an islet in the water-garden, and a visit to the late owners of the house, two spinster ladies living at Weymouth, revealed the fact that one of them had taken a photograph which included what might be a small boy peering out of some reeds. Soon afterwards the narrator's small granddaughter, Bambine, came on her first visit to Salutation, and, on being told that if she looked into a sheet of dull steel framed as a mirror she would see herself as she really was, surveyed herself and said: "I suppose it is me . . . Yes, it is me, but such a funny me . . . But who is the other little girl?"

AS soon as I was alone with Henry, I said eagerly: "What do you make of this?"

"I make no hand of it," he replied. "And unanswerable questions had best be left till the Day of Judgment."

"Are they unanswerable?"

"It comes to this. You accept—I accept—evidence of something supernormal. Bambine saw the child of your dream. Bambine may be clairvoyante. It is certain that others have seen or heard this something which stirred up gossip and gave a delightful old place a bad name. What you think, I think; I am worried just as you are."

My thoughts, easily divined by him, can be set down. After a long quest I had found a home that suited me, and I was sure that it would suit Joan, that she would love it as I did. At sight of it she had clapped hands, exclaiming: "Oh, I could live here for ever and ever!"

I knew her well enough, however, to be sure that she would leave by the next train if anything happened to distress or frighten Bambine.

Ought I to tell Joan?

Henry detests futile speculation. When others talk round a subject, he remains silent. Nobody bustles more quickly into the thick of a verbal scrimmage. I have heard him say again and again: "Let's get at the marrow of this."

I wanted his advice, asked for it, and accepted it. He counselled silence; he emphasised our own peace of mind. He ended positively: "There is nothing evil here. At our leisure we can delve into the history of the house; I look forward to that. As for Bambine, she is going to have the time of her life, spooks or no spooks."

He predicted truly about the child. She went crazy over the garden, and mutinied when ordered by Nurse to get ready for the afternoon "promenade." We pacified Nurse and cajoled Joan.

"We don't leave the garden, why should she?"

Joan said seriously: "You are a couple of hermits, and I despair of both of you." Then she laughed and kissed me. "Really, Daddy, your garden is enchanted, and Nuncle, of course, intends to encourage Bambine to defy Nurse and me."

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"Providence created uncles for no other purpose," said Henry. "I regard children as much wiser than we are, because they know what they want. This garden is Darkest Africa. Let Bambine explore it in the true spirit of adventure."

Joan said reflectively: "I can't understand why you got this place for tuppence-ha'penny."

We didn't enlighten her, and Mrs. Covel, warned by us, said no disturbing word. Once again nothing happened. Fate, or Destiny, boils her pots slowly. If you watch them, they never come to a boil. I had made sure that Bambine would ask more questions about a little girl in pink and a little boy who limped. No, she romped about with Wiggles and Peter Paul and was as lively as a grig. A grig is a baby eel, an elusive little creature.

Finally, after many flounderings, we touched bottom. Salutation, according to our Malicious Lady, had been the dower house of the Coryton family. In 1870 the eldest son of the seventh baronet and his wife were living in the house. They had spent money upon it and laid out the water garden. In 1871 Mr. Harry Coryton succeeded to the family honours and estates.

We hastened to Sir Bernard Burke. But his invaluable book had been in my possession many years, a pre-war edition. Sir Harry Jocelyn Coryton, of Coryton Court, had married, in 1863, Priscilla Ann, daughter of Augustus Manvers, Esq., of Sutton Manvers, Somerset. Two children had been born to them: Harry Sutton, b. October 2nd, 1864, d. April 23rd, 1870; Ann Georgina, b. October 2nd, 1864, d. April 23rd, 1870.

Twins had died upon the same day. But how—and where?

Excitement quickened when we learned that Sir Harry Coryton and his wife were still alive, and living at Coryton Court, sixteen miles from us, a very old couple and apparently much impoverished. No other children had been born to them, and the Coryton estates, at their death, would pass, so I was told, to a distant kinsman. Our parson, who was not in our confidence, looked up his parish register. The twins had not died at Salutation, and were not buried in the churchyard of the village.

This information was picked up leisurely. From the first we were aware that our neighbours, gentle and simple, eyed us with polite curiosity. I have no doubt that we provoked a certain amount of exasperation because we "came short" at flies more or less skilfully thrown under our noses. We were shy fish, which sharpened the wits of the anglers, who tried lure after lure with patience and persistence. The Malicious Lady said to my brother: "I am sure that some men are so self-centred that they deliberately pretend to be blind and deaf."

My brother smiled at her. "Yes," he replied, "but, oddly enough, I have never met a self-centred woman who pretended to be dumb."

## II.

What did happen within a day or two constrained Henry and me to practise what he called "high mendacity." Easy lying comes pat to elderly lips, and I have whole-souled admiration and respect for all middle-aged, kindly persons who fib generously and ingeniously to spare the feelings and blushes (if there are any left) of the young people. My brother is a past-master of this art, because, I suppose, he is a painter. Put it as handsomely as you please, there is a smack of imposture about the fellow who takes a blank canvas and a paint box and in the course of an hour or two produces an article which he brazenly sells for ten or fifteen guineas. My brother accuses me of similar malpractices, so we cry quits.

At the end of the first week the lot of us were sunning ourselves in a fool's paradise. The few neighbours whom my daughter had met aroused no curiosity in her because they restrained their own. I had counted on this. If, as was possible, herbane percolated to a lively intelligence, Henry and I were prepared with the antidote of ridicule. What did happen caught us napping.

Joan looks at Bambine from the modern angle. She treats her naturally, as a vixen treats her cub. Her protective instincts are as strong, no doubt, as Mother Eve's, but she has grasped the essential truth underlying all forms of education—children must be taught to teach themselves. Bambine refused to believe that nettles could not be picked with impunity. "You pick one and see," said Joan. When the incredulous baggage was stung, Joan did not kiss a fat hand to make it well. She rubbed well into it the juice of the dock.

I was at work, when Joan came to me with apologies for disturbing me. "I must speak to you about Bambine."

"Yes?"

"The child is an unblushing little liar."

Thus the impending sword fell, decapitating our plans. I could deal with the

gossip of neighbours; I was aghast at this charge brought against an innocent child. To gain time, I said lightly: "Nonsense!"

"Daddy, she is. Do you think I would come to you if the matter wasn't really serious? I am terribly worried about it. Johnnie will be horrified."

Johnnie (her husband) was with his regiment—second-in-command—so I left him there, trying to marshal my thoughts.

"Tell me."

"I had it from Nurse first and then from the child herself. You know that I agree with you about encouraging in children their imaginative faculties—up to a point. When Bambine told Nurse the day before yesterday that she had been playing with a little girl in pink, whom she pretended to see in Nuncle's magic mirror, I laughed."

"Yes, yes. If this thing is serious, and I can see by your face that you think it is, I will send for your uncle. He—well, he is a bit of a liar himself, in the imaginative way, and——"

I was sparring for time, as you will guess.

Joan said calmly: "I have always thought that Bambine inherited her imagination from you. Shall I ask Nuncle to come here?"

"Do."

Delighted to be left alone for a minute or two, I pulled myself together. My thoughts took a swallow's flight to York, hovering above Johnnie. When I entrusted my ewe lamb to him, I did so without misgiving. Still, he is cut to the cavalry pattern, an out-and-out soldier and sportsman, but easily prejudiced against persons and places. My imagination is fairly vivid, but somehow I could not see myself talking with Johnnie about the Coryton twins. And, to be honest, the Coryton twins were exercising my imagination more than I cared to admit.

The sight of my brother's placid face reassured me. He has a way of his own with women which I describe as reticulated. He

"'Is the poor darling the most dreadful little liar that ever lived, or is she mad?"

spins webs, gossamer threads of fancy, most entangling and quite invisible to the grosser vision.

He sat down and filled his pipe. "Let us take our time over this," he said comfortably.

I condense Joan's narrative, to which we listened without comment. Bambine had refused to play with Wiggles and Peter Paul, on the plea that she had a better engagement with her new friend in pink and that friend's brother, to whom apparently she was engaged to be married. Bambine's story had been told to Nurse with such a wealth of corroborative detail that the worthy

woman was dumbfoundered. The affair had ended in ructions. Peter Paul and Wiggles had jeered at Bambine till the poor child burst into tears. Nurse, very properly, had sent for the mother. Unhappily, Bambine, bitterly sensible that she was regarded as a gilt-edged liar, had piled Pelion upon Ossa, not only sticking stoutly to her incredible story, but—in the face of solemn warnings from Mummie—embroidering her theme with such brazen effrontery that she had been put to bed. To make matters worse, she had added, with shameless ingratitude, that she was quite prepared to leave her family and live for ever and ever with her new friends. With tears in her voice, my daughter ended on E in alt.

"You know what Bambine is to me. I nearly died when she was born; she nearly died. B-b-because of that, I thought, I b-b-believed that I was the g-greatest thing in the world to her."

"So you are," I said hastily.

"Is the poor darling the most dreadful little liar that ever lived, or is she mad? I ask you. And I shall ask Johnnie."

I am reasonably sure that Johnnie—had he been in my place, knowing what I knew—would have there and then embarked upon a sea of speculation whose tides would have swept him and his family back to York. Perhaps the sanest and truest argument used by spiritualists against sceptics who demand first-hand evidence of life beyond the grave is that the many are not yet prepared, or worthy, to receive what has been vouchsafed to the few, and only to them under bewildering conditions. Not being Johnnie, and having nothing to say, I glanced nervously at Henry. Joan did the same.

"What do you think, Nuncle?"

"I must call you Pontica."

"Pontica?"

"Yes. You have reverted, like a rhododendron, to type. I suppose if you saw a mouse you would jump on to that table and scream."

Mentally I ejaculated: "Spider."

"I should do nothing of the sort."

Another filament followed the first.

"I am glad that I resisted the blandishments of your sex, because, had I married, *I* should have reverted to type."

"What can you mean?"

"Well, Pontica, if you were my wife, there is enough of the cave-man in me to send you to bed and then smack you soundly."

If I had said this, Joan would have burst into tears, but Henry spoke so whimsically that she laughed. He had diverted a mother's thoughts from her child to herself. Bambine left the stage, so to speak, till Henry brought her back.

"Dorcas," he continued, "is not the *bambina* that her mother is. Leave Dorcas to her elders and betters—us."

Joan laid a hand upon his knee. "Nuncle, you can account for this?"

"So easily. Bambine knows that her grandpapa is a storyteller. She is treading in his footsteps. She may beat her grandsire at his own game. 'To tell his grandchild stories much fancy he'd displayed, Until at last the old man was outfibbed by the maid.'"

"Oh, dear, why didn't I think of that?"

"Ah, why didn't you? We will deal with Bambine. Possibly her fairy tales will be taken down by your father and illustrated beautifully by me. Go upstairs, kiss her soundly, distract her mind by washing her face, and bring her down here."

Joan scurried out.

## III.

I CONGRATULATED an accomplished liar, fervently grateful.

"The red herring did its work," he observed dryly. "But, all the same, we are skating over thin ice. I mix my metaphors because I'm so mixed myself. Bother these Coryton twins!"

"They are charming."

"Why are they here? Can we send for the parson, provide bell, candle, and book, and exorcise the brats?"

"We must go to Coryton Court."

"Yes, and deliver the treasure-trove to the old people. An 'Open Sesame,' surely."

We talked on till Bambine came in alone, slightly defiant. It may have occurred to her that she had said too much, so she stuck her thumb into her mouth to stop further leakage. I took her on my knee and removed the thumb. My brother produced a chocolate, caused it to vanish, found it in Bambine's ear, and popped it deftly into her mouth. Whilst she was consuming it, he addressed me.

"Bambine," he said solemnly, "is a good little girl, and I always believe what she says. Have you noticed how large her eyes are? Bambine sees more than Peter Paul. Bambine, too, has sharp ears. She hears more than Wiggles. Once upon a time there was a little girl who could hear the grass

grow and knew what the bunny-rabbits were saying——"

"I fink I can do that," said Bambine calmly. "And I sawed a brownie once. May I go into the garden?"

"Presently."

"I promised to go into the garden to play with Harry and Ann."

Harry and Ann!

That she should know the names of the Coryton children confounded us. What followed was even more confounding. Conceding that the child was clairvoyante and clairaudient, although quite unconscious of such powers, conceding also that she could take our thoughts, what we knew or imagined, and put them into her own childish words, how could she know, unless the knowledge came direct from the twins, *what we didn't know*, what neither of us had ever conjectured?

"Ann and Harry," she said presently, "don't say their prayers."

This statement made little impression at the time. The life of a happy child is a pæan of thanksgiving and praise from morning till night, but Bambine went on earnestly: "And they never go to church—never, never, never!"

If Henry is right in his contention that children have a wisdom peculiarly their own, this second statement should have challenged attention. It merely tickled my humour, because I had a nightmare vision of the Coryton twins walking sedately into the village church, and of the congregation rushing madly out of it, headed by our Malicious Lady.

"They love the garden," said Bambine. "They don't *want* to leave the garden. Last night Ann slep' with me, an' we tickled each other. Ann *is* a tickler. But often they play in the garden all night. That must be fun."

She sighed deeply. I was convinced that she was contemplating a nocturnal flitting, and wondered whether she would have the wit to accomplish it. To beguile her thoughts from such an escapade, I said lightly:

"When *I* played with Harry and Ann, I noticed that Harry limped. Has he said anything about that to you?"

"Course he has. Mummie says it's rude to make pussonal remarks, so I purtended not to notice it; but Harry says that he broke his leg in the garden, and one leg is a teeny-weeny bit shorter than the other."

"Well," said my brother judicially, "all this is very interesting."

"You *do* believe what I say, Nuncle, don't you?"

"Yes, yes. And now, Bambine, I want you to believe me. It is not very kind of you to refuse to play with your own guests. We think it rather beastly. We have made new friends here, but how would you like it if we gave all our time and attention to them?"

Bambine nodded demurely.

Henry held up an admonitory finger, waving it portentously under Bambine's nose.

"It is quite likely that Harry and Ann might refuse to play with you if they found out that you were a selfish little girl, only thinking of your own good times. So run into the garden and be extra nice to Peter Paul and Wiggles. And—bide a wee!—you can talk to us about your new friends, but as—as they don't seem willing to be friendly and jolly with some of the others—why, if I were you I should not talk about them to—to the others. Off with you!"

She smiled at us and scuttled away.

We sat on, talking and smoking, in no mood to return to our work. Fortunately Joan had to go into the village. She dropped in for a minute, and we lied to her superbly.

"Bambine," explained my brother, "is a dear, honest little soul. Be easy in your mind over that, and leave her alone. Her active brain has conceived a sort of fairy story. If you were unwise enough to try to kill her faith in these invisible playmates, you might distress her dreadfully and cripple her confidence in you."

I rubbed this soothing ointment in.

"Don't be a Pontica."

"If you call me that, I shall be furious with you."

Really she was very pleased with both of us, and slightly ashamed of reactionary tendencies. As the door closed behind her, Henry said ruefully:

"We're up against it. For the moment all is well. But when Johnnie comes——"

"Yes—a court-martial."

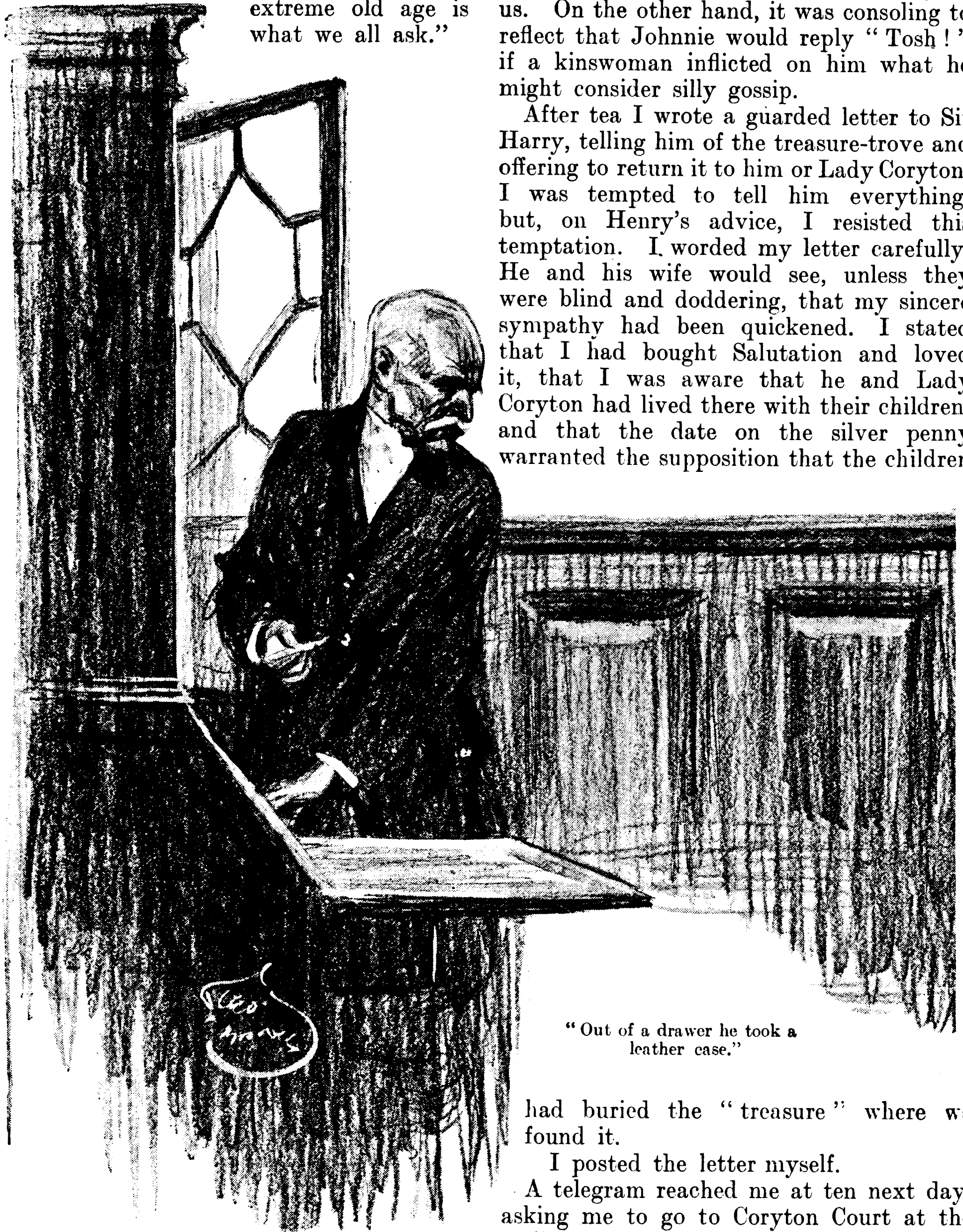
"Salutation in the market again!"

## IV.

THAT afternoon our Malicious Lady called upon my daughter and drank tea with us. She carried a nose cocked at a provocative angle. However, she got precious little out of us, and we did get something out of her. She happened to mention that the Corytons had sold Salutation in 1872. According to her—and we salted her remarks—the old

couple were cantankerous and unapproachable.

"A pair of wicked old pagans," she declared. "They want to be left alone, and they are left alone. Why such people are permitted to live to extreme old age is what we all ask."




"Out of a drawer he took a leather case."

Henry suggested slyly: "Perhaps they live on because they *are* left alone."

One for her nob—that.

Despite her inquisitiveness and the too flaunting conviction that Salutation would not shelter us much longer, we liked her. She asked us all to dine, and claimed to be distantly of kin to Johnnie. But I fancy they had never met. This cousinship alarmed me. She might say things to Johnnie which she hardly dared to say to us. On the other hand, it was consoling to reflect that Johnnie would reply "Tosh!" if a kinswoman inflicted on him what he might consider silly gossip.

After tea I wrote a guarded letter to Sir Harry, telling him of the treasure-trove and offering to return it to him or Lady Coryton. I was tempted to tell him everything, but, on Henry's advice, I resisted this temptation. I worded my letter carefully. He and his wife would see, unless they were blind and doddering, that my sincere sympathy had been quickened. I stated that I had bought Salutation and loved it, that I was aware that he and Lady Coryton had lived there with their children, and that the date on the silver penny warranted the supposition that the children had buried the "treasure" where we found it.

I posted the letter myself.

A telegram reached me at ten next day, asking me to go to Coryton Court at the earliest moment convenient to myself. Sir Harry offered to send a car.

We took the road within half an hour, despatching another telegram to say that we were coming. I asked Henry to accompany me, because I needed his companion-

ship and support. Somehow I felt nervous and tired. For a couple of nights I had slept badly. The apprehension that circumstances would be too strong for me, that I should have to begin all over again a quest for a home, that I should never find a house so right as Salutation, made me restless. The conviction that my brother felt as I did, and was as subject to the charm of the old place as I was, added to my aggravation. I knew that he wanted to live there with me. We couldn't live there if it was banned by my daughter.

"'I should like you to show these gentlemen the miniatures of the children.'"

A double lodge on each side of high iron gates flanked the entrance to Coryton Court. It was significant that the gates were locked, and the old woman who

hobbled out to unlock them seemed to glare at us. The broad drive, moss-grown, bordered a once fine avenue, now marred by many gaps. We could see the house on a slight eminence, Palladian in character and looking indescribably desolate. Impoverishment cannot rob an ancient house of dignity, but neglect and indifference do so unmistakably. I felt that the owner of Coryton Court could have no respect for it or for himself, and no sense of obligation to his successor.

An old butler opened the front door—cautiously. No doubt he had orders to admit us, but he did so deprecatingly. We found ourselves in a cheerless hall, but I could see at a glance that some fine pictures hung upon the walls, and that the furniture was valuable. Obviously Sir Harry could have sold, had he so chosen, some of his pictures and kept his house in decent repair. The condition of the pictures was shocking. I saw Henry scowling at a full-length Reynolds almost falling out of its frame.

Sir Harry and Lady Coryton received us in what I took to be the smallest and shabbiest of many reception rooms. Certainly at first sight they looked cantankerous, but not unapproachable. Old as they were, they darted at us, much agitated, speaking both at once.

"So good of you to come! We are immensely interested in what you have found."

I took from a small handbag the treasures and laid them on a table. Moved by a common instinct, my brother and I walked to a window, turning our backs upon host and hostess. I heard a little gasp from Lady Coryton and a startled exclamation from the old gentleman. The next moment he spoke warningly:

"Prissy—Prissy!"

I dared not turn round. I knew that my eyes were wet, I knew that the old woman was crying, and I wished myself ten thousand leagues away. Our presence became profanation. Henry admitted to me afterwards that he contemplated bolting through the window. But it happened to be shut, although the July day was uncomfortably warm. As I entered the room, I marked the lack of fresh air. I thought to myself: "Here these two persons have buried themselves alive."

I determined not to stir till I was spoken to. And then, fluttering upon the silence, came the pathetic tinkle of "*Ah! che la morte. . . .*"

I regard music as a God-given source of happiness and comfort to us. To some it is inspirational. Certain airs have a magical effect upon memory. If I heard unexpectedly one of the many Mozart melodies played to me by my grandmother when I was a boy, I should not only see her upright at her piano, but the room in which she was playing and the gown she wore at the time. I conceive that a tune played fifty years ago by every barrel-organ in England had this effect upon Lady Coryton. The air quavered away as the frail fingers relaxed their grip of the tiny handle.

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Sir Harry.

We turned then swiftly enough, and I saw that Lady Coryton had fainted, and she was slipping from the enfeebled arms of a man past eighty. We saved a fall in the nick of time, and laid her upon a sofa.

"She is dead," said Sir Harry savagely.

The rancour in his voice impressed me tremendously. When he greeted us his general appearance repelled me. Well, I was expecting that. Old age is repellent, terribly so when humanity fades from it. It is beautiful so long as kindness and benignity remain. Both these old people must have been handsome in their youth. Vitality still sparkled in their eyes, but a vitality that seemed to have no justification. I thought of Juvenal's line: *To live when life is not worth living.* The savage inflexion of tone conveyed to me the conviction that Sir Harry cursed his wife for dying. I may have been wrong.

He bent over her, muttering. Suddenly she opened her eyes, smiling faintly. There had been no time to administer restoratives.

"Are you all right, Prissy?"

She nodded, turning her head to the table. Half apologetically she said to me: "I had not heard that air for fifty years."

Henry suggested that we might open the window, and this was done. I was wondering whether we ought to go. Sir Harry had become impassively grim. Lady Coryton had half closed her eyes. I was about to make a sign to my brother when she said quietly: "Please tell us where you found these little things."

V.

DURING the journey between Salutation and Coryton Court we had beguiled the way by discussing whether or not we should take the old people into full confidence. That, we felt, depended entirely upon them. However, it was understood that Henry should have the "honour," and drive the talk as far as he could in the right direction.

He adopted what I have called his spider methods, and I listened to him, wondering whether his technique as a story-teller was not better than my own. Frozen by the cold, cynical eyes of Sir Harry, I'm sure that I should have described too curtly where and how the "treasure" was trove. My brother most artfully, and addressing Lady Coryton in a very quiet voice, sent forth his first thread of narrative from the spinney, describing how we had discovered the spring and rivulet, and wandered down the latter upon an exciting voyage of discovery.

"We guessed," said he, "that the little pools and islands, the ruined bridges, the overgrown paths, had been designed to amuse, and perhaps educate, children. Looking forward to entertaining my brother's grandchild, we set to work to remake and restore your designs. We thoroughly enjoyed doing so."

Sir Harry grunted; Lady Coryton sighed. But presently, as Henry lingered purposefully upon our labours, she let fall little exclamations of assent or dissent. Finally she said timidly:

"I should like to see what you have done."

"No," snapped Sir Harry.

This was discouraging, but I made sure that Henry had enmeshed him. I decided that the old fellow was struggling to escape from the web. More, he was in the barbed-wire entanglement of his own habits. My brother described the discovery of the biscuit tin, concluding politely:

"We could not return the little things to you then because we had no idea to whom they belonged. Yesterday a neighbour of ours told us that you had sold Salutation in 1872."

"Harry," said Lady Coryton, "I should like you to show these gentlemen the miniatures of the children." She added tremulously: "To—to please me."

He hesitated, eyed us malevolently, and stood up. I rose with him, expecting a gruff word of thanks and an intimation that we might go. Impatiently he waved me back, crossed the room, and unlocked a massive Queen Anne escritoire. Out of a drawer he took a leather case, opened it, and placed in my hand two miniatures enclosed in one frame.

*They were the children of my dream.*

You will say that I ought to have been prepared for this. In a sense I was; in another sense I was not. So far as I know, the middle of the nineteenth century held no miniature painters of note, certainly not one with the distinction and quality of Cosway or Engleheart. Nevertheless, the artist had painted two portraits of beautiful children. But the little girl was figged out in a sort of "party" frock, an affair of frills and furbelows, her hair had been "crimped," coral beads encircled her neck. Here was no sprite of the garden, but a prim little Victorian miss wearing her best clothes and a "visiting" smile.

In silence I handed the case to my brother.

"Angles and angels," he muttered.

He owned up afterwards that this was high mendacity, a shaft discharged at Sir Harry, intended to provoke him. It did.

"Angles, yes," he growled, "typically so, but angels—what sentimental balderdash! They were two jolly, healthy little devils. Hang it! Do I look like the father of angels, sir?"

Henry ought to have been in the Diplomatic Service. He replied suavely: "I had not the honour of knowing you, sir, sixty years ago."

The old man snarled.

Lady Coryton said softly: "They were angels to me."

Again I wished myself anywhere in the wide world except in this room. The situation had become too intimate, and intimacy between this stricken pair and two strangers was intolerable. One is conscious sometimes of mental impotence, which with many people takes the form of shyness. I have never suffered from shyness, but confronted with bewildering conditions I feel and behave like an idiot. It was not the unbridgable gulf between me and this cantankerous old gentleman that affected me. No, I was palsied by the conviction that a moral Atlantic surged between him and his wife. She had shared his life—if you can call it that—for sixty years; she had become, inevitably, like him, simply because he happened to be the dominant partner. She must have drifted, poor, unhappy soul, along the lines of least resistance, isolating herself with him till they stood together, cut off from the world about them, derelict—marooned. And love, the greatest thing in the world, had been diabolically transmuted into hate. These two had loved each other and their children with a strength and tenacity rare indeed. Love had whirled them from heaven into hell. The man might not be aware of this; the woman was. And I was staring at her stupefied.

One lobe of my brain repeated dully:

"Sentimental balderdash!"; the other lobe echoed this. If I told Sir Harry my dream, or repeated Bambine's story or the village gossip, he would shatter my nerves with ironical laughter.

Fortunately, Henry is of less plastic clay. He has never essayed the "problem" picture. He can draw imaginative scenes to amuse children, not to please himself. He prefers to depict swaying weeds in pools, shadows on sand dunes, and the baffling curves of water rippling over wet sands, and there is only a limited public for his stuff. At this moment, as he told me afterwards, he was engrossed with Lady Coryton, and as cynically indifferent to Sir Harry as Sir Harry, no doubt, was to him. I heard him say:

"My father must have thought me a little devil, but there is less devil in me because my mother saw me as—as——"

"As an angel," suggested Lady Coryton.

"Did she?" cackled Sir Harry.

"Of course she did," murmured Lady Coryton.

"Your mother," said Sir Harry, "willed wings to sprout on *you*?"

He put this question so insolently that I judged him to be unbalanced. Such a man, whatever his faults might be, was incapable of being blatantly discourteous to a guest in his house. But Sir Harry had left his house; he was soaring into the blue, as, indeed, I was. So I made allowance for him.

"I hope she did," replied Henry calmly. "I have not seen them myself; I have to limp through life, like your little boy——"

"Like my——"

The old man choked. His face flushed so deeply that I apprehended a seizure. With a tremendous effort he turned to my brother and said viciously: "How the devil do you know that my boy limped?"

## VI.

In attempting to describe this poignant scene I am conscious of my inability to convey the tension between conflicting characters and temperaments. Looking back with what detachment I can achieve, I can only conjecture that my brother and I, showing too plainly, perhaps, sympathy for Lady Coryton, had enraged her lord and master. We were three against one, and he knew it. With a scornful laugh, he answered his question: "Somebody told you that he limped."

"Yes. My brother here and my great-niece, a child of six."

Sir Harry turned to me. "Who told you that my son was a cripple?"

Once again the rancour in his voice betrayed his feelings. It had been hateful to him that his son should be called a cripple. I remained tongue-tied. A parrot inside my head kept on repeating: "Sentimental balderdash!"

Lady Coryton asked quaveringly: "I—I don't understand. Who could have told a little girl of six that my child limped fifty years ago? How many people are left who know that I had a boy?"

"Or a little girl who danced about a garden in pink gingham."

"In pink gingham——" faltered Lady Coryton.

We had crossed the Rubicon. Retreat, a gentlemanly retreat, was cut off. Henry, masquerading as Fate with a pair of shears, had snipped the thread that I was clutching. I knew that Sir Harry wanted us to go. I knew that I wanted to go, having outstayed my welcome. That was my thread leading to an emergency exit.

"Tell them," said Henry. "Tell the incredible story. It is not our affair whether they believe it or not. After all, we believe what we want to believe, and that—*that* is salvation or damnation."

I began haltingly.

"I must ask you," said I, "to take our word of honour that we had never heard of the children when we bought Salutation. The place had passed through many hands. We were astonished at our luck in buying so much for so little."

Lady Coryton was sitting up, feverishly alert. Sir Harry, whether designedly or not, had assumed a bored expression. Possibly the pink gingham frock meant nothing to him. Possibly, too, all his hopes and ambitions had been centred upon the boy. His eyes were smouldering with resentment.

Lady Coryton said quickly: "We sold it for seven thousand pounds, didn't we, Harry?"

"Did we? I have forgotten."

"I paid four thousand pounds."

"Really?"

"That doesn't strike you as odd, sir?"

"It doesn't strike me at all. I'll say this: you got it cheap."

I went on, slightly nettled.

"But, knowing the charm of the place as you do, isn't it strange that no owner or tenant after your occupancy lived there for more than three years?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It struck us as so strange that we tried to find out the reason—and we did. Salutation, according to local gossip, is haunted."

"Tchah! So is every old house in Dorset."

"Please go on," panted Lady Coryton.

"I bought the house, Sir Harry, and at first I was not affected by local gossip. We were told nothing definite. Our predecessors had had difficulty with servants; the house, too, is remote, off the main roads. My brother and I moved into it without the slightest apprehension that we should see or hear anything that could not be accounted for naturally. For some time nothing happened."

Sir Harry jumped up. To do him justice, he was, I think, more concerned with his wife than with us. She was leaning forward, gazing intently at me, trembling with excitement.

"I am sorry," said the old gentleman with dignity. "You have done us a service, at some inconvenience to yourselves, and Lady Coryton and I hope that you will stay to luncheon. It might interest you to see the house and some of the pictures. But Salutation—and everything that concerns Salutation—has ceased to exist for us. We left it fifty years ago; we cannot go back, even in fancy. It may well be haunted, not by what fools call ghosts, but by the broken hopes, the sorrows, the dreadful misery that we endured there after our children died. To me that house is accursed. My wife shares my view."

Did she?

I glanced at her face, the colour and texture of ivory. Whilst her husband was speaking, she lay back again on the sofa. His vehemence, the passion in his still strong voice, seemed to calm her. She had folded resignedly her trembling hands; her eyes dimmed. At his last positive affirmation she bowed her head.

We refused the perfunctory invitation to luncheon, and took our leave. I imagined—it may have been imagination—that Lady Coryton pressed my hand at parting. The sadness on her face was the enduring impression that I carried with me as we sped away from this house of desolation. I couldn't speak for a few minutes.

My brother muttered, half to himself: "We are up to our necks in Greek tragedy."

## VII.

I RETURNED to Salutation horribly depressed and tired. My mind had been poisoned. My lovely house *was* accursed. Others must have fought against this conviction just as I did, and they had yielded, as I was yielding, to amorphous fears which an outsider would have ridiculed and condemned.

Lying, as we had to lie, was no counter-irritant. Naturally enough, Joan asked questions. I replied that business had taken us to Sherton Abbas. It had, indeed, taken us through Sherton Abbas, so her curiosity was easily allayed.

Joan is really a sw—— No, let a fond father restrain himself. When a man assures me that his dearest girl is "perfectly sweet," I question his truthfulness. If he tells me that the darling was born with a hare-lip, I accept that as a fact unhesitatingly. Henry says that Joan bullies me. I am sadly conscious that she has the whip hand when we are jogging down the beaten tracks of domestic life. Her unfriends admit that she is very agreeable when she has her own way. And every nice woman knows that the more experienced male mind can be warped to serve feminine ends, not necessarily selfish ends.

I believe that I should have screamed if Bambine, or anybody else, had mentioned the Coryton twins that afternoon. To escape from my own house I took our party to the sea, where I snoozed on the hot sand and regained some measure of resignation.

Before going to bed that night I stood, as usual, at my bedroom window, which faces south, and looked down over the garden, even more fascinating by moonlight. To think of it as "accursed" was ridiculous. Instinct revolted against such a wicked indictment. The old man was accursed, not Salutation. A grim determination to remain in my sanctuary took hold of me. I would defy our Malicious Lady and Joan, if Joan, as I so greatly feared, became in her turn a victim and a coward. Why should I consider Joan and Bambine? After my death they could do what they pleased. During my lifetime, and at my age, I was justified in considering myself.

I went to bed in this valiant mood and fell asleep. I was awakened just after midnight by a knocking on the door. Joan rushed in. In a second I was wide awake, distressingly so.

Bambine had vanished!

Instantly I guessed where she was—in the garden, playing with the twins. From the passage came gurgling noises.

"Nurse," said Joan gaspingly, "is in hysterics."

"Nurse," I replied angrily, "is an old fool! If you will kindly empty a jug of cold water over her, I—I will fetch Bambine."

Joan, under this cold douche, became less hysterical herself.

"Fetch her?" she repeated. "You—*you* know where she is?"

"Yes—in the garden. Now, Joan, you will please do exactly as I tell you. We can go into explanations later on. You will take Nurse to the nursery quietly. I won't have the whole household disturbed. I will bring back Bambine."

In the big crises of life I flatter myself that I have my way. Joan obeyed me. I slipped a dressing-gown over my pyjamas, thrust my feet into slippers, and hurried downstairs, accompanied by Snudge. A hasty glance through my bedroom window had revealed nothing. That was to be expected. I knew that I should find the truant in the spinney.

I crept into it, with Snudge at my heels, treading noiselessly, slipping from tree to tree till I saw the upper pool and its *Amorino*. At the same moment Snudge dashed away from me. I stood still at the edge of the rivulet, listening. I had heard a laugh.

Between the first pool and the second is a glade, and on each side of the rivulet are clumps of king fern and giant maidenhair. Between these my brother had planted forget-me-nots. This tiny glade we considered to be the prettiest part of the garden, because it was so secluded, so complete in itself. Our finest oak stood at the lower end, a hoary sentinel. Under its great branches the moss grew thickest and greenest. Upon the moss Bambine was dancing. And Snudge had gone "mad dog." He was racing round the child, barking whenever she laughed, and leaping up, not at her, but at something invisible to me. Bambine was barefoot and in her nighty. However, the night was so warm that my dressing-gown felt oppressive.

I watched the child, entranced and—shall I add?—awed, for the sprite seemed pure spirit, a little Euphrosyne, light on her toes, hardly touching earth, flitting from moonlight into shadow, an ethereal nymph, a dryad. And my *Amorino*, with his broken bow and empty quiver, looked on poutingly, as if he, too, was longing to join these revels.

Suddenly Bambine saw Snudge. She stood still, called the dog, and bent to pat him. Snudge fawned upon her, and the spell seemed to be broken. The Sand Man was beckoning. She rubbed her eyes and slowly sank down upon the soft moss. Snudge curled himself up against her body. . . .

When I reached her she was asleep. I picked her up without awakening her and carried her to the nursery. Snudge followed at heel. Two anxious but relieved women accepted as truth a happy lie.

"I found her fast asleep in the spinney. Shush-h-h!"

"You think," whispered Joan, "that she has been walking in her sleep?"

"What else can I think?"

Bambine was tucked up in her cot. Joan passed a maternal hand over relaxed limbs, and followed me into the gallery.

"If she has taken cold——"

I said nothing.

"Her little body is quite warm, astonishingly so. That *is* astonishing, isn't it?"

"How do we know that she didn't run or dance in her sleep?"

Joan shot a glance at me, which I countered with a yawn. Lying to women is uphill work, whatever modern husbands may say to the contrary.

"Bambine has never walked in her sleep before, Daddy, and the child is so well. I—I can't account for this."

I retreated into my own room, and lay awake, trying to assimilate my own righteous fibs. I told myself that I couldn't keep it up. I felt easy in my mind about the Recording Angel. I was piling up the good marks with him. But I distrusted my staying powers; I was dismally sensible that Joan's suspicions were aroused.

I hoped that Bambine would awake next day blissfully ignorant of what she had done. It was, so I decided, quite probable that she had strayed from the nursery asleep. She might prattle to Nurse and Mummie about a funny dream——

Not so. The elf had the pluck to make full confession. She woke up to find herself in the nursery. How did she get back there?

Joan came to Henry and me after breakfast, and told us that Nurse had given notice.

"What—Boadicea" (I called her that) "is leaving you and Bambine! Why?"

But I knew why well enough.

"She says that this house is haunted—and everybody knows it. She says that Bambine has seen the ghosts, that she escaped last night to play with them in the garden. Her story has frightened Nurse out of what wits she has, and—I must be honest with you, Daddy—I—I am rather frightened myself."

Perhaps I ought to have made a clean

breast of it there and then, but so much was at stake. Anyway, I temporised, going very easy with Joan.

"Is Bambine the worse for her adventure."

"N-no."

"I watched the child, entranced and—shall I add ?—awed, for the sprite seemed pure spirit."

"Try to tell me exactly what Nurse says."

Nurse, at first, had lied, but not convincingly.

VIII.

In high mendacity (as practised by experts) Ananias, I am sure, could give half-thirty at least to Sapphira. Women over-lie, and it takes a woman to expose them. Joan made mincemeat of Nurse's reasons for leaving an excellent billet. Then the truth—or what Nurse believed to be the truth—burst into coloured sparks. All the imaginings of credulous ignorance took concrete form. They were hurled at my head. Doors opened and shut mysteriously in the house itself. A kitchen-maid, in the service of the spinsters, had seen a grey lady flitting about the passages. Somebody long ago had encountered a Cavalier carrying his head under his arm! Murder had been committed in the best bedroom! Skeletons lay beneath the cellars!

I exclaimed, unconsciously quoting Sir Harry: "What balderdash!"

At any rate, further dissembling was impossible. I had to tell my tale, and I never told a tale worse — at least, Henry said so afterwards. He admitted, however, that I was convincing. Joan sucked in every word; Henry puffed at his pipe.

I concluded irritably: "Nurse can go to Jericho, and the sooner the better."

"I suggest," said Henry, "a place not quite so far off—Mrs. Covel's parlour. Mrs. Covel, mark you, has lived here happily for several years. She has seen nothing to disturb her peace or imperil her wages. Let her talk to Nurse. Dash it all, we're sensible

people, who take life as we find it, and life here has been very jolly and satisfying. Bambine is as gay as a gazeka. Let us mark time, and—well, look for sign-posts."

Joan nodded. I had a word with Mrs. Covel, and she had a word or two with Nurse, who, under the combined pressure of four sensible persons, consented to stay on " to oblige." I had the notion that she was rather ashamed of herself.

But the mischief had been done; my halcyon days at Salutation were numbered. I knew that Joan was staying on merely " to oblige." She mentioned lightly that in case of sudden illness there was no good doctor nearer than Sherton Abbas, and pointed out to me that with advancing years the distance from the golf course might prevent me from taking my favourite exercise—and so forth.

Bambine made matters worse. The child sneaked into my bedroom when I was dressing for dinner.

" I popped out of bed to tell you somefink. It's a secret."

We shared many secrets, I'm proud to say, so I inclined an attentive ear and took the elf upon my knee.

" There is too much popping out of bed," said I.

" Are you very angry with me ? " she asked. " You see, Gran, I 'member puffec'ly crawlin' downstairs and through the big window into the garden. Harry an' Ann was waitin' for me, and—oh, it was such fun! Then I saw Snudgie, an' Mummie says you found me fast asleep an' carried me back to the nursery. Was I very heavy ? "

" No. Now, Bambine, tell me the secret. It shall be a dead secret between you and me."

" A *dead* secret! Well, Gran, Harry an' Ann say that the garden belongs to them. Isn't that a story ? It's yours, not theirs, isn't it ? "

I thought helplessly of Henry. Why wasn't he here to cope with this inquisitress ?

" M'yes," said I.

Fortunately Bambine shot off at a tangent. " I want to know, Gran, *who they are.* They just laugh at me when I ask them. I s'posed that they might come here by car. Gran, *they have never seen a car!* I—I can't b'lieve that. And why do they wear such funny clothes ? "

I glanced round. Dared I fetch Henry ? No. Where was " Boadicea " ?

" I shall be late for dinner," said I, " and if Mummie catches you in here——"

" She won't. Nurse is in Mummie's room. I purtended to be fast asleep. We're quite all right." She cuddled up closer. " Harry an' Ann *are* queer. They do go on so 'bout this garden being theirs. I asked 'em where their Daddy and Mummie lived."

" Did you ? What did they say to that ? "

" They just laughed. They—they didn't seem to care much. Ann said they left their Daddy an' Mummie in Tilly."

" Where ? "

" In Tilly. 'Course you know where Tilly is."

" I—I don't. I haven't the remotest idea."

" Oh, Gran! And I thought you knew everyfink! Now, I've got such a splendid plan. You said *you* played with Harry an' Ann."

I regretted having made this damaging admission, but I murmured cautiously that I had.

Bambine went on: " You can jump about in the garden all night, if you want to, can't you ? If you slipped out to-night, you'd find 'em, an' then you might ask 'em where Tilly is. I want to know why they left their Daddy an' Mummie in Tilly——"

At this moment the gong, that is sounded five minutes before dinner, boomed out.

" Shush-h-h ! " said I. " I'll pop you back into bed before we get caught."

She agreed that this might be wise.

I went down to dinner, wondering where Tilly was. Smoking a cigar after dinner with Henry, I repeated my talk with Bambine. Certainly Henry's wits are sharper than mine, but then the *Amorino* had interested him—as a work of art, I mean—far more than it had interested me. To me it was merely a symbol placed in its niche by two unhappy parents.

Joan was not with us. I fancy that " Boadicea " and she were " on guard." And " Boadicea " was having her supper.

" Tilly," said Henry, " is obviously Italy."

I was ashamed of not having thought of this.

" It must be Italy. That *Amorino* came from Italy. If we have not been enslaved by some strange concatenation of circumstance and coincidence——"

" But these names——"

" I know. Still, it is conceivable that one of the ancients of the village knew the Coryton twins, and actually saw a small girl in pink gingham and a boy who limped. Such a memory might have been

passed on and on till finally it reached Bambine from some village child—Susie, for instance."

"But my dream ?"

"Yes, yes, we are groping helplessly in the dark. The twins may have died in Italy. To commemorate their memory, Sir Harry or Lady Coryton would be quite likely to buy that *Amorino* and place it in the water garden."

For the moment we left it at that.

I was tempted to write to a friend of mine, once a rabid agnostic and materialist, but now convinced—against his will, so he assured me—that the dead can communicate with the living, and world-famous as a teacher and preacher of the higher truths of spiritualism. This friend happened to be in London, but I knew how importunate were the claims of thousands upon his time and attention, and how generously he responded to them. He would come to us if I asked him, but I didn't.

Instead, I went on, as Henry said, looking for sign-posts in a very deep and twisting lane.

IX.

A FEW days later Joan, Nurse, and Bambine left Salutation. Bambine howled with rage. Mentally, so did I. Even Henry was so distressed that he found himself unable to paint. We wandered about together, talking things over with exasperating repetition, unable to blame Joan, miserably aware that in her place we should have done the same. She took the child to Bembridge, where (she hoped) sea breezes and other children would blow the Coryton twins out of a bewildered little pate. We knew that Johnnie, when he heard the story—whether he believed it or not—would side with Joan.

Henry said to me irritably: "Salutation is a wash-out for them."

And thus all my pleasant plans for the future crumbled away.

Our Malicious Lady guessed something, and assumed a triumphant expression. I dare say a garbled version of Nurse's giving "notice" reached her ears. She was certainly "nice" to us, and proposed an expedition or two to local points of interest. Henry was rather short with her.

"Salutation is so satisfying that we hate leaving it."

Her eyebrows shot up. "Are you thinking of leaving it ?" she asked.

I replied hastily: "My brother and I are perfectly happy in the garden."

I thought that she looked slightly disappointed.

About a week later she brought us exciting news. She bustled on to the lawn, where we were having our tea.

"I was telling you about the Corytons the other day. I heard this morning that Sir Harry died suddenly last night—a sort of seizure. He was eighty-seven. Nobody seems to know whether or not he could leave the Court to his wife for the rest of her life."

I dissembled with her. "Well, well, eighty-seven is a ripe age."

We were pleased with her when she riposted: "Those whom the gods love don't live quite so long."

I touched a waistcoat button and bowed. A good gossip carries more than a well-turned arm up her sleeve.

Presently she went her way.

Henry said: "Are you going to the funeral ?"

"Why ?"

"Oh, I don't know. Lady Coryton would hear that you were there. It—it might lead to something."

I did attend the funeral, and half the die-hards in Dorset were there. It leaked out afterwards that Sir Harry had added a codicil to his will: "Give my neighbours, whom I have not entertained for fifty years, the best wine in my cellars." He was laid to what is called "rest" in a mausoleum. Joan will know, when she reads these lines, why I attended the funeral. I wanted to find out if the twins were in the mausoleum. They were not. Sir Harry, I learned, had been cremated. Lady Coryton, so the old butler informed me, was in bed, prostrated by grief.

Within forty-eight hours everybody in the West Country was chattering about the late baronet and his money affairs. My widow—I use the possessive pronoun because she attached herself to me like a barnacle—had said that he was impoverished. Those who were lucky enough not to know him may have said the same about that noble and puissant prince, the late Marquess of ——. Between him and Sir Harry Coryton lively journalists established a striking parallel. The Coryton estates and the Court passed to the old man's next-of-kin (whom he had never seen); a large private fortune, accumulated by a miser, was left unconditionally to Lady Coryton. Even the gaffers in the ale-houses mumbled to each other: "Ah-h, now, whatever will

she do wi' it?" Nobody knew, and very few cared. The old lady—so my widow assured me—would join her husband (wherever he might be) within a week or two.

She didn't. Within a week or two she sent for Henry and me, and we found her, under all the circumstances, singularly alive, and, I am tempted to add, pathetically so. I told her everything, and she accepted the bewildering story as true. I would set down, if I could, what she told us, but hers was a long and disjointed narrative, and we had to wander with her down many byways, lost now and again in labyrinths of irrelevancy and reminiscence. One fact stood out—she had loved a man who unquestionably was not quite sane, and he had loved her, but with an insensate jealousy from the first. Even as a young man he had immured her and the children at Salutation. She said tenderly: "We were so happy there, but I knew it was a selfish happiness. I—I couldn't make Harry see that. We lived for ourselves and the children. He had no faith in religion, none. The children were brought up as joyous little savages. After the boy broke his leg his robust health failed. Eventually my husband called in a great London doctor, who advised us to go to Italy for the winter. And there, as perhaps you know, they were drowned."

She made an odd, despairing gesture, and we guessed that half a century ago life had ebbed out of her and with it all that life holds.

She went on presently, dry-eyed, but with a quaver in her voice: "My husband never rested till the bodies were recovered. He insisted that they should be cremated. We brought back the ashes and placed them in that block of Ham stone upon which the *Amorino* stands. I was against that, but he—he had his way. We lived on at Salutation for nearly two unhappy years, till Harry's father died. Then we sold the place and moved to the Court."

## X.

Back in our oak parlour, Henry and I had to admit that we were in a blind alley. I could see no way out of it. Two little spirits were earth-bound in my garden, and I was at their mercy. Absurd as it may sound, I had the feeling that the tiny pagans were laughing at me. My mother—had she been alive—would have entreated our parson to "lay" these small ghosts, but my faith in the powers of the clergy is less strong.

In the end our Malicious Lady triumphed. Salutation was offered for sale again, and the tongues of the gossips must have ached. I betook myself to the Sherton Abbas solicitors, and repeated not too convincingly the Joan objections to the place.

"One must have fresh fish—and the time wasted going to and from the nearest golf course — and — the eternal servant question—— But—it is in the heart of a good hunting country, and——"

"Yes, yes, we have sold it before, and I make no doubt we shall sell it again."

They sold it.

## XI.

Lady Coryton bought it, and the Sherton Abbas solicitors congratulated me with effusion upon having made a reasonable profit upon a not too wise investment. I was sensible only of the loss of my dream-house, and was, I fear, very crusty with them and on no good terms with myself. My horizon brightened when Lady Coryton took over, at a fair valuation, much of my furniture, including carpets and curtains. I stored what was left and went abroad with Henry. We admitted that we had no stomach at the moment for home-hunting.

Henry summed up: "We shall never be greeted by another Salutation."

Just before I left England I received a kind letter from Miladi asking me to come to see her if I happened to find myself in Dorset. I wrote in reply, as courteously as I could, pledging myself to do so *if*—— The "if," to me, was as wide as the Atlantic. Henry, impassioned optimist, annoyed me by saying, "We shall get over this," and I answered too tartly: "You are speaking for yourself."

Touraine, however, that blessed land where one can laugh and do nothing in a Rabelaisian spirit, softened many acerbities. We took, furnished, a maisonnette not far from Blois, overlooking the Loire. The great river swept out of my mind vain regrets, a purging flood, as all rivers are, if we regard them symbolically. Henry began painting again, and I wrote a book (to please myself) wherein I strayed from the beaten track into hamlets that have changed little since French kings rode through them.

If Henry were less of an Englishman, I might have stayed indefinitely in this sweet country, so restful, so softly sunny. I think, too, that Joan became alarmed, roused to mild protest by Johnnie and Bambine. Our

Malicious Lady—whom I shall never speak of again with the damning adjective—wrote in her most sprightly vein: "Surely we have not seen the last of you." I was so touched by her insistence that we should pay her a visit that once more I pledged myself *if*—— And by this time nothing much wider than the English Channel lay between promise and performance. We crossed it soon afterwards.

Within a month I found myself passing through the gate-house. Mrs. Covel smiled demurely at me, but I dared not ask her questions. Obviously she was now the keeper of the gate, and I wondered whether her hand in the kitchen had lost something of its cunning. She told me that Covel was working in the garden with a man under him.

I found Lady Coryton ethereally serene, exactly what an old gentlewoman should be in the still evening of life. Leaning upon a crutch stick, she took me into the garden, where we sat down in sight of the *Amorino!*

It was another *Amorino!*

The laughing sprite carried an unbroken bow and a quiverful of darts. I marked at the same time that the pool at his feet had been embellished by the addition of a tiny fountain which tinkled musically and joyously. As the drops of spray fell upon the pool, I was reminded of the pattering of fairy feet. When I put this thought into words, Lady Coryton smiled, laying her thin white hand upon my arm.

"They are still here," she whispered. "It makes me so happy. And I am teaching them all I did not teach them in their life-time. They know that there are planes beyond this, fuller and even more joyous lives than theirs."

I glanced at her delicate face, marvelling at the change in it. She looked sublimated beyond expression and, in an amazing sense, youthful. I found myself wondering whether she was of this earth. Had she passed from it, and after passing rejoined her children? I dismissed swiftly the possibility that she had indeed drifted into second childhood. Her blue eyes were more clearly sane than my own; there was no sign of decrepitude, except the crutch stick, which I accepted as a wand. It occurred to me, as a reasonable hypothesis, that very old people after death would regain their youth as slowly and as certainly as she had done.

I think she guessed my thoughts, for she went on in the same lowered tones: "I am living, kind sir, and you helped to raise me from the dead."

She laughed, turning from me to the *Amorino.* He appeared to be laughing, too.

We must have sat there for nearly an hour. She asked many questions about Bambine, and her curiosity in regard to my own feelings about leaving Salutation rather astonished me.

"You loved it, children and all?" she asked; and when I said "Yes," she nodded.

Before I left she showed me what she had done in the water garden, arousing in me, I must confess, both envy and cupidity. I promised to come and see it again in the spring, when the daffodils were a-frolic. She told me that it was now as she had originally planned it. Her evident anxiety that I should approve was touching in its sincerity. I did approve, but I should have lied splendidly if I hadn't.

She waved me adieu from the steps of the quaintly pilastered porch, a diminutive figure, lilac against the warm gold of the Ham stone. She had told me that Harry and Ann loved colours and hated black. I never saw her again.

## XII.

She died a few months later. I happened to be in London at the time, and was confounded to learn that she had left Salutation to me, and all that was in the house. Her solicitors handed me a letter upon the day of the funeral. There hung about the notepaper a faint fragrance of orris root which brought her vividly to life again. She wrote as follows:

"I have nobody very near of kin to me, so I have left Salutation to you because you loved it. The ashes of the children are to be buried with me, but not in that dreadful mausoleum. I think, my dear friend—indeed, I am sure—that when I go, which will be very soon, my children will go with me. Will you yourself place in the Ham stone below the *Amorino* the treasure trove, which you will find in a drawer in my bedroom?"

Henry and I re-buried the treasure. Within a few weeks we moved into the house, and have been there ever since. Perhaps—who shall say?—the garden has lost some of its enchantment, but not to Wiggles and Peter Paul. They often play in it, and other children have played with them.

Last summer Joan, Johnnie, and Bambine came to us. This was a test visit. I had told Joan that Bambine would expect to

see Harry and Ann. If she failed to see them, we might assume that they had flitted away for ever. Joan imposed conditions.

"I have never spoken to Bambine," she said, "about the Coryton twins. I hoped that they would fade out of her memory. Two years and more have passed. Physically she is much more robust. She may have forgotten. Promise me that you will not mention the children to her."

I promised.

Bambine occupied the nurseries as before, but no magic mirror hung above the mantelpiece. And Snudge, alas! was no more. How children and dogs remind us of the flight of time! Bambine did not miss Snudge, because she brought with her a tike of her own, of a famous fox-drawing strain. The dog reminded me of Johnnie; he had the same determined jaw.

Henry and I took the little girl into the water garden, where we watched her with alert eyes and ears. She stared at the *Amorino*, but said nothing; she was delighted with the fountain. Then she scampered from pool to pool, the tike barking at her heels. Goldfish distracted her attention. She came rushing back to us to say that she couldn't remember them. We had sat down in the glade among the tall ferns and foxglove, expecting to see her peer here and there, and pause, possibly, at the spot where she had fallen asleep after her midnight revels.

"I have not forgotten the cascade," she panted, "but wasn't it much, much larger?"

We assured her that it wasn't.

Presently she asked after Wiggles and Peter Paul, but her recollections even of them were hazy. Finally we played the trump card up my sleeve. We took Bambine to the stables, and there, in a loose box, stood a Shetland pony. Johnnie's daughter gazed at it in ecstasy.

"That," said Henry, "is my present to you, Bambine."

"Nuncle!"

The pony was a happy thought of Henry's, and, I believe, it served its purpose. Certainly it obsessed Bambine for the first forty-eight hours, passed by me in fear and trembling.

Of the Coryton twins not a word.

Had the child forgotten them? I am inclined to think she had. An indiscreet allusion might have recalled them. If she ever thought of them, they must have seemed creatures of a dream. She once said to me: "I have seen a gnome." When I asked her to describe it, she replied gravely: "I have forgotten what it looked like."

They forget so easily.

But I shall not forget those joyous creatures that danced about me, whirling me out of myself, transporting me to a diviner air. If they were of the earth, and so loath to leave it, was not that nearly all which I had in common with them? And so their innocent spells still linger in my garden, and work their will on me. Perhaps they come back now and again, but not in the broad light of day. When the moonbeams flicker through the glade and silver the placid surface of the *Amorino's* pool, I think they are hiding in the bracken. I seem to hear rustlings and the soft pad of feet upon the moss. Once, as an experiment, I passed the whole night in the glade upon a not too comfortable camp bed, and I slept dreamlessly till the warblers awakened me. Next morning Henry eyed me with slight derision, but the garden remains enchanted for him.

Joan and Johnnie have surrendered unconditionally. Henry, with a sense of humour to which I cannot attain, told me that he had detected in Johnnie's eye a proprietary gleam as my son-in-law surveyed critically the stables. I said testily: "Why?"

He replied: "Why not?"

But Joan, I am sure, when she inherits my small kingdom, will keep up the garden as the children loved it.

And, really, that is all that matters.

"Then George went his way very cheerful, and Billy so far forgot his manners as to bide dumb and not wish my brother 'Good Evening.'"

# GEORGE'S MASTERPIECE

## By EDEN PHILLPOTTS

ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON

MIND you, I never was a crafty creature myself nor yet was my brother; but when it comes to one you love, then the wits be sharpened, and you'll do more for them than ever you'd do for yourself. And 'twas so with George's masterpiece.

But 'tis amazing true that we never know the best, or worst, hid in us, and all my life I'd counted George as one of the simple sort and often thanked God he weren't clever. For I'd seen such a lot of clever people come to grief, and 'twas often their very cleverness landed 'em in a mess; because to be too clever is a lot worse than not to be clever enough.

Then came the challenge, and me and my old brother was faced with a fearful problem far beyond our sense to solve, you might have thought; but, thanks to a watching Providence, we rose to it. Which showed the wits was there.

The tale runs back a long way, for when her great adventure overtook her, Mercy Mayne was up home, twenty-eight years old. Her mother and me, you see, had been dear friends from our childhood, and life crossed us both and our sorrows drew us together.

I was near five years older than Susan Sanders, and when I married Ned Pritchard, the gamekeeper, she was feared of her life she wouldn't be the apple of my eye no more. But her dread was groundless, because I never had no family myself, nor yet any luck with my husband. One of the salt of the earth was Ned, and it weren't along of nothing ever he did that my luck was out; but he went and died after we'd been married four year, and such was my great

respect and affection for him that I couldn't take another. Not but I might have, for I was a fine piece at thirty year old, and a good few offered for me.

However, I inclined to the single state, and presently it was my turn to fear the loss of Susan Sanders, for though we were heart to heart again, love of man overtook her, and, as ill-fortune would have it, the man was Thomas Mayne.

Nobody thought 'twas ill-fortune at the time, of course, because Mayne hadn't got a bad mark against him. Shepherd to Farmer Ford he was, a very clever man with sheep. But I can always say from the first I didn't feel too sure of him. He was impatient with us everyday people and never could suffer fools gladly. And though my dear Susan was far ways off from being a fool, she hadn't no more brains than, please God, she should have, and she never did learn how to cook in a way to please a man. For there be a great gulf fixed between what a man likes to eat and what contents a woman. If there was no men, there would be no cooking worth the name. Us can scramble along on any odds and ends, and just peck a bit when we're hungry and care nought about meals on the grand scale; but not so men. They like to think of their food afore it comes, and they like to forget it the minute 'tis gone, and that means cooking. And a man with the indigestion is a parlous neighbour till he's better.

So Thomas and Susan married, and the gilt was terrible soon off the gingerbread, for, as ill-luck would have it, Mayne turned out a greedy man, and his wife's cooking cast him down a lot from the start. Then along of her disappointment at finding marriage far ways off what she'd hoped, the poor girl wilted and took ill. There was consumption in her family, and a few months after her little daughter came in the world, her eyes grew so bright as stars and she began to cough.

I bain't one to meet trouble half-way, and no more bain't my old bachelor brother, who lives along with me. In fact, George have always boasted himself to have a rare nose for trouble, and never man was cleverer at escaping from it than him. A most affectionate man by nature, yet that cautious he never would get fond of nothing, or nobody, for fear of death taking the party away from him. He wouldn't marry, and he wouldn't so much as keep a dog lest the death of the creature should tear his heart-strings. But a cat he never minded round the house, because he weren't addicted to 'em, and the nicest-mannered cat was never known to win him. At seventy-five year old the only cloud in his uneventful days was the thought that I may go to ground afore he do. Then he'd have met the common fate at last, and grieve and miss a fellow-creature.

Well, George he marked the danger signals in poor Susan, and he warned me I must be prepared to face the pang of parting.

"She's a goner," said George, "and if it wasn't libellous I'd whisper her husband have helped the bad work."

Too true I knew it was, for the shepherd hadn't shone as husband, nor yet father. He'd said openly, afore neighbours in the bar of "The Wheatsheaf," that he wished his cake was dough again and him a bachelor; and far beyond Goldcross—our village—he'd uttered the same shameful wish; and, of course, it got back to his wife, as such things always do, and I heard my dear little Susan say, with my own ears, that she didn't want to live no more, because she'd failed with Thomas. He'd wished for a boy, too, and she brought him a girl, and though as nice a little maid in her temper and manners as you'd expect in a new-born creature, she was out of the common plain. In fact, an uglier baby than what Mercy Mayne was you might go far to find, and though we all made light of it and said the homely infants always grow up to be the prettiest boys and girls, there was a right-down hopeless look about Mercy from the first. Her poor mother loved her, but her father did not, and he went so far as to say that in a proper civilised land Mercy would have been put away so soon as she was baptised and allowed to make a fresh start in a happier world than this!

That was the sort of man Thomas Mayne proved to be under the test of marriage, and then far worse happened, and the fearful inner nature of the villain appeared. Instead of softening the lot of that dying woman and putting a bold face on his fate, like any brave and decent chap who'd drawn a blank, he done a cowardly and unchristian thing and bolted! You could have knocked me down with a feather when I heard it; but not so my brother. He'd known that Thomas was going about saying he might very likely "cut a loss"—to use his own expression. And then he did cut out of Goldcross and vanished like the dew of the morning. A pretty good hue and cry was made, and Farmer Ford spent five pounds in trying to find the man; but he'd looked

ahead and covered his tracks very clever indeed, and never sight or sound of the hard-hearted wretch rewarded inquiry.

It hastened the end of Susan by a year, I dare say, for he'd left no provision for the girl or her child, and it would have meant the union workhouse for both of 'em ; but by God's goodness there was me and George in our own little home, and I will say for George, though a marvel at escaping trouble, he never raised no question when I ordained to take in Susan and let her close her eyes along with us. His only fear was he'd get fond of the little girl ; but him being well over sixty at the time, and Mercy a babe under a year, it looked in nature she'd never leave him, unless she'd got the seeds of death in her through her mother.

That didn't happen, however, and us soon forgot the handicap of her poor looks, because she had a heart of gold, and took especial to George from the time she learned to walk and talk. And his affectionate nature, what he'd pent up all his life, went out to Mercy, and long after, when the tragedy threatened, my brother was face to face, after all, with the trouble no human creature can ever escape in this vale, do what he will to shirk it.

Poor Mrs. Mayne bided a year along with us, and never a word from her wicked husband ; but the end was in sight from the first, and she went in her sleep at last. The baby was too young to know what she'd lost, and when came the question of the little one's future I only said one word to George.

"Susan left her to me," I said. "'Twas all in the world she had to leave, for that matter, and you may call Mercy Mayne a gift, or a sacred trust, whichever you please, but here she is, and here she bides."

"May you be rewarded," George answered me, and the time came when we both was, for the child took to her foster-parent from the first and fell into the way of calling me "mother," for that matter. We was very scantily off for relations in any case, and by the time Mercy grew to be ten years of age, there was none but an orphan nephew, Ted Banks by name, who had any claim upon us.

By then, however, we'd long grown to feel Mercy was our own, and as the years passed, she became so near as any daughter could have been, and a lot dearer than most young daughters you see nowadays. For she was the old-fashioned type that respect their elders and reckon age be worthy of kind treatment. Indeed, she was a most grateful pattern of girl, and when us adopted her and gave her to understand we stood in place of relations, she never could be enough obliged. She did her part to spare me, and proved a quick learner and so clean as a new pin ; and when her schooling was finished, though as a scholar she never shone, she was well content to settle in the home and do her part and not hanker for nothing better. Mercy grew up so plain as need be—no blemishes, you understand, and a very fine set of teeth, which often save the situation for a face—but just general all-round poor looks. Her face was round as a ball and her eyes were so small as a rat's, and her nose was snubby and her mouth so large as a door, yet a nice kindly expression she had and a very trusting manner.

"There's one bright thing about our Mercy," George used to say ; "we shan't lose her."

But I never shared his confidence. "A wise man might take her for her temper," I'd tell my brother, "and a crafty one might offer for her prospects. She'll be tolerable snug when we're called home, and there's men in Goldcross—and everywhere else for that matter—as would swallow any pill if it was coated with enough sugar. Another thing," I told George, "Mercy have all a woman's feelings, and she could love a man as dearly and faithfully as the comeliest girl in the parish ; and if one did come along, she'd be so properly surprised and so terrible grateful, you may be sure she'd take him whether we approved or whether we did not."

"Rest content," he said. "If ever a woman had 'old maid' stamped upon her face, 'tis our Mercy."

It looked as if George was going to be right, and when our maiden turned eight-and-twenty, even I felt the danger might be said to have passed ; but far from it. At that critical age, when you might have said hope was dead, Mercy Mayne had her hand read by a gipsy woman at Okehampton Fair, and the wicked creature told her she'd live to see her grandchildren. And on top of that came William Friend, and she broke the fatal news that she was walking with him. I never see a more triumphant girl.

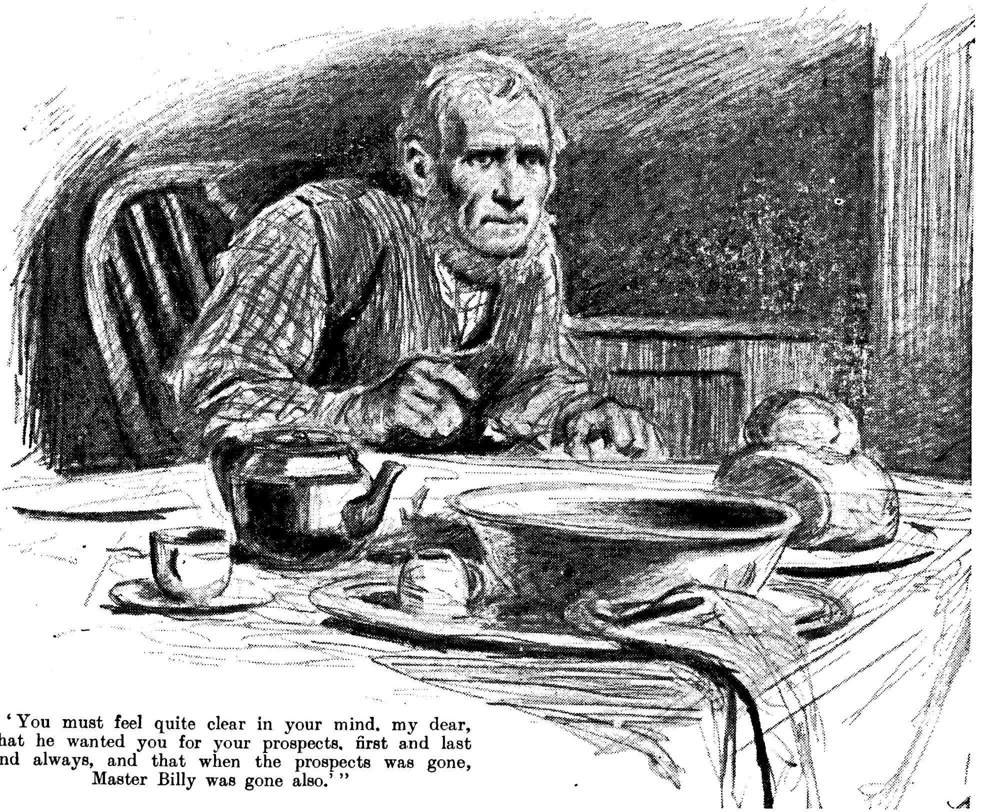
Billy Friend was one of they ginger-red men with yellow eyelashes ; and George, in a long life, had found that such a man was never to be trusted.

"If I seed a bishop with yellow eye-lashes, I wouldn't repose no faith in him," George said to Mercy, "and, whether or no,

Friend be long ways short of the worst bishop ever was known. He's a downy bird, and you won't hear no good about him from anybody but himself."

Friend worked at a pottery a mile from our house, where he threw clay on the wheel, and nobody doubted his cleverness at that; but he gave you the impression of a man you couldn't rely upon and he was very vague on all serious subjects and apt to make jokes that nice people didn't hold with. A big man with blue eyes and a quiet sort of voice; but a determined customer. He was a foreigner to Goldcross, and it was give out by him he'd come from Bristol.

I wouldn't say but what he might have bested me, for he had a large choice of words and a clever way to praise the things about me that be worthy of praise. He'd listen and look as if he was interested, and when he heard I'd made our Sunday cake, he attended to it and pointed out where it stood a good bit above such things in general. And the second time he came, he fetched me a very pretty little flame-new teapot from his works. It was red clay with a daffodil painted so large as life upon it, and the well-known words, "The cup that cheers."



"'You must feel quite clear in your mind, my dear, that he wanted you for your prospects, first and last and always, and that when the prospects was gone, Master Billy was gone also.'"

He came to tea two Sundays running, and me and George sized him up, while Mercy ministered to him as if he was a being from a better world than ours. I could see they'd gone a good bit farther in their courting than we was supposed to know, and I also marked that the man had the confidence of victory already. He knew he'd got Mercy all right, and he didn't pretend no pride over it neither; but where he did show interest was in me and George, and he took a good bit of pains to come round us.

So, but for George, I'm free to confess I might have weakened; but he didn't hoodwink my brother, and I knew from the first the battle would be there. Mercy took Mr. Friend to church for evening prayer the second time he came, and he went at her wish, but not at his own.

"Mark that," said George, after they'd gone. "When Mercy said 'church,' the man's face fell a yard. And 'tis all very clever for him to praise your tea, but how

much did he drink? I never trust a man that shies at his tea, because you well know that means his thirst be quenched in other ways."

dangerous of the man, but there was an impression he carried a lot up his sleeve and might be thought no companion for

"'I see that, and no doubt, so far as he's concerned, I've had a merciful escape,' she answered."

He said a good deal more against Billy Friend and wouldn't hear nothing for him. He'd made inquiries, you see, and the general feeling ran a bit against the potter. Nobody could say anything right-down

youth. He played cards and he always won, and he played billiards at "The Wheatsheaf," and seldom lost, and though he'd always take a drink gratis and for nothing, he proved a good deal absent-

minded when it came to his turn to stand a round.

"Well," I said, after one of our long arguments, "Mercy's a growed woman, and I'm blessed if I can see what power us have got against her."

And George grew vexed and spoke harsh; but there it was, and the day after he'd heard old Norcott at the works say that Billy Friend was wicked at heart and had only come to Goldcross to hide from his past, Mercy told us all in a flutter that she'd taken the man. And, for once, she looked very near pretty, because love will act like a charm and put its own passing beauty into any face while it lasts.

George let her run on, but his silence soon quieted down Mercy Mayne, and when she waited for us to speak, she heard all the truth and the prophets from my brother. For the first and last time there was words between 'em, and Mercy wept all night and was uglier than ever the next morning; and George lost his sleep, for I didn't hear him snore once, though as a rule he trumpets steady from the small hours till cock-light. And next day he came to breakfast in his best clothes and very down-daunted.

"I be going to market town," he told me, and 'twas a thing he often did when he was restless; so he went to Okehampton till evening, and I had Mercy on my hands all day.

She was quite determined, and when I pointed out that the man had only took her for her prospects, she quarrelled bitter sharp with me, and said I was no true mother to her, else I'd not have let myself say such a cruel thing. And I felt that a good deal.

"Lord love you," I said, "be sensible, Mercy Mayne. Nobody cares for you like me and your Uncle George, and we worship the ground you walk on; but truth's truth," I told the poor woman, "and 'tis your beautiful inner nature we love and your big heart and your fine feelings and high religious opinions. God's given you what be far more precious than a pretty face, and we should hate for all your wonderful gifts to be run to waste on a man like William Friend."

But her answer showed only too clear how rightly George had figured up the potter.

"Billy knows all about my gifts," said Mercy. "He don't undervalue me, and, what's more, he admires me. He likes my looks, and he says my eyes be a beautiful and speaking pair, and my hair's the colour he best loves. And he's always reminded of it when he's throwing clay on the wheel. So now then!"

Of course I could say no more, because if the cunning rascal had called her beautiful, then 'twas all over with Mercy Mayne. A girl would rather be thought handsome than good any day of the week, and if Billy had let on she was nice to his eye, he'd got her body and soul, since the woman could find herself fool enough to believe him.

However, 'tis always darkest before dawn, and the watching Providence hadn't no mind to let Mercy follow her mother into an unhappy marriage. So, at least, it turned out, thanks to the amazing wit of George; but 'twas some time before he rose to his great stroke, and meanwhile for a good week the future looked terrible dark and we felt that our dear girl might be lost.

My brother came back from his day off pretty quiet, but I, who knew him so well, felt there was a lot hidden. Something had happened to him, and I couldn't tell whether he'd got good news or bad, but inclined to think 'twas bad. He looked on Mercy with melancholy eyes, but was quite civil and spoke but little till she'd kissed the pair of us "Good night" and gone to her chamber.

Then George fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and fetched out a bit he'd tore off a newspaper, and told me a most amazing tale.

At first it only looked as if Mercy Mayne was doomed worse than ever, for that had happened which might put up her market value by thousands of pounds, and I own, when George told me of his discovery, I felt hope slipping away; but that was where he came out a lot stronger and cleverer than me, and not till a week later, when his great course of action flashed on my brother, did I realise the heights of the man.

He'd found a newspaper in the bar of the inn where he took his dinner that day, and looking through the advertisements, which was the only part of a newspaper he was ever known to read, he came on the name of Thomas Mayne. More than five-and-twenty years had passed since poor Susan's husband bolted, and few remembered him, but there he was, or rather there he was not, for he'd died three months before out in Australia, and he'd turned his thoughts home at the last, seemingly.

Some London folk, by the name of Messrs. Adshead and Frost, was advertising in *The Western Morning News* and saying that if there was relations of the late Thomas

Mayne, sometime of Goldcross, Devon, who had died at Sydney, New South Wales, Australia, they might hear of news to their advantage if they was to communicate.

"'Tis in a nutshell," said George. "The man cut his stick and went foreign; and out there he have flourished like the green bay tree, as the ungodly will, and now his thread's spun and at the last he turned his thoughts to his wronged wife and child."

"And Mercy may be in for a fortune," I said.

George was just so gloomy as me for a good bit, because, of course, the fatal thing couldn't be kept from her, else our consciences would have ate us alive; but it meant on the face of it that Billy Friend would triumph and poor Mercy reap a bitter harvest in the long run.

Us talked unbeknownst to the woman for three nights and then George ordained to make a move.

"The first thing," he said, "is to get news, and so I'll write to these people, and tell 'em that Thomas Mayne's wife be dead and his only daughter living. They can prove the truth of the matter, and 'tis all plain sailing, for Mayne hadn't no other relations to my certain knowledge."

With that he wrote to the lawyers and received a very civil reply. They proposed to send a clerk down to look into details and see that Mayne's marriage was regular and so on; and they told us there was a matter of eight thousand pounds and two small houses in Sydney, which might be sold for another five hundred. Mayne hadn't no particular friends out there. He'd made his money wool-growing, and, when he was struck with death, let it be understood he had a wife and child at home so far as he could tell. And if alive they was to have the money.

And then, at the darkest hour, you may say, when it looked like "Good-bye" for ever to our Mercy, and I began to ax myself what life would be like without her, George heard the Voice of Providence whispering to him and rose to his great feat.

Like all fine ideas, it come in a flash, and from being two of the most troubled folk in the parish, we cherished a great new hope; and George was hopefuller even than me.

"Instead of this here money being a curse in disguise," said George, "I've got to see 'tis much more like the ram caught in the thicket that saved the holy Isaac, and if I do as I hope, then the money will prevent the sacrifice of Mercy Mayne and do a sight better for her than land her with William Friend. In fact, this fortune, rightly handled, be going to free her from the man and show her the truth of him."

'Twas a dark saying to me, but I couldn't doubt George, and presently he took his great step all unknown to Mercy.

He come in one night with the light of victory in his eye, and when I axed what good thing had overtook him, he said nought till we was alone, and then poured himself out a second nightcap—a thing he only did on rare occasions.

"I've sowed the seed," began my brother, when Mercy was gone to bed. "I've been so deep as a well to-day, woman, and amazed myself with my own cleverness. But well I know 'twas put in me to speak, for I'd never have rose to kindiddle a cunning file like Billy Friend without help from Above."

"Spoke to him!" I said. "My life, George, you haven't let it out to him afore you've told Mercy herself?"

"No—far from it," he answered; "but I've let something out to him. I've given him a powerful lot to think about, I can assure you. And if I don't know what he'll do when he have thought about it, then call me a zany."

Well, George, you see, had contrived to fall in with Billy and meet him in a friendly temper and bid him into "The Wheatsheaf" for a drink. Over their glasses he'd talked and Billy had listened; and I'd have given a year of my life to hear George play-acting to the young man, for you never would have guessed that the power to do such a thing was hid in any member of our family.

"What's this I hear tell of you and our Mercy being tokened?" asks George, and Billy said it was so.

"I'm proud to tell you she's took me, Mr. Medlicott," says Friend, "and I hope and trust that you and your good sister will take it in a kind spirit. A fearful loss for you, I well know; but you won't lose her affection, and you'll gain mine, and I'm very wishful to be a good son-in-law to you in a manner of speaking."

"A most proper thought, Billy," answered George, so pleasant as you please, and the younger little knew my brother was full of craft; but, finding him so amiable, he ran on.

"'Tis a case of love at first sight," said Billy Friend. "The moment I see Mercy I said, 'That's the girl for my money.'"

And George knew then he was a liar, even if he'd doubted it afore, because no human male in his right senses could have falled

in love with our Mercy at first sight. But my brother struck in now and picked up Billy's words.

"She may be the girl for your money," he said, "and I've no quarrel with that. And if you see her many virtues and power of cleverness, so much the better. She's well worth your money, or any man's; but, as between friends, I want you to understand you're not the man for her money."

Billy put down his mug at that.

"And why not, Mr. Medlicott?" he inquired.

"For the reason that up to the present she ain't got none," explained George. "'Tis like this, Billy—and I should be very sorry for you to labour under a mistake. In your case, being love at first sight, I can speak open and without fear of hurting your feelings, because I well know you want the woman for herself, and money don't enter into the question at all. 'Tis just our Mercy your heart be set on; but I like all above board and so I'm just telling you that my sister and me leave our bit to my only nephew, Teddy Banks, the gardener."

"Mercy Mayne told me different," said Mr. Friend, and the light had gone out of his eye by now.

"Then you can tell her different next time you fall in with her," answered George. "She's a wonder and a treasure and the joy of our old lives; but be it as it may, blood's thicker than water when a man comes to make his will, and my nephew Ted gets my house and chips when me and sister be done with 'em."

Then George went his way very cheerful, and Billy so far forgot his manners as to bide dumb and not wish my brother "Good evening."

"So there it stands," declared George, "and if I've strained the truth, I hope God'll forgive me; for I be sure I'm right. Mercy will have a dollop more money now than ever us could give her, and neither me nor you have any quarrel with Teddy. So there it stands, and we've got the potter in a cleft-stick."

Then the light burst in on me also and I gave George the credit for his amazing deepness.

"Mark me," he said, "this lets out Friend all right, and in twenty-four hours you must be prepared to hear our Mercy say some pretty hard things to us. For a nasty shock be coming to her; but then we'll tell her about the ram caught in the thicket, and show her how the ways of Providence can always be trusted if we only do our part."

"And not only that," I answered George, "for there's going to be a dazzling light on Billy Friend also. And us'll soon see what his love at first sight was worth."

In fact, you might say George cast an illumination all round. He was properly transfigured, in a manner of speaking, and many and many a day afterwards, when my brother seemed to be no cleverer than anybody else, I'd remind myself of his masterpiece and laugh at commonplace people, who thought he was just a silly old man, like other old men.

Two days after Billy had got his bit of news he showed the cloven hoof, of course, and we had a painful time with Mercy Mayne. In fact, she came home weeping like a river and saying the man had throwed her over. And she weren't blaming him so much as us at first, till George argued with her and showed her the truth. Because Friend was quite well off and, as a potter of great skill, got big money. He could have well afforded to wed a pauper, and the fact that he broke his solemn word on finding that Mercy wouldn't bring nothing but herself, showed that the powder weren't no use to Billy Friend without the jam.

"You must grasp that afore I tell you something else," said George to Mercy. "You must feel quite clear in your mind, my dear, that he wanted you for your prospects, first and last and always, and that when the prospects was gone, Master Billy was gone also. And that's both ends and the middle of it," he told her.

"I see that, and no doubt, so far as he's concerned, I've had a merciful escape," she answered. "I'm not standing up for Friend no more, because he's a liar, and now I can call home half a hundred lies he's told me. But what I ax to know next be why you've turned me down for your nephew, after leading me to understand all these years I was your foster daughter and to be treated like your own and your only one. It bain't the house and the money," went on Mercy, "but it cuts me to the heart to think I ain't nothing to you, after all, and you can put Ted first and leave me to shift for myself."

With that Mercy Mayne cried harder than ever, and George put her out of her misery so quick as words could do it.

"Right well me and sister know you've earned every penny of our money and we've entertained an angel unawares in you, and been the richer for having you along with

us," he said. "You're entitled to the lot, and I'll go further and say that if you claim the lot after what I be going to tell you, I'll throw up my hand and let you have all and Teddy nought. But you must understand the Lord have brought 'deep things out of darkness,' and all on your account, Mercy Mayne, and you sit there now a richer woman by far than me and your foster-mother put together!"

"Perhaps you'll explain," she said; and George done so, and laid her amazing fortune afore her.

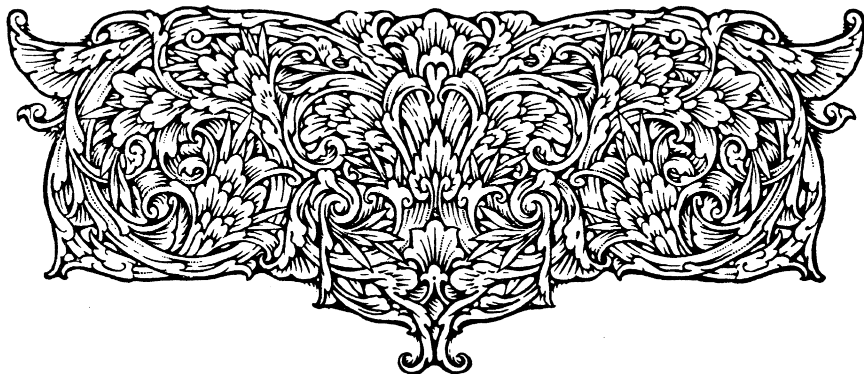
Mercy took it in a very cheerful spirit indeed, and she had the fine sense to see the way George had shone and how, knowing about her money, he was able to lay the trap for Billy Friend. And Mercy did another nice thing: she insisted that my brother should keep his word and that our nephew should be heir to all we had. And it was so.

"I got better luck out of losing your stuff than if I'd kept it," she said, "and it won't make no difference at all to me, though very like I'll buy this house from Teddy Banks when you be took, for I can't see myself in no place else."

George and me marked a dangerous side, however, for with all her money, we guessed she might be a target for the money-hunting pattern of men; but our fear was in vain.

"I loved Friend," she told me once. "True as this hand, I loved the man; but now I know what they are, I never won't look at another."

And she never have, and that's five year agone, though sometimes I can't help thinking she may turn to Teddy in her middle age, when we be took. He's a very plain fashion of man and be grown bald before his time; but he's honest and very clean in his habits, and has a great respect for Mercy Mayne. So, if 'tis only for the sake of the house, it may happen.



# A LOVER OF ENGLAND.

**THE blackbird scorns to join the migrant flights,**
**Content to wait for Spring's far-off delights.**
**An English wood or garden sets his bound:**
**His whole estate—some roods of English ground.**

**Yet who could think the blackbird's world too small**
**That hears him count, at early morning, all**
**His store of wisdom for the coming day—**
**His melodies, so tender, brave and gay?**

MURIEL KENT.

# THE MESSAGE.

'TIS Christmas-tide, all clear and cold
  Beneath the winter sky:
Three sprays of berries here I hold,
  What shall they signify?
What mystic message do they spell,
Sent by the Child Immanuel?

These little orbs of milky white,
  Like pearls from deep mid-sea,
Mistletoe—in the world's despite
  They whisper low to me
How one may cherish, undefiled,
The innocent pureness of a child.

These ivy berries, sombre black,
  Have danger hid within;
And who may tread a twelvemonths' track,
  Nor risk the snares of sin?
But yet, they murmur, one may still
Keep the child-heart that thinks no ill.

These holly berries, burning bright,
  Like blood's own red they glow;
Shall spears encompass, day and night,
  The road I have to go?
Oh, blithe and brave and blind to fear,
A child may journey through the year!

MAY BYRON.

# RACHMANINOFF
# COMPOSER AND PIANIST
## A PERSONAL STUDY OF THE COMPOSER OF THE FAMOUS "PRELUDE" AND HIS ART

By WATSON LYLE

STRONGLY individual in his personality and in his art, Sergei Vassilievich Rachmaninoff stands to-day in the forefront of musicians the world over, while he is generally regarded as the most important of modern Russian composers. His idiom, the musical phraseology which he employs to express himself, is markedly nationalistic in character, although the emotional content of his music has the universal human appeal that is the hallmark of great and enduring art.

Rachmaninoff was born on April 1, 1873, in the Novgorod district, and his musical education began at the age of nine, when in 1882 he entered the Conservatoire at St. Petersburg (now Leningrad) to begin his studies. Three years later he was sent to a similar institution at Moscow, his earlier work being directed towards the career of a pianist, in which branch of musical art he was thoroughly launched professionally by a long concert tour in Russia during 1892. Before that, however, he studied composition in the Conservatoire at Moscow under two fine masters, Sergei Tanieff and Arensky, and won the coveted gold medal for composition. Scriabin, who was also a student at the school then, but whose creative art is, of course, quite different from that of the younger musician (Scriabin was born at Moscow in 1871), won this distinction in 1891. One mentions the fact more for its coincidence than because of any similarity between the work or personalities of the two artists.

Rachmaninoff visited England in 1899, and he then played, amongst other items, his Prelude in C sharp minor, that composition, of all the works he has given us, many of them finer, that has stirred the popular taste and has gone on from fame to notoriety. The composer does not appear greatly to mind the jazzing of it, but it may at once be said that the fantastic programme popularly tacked on to it, declaring that it symbolises the premature burial of a young and beautiful woman, or a man (one hears both versions of the yarn), is not sanctioned by Rachmaninoff, and may be dismissed as sheer balderdash. Probably the custom of most pianists, and certainly of most amateur pianists, of playing it at a slower rate of *tempo* than that favoured by the composer when he plays it, may have suggested the lugubrious idea to somebody. The fact that "the Prelude" (as it has come to be called) came into prominence in this country about the same time as the Pathetic Symphony of Tschaikowsky, may have given rise to the idea, current for a long time here, that all Russian music and musicians inclined to melancholy and tragedy.

London audiences gained a wider and truer conception of the musical personality of Rachmaninoff in 1902, when his distinguished countryman, Basil Sapellnikoff, was the soloist in his Concerto in C minor for piano and orchestra, which was given its initial performance in this country then by the Royal Philharmonic Society. The composer was soloist in it at Leeds Festival in October, 1911, when he also appeared as conductor. Other visits to London and the Provinces went to increase his reputation here before the War, whilst his European position as a pianist and composer was also established. To that period succeeded the dark days of the revolution, to be followed in due course by the brilliant dawn of his appearance in the New World of America in 1916.

SERGEI VASSILIEVICH RACHMANINOFF.

*Photograph by the Farringdon Photo Company.*

My first meeting with Rachmaninoff was in the early summer of 1922, during his visit in connection with the first recitals he gave here after the War. Special influence, greater than the courtesy claims of the journalist, had been necessary to bring it about, for he was spending the days of his private life in the utmost seclusion, although, as one of the Russian artists who had left their unhappy country because of the revolution, he had found sanctuary for himself and his family in America.

It was fortunate for me, in the circumstances, that, in addition to being expected, I found in the lift at the hotel a colleague, an old friend of the composer, who was also visiting him. Rachmaninoff was alone in his apartment when we entered it, and he greeted his old friend cordially, then, noticing myself hesitating upon the threshold, smiled kindly, extended his hand in welcome, and gave me a long and searching look, a look that was almost wistful in its intentness. When I was told, years later, of the nervous tension of these days for him, I understood the meaning of that look.

He indicated a very comfortable chair near to the pianoforte, then seated himself on a settee beside his other visitor and entered into a conversation composed mainly of reminiscences and questions. As they chatted, the profile of his face was towards me, the features mostly impassive, but the dark eyes swiftly changeful in expression from a burning intensity to a look of sheer weariness. I thought he looked ill, and I learnt a little later, when we were left alone, quite casually in conversation —for there was no hint of complaint in the simple statement—that he was enduring the agonies of a bad attack of neuritis. Despite both mental and physical suffering, he courageously adhered to his concert arrangements; but I remember feeling very incensed, a few days later, when I read the complaint of a writer in a prominent Sunday paper that whilst Rachmaninoff played well and brilliantly to his audience (as the grumbler admitted), he did so in grudging fashion. Perhaps that clever commentator might have stayed his pen had he seen the victim of his smartness, as I did, bearing pain with an almost contemptuous fortitude.

It is not only at variance with the truth, but actually cruel, to represent him as incorrigibly gloomy, as seems to be the prevailing tendency. That sinister yarn about his famous Prelude in C minor, and his shy and impassive manner when coming on to the concert platform, may explain this popular misconception of his personality. There is a fascination, an impressiveness, about him that does not yield its secret after one or even after several meetings. Tall and dignified in bearing, with an habitual gravity of expression towards strangers that is apt to be mistaken for melancholy, he does not readily unbend, and no doubt this often creates in the casual visitor an impression of confirmed pessimism. He is far from being misanthropical, however, and his interest in life is keenly alert with a zest that is, at times, quite boyish.

Swift alternations of mood from grave to gay, and the reverse, come naturally to most artists, and in this respect Rachmaninoff is no exception to the bulk of humanity, whether or not they follow one of the artistic professions; but when I mention that at that first meeting, despite his indisposition, he took a kindly interest in a book I was completing for the press, and volunteered some helpful information for my use in it, it will be realised that a mere platform impression of his personality must inevitably miss the more intimate charm of it—a charm which subsequent meetings more than proved him to possess.

Rachmaninoff is one of the most modest of men, and becomes quite naturally shy —which is a totally different thing from the shy modesty of many sophisticated people— when his work either as composer or pianist is mentioned. But when he feels that the praise of a composition, especially if it is a favourite one, such as the Second Concerto for pianoforte and orchestra, is sincerely meant, and is not the outcome of mere politeness, a very natural pleasure illumines his thoughtful face. When I said one day that I intended writing a book about himself and his music, he advised me, smilingly, to devote my energies to somebody of real importance, such as Mozart, and he was incredulous that there was a large public interested in his own music. Nevertheless, I hope to write that book sometime, although he remained convinced that there was room for yet one more book about Mozart.

Few people who have heard him as a pianist can have failed to note this modesty, or the shy abstraction of manner in which he approaches the instrument and seats himself unostentatiously, yet purposefully, before it. This mannerism of his is appropriately characterised by the way in which the lovely little melody that forms the principal

interest in his Prelude in G flat (the tenth number of his Opus 23) steals shyly upon our awareness from the inner voices of the harmony. To me, at least, the beginning of that finely-wrought miniature in emotional contrast is always reminiscent of the entry of its composer on to the concert platform.

I recollect his intense amusement once, when I was with him during his visit to London, in October, 1924, the last time to date of his public appearance here, although there is a lively hope that we may hear him in the near future. He had arranged to give two recitals in town, for the programmes of which I was to write the descriptive analysis. The form that my notes should take had already been discussed, but when I got to work at home on the scores of the pieces that he had jotted down, and that had been sent on to me, I found that there was an error, in either the name or the opus number, of a composition of his own in one of the programmes. As I had to go to town next day, I went to Rachmaninoff at his hotel to find out the correct description of the item, so that there might be no mistake about the analysis of it.

He received me with his customary kindliness, his eyes twinkling as he listened to my perplexity.

"A moment," he remarked. "I have a copy of the music here, and we'll see."

By the expression on his face I believe he thought I was mistaken, but he was much too polite, and also too fair-minded to say so without investigation. However, when he produced a copy of the piece from a travelling case and found that I was right, he laughed heartily with amusement at the joke against himself of having made an error in describing one of his own compositions. He was amused that while he had correctly written down the rest of the programme (more than half of which consisted of works by other composers), the mistake should have happened with a piece of his own. When his endeavours to telephone to a fellow-pianist who was staying at the same hotel were rewarded, after considerable trouble, only by an unusually loud and prolonged "engaged" buzz, he turned to myself and another friend who happened to be in the room and said pathetically, with a wry smile, as he held the receiver so that the noise issued as from a gramophone horn—

"Will you try to get —— ? This is all it will say to me!"

Altogether, he was plainly happier and in better health at that time than during his previous visit to London.

Rachmaninoff, the pianist, is effortless in his technique, with none of the showman tricks of display favoured by some others of the *virtuosi* of the pianoforte; but, like Rachmaninoff, the composer, he is a past-master in his exposition of the sheer beauty, the aural enjoyment, that musical sounds, in combinations of hitherto unsuspected beauty, can bring to the listener. It is in this surpassing sensitiveness to the creation of tone-colour that his genius is most strikingly manifested. A few other pianists may phrase the music with a care equal to his, and may in this way make it as intelligible to us, since carefully phrased music is the equivalent of listening to poetry or prose that is read aloud with due attention to the punctuation marks; but in his power to give to this musical speech just the difference in inflexion that raises comprehension to the level of complete understanding, Rachmaninoff is one of the very few great artists. Even when he includes in his programme, as he usually does, a piece that is primarily a vehicle for the display of technical mastery, such as his own brilliant arrangement of the Gopak (a national dance of Southern Russia) of Moussorgsky or the Rhapsodie Espagnol of Liszt, we are conscious of the complete subordination of technique to sincerity in emotional expression and to the inner content of the music.

For the music of Liszt he has a great admiration, and a knowledge that is by no means limited to the half-dozen or so of show pieces which appear with wearisome regularity, season after season, in the programmes of all pianists who aspire to be regarded as finished technicians in their profession. Many people are inclined to base their estimate of the music of the great Hungarian upon these too familiar and tawdry examples of it, but, as Rachmaninoff pointed out to me, there is a large, unplayed literature for the pianoforte by Liszt that is noteworthy for beauty of workmanship and sincerity of inspiration. However, so far as the older masters are concerned, his tastes are catholic, and he nearly always includes Bach, Beethoven and Chopin in his programme as well as Liszt, his unique interpretative gifts enabling him to imbue each of their differing styles with its appropriate atmosphere plus enough of himself to give the dead bones life. His delight in, and reverence for, the music

of rare old Bach is very evident both in conversation and when he plays it.

Towards those who may be regarded as his contemporaries in art he preserves a breadth of outlook that can find scope for enjoyment and admiration in certain of the works of such diversified styles as those of Saint-Saëns, Moussorgsky, Scriabin, and Stravinsky—at least, the Stravinsky of "L'Oiseau d'Feu" and "Petroushka." He had not heard the much-discussed "Le Sacré du Printemps" when I last saw him, and in characteristic fashion was preserving an open mind until he had an opportunity of listening to it. He is greatly interested in our present-day British composers, and on the occasion of his first visit here after the War asked me what music of this school he would have a chance of hearing when in town. His attitude towards contemporary music may therefore be regarded as pliantly receptive to all that makes for the progress of the art, but he is unmoved by the mere freakishness that invades music of the ultra-modern kind from the hectic pose that sometimes passes for the modern spirit in social life. Eccentricity is not necessarily the same thing as originality, although a good many innovators, sincerely enough possibly, appear to think so.

There is a reflective element in the emotional content of Rachmaninoff's own music that reveals him as a seer rather than a preacher, and his attitude to the traditional state of affairs is shown by the regard which he has for classical form in the composition of his bigger works. This not only compels admiration from the musician for the beauty of his constructive manner, but gives a clarity of thought and directness of emotional appeal to his works that make them at once comprehensible to all lovers of good music. His creative art reveals an inner self that is as varied in make-up as the outer self familiar to his friends, which differs again, as we have seen, from the reserve and aloofness that are apt to be mistaken for indifference and cynicism at a chance meeting.

The most popular here of his bigger works is the Concerto No. 2 in C minor for pianoforte and orchestra, which was first publicly performed, with the composer as soloist, by the Philharmonic Society, Moscow, in October, 1901. There is a broad nobility of mood at the commencement of it, with a strength and sureness of rhythm that sweep on masterfully to the more intimate thought and romance of the middle section, followed by a capriciousness of mood that is satyr-like, before a return to the opening grandeur brings the work to an impressive close. The Third pianoforte concerto, in D minor, a slighter work, is less popular than its predecessor, but we had it during the last Promenade season at Queen's Hall, where the Second now forms one of the regular items. Londoners are also indebted to Sir Henry J. Wood for a recent acquaintance with the Second Symphony in E minor.

Rachmaninoff has produced some strikingly realistic sound-pictures in his music that is governed by pictorial suggestion. His "Polichinelle," which was broadcast by the distinguished pianist Pouishnoff from the studio for Daventry station last autumn, cleverly suggests, by its rhythm, the gyrations of that grotesque, historical, marionette figure.

In his Preludes the composer has advanced the stability of that art-form from where it was left by Chopin, and his two books of exquisite Etudes-Tableaux are intimate little mood-pictures. Popular fancy has, again without the least authority, tacked a legend, that of Faust, on to the magnificent Sonata for pianoforte, besides which there are numerous smaller pieces, and many fine songs, several of which are sung by Chaliapine, to the credit of this unusually gifted man of whom many people appear to think as the composer of only one piece—a certain Prelude!

# THE GREEN RIBBON

## By OLIVER MADOX HUEFFER

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT

THE Menace and the Mystery lived for a time on the Quai de l'Hôtel de Ville. They lived outside the third shop after you pass the bridge, next door to the big bulb warehouse where all the new kinds of tulips are shown growing in the window. Before their home was a broad bench on which lived dozens of tiny goldfish, each in a little glass bowl. Over the bowls was a large inscription in chalk, "Poisson avec boule, frs. 2.50," and above it was another which read "Poussins de Race," or, as we should have it, "Baby chickens of ancient pedigree," referring to the occupants of a coop on the pavement behind the bench. Above the coop were rows of little wooden cages wherein sat, trying to enjoy the thin spring sunshine, hundreds of little birds, Java sparrows, and "Widows," and chardonnerets, and "Canaris de Norwidge," and especially love-birds. The love-birds—to avoid the horrid name of Budgerighar, which is, besides, so difficult to spell—mostly lived in one long cage like a tunnel, sitting in a motionless solemn row on a single perch, pretending to love each other, but keeping a sharp eye on their own rights about feeding-time. The Menace and the Mystery, although they were also love-birds, had a special cage to themselves, as was only fitting, for they were trained to tell fortunes by cards, and to sit on your finger without flying away, and the *patronne* of the shop, who was stout and a sentimentalist, believed that they were passionately attached to each other, and christened them Cupidon and Psyche, which was really a mistake, for they were sisters, and, like other sisters condemned to live at too close quarters, not so devoted as all that.

On three successive days a girl, passing along the Quai about lunch-time, stopped and looked admiringly at Cupidon and Psyche. She had a pretty, rather peaky little face, which in repose was liable to look discontented, and she was small and delicately built, and she was rather shabbily dressed, though as neatly as are all her kind in Paris, with undeniable shoes and gloves and stockings, of which she was evidently proud. At a casual glance you would have taken her for a stenographer employed in one of the big office buildings in the Rue de Rivoli, and you would have been right. Her name was Jeanne, and she lived with her sister, whose name was Louise—but who preferred to be called Betty, because English names are more *chic*—in two tiny rooms on the fifth floor of a tall house that looked upon a narrow courtyard behind the Rue Sforza on the other side of the river.

On the fourth day, coming to a sudden decision, she pushed her way through the little crowd of loungers that always gathers round the bird-shop at lunch-time, and asked the *patronne* the price of Cupidon and Psyche.

The *patronne* was an excellent business woman, and knew to a sou the highest price obtainable for a pair of trained love-birds, but she was also, as we know, a sentimentalist, and a shade superstitious as well. As it happened, she had come by Cupidon and Psyche in a rather unusual way. An old beggar-woman, dressed as an Italian or a gipsy—the *patronne* was not an authority on national costumes—collapsed, through hunger or cold or old age, or all together, on the pavement outside the bird-shop one winter's evening. She was carrying a little folding table, and a wand, and a box of little cards with inscriptions on them, such as "Perfect Love Awaits You," or "Your Lover Will Ever Be True," or "Beware of a Dark Woman," and especially the cage in which lived Cupidon and Psyche when they were not sitting on the top of it. When the *patronne*, realising what was wrong, ran out with a glass of water, the old woman was just returning to consciousness, and a rather embarrassed young policeman was supporting her and awaiting the ambulance. As it happens, there is no provision for the care of love-birds in the Hôtel Dieu or any of the other big hospitals, and the question arose acutely what was

to become of Cupidon and Psyche. The *patronne*, as was natural enough, offered to care for them until their real owner should return, and the young policeman, relieved to find a way out of the difficulty, vouched for her perfect reliability, and the old woman, at first inclined to be suspicious, was too weary to protest overmuch. Then the ambulance came and whirled her away to some place where we may hope she found happier fortunes awaiting her than were hers in this world. At least, she never came back to claim her means of livelihood, and the *patronne*, inquiring in due course, learned that she was dead, and there was an end of her.

So you can understand that when Jeanne inquired the price of Cupidon and Psyche, Madame la Patronne found it a little difficult to reply. To gain time to think, she began to enlarge upon their beauty and amiability. "Never were two lovers more devoted," she said with a sentimental smile. "Cupidon—the bigger one, with the yellow head—is the ideal husband. And, as to Psyche, she is ——" She paused as though seeking some new word that should express the wifely perfections of Psyche.

Just then, so far as it is possible to judge of these things from the outside, Cupidon was stealthily regarding the remains of a piece of groundsel stuck through the bars of the cage, and Psyche was regarding him in a way which might have meant perfect love and understanding, or only that she would like to see him dare to touch it without her permission.

Jeanne burst into a sudden rippling laugh. "I should have said that she was menacing him for some mysterious wickedness," she said. The words came to her remembering an incident which had taken place only the day before in the little home behind the Rue Sforza. There had been a sisterly disagreement, beginning on a matter of the best kind of dye for renovating a superannuated straw hat, and continuing with charges of lack of mutual confidence and ending in tearful declarations. In the meantime Jeanne condemned Betty's habit of reticence, calling her a Mystery, and Betty objected to Jeanne's sharpness of speech, calling her a Menace. "If they were mine," said Jeanne to the *patronne* of the bird shop, "I should call them, not Cupidon and Psyche, but the Mystery and the Menace."

The *patronne*, offended at such sacrilege, intimated that a purchaser would be at liberty to call them whatever she thought fit, and without further hesitation, raised the price she intended asking from fifty francs to seventy-five. Jeanne did not do all her own marketing for nothing, so an agreeable discussion ensued, as a result of which she was nearly ten minutes late in getting back to the office—a lapse hitherto unheard of—but secured the Menace and the Mystery, and all their equipment, for the ridiculous price, as the *patronne* told her grudgingly, of sixty-seven francs and fifty centimes. And when after office-hours she fetched them from the shop, even before she had crossed the Pont Neuf, on her way home, they had ceased for ever to be known as Cupidon and Psyche, and had become instead the Menace and the Mystery.

If your total earnings were five hundred francs a month, out of which you had to feed and lodge and dress yourself, Paris prices being what they are now, you might hesitate a good deal before spending such a fortune as sixty-seven francs and fifty centimes in one fell swoop merely to gratify a whim. Indeed, Jeanne felt all her doubts revive long before she had reached home, and begged Madame Dupanloup, the *concierge*, to house the Menace and the Mystery for the night, because she wanted to surprise her sister next day. Her one consolation was, indeed, that it was not for herself that she had committed an extravagance so unpardonable. The real blame, indeed, should be put down to the ball of the Green Ribbon Society.

Because French girls are less reticent, or, it may be, more sincere than their English sisters, even the most modern of them frankly admit that their main ambition in life is to make a good marriage. And although the system of marriage by dowry which prevails in France makes it easy to find a suitable husband if you have a sufficient *dot*, it works just the other way if you have not. For that matter, girls who, like Jeanne and Betty, come from the country to work in a Paris office—and there are many thousands of them—have as much difficulty, or more, in making desirable acquaintances as is the case even in London. Meanwhile just at present all France is anxious to bring about as many marriages—with their natural consequences—as possible, and the Society of the Green Ribbon is one of the ways conceived by ingenious enthusiasts to help in the good work. It does so by giving dances and picnics and similar

junketings to its members and their friends, and if you are a young man or maiden anxious to marry, you attend wearing a green favour, as being the colour of hope, and the rest is, or should be, easy. There are, of course, difficulties, the greatest being

"The young man felt in his pocket and found a franc. 'Very well, old lady,' he said. 'You shall tell my fortune for me, though I fear there is little good in it.'"

that the maidens, perhaps because they are less self-conscious than the youths, are always considerably in the majority; but, on the whole, the Society has had its successes, and has brought about a number of weddings, and, as a cynic might put it, the French fighting strength in the next War to end War should owe quite a lot to the Society of the Green Ribbon.

Jeanne and Betty were not members of the Society, but Madame Dupanloup, the *concierge*, although she was fifty and twice widowed, was frankly eager to repeat the experiment, and when the Society gave its great annual fancy-dress ball, she attended it, dressed as Cleopatra, and she took with her as her guests Jeanne and Betty, the one as a Bohémienne or gipsy, and the other as a green-and-white pierrot, and all three wore little green favours in their hair. And because, like nearly all the other dancers, they were frankly anxious to get married, and

"'Let the innocent birds tell your fortune, kind sir.'"

not at all ashamed of letting it be known, they had none of the false shame or self-consciousness that might have been shown at an English dance under similar conditions. Also, although their costumes were home-made and had not cost very much, they were very successful, and Madame Dupanloup made the acquaintance of a very pleasant fellow dressed as a Doge of Venice, who was of suitable age and turned out to be engaged in the grocery trade in the Quartier, and it will not be at all surprising if something come of it. Betty, too, made several conquests, quite the most satisfactory, as she afterwards explained to Jeanne, being that of a young man named André, who, it seemed, had done heroic things in the War when he was little more than a child, and had been decorated, and left his left arm in Salonika, and now had a very good position with the great Morbus Automobile Company in their head offices in the Avenue Victoria. He was tall and slim and good-looking, with his hair brushed back like M. Carpentier's, and the neatest little moustache in the world, and their steps fitted exactly, and altogether he made quite an impression upon Betty.

So, unfortunately, he did upon Jeanne, none the less deep because she said less about it. Unfortunately, because, as she admitted to herself, he had eyes only for Betty, who was much the prettier, and looked particularly charming in her pierrot dress, and had lots to say for herself and no shyness at all, as was only natural, seeing that she made her living as a mannequin in the great *couturière* firm of Jeanvin's in the Avenue des Champs Elysées. He certainly asked Jeanne for one dance, but instead of being nice to him as she wanted to be, she felt suddenly intensely shy, and, to cover it, tried to say clever things, which only sounded spiteful—as she so often found happened when she was feeling shy and awkward—and when he asked her again, said that she was engaged, although she was not, and was dying to dance with him again; and then he danced with Betty three times running, and Jeanne got more and more depressed, as one does when one feels one is a failure, and all the way home she found herself saying more and more spiteful things, until Madame Dupanloup, who was radiant, thought she must be ill, and Betty, losing temper with her, told her that she was a positive little Menace.

Jeanne thought a good deal about André after that, though she never mentioned him, feeling that he belonged to Betty by right of capture, and that Betty was thinking a good deal about him, too, though she was always so reticent about her feelings that no one would have thought so who did not know her so well as did Jeanne. And one day, when they were coming out of Nôtre Dame, after hearing a sermon by Père Février, who was just then electrifying all Paris by his Lenten addresses, there was André waiting in the Parvis with a bunch of roses in his hand. Jeanne's heart beat so fast that she actually turned and ran back into the cathedral before he could speak to them, and when Betty came home half an hour later she was carrying the roses.

Nevertheless, although she would not for the world have been inquisitive, Jeanne could see that things were going wrong very soon after that. Betty grew more and more mysterious, and twice running she burst into tears, which was most unlike her, and, when Jeanne tried to comfort her, almost flew at her. Then she took to staying out much later than formerly, so that she was scarcely ever in to supper, and declared that she was kept late at Jeanvin's, although Jeanne knew perfectly well that they closed at six, and there was nothing for her to do there afterwards. And all the time she got to look more and more miserable until Jeanne grew seriously worried about her. She had no doubt whatever that things were not going right between her and André, and because she was at heart devoted to Betty she set her wits to work how to put them right again. But first, to make quite sure, she asked her sister carelessly one evening if she had seen André, and Betty, even more carelessly, pretended at first not to know of whom she was talking, and added, as if it were the most uninteresting thing in the world, that she had not seen him for weeks. That told Jeanne all she needed, and the very next day she paid sixty-seven francs and fifty centimes for the Menace and the Mystery and their fortune-telling apparatus.

The following day happened to be Mi-Carême, which is a half-holiday or not, according to the kind of office you work in. Jeanne's firm, the big furriers, Radonteau and Boischenier, were model employers, so she had the afternoon free. The Morbus firm, for whom André worked, were less kind, as she had found out by discreet inquiry beforehand, and that gave her her opportunity.

You could not, in the ordinary way, look for a harder or more conscientious worker

than was Jeanne, yet that morning—it was true that things were rather slack—she devoted most of her energies not to her proper duties, but to cutting up pieces of white cardboard to a certain size, writing upon them and sealing them up into little envelopes like those in which you send your visiting card to your friends on New Year's Day. Only when she had finished them did she return to her neglected typewriter and make up for lost time by a furious outburst of energy which may or may not have resulted in more misspellings than usual.

Betty was at home when she got there, and from the state of her eyes it was evident that she had been crying again, which served to steel Jeanne's determination. Betty was more than usually taciturn, and early in the afternoon went out, saying that she might not be back until late in the evening. In spite of her anxiety, this was somewhat of a relief for Jeanne, who was thus able to make her preparations without having to answer awkward inquiries. She set to work accordingly as soon as Betty was gone, darkening her skin until it was almost brown, and blackening her eyebrows and lashes, and powdering what could be seen of her hair until the looking-glass assured her that no one could possibly recognise her. Then she put on her gipsy dress, pulling down the silk handkerchief that formed its headdress well over her eyes, and felt more than ever reassured.

Because it was Mi-Carême, when even in these dull post-war days quite a number of young people still don fancy dress and parade the streets rather aimlessly, she felt less embarrassed by her disguise than might otherwise have been the case. Even as it was, when she had slipped downstairs to the *concierge's loge*—Madame Dupanloup happened, fortunately, to be absent for a moment—and had collected the Menace and the Mystery and their paraphernalia, she was more than once tempted to turn back even before she had crossed the Pont Neuf without anyone taking any notice of her at all. But she reassured herself by the thought that it was, after all, for Betty's happiness that she was doing it.

It was nearly seven and already dusk when she reached the Avenue Victoria and took up her position beside the door of the big office by which, as she had already satisfied herself, the *employés* left the building after their work was over. She had just comfortable time to set up the little table and arrange the cage and the box of cards upon it, and to release the Menace and the Mystery so that they could sit on top in readiness, and then she settled down to wait. It was not very pleasant, for a number of the young men who passed made remarks, and one or two of the young women even wanted to have their fortunes told; but at last, just when for the twentieth time she had made up her mind to give up her mad scheme and go home, three young men came out of the big door together and one of them had only one arm.

The Menace and the Mystery were already sitting on the end of the wand, and Jeanne, all her doubts forgotten, put herself right in the way of the one-armed young man and smiled at him, feeling quite certain that he would not recognise her. "Let the innocent birds tell your fortune, kind sir," she said, speaking as hoarsely as she could and in the kind of broken French it seemed to her most likely that a gipsy would speak.

The three young men were forced to stop, if they did not want to overturn the importunate gipsy, but two of them only frowned and tried to push past her. André—she thought he was looking tired and depressed, and all her heart went out to him—stopped suddenly and looked at her. She repeated her words, though terrified lest he might have recognised her, after all, and the young man felt in his pocket and found a franc. "Very well, old lady," he said. "You shall tell my fortune for me, though I fear there is little good in it."

Jeanne was about to refuse the money, but, remembering her part, accepted it and thanked him with a curtsey. Then, putting the Menace on her shoulder, she gave him the wand on which the Mystery was perched and told him, still in broken French, that he should tell his fortune for himself to be sure that there was no deception. He took it obediently and, under her direction, held it towards the little box of envelopes, and the Mystery leaned over and chose one in her beak. He was going to open it when the gipsy stopped him and told him that he must wait for a time or the spell would be broken. Instead, he must put it in his pocket and promise not to look at it for at least half an hour, lest the most terrible things happen to him. And before he could reply she had popped the Menace and the Mystery back into their cage and folded up the table and disappeared in the crowd waiting to enter the Châtelet Theatre, her heart beating so fast that she could scarcely walk.

As a matter of fact, André risked all kinds of bad luck, as became a soldier, for it was scarcely five minutes before he opened the little envelope and read the card. His companions waited expectantly to hear what was written on it, in the hope of making fun of him, but he only turned red and put it back into his pocket without a word, wondering, in spite of himself, how it should have come to him. It was not really very surprising, for, as it happened, each of the gipsy's cards had borne precisely the same words, which were: "You will find your real happiness awaiting you to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock at Number 86bis, Rue Sforza, VIme Arrondissement. Fifth floor. Please tap on the door, because the bell is broken."

Jeanne had reached the Pont Neuf again when she suddenly found herself beginning to cry. It was ridiculous, she told herself angrily, for she was quite certain that everything would come right now. André would certainly come and find Betty, and there would be—there must be—a reconciliation, and they would get married and live happily together ever afterwards. And at the thought of how very happy she ought to be, the tears came faster and faster until she had to hurry into the recess behind Henri IV.'s statue and lean over the balustrade as if she were admiring the river view, where no one could see her face, and wait until the tears condescended to stop.

Betty had not yet returned, at first rather to her relief, but she began to grow alarmed when nine o'clock came, and ten, and eleven, and still no Betty. She waited up until past midnight, growing always more disturbed. What if her peace-making had come too late? Betty was always a strange girl, who took things terribly seriously, even when she did not seem to mind them at all. Supposing she had taken the quarrel with André too much to heart? Supposing, in a fit of despair—Jeanne had a dreadful vision of the cold, grey river flowing so silently beneath the bridges.

She dared not go to bed all night, but lay down fully dressed, waiting and dreading what might come in the morning. When the morning came she was half beside herself with terror and indecision, wondering what she ought to do—whether she ought to go to the police, whether—— She felt she could not take Madame Dupanloup into her confidence, yet there was no one else. She made herself a cup of the strongest possible coffee, but though it checked her trembling, it only intensified the visions wrought by her fears.

The bell of Saint Sulpice had just boomed ten when there came a rapping at the door. More dead than alive she tumbled across to open it. "Thanks, so much, *chérie.* I had forgotten the key."

It was Betty herself. Betty, that is to say, but not at all the accustomed Betty. Instead, a new, dazzling Betty, radiant with happiness and dressed in wonderful new clothes, and wearing them with an expression of gratified pride such as Jeanne had never seen in her.

"Oh, Betty, where have you been?" was all she could murmur before collapsing into the nearest chair in a state as near fainting as she had ever approached in her practical young life.

"I have only come for a minute." Betty pirouetted about the room, only pausing for a moment to admire herself in the little cracked looking-glass beside the window. "Well, how do you like my dress? One of our very latest models. And the hat—rather *chic*, don't you think? I mustn't stop now. I only looked in because I thought you might be anxious about not hearing. Pierre is waiting for me in the car."

"Pierre! The car! What do you mean?"

"Of course. You don't know," said Betty, with an elaborate air of carelessness. "We were married yesterday."

"Married? You? Who—who——"

"How silly you are! Pierre Jeanvin, of course."

"Jeanvin! The—the *patron*?"

"Naturally. Do you think I should have married one of the office boys?"

"But—but—André?"

"André? What in the world do you mean?"

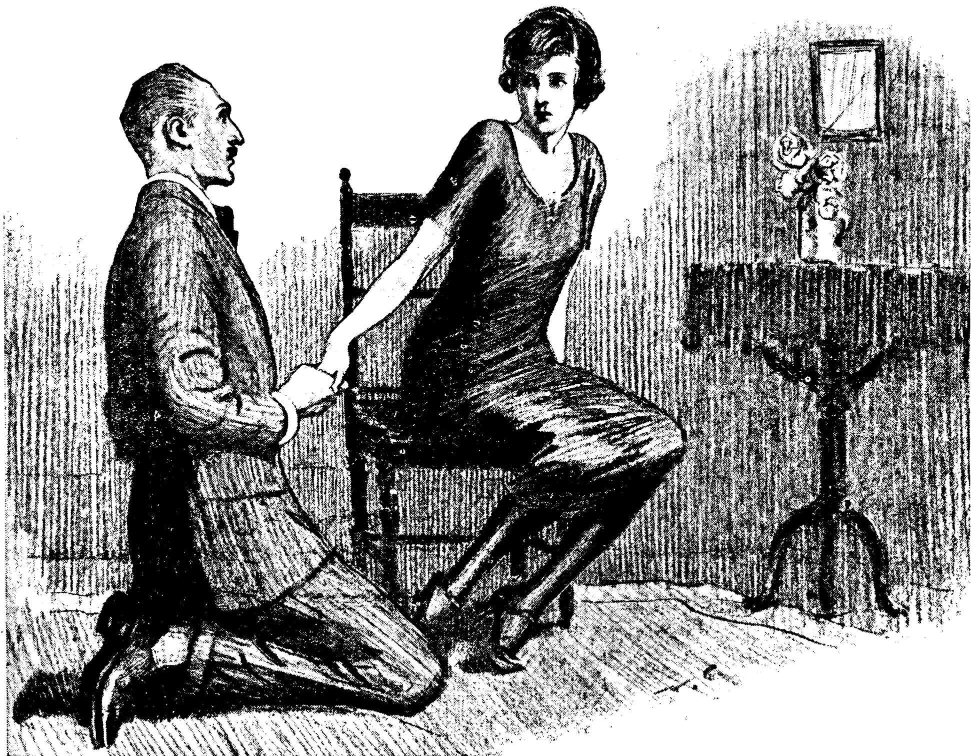
"I—I thought—you and he were fond of each other."

"That boy at the Green Ribbon dance, do you mean? Absurd! He is only a clerk. No, thank you, my dear. Pierre has been on his knees for months, only—only there were difficulties in the way. And it doesn't do to make oneself too cheap." She consulted a tiny watch set with diamonds, holding it so that it best reflected the light. "I really must run away now, dearest. Pierre will be furious. We are going to look at the furniture for the new *appartement* we are taking in the Avenue Kléber. There." She held up her hand as the impatient honking of a motor-horn came faintly up from below. "You can hear how

angry he is getting. Of course the dear boy is not so young as he was, and the least thing makes him impatient. But never mind—I know how to manage him. Now listen, and don't look at me like that, you little menace. I shall come back to-morrow to take you away from this." She glanced round the room in which she had lived for five years with the serenest contempt. "It would never do for my sister, the sister of Madame Pierre Louis Jeanvin, to live in a place like this. And, of course, you must give up your work, and—but I mustn't stay another minute." And with a hurried kiss and one more pirouette round the little shabby room, the better to enjoy the contrast, she was gone.

Jeanne remained where she sat, staring straight before her with horror-stricken eyes. She was not at all selfish, but for the time she was thinking less of her sister than of herself, of the terrible mistake she had made and of the deplorable consequences that might ensue. She had no doubt whatever that André was devoted to Betty—Jeanne knew, none better, what love at first sight meant—and he would come in answer to her ridiculous, wicked, foolish message, and she would have to tell him the truth, and perhaps his poor heart would break there and then and—oh, it was all too dreadful! And at the thought of the poor young man's misery her own heart overflowed again.

She was still sunk so deeply in miserable thought that she did not hear the rustle of the door, which Betty had left open behind her in her haste, and the next thing she knew was that a young man was standing before her chair, making tragic gestures in the air and murmuring quite incoherent words, presumably directed at her. She sat up and gazed at him blankly through a sudden rush of tears. "It is you—you have come, then! How dreadful!"



"'Gone!' he exclaimed. 'But—who is gone?'"

The young man became even more incoherent, crying out something about the tears of angels from Heaven, and drying them with lifelong adoration, and threw himself on his knees on the floor, and seized one of her hands and kissed it passionately, and altogether to an outsider might have seemed to behave rather ridiculously.

Jeanne did not think so, perhaps because she was so full of the tragic blow she must deal him. "She is not here. She has gone. You are too late. Oh, it was all my fault!"

The young man, remaining on his knees, looked up from her hand to her face. "Gone!" he exclaimed. "But—who is gone?"

"Betty, my sister." The axe must fall some time. "She was married yesterday."

"Your sister?" André evidently felt that it was impossible to discuss a third party on his knees. He rose and stood over her. "I think I understand. Your sister is married, and you are grieving for her loss."

Jeanne was not listening to him. "I thought—I hoped—I might make you forget your misunderstanding—if I could bring you together again. I did not know——"

A light seemed to burst upon him. "Your sister — Mademoiselle Betty — yes. But you——"

"I knew you were in love with her, because I saw you together, and I thought she——"

"There has indeed been a misunderstanding," said André gravely. "But it was on your part. It was not—it was never mademoiselle your sister that—that I so longed to see again."

"Then—oh—I don't understand!"

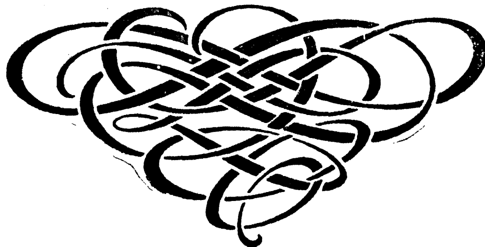
André descended for the second time, quite regardless of his trouser-knees. "Do you not see—oh, cannot you understand? It was you that I wished to see—you that I adored from the first moment I saw your eyes—you that have ever since been the lodestar of my dreams!" Followed a relapse into incoherency, with references to doves, stars, despairing hopes and immortal passions, and again, as it happened, Jeanne did not see anything ridiculous about it. "Lacking your adorable address, all seemed hopeless," he concluded. "I apply to the secretary of the Society. He knows nothing of it, as you are not a member. I rush through the streets seeking always the radiance of your face, but it is hopeless. I have but the one clue, so slight—that mademoiselle your sister told me that she had been once to hear Père Février, the great preacher at Nôtre Dame. It is possible, I think, that she may return. I haunt the cathedral at all hours when I can escape from my work, for the time become loathesome to me. On Sundays and Holy Days I seek there from dawn until the doors are closed. At last that dreadful day"—he groaned bitterly at the recollection—"I see you in all the glory of your incredible beauty. I rush towards you, and you turn scornfully away and leave me. It is evident that I have nothing to hope but instant annihilation. I am mad. I do not know what I am doing. I approach mademoiselle your sister, mumbling I know not what. I thrust the flowers into her hand which I had brought, as I had brought others every day. And then my courage fails me. I turn and rush away. Oh, most adorable of created women, is there then no hope for me? Have you not one word of comfort to fling to me?"

"Oh!" said Jeanne.

* * * * *

Madame Dupanloup fell in love with the Menace and the Mystery from the very beginning, for to her, as to the *patronne* of the bird shop, they represented the perfection of mated love. As though it were a sacred symbol, she tied to the outstanding bars by the water glasses the green ribbon which she had worn on the night of the ball, and through those at the other end of the cage she thrust the largest piece of sugar she could find.

The Mystery with a sidelong glance at the Menace, hopped from the perch and attacked the sugar. The Menace, without noticing her, hopped instead towards the green ribbon and took an end of it thoughtfully in her beak.



"The emerald-hued dwellers in the hole heard, and like flashes of green and blue light they dashed wildly out."

# THE EMERALD FISHER

## By H. THOBURN-CLARKE

### ILLUSTRATED BY ROLAND GREEN

IT was a most unlikely place. No one would have ever thought of looking for a kingfisher within a mile of the desolate marsh, across the face of which a northerly wind was driving the mist like sheeted ghosts fleeing before the dawn of a murky day. A great dyke stretched across the marsh, almost concealing, amid a smother of brambles and wild growth, a deep cut through which flowed the brown waters from the peaty mosses beyond.

Far out on the edge of the marsh the tide flowed inwards, and a long flight of peewits, wailing drearily, flew inland, waiting for the outgoing of the sea to return to their feeding-ground far down the bay. In front of the high dyke the grass grew in tufts, and just below a swampy pool, surrounded by tall reeds and rushes, showed dimly in the dawning light, while a tall, tide-driven tree-root stood up far into the air, resembling, in the dim light, a huge whitened hand that pointed skywards. The daylight grew stronger, and the wind-driven mist faded away against the brown hills behind the marsh. The peewits' wailing ceased, and everything was very still. Suddenly across the quietness of the early dawn struck the shrill cry of some stricken creature. A dog bayed sullenly in the distance, and something chittered angrily from the darkness of a rabbit burrow.

A stoat crept silently into sight and, climbing upon the tree-root, gazed around, questing the air with upraised head and quivering nostrils. Perhaps he smelt the

fetid scent from a hole in the bank, for, just as silently as he had come, he melted softly into the line of driftwood and wrack that had been left below the dyke by the high winter tides. A minute later he was worming his way through the grass tufts towards the hole from which had come the fetid smell. He went so very softly that if a watcher had been there he would not have heard the stoat as he crept upwards. I doubt if he would have seen him in that uncertain light, yet the emerald-hued dwellers in the hole heard, and like flashes of green and blue light they dashed wildly out and, wheeling to the right, flew out into the dawn to where some dark rocks showed darkly above the silver tide.

The stoat paused again, quested the air, gazed after the vanishing flashes of vivid colour, and then, stepping very daintily and cautiously, as if afraid of soiling his radiant coat, he peered into the darkness of the hole. He chittered angrily, for instead of a clutch of delicately-tinted eggs lying upon a rude nest of fishbones, he could see nothing. With the flight of the kingfishers all his hopes of a meal had fled, and he was exceedingly angry. Once more he chittered, then he retraced his way to the tree-root, and, sinking very softly among the bleached wrack, he waited for the rising sun and the return of the kingfishers.

Almost with the first ray of sunlight, shining from beneath a grey cloud, the kingfishers came hurrying back again. The little hen perched on the pointing finger of the tree-root and looked carefully around, while her mate hovered above her head. There was nothing dangerous to be seen, but yet the little hen was worried. Then she caught a glimpse of a bead-like eye gleaming amid the wrack, and a cautious head that crept slowly out. She gazed down as if bewitched, and the stoat came out, bounding, twisting, and rolling in a fantastic manner, his eyes fixed firmly upon the kingfisher, that gazed, as if mesmerised, upon the enemy below. Only the hovering mate, out of the range of the beady eyes, was not fascinated, and he called shrilly to the little hen. Lower and lower she bent, as if to fly down to the writhing, rolling, dancing, twisting stoat just below. How the matter would have ended I do not know, if a shepherd, looking after his sheep, had not walked along the top of the dyke. The stoat stopped his weird dance and froze among the tufts of grass, and the kingfisher, freed from the spell of the beady eyes, flew hurriedly off after her mate.

Away, away they flew across the marsh, over the mosses until they reached the higher ground, and the place where the river tumbled, seething, over a ridge of rocks. Although their ancient nesting-place called strongly, the fear of the dancing stoat was still stronger, and they settled down to nest-boring in a convenient sand-bank. In a very shallow hole bored in the bank the hen laid her eggs, and it was here that that Emerald Fisher was hatched, among three other little balls of squirming flesh, that required such incessant feeding that their parents had their work cut out to secure enough fish to go around; and the most insistent and strongest of the brood was Emerald Fisher.

He could hardly flutter, much less fly, when he scrambled down the slanting, slimy way that led to the open air, and gazed blinkingly out upon the foaming falls and the vivid sunlight. Perhaps it was an accident, or perhaps he intended to leave the home nest, for there was a pitiful squeak, a fluttering of weak wings, and the Emerald Fisher found himself clinging desperately to the root of a beech that jutted out perilously just above the foaming falls. It was a terrible struggle, but at last he managed to gain an upright position on the root, and he sat stolidly gazing upwards—a small image carved, as it were, in gems, with beak pointed grotesquely upwards, and a tail so short that it could not be seen. His immovable position may have been simply swank, to show that he was not afraid, or it may have been an inherited instinct to render it difficult for an enemy to see him against the dancing, sunlit waters. There he sat, stiff, immovable, with beak pointing straight skywards all the day, except that when his parents came with fish he fluttered and implored to be fed like any other little baby bird. Being, as it were, first on the field, he had the lion's share of the food, and by nightfall he was extremely well fed, and ought to have felt happy. But he missed the warm comfort of the nest; a chill wind blew down the river and numbed him through and through. The night was full of vague terrors; strange sounds that had never penetrated into the recesses of the nest made him cower closely to his mother's side. She had called in vain to him to return to the nest and had perched beside him, and with dawning she again hovered above him, uttering

shrill, metallic cries to encourage him to make the attempt, but in vain. Emerald Fisher could not be persuaded to relinquish his hold upon the root. Not even when the sun shone brightly upon his chill little body would he move. He still gazed upwards, his beak pointing skywards.

The day grew warmer, and with the extra quantity of fish dropped into his willing beak, Emerald Fisher began to take more interest in life. He gazed downwards, watching his father fishing in a long limpid pool just beyond the swirling waters of the falls. It seemed such a delightful thing to do —to drop from a perch upon an overhanging twig, dive deep into the clear water, and return with a tiny fish held firmly in the beak. Ambition stirred deeply. Emerald Fisher loosened the clutching grip of his claws upon the root and carefully sidled along it, looking eagerly down upon the foaming, glancing waters below. Then, with a wild flutter of his utterly inadequate wings, he launched himself into the air in a vain endeavour to reach the twig on which his father perched. His mother's alarmed note of dismay did not concern him, he was sinking, sinking, his weak wings refusing to hold up his fat little body. The frenzied outcry of the parent birds, as they dashed to his assistance, was of no avail. Emerald Fisher fell lower and lower, until he landed upon the surface of the river, his little green wings outspread to their widest extent, and thus, buoyed up, he floated away down the stream, followed by the loud outcry of both parents. Emerald Fisher was not afraid, but then he did not know of the dangers that lurked in his path. He did not know that the wild duck that lived in the reeds at the edge of the pool would have snapped him up without any regard for his helpless beauty; that untold dangers lurked in the clear depths beneath him. He was utterly unafraid, and wondered why his parents made such an outcry. Even when the big heron, fishing at the far end of the pool, strode out into the water and waited for him to drift into reach, he did not realise the peril of that huge beak. Fortunately the parent kingfishers threw themselves downwards, with frenzied cries dashing at the heron's great head, and fluttering so daringly around the enemy that the heron drew back and the wee morsel of vivid green and blue floated into safety close under the lee of a little rock.

Utterly disregarding the protests of a dipper, Emerald Fisher climbed out and, because he felt extremely satisfied with himself, he sat for a few minutes still as a statue, with beak pointing skywards; then very slowly and deliberately he proceeded to preen himself. Spreading first one wing and then the other, he dried himself in the warm sun. He was utterly unafraid, and, truth to tell, his mother's rapture at his rescue rather bored him, and her well-meant advice fell upon deaf ears. With intervals of skygazing he placidly cleaned himself, while overhead his mother hovered, uttering piercing, metallic notes of distress, for a stoat lurked among the herbage on the bank, while a sparrow-hawk was quartering the top of the cliffs that overhung the streamlet. There were many dangers lying in wait for the fearless little kingfisher.

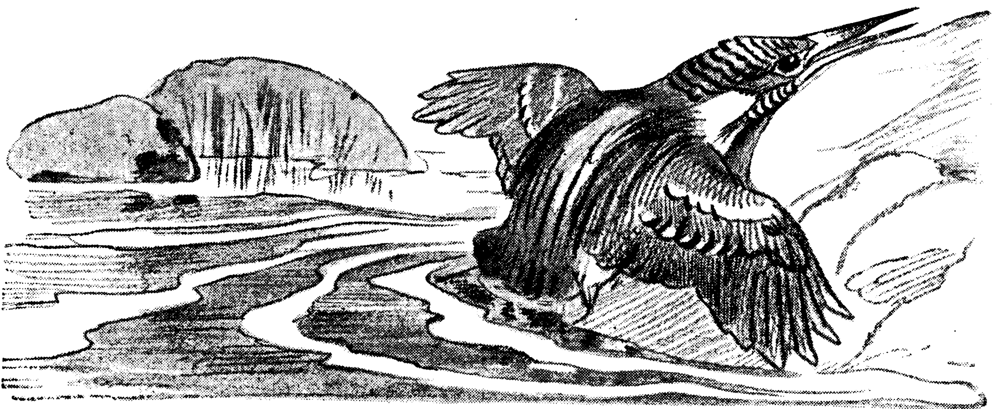
Emerald Fisher was, however, only one among a hungry insistent brood of young ones, and the two kingfishers had to work hard, as they fished and fed, fished and fed, hour after hour, until the sun had climbed high overhead and commenced to descend the azure dome towards the western horizon. Emerald Fisher had been watching his father out of the corner of his eyes. Fish after fish had been seen, and the flash of jewelled light that was really his father, had darted in and out of the pool, always coming out with a silver fish in the dark beak. It was so easy, Emerald Fisher thought, and, creeping cautiously out on a bit of driftwood that had been caught on the rock, the little fellow watched the green waters beneath him. Soon a tiny shoal of baby fish came darting past, and Emerald Fisher shot down into the water. He had not even an elementary idea of fishing, so overshot the mark and dived too deeply into the water, coming to the surface a few seconds later, feeling extremely sorry for himself. He had missed the fish, and an exceedingly angry dipper, seeking for water insects at the bottom of the pool, had pecked him viciously as he came within range of her beak. She had whirled upwards and was out on the rock when Emerald Fisher contrived to scramble once more into safety. But alas! the dipper had no intention of allowing him to rest. She had a brood of young things in the nest under the cliff, and suddenly resented Emerald Fisher's presence upon the rock. She jostled him with merciless strength back into the pool, and then turned to defend herself from the attack of the father kingfisher, while the mother fluttered shriekingly over the nestling in the water. There was a sudden swish

through the air. The dipper dipped suddenly into the water, while the kingfishers fled, like green flashes, straight away from the danger zone. The sparrow-hawk dropped like a shot almost to the surface of the pool, then turned and darted away after the fleeing kingfishers. Emerald Fisher saw the hawk, and instinctively dived, as a kingfisher should, and skimmed just under the water till he reached the fallen trunk of a tree and once more scrambled out. He could see nothing. The place was strangely silent, and the hawk had apparently vanished. But Emerald Fisher had seen enough. The memory of the swish of the strong wings, the glare of the cruel eyes had taught him a lesson. He had not seen the hot chase after his mother and father, or he might have been still more afraid. How was he to know that as far as his father was concerned, the chase was ended, and that the sparrow-hawk was already scattering the kingfisher's jewelled feathers to the wind? The sun was setting when the tired and terrified little mother came sneaking back to the nest and, hurrying into the tunnel, crouched amid her hungry young ones. Emerald Fisher, clinging desperately to the trunk of a tree, was quite forgotten.

During the days that followed, Emerald Fisher found that if he wanted to feed he must catch fish, for the widowed kingfisher found it dreadfully hard to fill the mouths of her nestlings. She worked from early dawn until the light faded, and even then the incessant protests of her brood showed that they were still hungry. She was desperately anxious to get away from the falls. The memory of the sparrow-hawk haunted her, and whenever she saw it quartering the cliffs above them, she would dart into the nest hole and cower among her brood, and wait until the coast was clear before venturing out again. Even then she went far afield to catch fish, and this added to her troubles.

Emerald Fisher grew bolder and bolder, and it was marvellous how many dangers he managed to escape. Perhaps this was due to his habit of suddenly turning into a jewelled statue whenever danger threatened. He soon grew learned in the ways of tiny fish—how shoals loved to bask in the warm sunshine at the edge of a pool, and with cunning cleverness he would dive softly in among them and secure a good haul almost before the shoal knew the danger that lurked so close at hand. Growing strong on the wing, he would make his way to where an old ruined mill spanned a ruined millrace. Here the baby fish loved to collect, and only a cross old blackheaded gull knew what abundance of food lurked on the edges of the miniature sandbanks and sunkissed mud of the slow-moving millrace.

The widowed kingfisher, still afraid of the sparrow-hawk, waited only until her brood could leave the nest, and then she lured them off to the marsh. Emerald Fisher, however, was determined to fend for himself. Turning his back resolutely upon the little family, he spread his wings and shot away up-stream, seeking another home. The old mill called him strongly, but he did not like the look of the owl that flitted, like a huge white moth, in and out of the shattered, gaping windows. So he sped onwards. There were many ideal spots, but unfortunately they were occupied by other kingfishers, stronger and older than himself.



"Emerald Fisher climbed out and, because he felt extremely satisfied with himself, he sat for a few minutes still as a statue."

He would have liked to dispute their possession, but the odds were too great, so he flew on to another reach. At last he found what he sought. The river opened out, rippling over a stony bed, dividing around a rocky island. Another island, shaded by willows that shaded a long limpid pool, formed the left bank of the river. A brawling stream led down from the high fells, and fish seemed very plentiful. He at once took possession, darting in and out of the willows, diving with long, sweeping dives across the pool. It was an ideal spot, and he wondered why no other kingfisher had taken possession of it. He did not know that under the butterwort leaves lay all that remained of the former possessor, a little heap of green and blue feathers, two dried feet, and a hard black beak.

They were halcyon days. He would flash through the tall balsams, hover over the big yellow mimulus plants, now and then paying

"Overhead his mother hovered, uttering piercing, metallic notes of distress. . . . There were many dangers lying in wait for the fearless little kingfisher."

a visit to the old millrace. So the days passed until the leaves on the old oak tree that overhung his favourite perching-place turned yellow, and a chill wind moaned through the willows. The curlews came wailing past, and on foggy nights he would be waked by the wailing of passing birds, all crying out that Winter was coming and they must seek warmer climes. The gulls came back in hundreds, and disputed his possession of the river, while some of his own kindred would have dispossessed him and taken possession of his kingdom. But he had grown strong and bolder than ever, and soon drove them away.

No great adventure had come his way since he had left the home pool, and life had been very pleasant and sunshine had reigned supreme. One night he was waked by the surging of the trees above his perch. The storm whipped the tree branches until the yellow and red leaves whirled about like huge moths and butterflies, and the rain lashed him in great drops. Long before morning he was cold and miserable. Perhaps he thought the end of the world had come, for when the murky morning dawned, the branches above his perch were bare, and the river was turned into a turgid, yellow flood. Already the yellow waters had covered the rocky island, and were lapping the top of the banks of the left-hand one. The streamlet flowing down from the fells was a turgid torrent flecked with masses of white foam. Emerald Fisher's heart sank. Never had he seen such a sight; never had he seen such torrents of rain. He sat huddled up on his perch, watching the waters, then he crept closer to the willow and took refuge in a hole in the trunk. The gleam of green eyes and a stealthy movement warned him in time that the half-wild cat belonging to the nearest farm had taken refuge there. Emerald Fisher backed suddenly away, feeling very small indeed.

The harsh rush of many waters struck an added terror to his heart as he flew off to the oak tree. Surely that would shelter him. He did not know that the flood was steadily eating out the ground from under its roots, and that it would soon fall. The roaring of the flood and the swaying of the tree gave added terror to the situation. Suddenly, around the bend of the river, came a mountain of yellow water, with tree-trunks thrown out like protesting arms from the swollen wave. It broke upon the island and covered it in a moment, and then, surging around the weakened roots of the oak, the great tree toppled and fell. With a harsh cry of desperate terror, Emerald Fisher flew screaming off up the river, flying low just above the turgid waters, seeking some refuge where he might be safe. He flew for miles, still terrified beyond measure, until just before he came to a bridge, just before the waters surged over the river wall of a town, he saw a hole in a wall. It was only the mouth of a large drain, through which flood-waters were pouring, the grating torn away by some flood-borne tree. It looked a perfect haven of refuge for the terrified kingfisher, and he dashed in.

"Always coming out with a silver fish in the dark beak."

The drain was dark and gloomy, lighted only by a feeble gleam from gratings through which water was dripping, but Emerald Fisher flew on and on, seeking somewhere to perch. But there was nothing to which he could cling, and the drain

became narrower and narrower, until there was no space between the flowing water and the roof of the drain. It almost touched a grating overhead. Emerald Fisher hovered with distracted cries over the water, then, clutching desperately to a jutting bit of brick, he hung just below the grating. Utterly desperate and miserable, he never thought of seeking safety by the way he had entered; he could only cling wildly to the underside of the framework of bricks that supported the grating. He was so miserable that he did not resent the arrival of another kingfisher, who, perching beside him, clung just as tightly to the bricks. Still, there was a little comfort in the companionship of misery. Wet and draggled, they clung together for what seemed to be ages, but was really only a few hours. Finally a feeble ray of sunlight crept through the grating, the rain ceased, and the water below them began to subside, but the kingfishers were too chilled and miserable to realise this. Probably they would have stayed there and died, if a ragged little urchin, questing along the gutter, had not seen the gleam of the green and blue of their feathers, and had not with merciless energy "progged" them up with a stick and forced them to loose their hold.

Some instinct must have made them turn towards the entrance of the drain, and, half fluttering, half diving, they finally reached the opening. The river had gone down considerably, and utterly worn out the two kingfishers, united by misfortune, crept into a hole in the bank and slept until the next day. Then the sun was shining brilliantly, and both the kingfishers felt more at peace with the world. The river-bed had been scoured out by the flood-waters, but already it was beginning to clear, and had fallen almost to normal levels. But the flood had washed away the baby fish, and Emerald Fisher watched in vain for the glittering shoals to pass his perch.

He was too dreadfully hungry to trouble about the companion of his misfortune, or to notice that she followed him from pool to pool. It was only when he had secured a scanty meal that he realised her presence, and, with savage rage, chased her away into the next reach of the river and returned to his fishing. His rage knew no bounds when he saw her return and even dare to catch a baby fish in the same pool. This was too much. He chased her down the river, far beyond the falls, on his return visiting the ruined mill, to find to his delight that great numbers of baby trout had been caught in a tiny pool formed by the flood, and had not been able to escape. He fed right royally, scooping up the trout one after another until, well fed and satisfied, he perched upon a rotting beam, and, holding his beak straight upright, he dozed contentedly for some time. Then, glancing across the ancient millrace, he found that the little hen had returned and was sitting in the same statuesque attitude. It was too much. Once more he chased her ungallantly away. This continued for some days, then, tired of repulsing her, he accepted her presence, and finally they fished together and had made friends.

The bright winter days found them still friendly, but when the call of spring echoed through the woods and along the river, the two flashed, like living jewels, up and down the stream in an ecstasy of lovemaking. Then when the buds were swelling and tinting the willow twigs with a ruddy flush, they selected the bank close under the fallen oak and commenced their nest-boring. One would have thought it a difficult task to pierce a hole in a sheer, sandy bank that offered not a single foothold for the pair; but Emerald Fisher and his mate launched themselves at the selected point and, acting like battering rams, with beak and claws soon excavated a depression in which it was possible to stand. The tunnel soon penetrated deeply into the bank, and at the end they ejected sufficient fishbones to make a sort of apology for a nest, and here four pearly white eggs were deposited. They were so pearly and the shells so transparent that the yolks showed dimly, turning them into delicate spheres of faint rosy colouring.

The old fallen oak had lain desolately athwart the stream, the brown leaves still clinging forlornly to the dead giant. Now woodmen came and, lopping off the branches, piled them on the top of the bank, and when Emerald Fisher returned with a fish for his mate one afternoon, he found that a leafy branch had completely blocked the entrance to the tunnel. He could hear his mate behind the leaves, but in spite of all his efforts he could not get through. He had helped to bore a tunnel in the bank with beak and claws, and now he tried the same tactics. He hurled himself again and again at the offending twigs and leaves, but although his strong beak and claws tore at them, there was no giving way. In vain his mate tried to escape from behind. It was hopeless. Emerald Fisher, completely exhausted,

stood on a rock and looked despairingly at the obstacle that blocked the tunnel. He viewed it from every angle, then, with a sudden inspiration, he attacked the sandbank from the side, choosing a spot where the leaves did not obstruct his movements. Then he once more resumed operations. In a few minutes he had commenced to form a slanting tunnel that would lead into the nest-hole beyond the obstruction that blocked the tunnel, and before the sun had set he had released his mate from her imprisonment. Strange to say, the kingfishers did not desert the nest. Within a week the oak tree had been stripped, its trunk carted away, and the river was given over once more to the kingfishers and solitude, while four green-and-blue baby kingfishers crept out into the daylight and perched upon the twigs that had once imprisoned their mother within the tunnel long before they were hatched.

# THE SNOW.

HOW lovely are the stories
That tell of long ago,
When all the trees are barren
And heavy lies the snow,
On iron earth below!

When on the pallid skyline
The lonely poplar tree
Leaps up, and there the raven
Snow-pied sits solemnly
As though a vane were he!

How lovely are the stories
That tell of long ago,
When all the trees are leafless
And earth lies frore below
Her coverlid of snow!

WILFRID THORLEY.

# MRS. EDEN SEES THE PASSER

## By ERNEST RAYMOND

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK WILES

THE visitors, sitting at the dinner tables on the verandah of the Hotel Grandelmere, saw in Mrs. Eden—as she walked to her place, followed by her husband—a tall, slender, well-dressed woman, with soft eyes and hair silvering too soon. They judged her forty-five or forty-eight.

Mrs. Eden, as she sat down and, lifting the inviolate table-napkin, glanced along the verandah with its chain of dining tables, was thinking thus: The first evening of a holiday—from the moment you walk to your table-napkin and sit down and look about you, till the moment you retire to your bedroom—is perhaps the best of all your thirty evenings. You see and measure the people whom you will meet for the next few weeks, and they see you in the dress to which—as always for a first appearance among strangers—you have given especial care. You trifle with the menu card, order your wine, eat and drink leisurely, and, when the last course has been served, watch the gradual departure of the other guests, studying their manner and deciding which are interesting, till at last you yourself arise and, pretending to be unconscious of anyone's glances, pass by the sitters in their wicker chairs to find seats at the farther end of the long verandah, while the string quartette tune up for their evening programme. Before you stretches a month of such lazy hours and leisured, careful dressing, with meals and service, like the glacial halls and marbled staircase, at several points above your normal. It's a sensation that flatters and cozens you, but one to which every holiday-maker should rightly succumb. It's just a period of life more gaily dyed.

Evidently Mr. Eden, her husband, who had just seated himself opposite her, was thinking the same, for he expressed it with gay crudity, "This is a bit of all right, Agnes," and clapped and rubbed his hands. She could almost have predicted those words, her husband being a hearty, prosperous City man, of enlarging girth, well tailored; and such words of well-being would have been the lyrical outburst of ninety-and-nine of his kind.

"You look very beautiful to-night, my dear," he added, and glanced at his wrist-watch. "Fancy it being half-past seven! It's as light as tea-time. Ah!" He picked up the wine list.

"Yes, 'Summer Time,'" answered Mrs. Eden, gazing over the verandah rail at the lake of Grandelmere. "There's a lot to be said for Summer Time when it lets us sit on a terrace and eat our dinner by the last light of the sun—it's best light—and by its last warmth, too."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Eden, with his face in the wine list. "What shall we have?"

His wife smiled in reply and lightly raised her shoulders. "I wish I were a real connoisseur in wines." And again she looked at the lake. "There ought to be a wine that somehow matches this scene—matches the mountains and the dense pines and the evening sun glinting on the water. I'm sure there ought. I love this evening air, just flushed through with warmth."

"Yes," Mr. Eden answered doubtfully. "Well, what's it to be?"

"Choose yourself, dear. It's something more tranquil than champagne, I think. I wish I knew."

"H'm, but champagne's a good word. Yes, an encouraging word—an inspiring word." So his refrain dwindled, as he turned over the pages of the list and ran thoughtful eyes down the column of champagnes.

His deliberations were hurried to a decision by the appearance of soup. Rather

hastily he selected a wine and abandoned the list for the pepper-pot. His wife, sipping her soup, gazed unobtrusively at as many of the visitors as were within reach of her eyes. She had looked forward to this. At the next table was a middle-aged lady, without a companion and plainly expecting none, for there was an open novel by her plate. The table beyond was possessed by a family of three—a good-looking, grey-moustached father, a full-bodied but still young mother, and a boy of about sixteen. This family pleased her much; they were so—so typical. She judged the father to be a battery commander, and placed the boy at Cheltenham or Harrow—a nice youth with fair hair laboriously brushed with brilliantine, and a dinner jacket as well cut as his father's. From where she sat she could see his feet curled round the legs of his chair, and remarked the black silk socks and the brand-new pumps.

"A glance at one of the recesses formed by the side bay-windows had shown her the boy and the girl."

"I've found one nice family, at any rate," she murmured across the table to her husband. "No, don't look just yet. If you turn round, they might guess I'd mentioned them. Now you can look. They're talking to the people beyond them."

The people at the table beyond, to whom the whole family was now talking, were also a family of three—a father and mother out of the same mould, and a school-girl daughter. There was every reason why the two families should be friendly on their holiday. Possibly they had arranged, since they met here, to have their tables side by side. The school-girl seemed no more than fourteen. Her dress was a simple affair of patterned silk, and she wore neither necklace nor bracelet. Her pale brown hair was simply tied at the nape of the neck, and her eyes gazed about with simplicity, as if this were her first visit to a spot of quite such beauty, and she had not been long accustomed to eating dinners and drinking red wine in the open air of a verandah.

"The girl was on his left . . . her elbow on the chair-arm, her chin in the cup of her hand."

"I shall certainly get to know *them*," announced Mrs. Eden. It was pleasant to watch the chaff and teasing that was being tossed between the tables of the two families. "They are the only two children here."

"Who?" inquired her husband.

"The nice boy two tables away and a fourteen-year-old beauty three tables away. I'm sorry there are no others. You want children about at an hotel to make you feel it's a holiday place."

Mr. Eden was doubtful of this. "I don't know. I don't know so much about that. They're generally noisy and rush about."

With pauses between the courses and silences between the conversations, the dinner floated by; and after the fruit the tables, one by one, emptied themselves of their sitters, the men and some of the women taking their cigarettes to the other end of the verandah. As Mrs. Eden expected, the chairs of the two tables

that particularly interested her were simultaneously pushed back, and both families rose. The boy stood aside to let his parents pass, and the girl stood aside to let —no, Mrs. Eden was more than ever interested—the girl, conceal it how she might, stood back to wait for the boy. She had done it a little diffidently, covering her delay by playing with something on the table. Just that—she had lingered. And by the manner in which the two walked away together, behind their chattering parents, the girl looking at the windows of billiard-rooms rather than at her companion, and the boy staring ahead and keeping his hands in his trousers pockets to affect a spurious self-possession, Mrs. Eden knew everything.

"They're in love."

"Who are?" inquired her husband, who was selecting a cigar.

"That boy and girl."

His head swung round to examine them. "My dear, don't be romantic. It's the champagne or the scenery gone to your head. Two whipper-snappers aren't in love just because they walk away together."

"Oh, but these two are—I'm sure of it. Not by their walking away together, but by their manner of walking, and by the exorbitant care the boy has given to his dress. There's not a ripple in his black silk socks, his pumps are like black glass, and there's not a speck of dust on his trousers or his dinner jacket, and his hair is plastered down—stupidly enough, for it's pretty hair. And *she*—she didn't do her hair in fifteen minutes. And then he finds it difficult to look at her, lest she catches him at it; and she looks anywhere but at him, either at the ground or at their reflection in the windows."

Mr. Eden's cigar was now alight, and his body turned comfortably round that he might face towards the moving people.

"Anything more you know about 'em."

"Yes, both families have been here some time."

"How d'you get that?"

"Why, they're not in the least interested in the people they are passing in the wicker chairs, and the people in the chairs are not interested in them. When you and I pass those wicker chairs, every head will turn and follow us along the verandah. Besides, the two families are so intimate. It's more than a week's intimacy."

Her husband pushed back his chair and rose. "We're almost the last at the tables. Looks bad." He tossed down the napkin with which he had dusted his front, and he and his wife strolled along the verandah till detained in conversation by some people they had met earlier. After this they walked on in search of a couple of chairs, and, being late comers, had to walk far. They passed the piano and chairs of the musicians. They passed the boy's parents and the girl's parents, and other people less recognisable, and still found no chairs. They passed round the corner of the hotel and on to the deserted side-verandah, hoping there might be chairs here which they could carry to the front. But suddenly Mrs. Eden muttered:

"If you're a sport, Peter, look straight ahead and mumble your usual 'There are no chairs,' and then let's turn gracefully about. We're being a nuisance."

A glance at one of the recesses formed by the side bay-windows had shown her the boy and the girl seated—not very close to each other—in wicker chairs. The boy was lolling back, and the one leg that was thrown over the other was gently swinging its foot and showing the most of his silk sock. The girl was on his left, sitting almost sideways as she talked to him, her elbows on the chair-arm, her chin in the cup of her hand, and her legs bent under the seat.

"No," said Mrs. Eden on second thoughts, "come away and don't mumble anything about chairs, or that boy'll certainly get up and offer us his."

"Well, why shouldn't he?"

Just then the quartette opened its programme with a vigorous and swinging march.

"Why? Why, a man who would disturb an idyll like that would—would"—they were now round the corner again, and could see the musicians throwing their first energies into the march—"I can't think of a sufficiently crushing simile—would prick a bubble all opalescence and mystery one-tenth of a second before it must necessarily burst." And, having found her simile, she was delighted at its aptness.

As they returned along the avenue between the wicker chairs, they saw that the girl's father and mother had departed indoors, leaving available the two seats beside the boy's parents. Mrs. Eden was quick to inquire: "Are you keeping these seats?"

The father smiled politely. "No, I don't think so. Mr. and Mrs. Chandry aren't coming back, are they?"

This had been asked of his wife, who smiled up at Mrs. Eden.

"No, they've gone to the Casino. I should certainly secure these chairs."

So intimacy began. Names and information were exchanged, Mrs. Eden learning that her new friends were Major and Mrs. Powell, that they had been at the Hotel Grandelmere nearly three weeks, and were staying another two, and that all wise people should go on such and such excursions about the lake and the surrounding hills. Chairs were exchanged, that Mrs. Eden might sit beside Mrs. Powell and her husband beside the Major. The conversation continued during the intervals, and during the music too, perfunctory applause apologising for this forgetfulness. Soon Mrs. Eden mentioned her admiration of Mrs. Powell's boy.

"Oh, John, you mean," said the mother. "Yes, John's a good old fellow."

The words, though affectionate, seemed inadequate, inharmonious.

"I suppose he's still at school?"

"Yes, he's only just sixteen. He's at Haileybury. He's not at all a bad boy."

"And who's the little beauty he goes about with?"

"Little Sibyl Chandry. You haven't met Mr. and Mrs. Chandry, have you—the people whose chairs you've got? Yes, I like little Sibyl, and I'm glad she's here to amuse John. In fact, there's no one else near his age in the place. They don't bring many children to a place like this, do they? I suppose it's only ancient parents who appreciate tranquillity and lovely scenery for a holiday. Children want piers and concert parties and theatres. I was afraid all along old John would be bored, but he and Sibyl seem to have amused each other."

Again the inadequacy of the words left Mrs. Eden dissatisfied: it was as though someone had described as "this old waterfall" one of those cascades in the hills on whose haze of spray the sun cast pale concentric rainbows.

"Well, as a pair they delight me," said she. "And I shouldn't think even children could be quite insensitive to the beauty of such a spot as this."

"Oh, but you wait till the sun really goes down—it's only a little while longer—then the lake's at its best. After that it begins to get chilly. Do you smoke?"

Mrs. Eden accepted a cigarette, and both ladies smoked lightly and talked lightly, waiting for the sunset. It certainly did not fail them. The long-thrown rays lay a golden light on the water and, catching the ruddy bark of the pines, touched them with fire. The hills turned to indigo, as the unseen disc of the sun dropped down and drew home its light. And one hardly knew at what moment this or that star had become noticeable above the hill-tops, or when the warm air began to be interfused with cold, or the lights went up in billiard-room and lounge, and balls clicked and glasses clinked, and the verandah, though the quartette was still playing, began to lose so many of its people.

## II.

NEXT morning, when the sun was hot upon the lake, Mrs. Eden contented herself with sitting upon the verandah in one of the wicker chairs. She had thought to read a holiday novel, but the sound of voices down below by the water's edge soon drew her eyes their way. It was John Powell and Sibyl Chandry, in buff mackintoshes and bare legs, standing on the little bathing platform. From their laughter Mrs. Eden guessed that they were quarrelling who should enter the water first; and, fittingly, John suddenly threw off his mackintosh, poised on his toes, and took a header into the lake. Sibyl also discarded her mackintosh, but, lacking this strength of will, stood with her arms, for warmth's sake, folded across her breast, the hands grasping the bare shoulders. Her dress was a dark blue skin-tight costume like a man's, and Mrs. Eden had time to notice how her figure and limbs were just beginning to fill with maturity before a shriek of mixed amusement and apprehension accompanied her leap into the water after John. Both could swim, the boy splendidly, and anyone might have seen that, like a young cock-bird, he was displaying his over-arm stroke, his somersaulting, and his kick-churning for the admiration of his companion. Again and again he climbed on to the platform and dived over or under Sibyl, while she shrieked and laughed. Their voices seemed the only sound on the water or between the mountains. When they both swarmed out on to the hard planks of the jetty, their costumes dark and shining with wet like the skins of sea-lions, they lay supine in the sun, their hands behind their heads. On the weathered wood their limbs lay white. Tiring of this, or dazzled by the sky, they rose on their elbows and then sat with crossed calves, tailor-wise. Once Sibyl

threw her legs straight before her and, placing her palms on the boards behind her, leaned back that the sun might beat on her breast. That John suggested going in again was made clear by a quick, enthusiastic turn of his head, and that Sibyl repelled the idea by a shiver of her shoulders. At last they stood up, put on their buff waterproofs, and, leaving the jetty for the hotel, were lost to the watcher's view.

III.

MRS. EDEN had read a great many pages of her book and passed away an hour before she wearied. It fell then to her lap; and she abandoned herself to idle staring across the water at the dense trees climbing the opposite hill-slope. It was noon: the sun, high above the verandah, was exactly in front of the hotel, its light spread brilliantly over the face of the lake. This reflection on the water, filmed with calm, was so wide and dazzling that a little pleasure skiff which had come from the hirer's stance near the pier and was about to cross it, seemed lost in an enchanted sea of stillness and light. The boat moved soundless and slow. It was rowed by a man or youth in tennis flannels and hatless, while in the stern-seat a girl in a white dress and white cloche hat held the rudder lines. John and Sibyl. John Powell and Sibyl Chandry. No voice could be heard at this distance, and, so far as could be seen, Sibyl was not moving at all, while John's rhythmic motion was a thing so regular as to be near to stillness. The boat passed on towards the east, diminishing and growing indistinct, till at last it rounded a little cape of trees.

Mrs. Eden remained thinking, wishing the boat would appear again. But it did not, and she was obliged to relapse into her book. Her interest in the story revived, and it was not till near lunch-time, when the tables were being laid at the diners' end of the verandah, that she was disturbed by voices and hurrying steps. It was John and Sibyl returned from their row. Not knowing her, they would have passed, had she not, on an impulse, asked the boy with a friendly smile:

"Well, did you have a nice row? I've been watching you."

"Yes, topping. We're going out again after lunch. Over to that village, Broadhaven. We shall have tea there and bathe."

"But you've bathed once already."

"Exactly," he replied triumphantly.

"Won't you introduce your friend?"

He blushed. "Yes. Sibyl, here! This is Sibyl Chandry. I—I don't know your name."

"Mrs. Eden. I arrived only last night. But you've been here quite a while."

"Yes, worse luck," said Sibyl. "To-morrow's my last day. We go home the day after. It's horrible."

"You've enjoyed yourself, then?"

"Oh, *rather*! I've never had such a perfect time in my life." She crumpled up her nose in annoyance. "I don't want to go a bit."

And John interrupted: "Oh, don't let's talk about it! There's all this afternoon and all to-morrow."

"Are you going too?" inquired Mrs. Eden.

"No," answered John, looking at the waiters laying the tables. "We're staying another two weeks."

Mrs. Eden, while she was speaking, had noticed his dress. His flannel trousers were pressed to a fine crease, his shirt was opened with premeditated negligence at the throat, his hair was as faultless as when he was in evening dress, and his white socks were of silk.

"I think I must go and get ready for lunch," said Sibyl.

"Right-o!" permitted John; and she went.

"You can't say *you* want to go, Mr. John," laughed Mrs. Eden. "I've never seen anyone so tidy in my life. Sit down, won't you?"

John took the chair next to her, perhaps a trifle embarrassed. The obvious thing for Mrs. Eden to do, if he were to be made at ease, was to set him talking casually about Sibyl, so she began:

"That's a beautiful girl." She was going to say "little girl," but her wisdom saved her.

"Who? Oh, Sibyl Chandry! Yes, she's very jolly. She lives in Cornwall, where her father's got an estate, or something. She's only fourteen. You'd think she was more, wouldn't you? She's so sensible. I think she's one of the few sensible girls I've ever met."

Mrs. Eden nodded, but did not speak; and after a long delay, in which John might have been wondering whether or not to say more, he continued:

"I think this 'Ships that pass in the night' business is rotten, don't you? I

mean, I like all the people here; I think they're a topping set. Well, you meet a lot of nice people on a holiday, and get to know them and like them, and in a week or two it's all over, and you never see them again. You may think you will, but you never do, do you?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes."

The boy smiled and shook his head. "No, I don't think so. People just go out of your life like—like a candle." It was not a good comparison, but the first that occurred to him, and he followed it with a remark whose sequence would not have been obvious to all: "I live in Derbyshire."

In acknowledgment of this information Mrs. Eden raised her brows, but, knowing he would be happiest if he spoke of Sibyl, repeated:

"Well, I think she's perfectly lovely."

"Who?"

"Your friend Sibyl."

"Is she? Yes, I suppose she *is* pretty." If a person is spoken of admiringly, one's natural instinct is to exhibit any proprietary rights one may have in her, so John continued: "Yes, we always sit out and chinwag together after dinner. She's the sort you can talk to. We've done it every evening, so that it's become quite an institution."

That minute Sibyl appeared out of a distant doorway, ready for lunch. Observing that John was sitting with Mrs. Eden, she pretended not to have seen him, and walking to the rail of the verandah, leaned her hands upon its top and looked down upon the gardens below. John had seen her, of course, but his manners were too good to allow him to get up and go to her, and he sat on a little abstractedly.

"Well, I must also be getting ready for lunch," said Mrs. Eden, rising. "Good-bye for the present."

He jumped up and opened a door for her, and, with her book in her hand, she walked through the door of the lounge towards the lift which raised her to her bedroom floor. In the bedroom was her husband, brushing his hair, and to him she reported:

"That's a perfectly delightful little romance, Peter. The boy's over head and ears in love with the girl."

Mr. Eden dipped his hair-brush in the water-jug, and commented: "Silly young ass! Calf-love! There's always bucketsfull of these budding romances at holiday hotels. I suppose he's making himself ridiculous."

But his wife shook her head.

"Not ridiculous, somehow."

## IV.

SHE was careful to be in her place on the verandah that afternoon, so as to see John's skiff pass along the lake, as he took Sibyl to their tea at Broadhaven. And since she was impatient for its coming, the time seemed strangely long before she saw it soundlessly moving over the glassed water, as it had done in the morning. It was at a greater distance from her, and the two white figures, one in the stern and the other rhythmically rowing, were only specks.

"You have all this afternoon and all to-morrow," thought she, "and then—then the day after!" To-morrow and then the day after! There were days in life when To-morrow, because it stretched a wide reach of sunniness between us and the unthinkable day after, had a face of sweetness and mercy.

She tried to enter into the thoughts of John. What had *she* felt that summer in Thanet, thirty-three years ago, when for five weeks she had loved Norman? Norman! The name moved her lips to smile. He was Norman to her still, a self-conscious little dandy of sixteen. Thirty-three years ago! They had walked together, of summer nights, eating chocolates round the bandstand. There had been much less beauty there than here to trouble the surface of their souls and swell the disturbing love: meretricious beauty it had been—illuminations and carpet gardens and a red-coated band playing light melodies—music that was machine-made and therefore unimpassioned and insincere. There had been no broad and shadowed lake, reflecting the sun in its centre and pine hills under either bank; no mountains looking down as if they held the eternal things that sometimes break through upon our earthly business; none of the waiting stillness of Grandelmere. And yet that day! That day before he had to go, when she had told herself: "I shall never see him again. I know I shan't. One never does." And she had not—in thirty-three years. Nor had they written, for both had been too shy to use a word like "love" and to exact promises in its name. Perhaps that had been as well, saving them from humiliation when letters flagged and failed. And that day of his departure at Broadstairs Station, when she went to see him off, being gay about it and saying: "It'll be fun to see you off!" None of the

elders had thought it remarkable that she should be on the platform to wave a good-bye. She and Norman were only children and had been playfellows together. Good chums. Or if the parents had suspected that the heart of either child was engaged, they had tolerantly laughed, knowing that it was nothing very serious. Time would mend all. And the train had gone out, its windows flecked with waving handkerchiefs, and, lonely in the jovial crowd on the platform, she had turned and walked home. Throughout the afternoon and evening she had kept up a counterfeit liveliness with her parents and brothers, lest they suspected her of her folly. But all the

"'To-morrow's my last day. We go home the day after. It's horrible."

while she had longed for the loneliness of bed that she might sink herself in thoughts of Norman. In bed she had let her grief have its reins and run. "Norman, come back! Come back to me! Norman, I loved you! Come back; come back!" She had liked to torture herself with the sentimental words. "I shall never see him again. I *know* I shan't. I *know* I shan't. It's over." So had she played on herself, till the ache spread over her brows and her heart beat sickly. As far as she could remember, she had not cried.

True enough, Time had healed her, and it had only required eight or ten weeks of time. That, she supposed, was what made it funny.

## V.

Too quickly passed to-morrow, and in the evening, after dinner, Mrs. Eden treated herself to but one glimpse of John and

Sibyl where, perfectly dressed, they sat on their wicker chairs, isolated round the corner of the verandah. They were still not close to each other, and she knew that John would be too diffident and awkward to address to Sibyl anything but the words of a fellow holiday-maker.

The Chandrys were leaving, so the mother and father had told her, by the three o'clock boat the next afternoon. She could have wished they were going earlier, so saving John a morning of dull pain between breakfast and lunch.

The pier from which the boat would leave was visible from the verandah, and Mrs. Eden sat there, resolved to see the end. She had heard John say lightly to Mrs. Chandry,

"'You've enjoyed yourself, then?'"

"Well, I'll come and see you people off all right," and Mrs. Powell's "Old John's refused to come on the excursion to-morrow, just so that he can see you off," and now, from her chair set along the verandah rail, she saw him, in his white flannels and grey coat, standing near the luggage on the pier and watching the crowd of passengers as it funnelled up the gangway. On the first-class deck stood Sibyl, in a black cloche hat trimmed with red and a long fawn coat, pretending to talk and laugh suitably.

The siren sounded, and Mrs. Eden exclaimed at its brutality. Now the luggage was being carried aboard, and John was standing with his hands in his pockets, watching. The only other people left on the pier were a few blithe souls who, like himself, were paying a last tribute to the intimacies of a holiday. Again the siren boomed. John brought out one hand in readiness to wave. But the ropes were not yet cast back to the boat, and his hand returned to his pocket. He was no longer looking up at the Chandries on their deck, but, as if impatient for the ship to be gone, studying a time-table placed on a pier notice-board. Once he looked at his wrist-watch. At last the boat began to move away, while the watchers on the pier, John included, waved their hands. Sibyl was waving hers, and so was Mrs. Chandry, for all the world as though her waves had a value equal to her daughter's. About John's hand-wave there was nothing fervent; it was awkward and sufficiently full of effort to show his embarrassment with a courtesy so long drawn out. Doubtless he wished the boat could go quickly round a bend like a train. Still, it was well under way and fast diminishing. John walked towards the entrance of the little pier, then turned and waved again, in case he could still be seen. But the boat was a toy in the distance, so he turned about, put his hands in his pockets and climbed the hill to the hotel.

"He's sure to come on the verandah and stare over the lake, and want to be alone," thought Mrs. Eden, rising from her chair and taking her book into the lounge.

In ten minutes the window showed John as he appeared round the curve of the hotel. He sat himself sideways on the rail. He took out a cigarette and lit it. Puffing, he looked over the water, mostly in the direction of the pier and the stance where the pleasure skiffs were kept. Once he turned his head and looked at the little cape of trees that hid Broadhaven. Finishing the first cigarette, he pulled out another and lit it, first spitting from his mouth a flake of tobacco. More than one sound on the lake or in the gardens below him drew his face towards them. Some activity which he had suddenly descried on the farther bank kept him speculating long, and when he had ascertained what it was and studied it enough, he left it to itself, and entered into his thoughts again. The hour of afternoon tea drew near, bringing people on to the verandah, so he got off his perch and walked away.

## VI.

During dinner that evening he talked merrily to his parents at their table, though at times he sank into remoteness. And when the meal was finished and the chairs pushed back, he wandered along with hands in pockets, slightly ahead of his parents, who soon took chairs and entered into a vivacious conversation with their neighbours. John went and stood against the rail of the verandah, leaning his body against it and pressing a hand on its top at either side of him, while his right foot curled behind his left heel. There was a cigarette drooping from his mouth, and once it trembled, as if his teeth had suddenly set.

"One never sees them again! . . . One never does! . . ."

The words were Mrs. Eden's, and only in her mind. She had been careful to lead her husband to chairs not very far away. Studying John again—his hair as laboriously brushed, his black silk socks as neat as yesterday, and his pumps like black glass—she asked herself: "What pleasure did he get in dressing to-night?"

Well, there it was. A little of love, not much, but his first sip of that dreadful cup, his first prick of the sword that should one day pierce deep, the first wounding touch of beauty as it passed, fugitive.

## VII.

And her words to her husband seemed weak and inadequate: "Poor boy! He's lost her now!"

Mr. Eden surveyed him. "Awful little coxcomb, isn't he? A boy of that age in silk socks ought to be put to bed."

"Still——" she began.

"Oh, yes, I know you're smitten with him. But I like a boy to be a boy, not a young cuckoo, simpering after a fourteen-year-old skirt."

"Oh, don't," begged his wife, "please, please!"

"He'll be all right in six weeks. A few good games of Rugby'll knock that nonsense out of him."

Mrs. Eden lifted her rope of pearls contemplatively. "Yes, but—but why laugh at him?"

"Why? Because it's the healthiest thing to do. One should always laugh at folly as it flies."

"Words, Peter, only words. I could make as good a phrase. Why should one laugh at pain as it passes? Or, better still, why not keep silence when beauty is passing by?"

Surprised, he turned towards her and said: "My dear, you're quite strange to-night."

"Yes, perhaps I am. It's a wonderful night, this, and a wonderful spot."

Lights flared up behind them in billiard-room and lounge, for there was no quartette to-night. They heard the fall and click of the billiard balls as they were decanted on the tables, and a clink of glasses at the bar, and men's voices. Mrs. Eden's head moved resentfully, as at the intrusion of something from which she had known holiday.

"Well," said Mr. Eden, "I'm going to have a game. Will you come and watch?"

"Not just yet, dear."

"Well, see you later."

"Yes, very soon."

# EVENING AT HOME.

**WITH curtains drawn, all gay bedight,**
**My love shuts out the creeping night.**

**The prim, high overmantel stares**
**O'er sprawling rugs and lazy chairs,**

**But with serene approval looks**
**At quiet rows of docile books**

**And on grave pictures, framed in black,**
**That just as primly quiz it back.**

**A chandelier of crystal spreads**
**Its benediction on the heads**

**Of little ornaments that sit,**
**Like children shy, and blink at it.**

* * * *

**These silent friends, they have no voice**
**To praise their calm and ordered joys.**

**Even the piano waits the touch**
**Of her whose hand it loves so much.**

**LEOPOLD SPERO.**

# UP TO DATE

## By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of "As Other Men Are," "And Five Were Foolish," "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.," "The Brother of Daphne," "Anthony Lyveden," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

POMFRET overlaid a piece of toast with honey and then surcharged the morsel with clotted cream.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," he said, "but the truth is I'm rather fond of my body. That may surprise you, but I've had it for forty years and we understand one another. Of course I can dress it up to look like Puss-in-Spats or A Bookie in the time of Wat Tyler—I've got the power, but . . ."

He shrugged his shoulders and proceeded to reduce his confection with a mournful air.

"What exactly," said his wife, "do you object to? The colours?"

"No. Only the form. I'll wear a crimson lounge suit with a Willow-pattern Homburg and lilac shoes if you like. But I'm not going to turn out in tights or have the toes of my boots chained up to my knees for any woman."

Eulalie frowned.

"The respondent," she said, "addressed the petitioner in public in a cruel and heartless way and with his mouth full."

"The petitioner's demands," said Pomfret, "were unconscionable and subversive of the dignity of man."

Patricia raised her white arms and, interlacing her fingers, set them behind her head.

"We're within The Pail," she said, "that is to say in Etchechuria. So we should do as Etchechuria does."

"'As Etchechuria does'!" said Pomfret. "My dear, this isn't Kentucky or Aberystwyth. It isn't a question of dining at a quarter to four or talking as though the lockjaw had left its mark. This precious country is literally 'off the map,' and from what I've seen of it so far it's got no 'book of the rules.' If it had I should be afraid to read them. They call this—this curio a city, but it's more like a Nursery Rhyme. And look at their habits. They talk about 'being transformed' as we talk of 'having the flu.' At the present moment I'm certainly eating breakfast, but there seems to be no reason why sharp at twelve I shouldn't become a flag-day and be annually observed. And you say 'Do as Etchechuria does'!"

"I was talking of dress," said Patricia, bubbling. "Look at Eulalie and me."

"Willingly," said Simon, raising his face from a mighty jar of tobacco, the quality of which he had been carefully considering. "In fact, it requires quite an effort to look anywhere else. You're right in the fairy-tale."

This was true.

The simple one-piece frocks, sleeveless and open at the neck, laced to the hips and flowing to the knee, could not have been more becoming or more admirably exposed. They were made of a silk softer and heavier than the girls had ever seen, and the exquisite tones of their colours—old rose and powder blue—argued some dyer's secret which only The Pail possessed. With her thick dark hair about her shoulders, Patricia Beaulieu might have sat to an Old Master and had the ages at her feet; while Eulalie seemed to have recaptured the careless glory of childhood and so to be unconsciously overruling Nature's most golden rule. Anyone would have known that they were King's daughters.

"All the same," continued Simon, filling a pipe, "if you're going to cite yourselves as an instance of conformity to local fashion, there's nothing doing."

"Why?" said his wife.

"Because, in the first place, a woman's raiment is always a fancy-dress."

"That's right," said Pomfret, replenishing his plate with a quarter of a honeycomb. "Man's dress covers, woman's discovers. I wear a pair of trousers to keep my legs warm: you wear a kilt and silk stockings to attract the male."

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A burst of indignation succeeded this blunt impeachment.

"All right," said Pomfret coolly, cutting a slice of brown bread. "What do you wear them for? To keep your legs warm?"

"Would you like to see me in trousers?" demanded Eulalie.

Her husband frowned.

"Don't be blasphemous," he said. "It's unmatronly."

"In the second place," said Simon, "you're no more conforming to Etchechurian fashions than we are. You've both of you shortened those models by about three feet and taken out the sleeves."

There was a guilty silence.

"But, my dear," purred Eulalie, "we couldn't 've worn them as they were."

"They were worn like that in the twelfth century."

"But this isn't the twelfth century."

"Exactly," said Simon. "That's why they're getting busy on a couple of nice lounge suits and——"

"As a matter of fact," said Gog, entering the room on his hands, "it's all over." He lowered his feet to the ground and stood upright. "You'll both have six of everything by mid-day."

The girls stared.

"But when were they measured?" said Patricia.

"While they slept, my lady," said Gog. "I took their clothes last night. From collar to socks everything's been taken to pieces, measured, matched and remade. The hats are done now, and the shoes 'll be ready to-night." He turned to Pomfret. "The only thing is they can't fade your shirts in the time, so I said it didn't matter."

"Quite right," said Pomfret, helping himself to cream. "I'll—I'll overlook that."

"Good," said Gog. "And you seem to have sat in something at some time or other. The Master-Chemist thought it was tar, so, rather than wake you, I said that tar would do."

So soon as he could speak—

"Oh, you did, did you?" said Pomfret shakily. "But what judgment." He pushed away his plate and covered his eyes. "Of course I'd trust you with anything. Six brand-new loose-covers done in before delivery. . . . And I've been trying to get rid of that keepsake for the last two months. That's why I walk so fast."

"Don't stop eating," said Gog, shuddering; "it doesn't look right. Incidentally, your words were 'Exactly the same.' Of course, if you——"

"I know," said Pomfret wearily, "I know. You don't mind my looking at you, do you? You don't often get a close-up of an all-red fool with the lid off. And I do hope you noticed that my south-east brace-button——"

"Its melancholy condition," said Gog gravely, "did not escape us. However, after deep thought I ventured to qualify your orders by adding 'Fair wear and tear and damage by tar excepted,' so we'll hope for the best. And now do have some cream, or——"

A blare of trumpets without cut short the solicitude, and even Pomfret repaired to the oriel to see what was afoot.

Below stood a coach-and-six of great magnificence. This was so bulky and the street so small that none could have said that the equipage had stopped before the doorway of The Mayor's Lodging rather than before that of The Guest-House, which was directly opposite, but the press of trumpeters and footmen about the former left no doubt as to the focus of the attention.

"A State Visit," said Gog. "His Worship is going to call."

As he spoke another fanfare was blown, and the Mayor emerged. He was a little, cheerful-faced man, with an eager bird-like air, and wore his insignia jauntily, with his hat on the back of his head. Immediately behind him came one in the scarlet robes of a Judge and a full-bottomed wig, and behind him again a very precise-looking man, clad in black silk, with a garter of cut steel below his knee and point-device to the hems of his white lawn cuffs.

"Law and Order," whispered Gog.

The three entered the coach with dignity, the door was shut, the footmen ascended the tail-board, the grooms stood back from the horses and the trumpeters formed two deep and marched away.

"What are they waiting for?" breathed Eulalie.

The courier rubbed his nose.

"Either," he said, "they're giving the trumpeters a start—you see, they've got to get there before the Mayor—or else His Worship is going to call upon you."

"Upon us?" cried Patricia. "But . . ."

Here the trumpeters turned, crossed the street, turned again and marched along the pavement up to The Guest-House door.

A moment later a third fanfare rang out. At once the footmen leaped down and

ran to the door of the coach, the grooms stood to their horses, and the Mayor sat up on his seat and prepared to descend.

"Into the parlour," said Gog, pointing. "I'll go and usher him up."

He slipped from the room, and the four withdrew feverishly to the adjoining chamber.

Like everything else in Date, the rooms were miniature. The apartment in which breakfast had been served was the size of a railway-carriage, while the parlour was half as big again, but the proportions of all were perfect and their appointments were superb. Walls, ceilings, floors—the house was lined with oak, much of it beautifully carved. The furniture was plain but finely made, and the chairs and settles were fitted with deep loose cushions covered with heavy silk and stuffed with down. All the plate and vessels were of silver, as were the candlesticks. These were massive and generally fixed to the walls to bear the short, thick beeswax candles which, when it was dark, afforded a steady light. To each pair of tiny bedrooms were annexed a dressing-room, a wardrobe, and a bath of crystal, sunk in a marble floor. Silent, respectful servitors, clad all in blue and silver, waited at table and stood without the doors by day and night, while two majestic bedels, wearing the same livery and bearing silver staves, patrolled the pavement, ready to precede Date's guests whenever they walked abroad.

"Simon's spokesman," said Pomfret, adjusting his tie. "I'll stand in a row and grin. Just touch on the weather and don't forget to thank him for the beer. Oh, and ask if we can have that pie up again: it was——"

"I refuse," said Simon. "It's obviously your job. I can't. Besides, there's nothing to say. We had an hour with him last night."

"Don't be silly," said Pomfret. "That was unofficial. This morning's quite different. He'll probably read the address and then give it you in a casket. Don't try to drink out of it."

"Simon dear," said Patricia, "you'd better take it on. You see the mood he's in, and if——"

Here the door was flung open, and Gog backed into the room. . . .

"Good morning," cried the Mayor cheerily. "And many of them. How did you sleep?"

"You needn't answer if you don't want to," said Law, looking down his nose. "And if you do he must accept your reply."

"Er, is that so?" said Simon, not liking to ignore the interjection.

"Certainly," said Law. "How you slept is your business. It follows that such a question is of the nature of a personal remark, and, while the spirit of the inquiry may be laudable, we regard with the utmost jealousy any spoken words which may tend to constitute or even invite a violation of privacy."

"I see," said Simon, and bowed. Law bowed in return, and Simon turned to the Mayor. "Thanks to the excellence of your attention, we slept very well. Indeed, I can never tell you how grateful we are. You've done us slap-up, sir."

"Good," said the Mayor. "Good. You must stay for some years. The city's at your service, you know, and proud to be there. Oh, and pray use The Garden whenever you feel inclined. What are we standing for?"

"In other and better words," said Law, "we desire you to use and enjoy all that township, situate within The Pail and known as Date, and the precincts thereof, together with its streets, squares, drains——"

"If you don't shut up," said the Mayor, breathing through his nose, "you shall only have two hours for lunch."

"I can produce the affidavits," said Law, "of two or more medical men to the effect that any curtailment of my luncheon-tide recess would almost certainly shorten my life."

"That," said the Mayor, "would be the object of my action. Sit down."

There was nothing to hand but a coffin-stool, but since, the door being shut, there was no room to move, Law, who was tall and portly, proceeded to obliterate this seat with his presence and compose himself to sleep.

The Mayor turned to the girls.

"Our great fear is," he said, "that you will find us dull. Now at Black Pepper——"

"We—we much prefer this," said Patricia.

"Yes," said Pomfret. "Black Pepper was too—too stimulating. In fact, to tell you the truth, I don't mind if I never see it again."

"I know what you mean," said the Mayor. "They've old-fashioned ideas at Black Pepper. That bear-pit, for instance, is most insanitary. Never mind. How's your aunt?"

Pomfret swallowed.

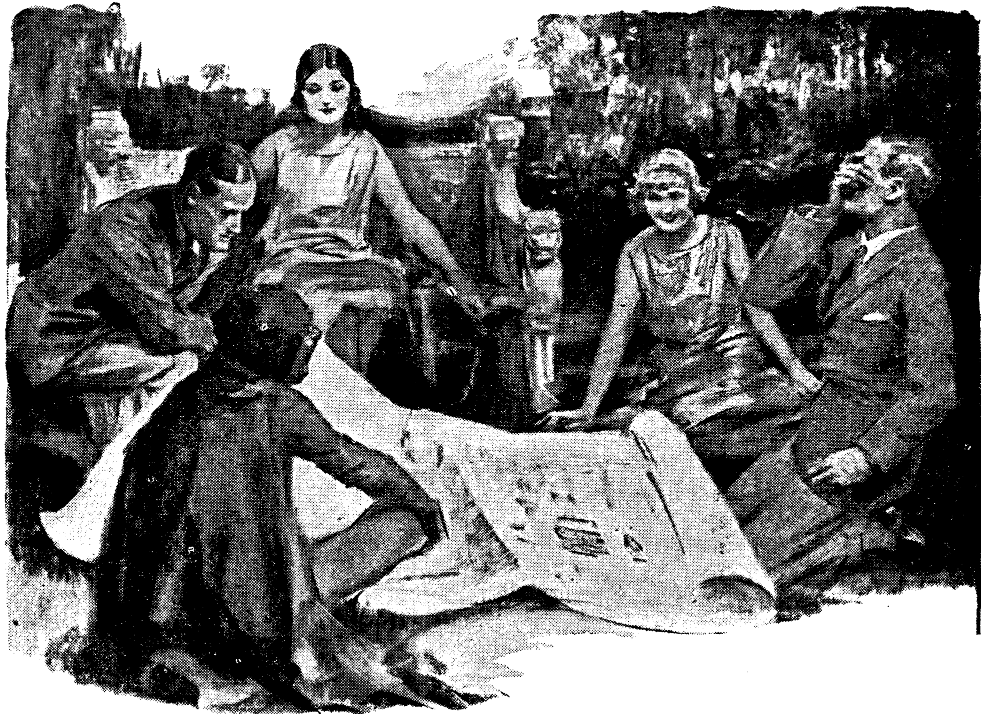
"Well, at the moment," he said, "I'm

auntless. I used to have a very good one, but since she fell off the roundabout . . ."

"My aunt," said the Mayor, "has a most beautiful collection of slop-pails. She's quite a connoisseur. Do they interest you at all ?"

"Very much," said Pomfret, passing a hand across his temples. "I—I like a good slop-pail."

"Do you, now ?" said the Mayor, rubbing his hands. "Well, that's splendid. She's been looking for some one like you



"'No landmarks are shown here because if they were you'd be able to find your way instead of following the map.'"

for years and years. Nobody here can bear the sight of them, and she's got about sixty thousand. You and she must get together at once." He turned again to the girls. "My dears, if you must wash in wine, what wine would you wish to wash in ?"

"In other and better words," said Law, opening his eyes. . . .

"I—I really don't know," said Patricia hastily. "Perhaps champagne——"

"Champagne be it," said the Mayor. "You see, to-morrow's a festival, and all the taps in the city must run with wine."

"A very pretty idea," murmured Pomfret. "D'you have any fireworks at night ? Or is every one too tired ?"

"Oh, it's only a festival in name," said the Mayor heavily. "We don't observe it at all. Nobody gets binged."

"I concur," said Law mournfully. "Despite the just opportunity afforded, nobody ventures so to indulge himself as to act in a manner which is inconsistent with the utmost discretion, or fail, if desired, to enunciate with painful clarity the most inconvenient shibboleths."

"Let us groan," intoned Order in a miserable voice.

The three groaned long and violently.

"You see," said the Mayor, "the Standards are out of Date, and until——"

"If ever," said Law.

"—they are back, we can keep no holidays. Till then it's all work and no play—that's why I'm so afraid you may find us dull. We've none of us been outside the city walls for over ten years."

"Ten years, four months, five days and an hour and a half, summer time," said Order, looking at his watch.

There was an awkward silence, broken

only by the gentle snores of Law, who had fallen asleep again.

"When you say 'standards,'" said Eulalie, "do you mean 'banners'?"

The Mayor shook his head.

"Weights and measures," he said. "The golden yard, the golden pint and the golden pound were stolen away——"

"Feloniously and wilfully," said Law.

"—one morning ten years ago, and we've been in mourning ever since. Heaven knows what it's cost us in cash, to say nothing of blood and tears."

"But how did it happen?" said Patricia.

"My dear," said the Mayor, "it was like this. By a stroke of bad luck we got across a dwarf whose name is Sunstroke."

"A vile and malignant being," said Law, "with but one eye—*cui lumen ademptum*."

"He runs a small pub," said the Mayor, "about ten miles away called *The Baby Bunting*. Sunstroke and a giant had each ordered a pair of hose, and the orders got mixed: the giant took it very well, but the dwarf thought we were being funny and swore revenge."

"A most unwarrantable assumption," said Law, "such as only a gross mentality would harbour."

"Well, ten days later," said the Mayor, "we held a festival. We held it well and truly and a bit over, because it was Measurement Eve, that is to say, the day before every measure in the town was to be checked with the Standards. Every one brought his yard, pint or pound to the Great Hall and left them there all ready for the following day, and during the afternoon the golden standards were brought to the hall in state and laid on the high table. After that we gave way . . .

"We were rather late the next morning, because Sunstroke had got busy with the cisterns and the wine in the pipes was doped."

"The nature and quality," said Law warmly, "of the abominable agony in the head resultant to all who partook however sparingly of the liquor were almost incredible. To continue, during the general stupor or swoon to which we had been so foully committed the standards were removed. Nor was this all. Although the fact did not immediately emerge, every yard in the hall had been shortened, every pound reduced, and the capacity of every pint diminished by the addition to the floor of every pot of a film of molten lead."

"'Did not immediately emerge,'" said the Mayor scornfully. "But for The Hearsay we shouldn't 've known now." With a snort he returned to his audience. "*For three solid months we gave short measure to The Pail.* Of course we'd not the faintest idea. Then all at once complaints began to come in. We swore by the good name of Dare that all was well, but the complaints went on. Then it got into The Hearsay, and at last we had to admit that our standards were gone.

"Of course such a howl went up as never was heard, and some of the letters we got were meant to be rude."

"To style them defamatory," said Law, "conveys nothing at all. Their matter was often irrelevant, generally ribald and invariably unfounded."

"Still we never dreamed," said the Mayor. "One doesn't, you know. We were quite confident. We actually offered a thousand nobles to any one who could prove that one of our measures was wrong." He sighed memorially. "That little stunt alone cost us over two million.

"Then Sunstroke, who had been in the background all the time, stepped into the light. He announced publicly that he had 'found' our standards and offered to restore them forthwith on one condition. That was that if we should find that we had been giving short measure we should return him the standards and confine ourselves to the city until we got them back. It was very slim, wasn't it? You see, we couldn't possibly kick. We couldn't refuse to back our honour to win."

"That," said Law, "I believe to be a wagering metaphor derived from the unlawful practice of staking money or money's worth upon the result of a horse-race."

"Yes, I was afraid it must be," said Pomfret. "I remember a gentleman at Epsom——"

"This Sunstroke business," said Simon hastily, "is simply wicked. Of course, what happened is obvious. His terms were accepted, the comparison was made, and you went down all round."

"Precisely," said the Mayor. "It's very trying, isn't it? And we're quite mad about The Garden. We still keep it up, as you've seen—I don't know why. Pride of possession, I suppose—like my aunt and her slop-pails." He turned to Pomfret. "When can you go and see them?"

"But can't something be done?" said Pomfret, deliberately ignoring the query. "Can't some one drop Sunspot a hint—in

the shape of a thick ear or a kidney punch? I mean, all's fair in love, isn't it?"

"We, er, we've thought of that," said the Mayor uneasily, "but he hasn't got any ears."

"Well, he must have some kidneys," said Pomfret. "If he hadn't got any kidneys he wouldn't work."

There was an uncomfortable silence.

At length—

"We, er, should have added," said Law, "that he takes an interest in snakes. I believe he has quite a number in the curtilage of the inn."

"Has he indeed?" said Pomfret, shuddering. "What a very popular house of call *The Baby Bunting* must be! We'd better run out for the week-end."

"Well, if you must you must," said the Mayor, "mustn't you? After all, I dare say it's not true about the coffins. Besides, a snake in the yard's worth two in the grass. Still, you must meet my aunt first, in case, er—— Well, supposing, for instance, you were detained. Then it would be too late, wouldn't it? Shall we say to-morrow at noon?"

Pomfret looked uneasily round.

Something had to be done.

"Look here, Mr. Mayor," he said. "I should hate you to misunderstand me. When I said just now——"

"It is my duty," said Law, "to inform you that no one in Date may plead The Gaming Act. His Worship's aunt will be expecting you and you may not disappoint her."

"Oh, burst the ewers," said Pomfret. "I'm talking of Sunshade."

"The same rule applies," said Law.

The Mayor and Order solemnly nodded assent.

"I forgot to say," said the former, "that when Sunstroke lifted the Standards he also took with him something which we prized even more."

"To wit," said Law, "our Sense of Humour."

"Let us groan," intoned Order dismally.

Again the three Officers of Date delivered a bitter groan.

"But surely," said Patricia gently, "if Sunstroke never knows that we thought of coming, he can't very well be disappointed if we don't turn up."

"I'm afraid we can't admit that," said Law. "It's not evidence."

Here the serjeant-footman opened the door.

"May it please your Worship," he said.

"Every time," said the Mayor.

"One of the creams has lain down."

"D'you mean it's asleep?"

"I think it's just dropping off, sir."

"Then what are you shouting for?" roared the Mayor. "D'you want to wake the brute? Go to at once. Oh, and tell the trumpeters to take their boots off before they blow."

The man withdrew, and the Mayor turned to the four.

"You must excuse me," he whispered. "But you know what servants are."

"We can't have that," said Law. "Unless you're prepared to prove that their opportunities of remarking the shortcomings of menials have been such as might reasonably——"

The rest of the sentence was lost, for the Mayor was already on the stairs, and Order stepped behind Law and urged him firmly out of the chamber.

When the trumpets were sounded for His Worship, the cream not unnaturally rose, and every one seemed greatly relieved. The trumpeters replaced their boots, the coach was entered, closed, manned, opened and duly evacuated, and the visit was concluded with the same pomp and circumstance as had garnished its outset.

As the door of The Mayor's Lodging closed—

"You see," said Gog, "Date's very proud of its creams, but as they're all six thoroughbreds—that is to say, princes transformed—you've got to be very careful. Wake one up when it doesn't feel like it, and instead of your off-wheeler you've got an exasperated Royalty who'd look much better in clothes than harness, who's bound to take precedence of every one in Date, and who, if he isn't bought off, will set the city by the ears worse than Sunstroke. That's why they get so hot and bothered when one of them misfires. And now, Brother Pomfret having as usual waltzed right into the muck—over all our knees, will some one kindly explain how we're going to get out?"

* * * * *

"I defy anyone," said Pomfret that same afternoon, "to deny that this place is wearing. I'm not saying I don't like it, because its sense of hospitality, for instance, is positively Olympian, but when you encounter whole boroughs whose sense of humour is kept in a chest of drawers outside the Mayor's Parlour and is as portable as a box of bricks, if you're to commune with

the burghers and get away with it, you want the cerebral agility of a successful politician, the memory of a good bridge-player and the outlook of a mental nurse." He raised his eyes to heaven. "Sixty thousand slop-pails. That's what I get for trying to be polite."

"You shouldn't have tried," said Patricia, looking up from a violet chain. "You should have——"

"I see," said Pomfret. "And the next place we come to they'll ask if I care for lug-worms; and if I say 'No,' I shall be forcibly fed. I know."

"The truth is," said Simon, laughing, "you talk too much."

"That isn't my fault," said Pomfret. "Somebody's got to say something, and none of you others ever open your mouths. When a man's doing you as you would be done, you can't ignore his small talk. No. The truth is, chivalry will out. None of us know where we are, but I'm the only one to get a move on. I've a sort of careless gallantry that must be served."

"I know what you mean," said Eulalie, dreamily regarding the sky. "I've noticed it at meals."

"Nothing is easier," said her husband, inspecting a large cigar, "than to be profane. But then I expect nothing else. Derision is the portion of saints: the stained-glass windows come later. If they ask your opinion, I should like to be portrayed in a violet bust-bodice, considering a bunch of asparagus and resisting an invitation to be translated." He lighted his cigar and lay back upon the sward. "And now let's enjoy The Garden, shall we? They made a great point of it, so let's be unselfish and try."

"Here's Gog," said Patricia, pointing across the lawns. "I wonder if he's had any luck."

As the courier drew near he was seen to be encumbered by an enormous sheet of parchment which was not rolled tightly enough to lie under his arm and seemed to resent being carried anywhere else.

As he came up—

"I'm glad you brought the screen," said Pomfret. "And don't throw it down like that—it may be a friend of mine who's had an accident."

The parchment unrolled itself and lay on its back.

"You'll thank me to-morrow," said Gog, wiping his face. "That's the map that's going to get you to the Mayor's Aunt's House. I may add that His Worship is adamant and the visits will have to be paid. So there's only one thing to be done. While Pomfret's getting on with the slop-pails, we must go and find Goosegog and ask his help. He simply loathes Sunstroke."

"I should have thought that was almost a local custom," said Simon, "loathing Sunstroke. Is Goosegog especially strong?"

"He's a tower of strength," said Gog. "Hence his name. All the Gogs are invaluable. When he hears that we're after Sunstroke he'll fairly hug himself."

"But we're not after Sunstroke," said Patricia. "By some misunderstanding we've got to stay at his inn, and all we want to do is to get out alive."

"I know," said Gog. "That's where Goosegog comes in. To get out alive one must delete Sunstroke. Never mind. Let's look at the map."

This was a remarkable document.

In its midst was a representation of a little walled town: this was surrounded by drawings of men and beasts, scattered over the sheet, by elegant etchings of mountains and glimpses of rivers and woods, while here and there a building had been delicately delineated. Each sketch was accompanied by its particular legend. A miniature avenue was labelled *This is the way the ladies ride:* a coppice, *Bears only:* a clump of broom, *Here are silver and gold:* a two-headed monster, *No gentleman:* a meadow, *Trespassers will be transformed:* a dragon, *Very difficult:* a half-timbered mansion, *This is the House:* a posse of men, *R was a robber:* and a pride of lions, *No flowers.* There was neither top nor bottom to the sheet, which could be studied equally conveniently from any angle, and since not even the course of the river which ran through Date was marked, it was impossible for a stranger to get his bearings.

"It's a wonderful bit of work, isn't it?" said Gog. "It doesn't show the Mayor's Aunt's House, but that doesn't matter because you'll see it to-morrow."

"Exactly," said Pomfret in a shaking voice. "Besides, I can guess where it is—between the lions and robbers and just after you've passed the bears."

"Where's *The Baby Bunting*?" said Eulalie.

"That wouldn't appear," said Gog. "Sunstroke was struck off the Rolls ages ago."

"I see," said Pomfret. "And Goosegog Hall? I suppose that's too obvious."

"Quite right," said Gog. "It's a landmark." He tapped the parchment authoritatively. "No landmarks are shown here because if they were you'd be able to find your way instead of following the map."

Pomfret loosened his collar before replying.

"I see," he said, steadily regarding the map with starting eyes. "I wonder what it'd do if you showed it a compass. Form fours? Or go over to the Church of Rome? And may I really take it to-morrow? Or won't the Mayor want it to get to the bathroom?"

Gog went backwards till his head was between his legs. Then he stretched out an arm and patted the skin.

"Follow this map," he said, solemnly nodding his head, "and you can't go wrong. I'll show you what I mean in a moment."

Pomfret lay back on the turf and covered his eyes.

"Of course," he said slowly, "I must be losing my mind. Three months ago I was an architectural archæologist: now I'm discussing the merits of a map from which every feature which could possibly be suspected of smacking of topography has been deliberately omitted or expunged, with a view to employing it to-morrow to guide me across country to a lot of slop-pails on which I shall be expected to rhapsodise."

"No, you won't," said Gog. "I was going to warn you of that. Whatever you do, don't say how much you like them. If you do, she'll give them to you, and then we shall have to drag them about wherever we go."

"But I thought she valued them," said Eulalie, finger to lip.

"My lady," said Gog, "she's old, and, while they've amused her quite a lot, she doesn't want to be seen dead with them. Besides, she's out to avoid the Death Duties. So, for that matter, is Date. You see, they're very high—a hundred and fifty per cent. So, if she died, the city'd have to take the collection and buy another thirty thousand slop-pails to square their accounts. It's very hard, isn't it?"

"Cruel," said Pomfret. "I suppose it doesn't occur to them to alter the law."

"They're mad to," said Gog. "But they can't without Law's consent: and he won't give his consent because, if the law's altered, he'll be changed into a vane, and he's so afraid they wouldn't keep him greased."

Simon rose to his feet and knocked out his pipe.

"I can't compete," he said shortly.

"Who wants to?" said Patricia, laughing. "Life's very nice without Logic."

"You really think so?" cried Gog eagerly. "Well, that's splendid." Exuberantly he flung up his feet and sat down as a tailor does. "And once again, my lady, you've welted the nail. Listen."

The courier's tone was always sprightly, but there was now a brilliance about his voice which was remarkable. Pomfret sat up as though pricked, and after a moment's hesitation Simon sat down.

"Years and years ago, when the hills were out of order and no river had made its bed, The Pail or Etchechuria was done. Nobody knows who did it, or how, or why. Some say that God had been hunting upon the earth and that one of His hounds was lost. And when night fell and the hound was all alone he curled himself up in a forest and went to sleep. But before he lay down he went round and round and round, as good dogs should, to make his form. He slept all night and rose at break of day, and, finding his way to Heaven, rejoined the pack: and only his form was left to show where he had lain. And that is the only time that a hound of Heaven has lain the night upon earth. But God was glad to see His hound again, and He blessed the place that had kept him, saved him from wind and weather and let him sleep. So the place was blessed. . . . Well, that may or may not be so, but the fact remains that from time immemorial The Pail's been a privileged place.

"Well, one day Logic was issued to all the world, whether they would or no: and when it was issued Magic was taken away. The issue took some time, but at last those who were issuing came to The Pail. Our fathers met them. They weren't at all certain that they wanted to have Logic, but they were perfectly sure that they wouldn't let Magic go. 'That be burned,' said the Issuers, for the way was long and their tempers were short. 'You must do as you're bid.' Our fathers pointed out that they were within The Pail. . . . Well, after a lot of argument the Issuers turned away. 'Here, not so fast,' said our fathers. 'Where's our Logic?' 'No Magic, no Logic,' said the Issuers. 'No one may have them both: they don't agree together.' And with that they went over the mountains, Logic and all, and our fathers, to my way of thinking, had the best of the day. Any way,

Magic we have and of Logic we've none, and when you can get hold of that The Pail's at your sweet pretty feet." He rose to his own. "And now let's stroll back to Date. Shall we follow the map?"

"It might be good practice," said Eulalie.

"Right," said the courier. Then he addressed the roll. "Be so good as to take us to Date."

Instantly the parchment began to flop across the turf, floundering along like a starched garment that is driven by the wind, moving in short rushes and always waiting where it lay until its train had come up.

"You see," said Gog, "it mayn't be easy to read, but you do get there."

* * * * *

"That's a good-looking suit," said a voice.

Pomfret, who had covered six miles and was fortifying his flesh with repose before proceeding, opened his eyes and propped himself on an arm.

Three paces away lay the map, awaiting his pleasure to advance, and immediately opposite, seated upon a boulder, was a squat, thick-set man in a sugar-loaf hat. He was singularly ill-favoured. Though he was plainly less than four feet high, his breadth would have suited a man of twice his stature, and his mighty hands and feet were out of all proportion to the crooked limbs which they adorned. His face was unpleasing, and even the substitution of two eyes for the large green orb which glinted from above his nose could not have redeemed the cunning of his gross mouth or the menace of his underhung jaw. As is happily often the way of such as are conspicuously unprepossessing, he plainly fancied himself, for his air was jaunty and he was overdressed. He was, in fact, a study in apricot. His doublet was bellied and slashed, his trunks were swollen and his hose clocked, while a double linen collar girdled his monstrous neck. He had rings on his fingers and roses upon his shoes, his hatband was a ruffle of lace and his doublet was buttoned with opals of a notable size.

Pomfret lay very still, hoping very hard that one-eyed dwarfs were not uncommon near Date, and wondering whether the stranger had any ears. Here the latter tilted his hat, the better to scratch his head, thus revealing the fact that he had but one ear, if that, and Pomfret moistened his lips.

"Did you hear what I said?" said Sunstroke, stroking his chin.

"No," said Pomfret boldly. "I was asleep."

"Why?" said Sunstroke.

Pomfret frowned.

"Such," he said, "is the magnitude of my brain that my physicians have ordered me to sleep at least twice in the day. Would you venture to question their wisdom?"

The dwarf shook his head.

"Certainly not," he replied. "They've got to live. If they told you you were a fool they'd lose a patient."

Pomfret rose to his feet and took off his hat.

"Good morning," he said stiffly. "I have a great admiration for your profession, but I detest irreverence."

Sunstroke opened his eye.

"What's my profession?" he demanded.

"Pardon me if I am wrong," said Pomfret, "but I took you for a publican." The dwarf started. "And now I must go. I'm on my way to inspect a very beautiful collection of *objets d'art*, and though it can wait I can see no reason why it should."

"Er, one moment," said Sunstroke, rising. "I——"

"Sunstroke," said Pomfret solemnly, "for I perceive that to be your name"—the dwarf recoiled—"you have interrupted my slumber and derided a sage. If therefore before the day is out anyone should take you for a herd of three-legged swine, don't be too hasty with them. They'll have quite a lot to go on."

Sunstroke, who had not felt uneasy for many a year, began to perspire.

"I trust," he said hurriedly, "that if I have said anything equivocal——"

"I can make it goats," said Pomfret, "if that's what you want. But, personally, I always think that as a flock of goats one would soon tire of one's personality. Except in a whole gale one would never get away from oneself, would one?"

The dwarf swallowed.

"The—the truth is," he stammered, "I'm—I'm not quite myself this morning."

Pomfret raised his eyebrows.

"A previous conviction?" he said.

"No, no. I don't mean that. But my boots are giving me hell."

This was true. The weather was hot, and every blood-vessel in Sunstroke's feet was lodging a hideous protest against the vanity of man.

"What, not b-b-blue hell?" said Pomfret, who was beginning to enjoy himself.

"I—I think it must be," said Sunstroke,

who had not thought of torment as coloured, but was anxious to say the right thing.

"Dear me," said Pomfret, leaning against a tree and regarding his *vis-à-vis* feet. "This is most interesting. Now, my boots—well, I mightn't have any on. I go to bed in them sometimes, just for the fun of the thing. But then, of course, yours are too large."

"Too large!" screamed the dwarf, to whom the bare idea of further compressing his feet was insupportable.

"Give a foot an inch," said Pomfret, wagging a forefinger, "and it'll give you hell. Now, look at my shoes. They were bequeathed to me by Suburb The Sordid out of gratitude for my acquaintance. Not that I knew him at all, but I once let him give me his seat, if I remember: so it was really presumption. However, the man was dead, so I let it go. Well, these are excellent. They fit anyone. If the feet are too large, they very soon bring them down. And now I must go."

"I suppose," said Sunstroke, staring, "you —you wouldn't sell them. I mean . . ."

"I would as soon," said Pomfret, "sell the superb collection to which I am on my way. And Heaven only knows what that's worth."

A hungry gleam slid into the monstrous eye.

"I didn't understand it was yours," said Sunstroke.

"It's mine for the asking," said Pomfret airily. "Sixty thousand articles of virtu if I like to say the word. But I doubt if I shall. Worldly possessions don't really interest me."

"Quite so," said the dwarf, who believed in the acquisition of property with or without its owner's encouragement. "Quite so. Still, people are often so sticky about parting with a gewgaw or two that when one gets the offer of a—a King's ransom . . . But no doubt you know best."

"No doubt," said Pomfret cheerfully.

There was a silence.

At length—

"Er, just supposing," said Sunstroke laboriously, "supposing you turned it down —I mean, I also am a collector, and——"

"I'm afraid," said Pomfret, "that the option was given to me—because of my brain, you know. Besides, you wouldn't enjoy it, and after a couple of days it'd be unrecognisable. You know what swine are. Why, they'd do in The Dead Sea if you gave them a chance."

"I don't want to be a herd of swine," said Sunstroke sullenly.

"Goats be it," said Pomfret shortly. "I think you're unwise, but——"

"Or goats," snarled the dwarf.

Pomfret stared at the fellow as though he had lost his wits.

At length—

"Of course," he said, "there's something the matter with you. First, you want my boots, then you want my collection of *objets d'art*, and now you don't want to be transformed. I suppose you won't want to have been foaled presently, or whatever the process was. Aren't you well?"

"Not very," said the dwarf, wiping his brow.

"I thought so," said Pomfret. "Typhoid. Have your snakes been tested lately?"

At this fresh revelation of the stranger's ghostly insight into his manners, Sunstroke felt rather faint.

"Not—not that I know of," he said.

"Then one or more are stopped up," said Pomfret. "You'd better blow through them all as soon as you get back. And yet I don't know that I should bother. What you really need is a complete change, and you'll get that about five. Why, you won't know yourself, you'll all of you feel so fit."

Feeling that something must be done, Sunstroke contorted his features into a frightful grin, slapped his thigh and vented a hollow guffaw.

"You know, sir," he croaked, "I've taken quite a liking to you."

"Have you, indeed?" said his tormentor. "Well, never mind. It'll soon wear off. And tell me next time you're going to have a seizure, and I'll go behind a tree. I hate to see anyone in pain."

Subduing a desire to burst—

"I should like to commemorate this little meeting," said the dwarf. "I don't know whether you'll agree, but there's a pretty custom hereabouts by which gifts are exchanged, or, er, arrangements made between friends to signalise——"

"Their pride in one another's company," said Pomfret. "What a perfectly sweet idea! Well, if you like to give me an heirloom, I don't mind carving a spleen on the bark of a tree."

Sunstroke swallowed.

"I'm afraid I put it badly," he said. "The idea is that, er, both should contribute."

"You blasphemous dog," said Pomfret. The dwarf blenched. "Besides, my hands are empty."

"But not your brain," flashed Sunstroke. "Give me of that."

"Yes, that's easy," said Pomfret, withdrawing a cigar from his case. "I can release you from the spell so shortly to become operative, but in that case how would you salve my *amour propre*?"

"With a hundred nobles," cried Sunstroke, lugging a purse from his pouch.

"Now I shall turn you into a flerd of

swoats," said Pomfret. "If you don't know what that is, in view of our recent discussion the merest dip into the pool of etymology should put you wise," and, with that, he turned to the map. "Lead on," he commanded, with a lordly wave of his hand.

Thus adjured, the map flopped forward, and Pomfret proceeded to stalk majestically behind, to the consternation of Sunstroke, who was now convinced that he had provoked an enchanter of the first water.

Indeed, he was so much confounded as at first to be unable to move, but, observing that the stranger had paused to light his cigar, he started to limp after him, begging his pardon and, when he proceeded, imploring him to slacken his speed.

"I'll give you anything," he wailed, "if only——"

"Foul swab," retorted Pomfret, increasing his pace, "you have nothing to give. What is dross to a sage? Besides, I've got everything. Men have gone mad from trying to think what to give me at Yule-tide."

"Have a heart," howled Sunstroke, breaking into a run.

"I've got one," said Pomfret. "I tell you, you've nothing to give. If you had a sense of humour——"

Sunstroke let out a screech.

"I have, I have."

"Liar," said Pomfret.

"I swear I have," shrieked Sunstroke. "At home, tied up in a bag."

Pomfret appeared to hesitate. Then he stopped and, after a long look at the dwarf, turned his gaze skyward and passed his hand before his eyes.

At length—

" 'There's nothing like beer, is there ?' she said comfortably. Pomfret swallowed. 'Nothing,' he said."

" Strange as it may seem," he announced, " you seem to be speaking the truth. Be here at three with the bag, and I'll take off the spell. To do that, I shall require some ingredients—a square yard of dough, a pint of porter, and a pound of soft soap. You'd better bring weights and measures, as I must measure the quantities myself, and beware they're exact to a hair. A fraction too much or too little—and the balloon will go up."

" My lord," said Sunstroke excitedly, " it shall be done."

" That," said Pomfret coldly, " remains to be seen. The proof of the blancmange is in the loathing. And now begone. If I'm not

here at three, don't wait after five, because I'm never more than an hour late."

With that, he turned again to the map and a moment later was surmounting a stile which admitted to a hayfield.

Sunstroke watched his going with an emotion too deep for words.

* * * * *

A cursory inspection of about two miles of slop-pails had been rounded by a magnificent luncheon, and Pomfret was seated upon a pleasant terrace overlooking a sunlit park. By his side sat his hostess, a bustling old lady, dressed in a bright chintz gown and wearing a chatelaine from which were depending so many and such accessories that one who had not seen her in motion would have sworn she could hardly move. In addition to a great bunch of keys, spits, buckets, lanthorns, scuttles and watering-pots swung and sprawled about her voluminous skirts in the utmost disorder and continually caused her an inconvenience of which she seemed to be completely unconscious. The dame, however, was as sprightly as her remarks were erratic, and Pomfret was as grateful for her momentary repose as for the silence which had lasted for nearly five minutes.

" And how," said the lady suddenly, " do you like my treasure ? "

Determined to take no risks, Pomfret steeled his heart.

" Madam," he said, " since you ask me, I think it's the most awful thing I've ever seen."

The Mayor's Aunt sighed.

" You're no fool, are you ? " she said. " Now, my nephew is a fool. My brother was a prize fool—I've still got some of his cups—and nobody but a fool would have married him. So my nephew's a born fool."

" He's a host in a million," said Pomfret. " But it's easy to see where he gets that from."

" Not at all," said his hostess. " Have another meal."

" I couldn't really," said Pomfret. " Not that I shouldn't like to, but my accommodation is limited. Besides, I've got an appointment."

" How dreadful," said the Mayor's Aunt. " Why don't you have it removed ? "

" I prefer to keep it," said Pomfret.

" As you please," said his hostess. " D'you mind lending me an ear ? "

" Metaphorically, with pleasure."

" Good," said the Mayor's Aunt, rising and turning to stroll. " And an arm. . . . That's right. Now, I'm going to seek your counsel. I doubt if it'll be worth having, and I know I shan't take it. It may even enrage me. Still, one never knows but it pours, does it ? "

With her first movement, the lady's battery of utensils had come into action, so that not only were the legs of her unfortunate squire mercilessly hammered, but the incessant and lively din made it extremely difficult to concentrate or to make oneself heard.

" I said ' Does it ? ' " shouted the Mayor's Aunt, as a coal-scuttle met a bucket with a distracting crash.

" I know," roared Pomfret. " I heard you. But I'm not ready yet. I haven't parsed——" Here his obstruction of a pail which was following through evoked a screech of pain. " Excuse me, madam, but if you could discourage that bucket . . ."

" I don't agree with you," screamed the lady. " Which one ? "

" That big brute, there," yelled Pomfret, nursing his shin. " And the water-cart."

" Now, listen to me," shouted his hostess, suddenly stopping short. " If you had a collection like mine and the thought of it made you tired, what would you do ? "

" Madam," said Pomfret painfully, " about five o'clock this evening I should haunt that delectable avenue which leads to your door, and when an overdressed, one-eyed, misshapen mammal approached me, walking delicately, I should ask him whether he was proposing to visit my collection, and, if so, whether he admired it. If he said ' Yes,' I take it the trick would be done."

" Tied up and posted," said the Mayor's Aunt. " He'd have to remove the lot within seven days."

" Then that," said Pomfret firmly, " is what I should do. Mark you, he might not come, but—well, one never knows but it pours, do they ? "

The lady drew off a ring and pushed it into his hand.

" If ever you're up against it, rub that ring. Nothing whatever will happen, but it keeps the bezel bright. And now look into it."

Pomfret peered at the gem. As he did so the stone faded and a miniature scene took its place. This was a glade of the forest: on the turf lay a sack, from whose mouth came the flash of gold, and by its side sat Sunstroke, his eye fixed upon a

neighbouring stile, gnawing his fingers in a frenzy of impatience and apprehension.

As Pomfret looked up—

"Anything doing?" said the dame, with her eyes on his face.

"Quite a lot," said Pomfret. "In fact, everything seems to be going extremely well. The sheep's in the shambles: 'All's right with the world.' Am I really to keep this ring?"

"I've not the faintest idea," said the Mayor's Aunt. "Are you interested in lug-worms?"

"N-not particularly," said Pomfret, with his heart in his mouth.

"Neither am I," said the lady. "I never met anyone that was. It's very peculiar. Would you like a cigar?"

"Thanks very much," said Pomfret, withdrawing his case. "But I've got one here."

"That's no answer," said his hostess.

"I beg your pardon," said Pomfret, putting up his case. "I should like one immensely."

"Good," said the other. "I like a man to know his own mind. Have another meal."

"You're very kind," said Pomfret, wiping his brow, "but I really don't think I will. Besides, I must be going."

"Cuff," bawled the lady.

A fat man-servant appeared.

"The stirrup-cup," said his mistress.

The man bowed and withdrew, and hostess and guest made their way to the front of the house.

"Well, so long," said the former, putting out her hand. "The more, the merrier."

Pomfret uncovered and put her hand to his lips.

"I've enjoyed myself immensely," he said.

"Not at all," said the Mayor's Aunt.

Here the servant reappeared, bearing a salver on which was a quart pot of ale. This he presented to his mistress. The latter accepted the flagon, raised it to her lips and drank long and deep.

As she lowered the vessel—

"There's nothing like beer, is there?" she said comfortably.

Pomfret swallowed.

"Nothing," he said.

His hostess returned to the pot.

When it was quite empty she turned it upside down before replacing it upon the tray.

"I always think," she said, wiping her mouth, "that that is a most beautiful custom. However boring the guest, the thought of the stirrup-cup almost always enables you to resist the temptation to kill. Which, of course, is why it was instituted."

Here the map, which had been lying at the foot of the steps, began to flounder down the avenue, and, since, as a visitor, he felt unequal to framing or enunciating any convenient comment upon so remarkable a usage, Pomfret bowed with great dignity and, putting his hat on his head, set his face to the way he had come.

As he passed down the steps—

"Come again," said the Mayor's Aunt.

"With pleasure," said Pomfret mechanically.

"Liar," said the dame. "Never mind. It's a great thing not to be a fool."

Half-way down the avenue, Pomfret remembered the ring. He turned and, raising his hat, waved it vigorously. After a moment's hesitation, the Mayor's Aunt snatched up the flagon and waved back. When Pomfret last saw her she was attaching the vessel to her chatelaine.

* * * * *

It was, perhaps, four hours later that Eulalie entered The Guest-House, darted upstairs to the parlour and flung her arms round his neck.

"I'm glad you're alive," she said, with her cheek against his. "And not transformed, or anything. Most awfully glad. I've been so worried all day."

"My darling," said Pomfret, kissing her, 'I've had the time of my life. Nice, gentle exercise all day, a Jacobean lunch, and now—bathed, beered and beloved, what more can a man desire?"

"We must hear everything," said Patricia, coming into the room, "but first let me tell you that Goosegog's done the trick."

"Give me magic," said her husband over her shoulder. "Our week-end at *The Baby* 'll be a joy-ride. We're the only people who know where it is."

"I see," said Pomfret thoughtfully. "'We're the only . . .' Of course, I don't want to embarrass you, but my brain's a shade frail this eventide. The Mayor's Aunt is not exactly exhausting, but—well, an hour with her chatelaine is quite crowded. You live all the time. And the answers to some of her questions are not at all obvious. So if you could be explicit . . ."

"Brother," said Simon, "*The Baby Bunting* has been moved. Three hours ago it stood on the top of a hill: now it's in the

heart of a wood about ten miles away. The cellars and the curtilage, complete with snakes, are still upon the hill. The snakes seemed very much surprised, and I don't blame them. I was almost astonished myself. Happily, the licensee was absent. Otherwise . . ."

"Goosegog's a marvel," said Patricia. "He simply——"

"All the Gogs," said a voice, "are quite exceptional. If you remember, I hinted that that was so. And now, pray, silence for Sir Pomfret. I can tell from the veins in his nose that he's suffering from suppressed emotion. They always go a pastel blue."

The three turned upon Pomfret, who fingered his chin.

"I can't bear it," said Patricia. "Pomfret, what have you done?"

In silence Pomfret sat down and put up his feet. Then he leaned back at his ease and suffered his eyes to wander about the diminutive room. Presently they rested upon the mantelpiece.

There lay a bag marked 'HUMOUR' and the golden Standards of Date.

Gog was the first to see them and let out a yell.

The next moment all was confusion.

Pomfret was overthrown, helped up, shaken, kissed, clutched and otherwise assaulted, and the treasures were seized and examined in feverish incoherence.

Finally order was restored, and the tale was told.

Towards the end the teller pulled out a ring—a gigantic emerald, well-nigh invisibly set, and amid a gasp of admiration slid it on to Eulalie's finger.

"And there's the ring, my lady. I give it to you. It won't adorn your hand, because no gaud in the world could ever do that: but it's a true crown-jewel, so it won't dishonour you."

The slight fingers held his for an instant before they slipped away.

"Go on, dear."

"That's practically all. Sunstroke was waiting, of course, and making a noise like a kettle upon a hob. He'd brought a great slab of dough, so I flattened it out on the grass and measured it up. Then I added the soft soap and porter, and made him work it into a kind of paste. It didn't look very tasty, and when I explained that we'd been preparing his food I thought he'd 've had a stroke. However, I pointed out that, as swine were notoriously careless of the nature and quality of their cheer, if he didn't eat it at once, he'd almost certainly eat it at five o'clock, so he made a short rattling noise, took an extremely deep breath, and then with a bulging eye, as they say in the Army, got down to it. While he dined, one spoke of the collection. One said it was unique and priceless, and one wondered what it would fetch when broken up. One said that some of the pieces had tempted one more than one could say—that was strictly true. Once or twice I felt actively sick—but that it was a question of all or none, and that one had decided with the deepest regret to turn it down. Well, the rest was easy. I gave him my shoes and the option in exchange for the Standards of Date. I said it was quite ridiculous—as it was—but he wouldn't have that. I told him to let the shoes cool before slipping them on, and added that, should the induction of his feet present momentary difficulty, the Mayor's Aunt would lend him a scoop. He perspired a little at that, so I rammed home a proverb or two, and inquired how the foot-gear could fit him unless he put it on. He got that at last, but he didn't seem to like it much better than he'd liked his food, so I handed him back the Standards, asked for my shoes, and said that the deal was off. That did it. When I saw him last he had just failed to negotiate the stile at speed, with the foot-joy under his arm. All things considered, he's had a trying day, and by the time he's done a few miles in Suburb's shoes to find his home's from home, I should think——"

A long peal of laughter, floating up from the street below, cut short the sentence. Ere it was spent came three more explosions of mirth, and within two minutes the length of the thoroughfare was quaking with convulsions of uproarious merriment which their labouring subjects made no attempt to control.

Masters leaned out of windows, with tears running down their cheeks; apprentices lay against walls, clasping their sides; dames were obstructing doorways, sobbing and heedless; servants squirmed on the pavements, fighting for breath; aldermen crowed and gurgled; maidens drooped against pillars, emitting tremulous wails; swains were bent double, and even The Watch was so far betraying its charge as to cling for support to a link-stand and cover its streaming eyes.

"They've seen The Hearsay," said Gog. "That's what it is."

"Is it always so funny on Fridays?"

said Simon, who was laughing in spite of himself.

"Don't be stupid," said Gog, with a grin. "The Hearsay's told them that they've a sense of humour."

Herein he was right, for immediately the door opened, and a footman, who was manifestly maintaining his composure by the skin of his teeth, entered with a skin of parchment upon a silver tray. This he offered to Patricia and then withdrew from the chamber with shaking shoulders.

Delicate fingers to temple, the girl stared at the skin. Then she raised her voice and read its message aloud.

TOWN.

*The Standards are back in Date, whose Sense of Humour has also been recovered. Sir Pomfret is to receive the freedom of the City, and the Garden will be enjoyed.*

COUNTRY.

*Sunstroke has 'bought' the Mayor's Aunt's collection of slop-pails and is some miles from his home. There he is likely to remain, first, because his feet will not work, and, secondly, because The Baby Bunting has been translated and now stands in a direction other than that in which he is attempting to crawl. He appears to have eaten something which he would have been wiser to reject in the first instance.*

As she came to the end of the matter, The Guest-House resounded with a burst of merriment, and a moment later a knocking fell upon the door.

"Enter," cried Simon.

At once the door was thrown open, and, supported by Law and Order, the Mayor tottered into the room.

Order alone of the three was for the moment able to speak for mirth, so, after a glance at his comrades, he twisted his features into some semblance of sobriety and bowed to the four.

Then he turned to Pomfret.

"My lord," he said, "speaking on behalf of the City, I beg you to believe that, so far as you are concerned, from to-day for so long as you live *it will always be up to Date.*"

"Every time," whimpered the Mayor, "every time. Now you're a freeman of the City. D'you feel any different?"

"Yes," said Pomfret, "I do. I feel very honoured."

"Good," said the Mayor. "Good. There are no end of privileges, of course. If anyone owes you money or runs you down, they can't sue you, you're entitled to be charged double for everything you buy, and every five years a fountain will be erected at your expense."

"My brother," said Law uncertainly, wiping his eyes, "has but touched the fringe of the honourable robe with which you are now invested. Indeed, so many and diverse are your dignities that to attempt to recite them before dinner would be out of all order and convenience. One of the cream horses, for instance, will be named after you, and in the event of its death its carcase will revert to you absolutely to do with it as you will."

"D-d'you mean it'll be my very own?" said Pomfret brokenly.

"All except the hide," said the Mayor.

The girls and Simon began to shake with laughter, and Pomfret took a deep breath.

"You—you overwhelm me," he said.

At that the three officers fairly exploded with mirth, clinging helplessly to one another and stamping upon the floor in a delicious agony of exultation.

As the seizure died down, Pomfret pointed to the mantelpiece.

"D'you want those baubles?" he said. "Or shall we chuck them away? I mean, as they're apparently priceless, and I only risked my life to get them, it seems silly to keep them, doesn't it?"

The paroxysm of laughter which his words provoked directly concluded the interview, for Law was understood to submit that if his life was valued he must be taken away, and the Mayor and Order, blinded with tears and bloated with exertion, were wholly incapable of contributing to any coherent conversation.

As the four watched them stumbling across the street—

"Of course," said Pomfret musingly, "the thing to do is to become an outlaw. I can see that. Then you get a Government grant and a tenner a week for every child you haven't got. And now, what about another bath?"

"Another one?" said his wife.

"Yes, dear. The hot tap's a wash-out, but if you let the cold one run a bit—well, its burden wouldn't make history, but I've tasted worse."

*A further episode in this series will appear in the next number.*

'What an awful house!' exclaimed Jane."

# THE HAPPY HOME

## By G. B. STERN & GEOFFREY HOLDSWORTH

### ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

RICHARD SPURNVILLE CAREW stood in front of the garden gate of "Ye Nooke," Lackey's Green, and surveyed it with all a lover's pride in a most unusual sweetheart. Yet at first sight it did not look as though Carew and "Ye Nooke" were affinities. Carew was a large and bearded vagabond, with the kindest eyes in the world; his clothes were careless, his boots serviceable, and his old, felt, slouch hat had long ago lost any shape that the block had conferred upon it. If he had been asked what were the three things he loved best in the world, he might at any time have replied: "Hard weather, a well-filled pipe, a road that is not straight, and the good company of a man whom I have never seen before and am never likely to see again!" If you are a pedant, you will argue that these are four things, not three; and the Happy Meddler will smile at you, shrug his shoulders, and never bother you again.

"Ye Nooke" was an appalling little villa; it had a neat garden path, a front door and a back door, ornamental gables and a dovecote. You really could not imagine anything more "nookish" and horrible. But

there is no fall into debauchery which can compare with a vagabond's fall into conventionality. And Carew had become a fanatic.

It began from the day when some one—he could not remember now who was the first fatal person—remarked to him casually: "You'll settle down, won't you, when your little sister comes back from school, and make a home for her?"

At first Carew laughed long and loudly at the mere notion of making a home for Jane. As if Jane *wanted* a home! She was a decent little pal, Jane, and a good fighting comrade in an emergency—and their adventurous nomad lives had been crammed to bursting with emergencies. But all this had ended four years ago, when Jane was thirteen, a pale, active little creature, her quick mind stored with unnecessary accomplishments, such as driving a pony who had been frightened by a traction-engine; climbing unscathed a wall with jagged bits of glass bottle on top; the best way to bully the inn-keeper's wife into giving clean sheets; and a most delightful gift of ventriloquism, rarely used otherwise than for unlawful ends. Yes, that was Jane. The Happy Meddler sighed. What fun they had had! But of course it could not go on; she had had to go to school. He was a happy-go-lucky eccentric himself, but he had, in his youth, received a decent education, and was still profoundly thankful for his Latin. Jane was not: Jane hated hearing Horace quoted at her sonorously down the long leafy lanes.

So, with the awakening of the fraternal conscience, Jane, alternately shrilly protesting and sullenly silent, was packed off to a good school, and her brother was able to let his conscience lapse again for four years. Now Jane was seventeen. "She will have grown into quite a young lady," quoth the second idiot to cross the Meddler's path at this critical period. And again: "You must make a cheerful home for her; that's what every *débutante* wants, a cheerful home!" *Jane* a *débutante*! *Jane* a young lady! The Meddler breathed long and deep . . . and then slowly the idea took possession of his whole being.

And "Ye Nooke" was the result.

To-day Jane was expected home, and Carew vowed by all his gods—and they were strange gods, most of them pagan, some of them Greek, and some of them of very doubtful mythology indeed—but he vowed by all his gods that nothing should be lacking in Jane's life with which hereafter to reproach himself. He had bought a villa—and he had furnished it. He had paid particular attention to Jane's own room; he called it her bower. He called it, sentimentally, her bower! The Meddler had fallen very low.

Along his own lines Carew had excellent taste—a funny, twisted, cornery sort of taste, cantankerous, if you please, in its selection and rejections, nevertheless sound at the core. But when, rejecting his own and original self, he forced his taste along conventional lines, the result was catastrophic. That villa, from inside and outside, would have made strong men sit down on the front lawn and weep. But Carew beamed upon it with the simple happiness of a child with a new toy. And, in point of fact, the happy home *was* a new toy for him. It had all the charm of the unwonted. He had drawn his ideas upon it from the most incorrigibly blighted sources, and the net result was a conviction that bright pictures on the walls, a kettle on the hob, a cat on the hearth-rug, and a bustling, smiling, rosy-cheeked woman to "preside"—whatever this might mean—were essential ingredients for the "happy home" pudding. A baby, too, had been mentioned as being eminently suitable—one of those fat, good-humoured babies who say "Goo!" when you toss them to the ceiling; likewise the gay voices of young people calling to each other as they run up and down stairs—but these were difficult to procure by mere wishing.

Oh, yes, and there was music. The Meddler ordered in a piano, and thought that Jane would do the rest; Jane, no doubt, was by now accomplished in better, sweeter ways than ventriloquism. The cook, whom he had perforce engaged for want of a better, did not quite echo his Christmas-supplement notions on the subject, but the cat, the puppy, and the hearth-rug were all that could be desired; so was the kettle; so was the hob. Another inspiration was to have visiting-cards printed:

MR. RICHARD SPURNVILLE CAREW.
MISS CAREW.

They were set out in white virginal packets of fifty each on Jane's little bamboo writing-table. The final inspiration was a work-basket. It was pink plush, and it had a view let into the lid. Inside was every kind of button and every coloured cotton, but no needles. This stood on Jane's little bamboo dressing-table.

The besotted man smiled complacently upon his own erection of follies, and then went down to the station to meet Jane's train.

Lackey's Green was not quite a suburb and not quite country. It was over an hour's train journey from Town, so only the more leisurely business men were able to go up to the City every day. It was neat and civilised, and the shops were able to keep their stock up to date. The stationer was distinguished from the grocer, and the draper did not find it necessary also to call himself the chemist. Nice little place, Lackey's Green. The Meddler did not know yet that it thought his clothing extremely odd. If he had known, he would not have cared. Jane would soon remedy that. Jane, his little sister who was going to keep house for him, he imagined as something mysteriously and entirely different from the little sister who, in olden days, had driven his pedlar's cart for him while he walked beside Pippa, the pony.

He had now been abroad, in South America, for nearly two years; and Jane had spent her holidays with a school friend. "Nice people, I hope?" Carew had written to her, severely. But the letter had reached her many weeks too late for it to have any effect. And besides, she thought that Dick was joking. . . .

When she alighted from the train, he had a slight shock of disappointment. Jane had grown, certainly, but she was still very thin and scraggy, her face that familiar blend of elf and urchin, with a broad grin that revealed a tooth knocked out and not replaced, large restless light green eyes and freckles.

"My dear kid," was the Meddler's first exclamation, "surely they could have given you a wash for your freckles at school?"

"Rot!" said Jane. "I had a wash every day; you can't wash away freckles! Don't be an ass, Dick! Why have you brought me down to this dreadful hole of a place?"

"This is our future home."

Jane's reply was monosyllabic, and not to be translated into print.

"What has become of Pippa?" she demanded, looking eagerly round, outside the station.

"Dead," replied her brother briefly, and they were both silent for a moment. "But I've got a cat for you," he told her encouragingly; "you'll see it when we get home; a really lovely puss."

"I hate cats," said Jane. "What's the matter with you, Dick? You don't seem a bit pleased to see me." She had never been demonstrative, but now she slipped her hand under his arm and looked up at him with all the swift devotion of old—not for long, though.

"*Jane*," cried the Meddler, in the voice of all the maiden aunts of all the world, "surely at school they took you to the dentist sometimes? Why have you never had that tooth put in?"

"Why have you never bought a new hat?" retorted Jane. "You've had that one for seven years; I know its spots and markings better than the map of Europe!"

"I'm sure of that," the Meddler snubbed her coldly. "I don't want a new hat."

"I don't want a new tooth," said Jane, equally coldly.

And in stony silence they drove in the station fly up to the gates of "Ye Nooke."

"What an awful house!" exclaimed Jane. "Don't tell me I've got to live in that, Dick! I should die of shame to be seen coming out of it! Look at the hanging wire basket of geraniums in the porch! Let's have it down! Dick, don't tell me you chose this place! Some one gave it to you, and you couldn't get out of it. Don't tell me you *chose* it!" There was sheer horror in her voice. She did not know this new brother who had taken the place of the cheery, whimsical adventurer whom she had alternately mothered and chidden in her rollicking pre-school days. Had he—grown up at last? Grown up and grown old? Some evil spirit had surely bewitched him. Jane had not yet learnt that nothing so bewitches a man as the spell of a strong obsession.

They went inside.

"This is Mrs. Rouse," said the Meddler, introducing the buxom but melancholy cook whose future mission was surely to call Jane "my bairn," even though she was not Scotch. Then he introduced the sitting-room, the piano, the cat, the kettle and the hob. Stimulated by these stage properties, he preceded a stunned and cowering Jane up the stairs, and with firm tread ushered her into her own room.

"All white, you see. White is the right colour for a young girl's—bower."

"*Bower!*" said Jane.

"Hell!" said Jane.

The rest of that day, and the next, and the next, were martyrdoms of boredom. Carew had not foreseen boredom. Had he been asked beforehand, he would have

replied with vague prophecies of a slim girlish figure running upstairs, moving her fingers lightly over the keys of the piano, standing with reluctant feet where the brook and river meet, singing in her bower, and dancing up to him, holding aloft the new work-box and saying affectionately: "Now, you poor neglected boy, I'm going to sew all the buttons on your shirts!" For this had been the Meddler's old-fashioned vision of young girlhood.

Jane did none of these things. She played with the cat till it scratched her, and with the puppy till it bit her, and then she merely sulked. When asked by the Meddler, in real distress, whether there was anything she wanted to do, she answered listlessly, asprawl on the hearth-rug, with her chin cupped in her hands: "Drive a cart!" . . . And before his eyes and hers moved a sequence of little brightly-flashing pictures of the past, when they had roamed and rambled and jogged along the roads together. He sighed . . . and, to escape from the burden of his responsibilities, went out.

On a barn just outside Lackey's Green a huge poster flapped in the wind and the rain, announcing a company of players who for three nights only would perform at the Grand Theatre Royal. The Grand Theatre Royal was a draughty room with a tumble-down entrance, rafters, and a wooden floor, at the back of the market-place. That night they were to play a well-known melodrama which Carew thought could not fail to cheer Jane, so he took two tickets. The programme announced that the *rôles* of two children were respectively played by little Maisie Marchmont and little Reggie Marchmont. Maisie and Reggie proved to be obviously brother and sister, probably even twins; Carew guessed their ages at about sixteen. It was more than likely that they had been chosen for the gold of their hair, and for their fragile fairness, calculated to touch the susceptible heart of the gallery, than for any merit in their acting. Little Maisie Marchmont, in spite of her make-up, looked more like an angel than anything Jane remembered seeing on earth.

The play had creaked and squeaked and meandered through two acts when suddenly occurred a hitch just before Act III. The curtain had been jerked aside half-way, and a hoarse voice from the wings cried out, "Down, you fool!" and it dropped again, hiding the stage. The interval went on interminably, broken only by unintelligible shouts and hurrying feet behind the scenes. Then the audience grew restive, started shouting and stamping and throwing nuts.

Among Carew's friends was the odd-job man, who on this occasion combined the offices of booking-clerk and commissionaire, with lapses into chocolate and programme seller, and emergency chucker-out. The Meddler went outside now and found him arguing in the "foyer"—otherwise on the steps—with a flushed and excited lady who had been playing the mother of alternately one or the other of the children.

"What's up, Bill?"

"They won't go on with it, sir. Their manager has gone off and left 'em in the lurch, and taken all he could lay hands on first. They've only just found it out, and they're feeling mad. Those kids, they're in such a rage I don't like to go near 'em for fear I'll hear some language I didn't know of before. Who'd 'ave thought it of 'em? They acted so beautiful, didn't they?"

Carew grinned, and went round into the wings, his incorrigible and cosmic instinct for interference leading him, as usual, to believe there was something in this pie that only his finger could ably direct.

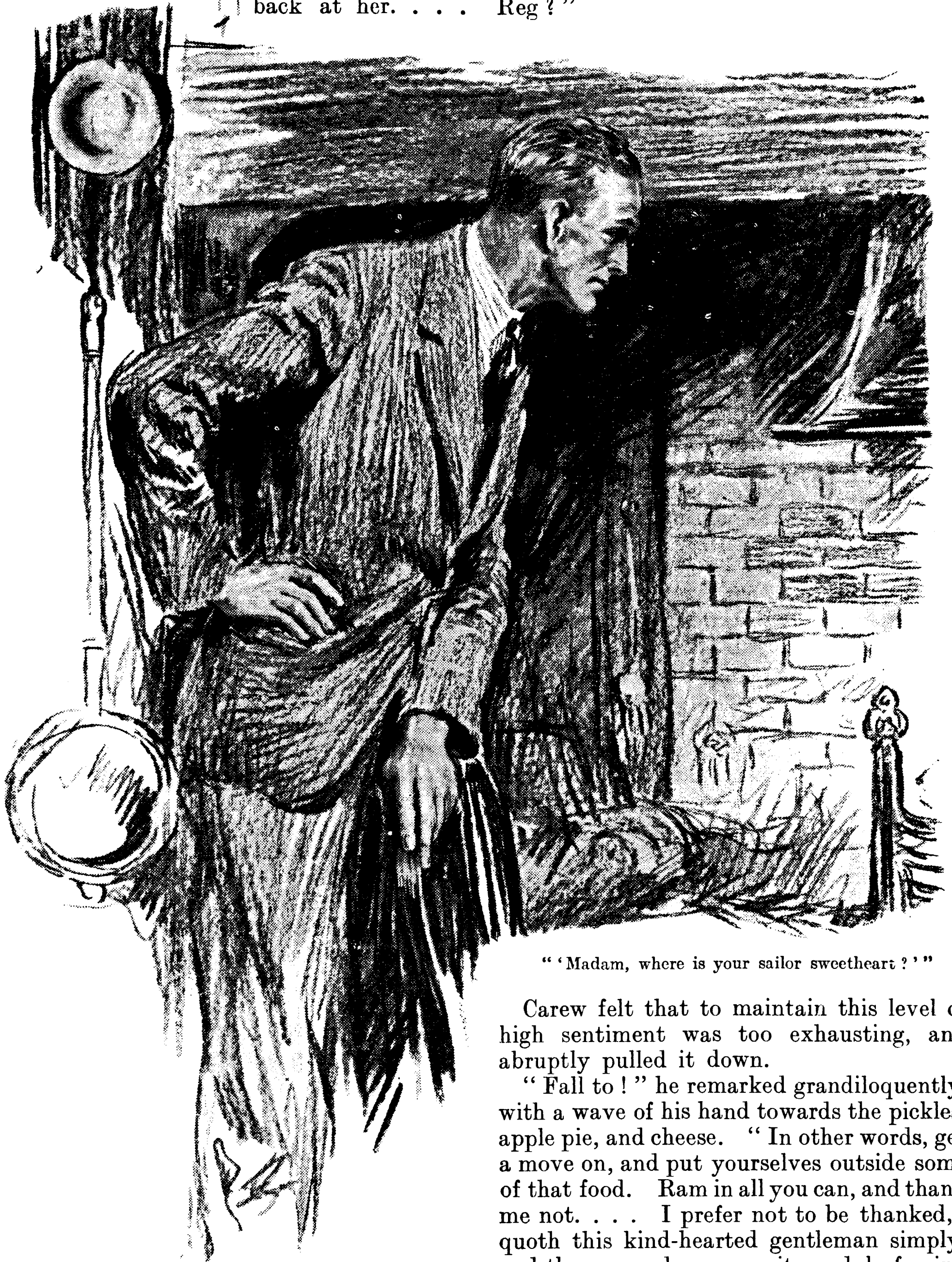
Half an hour later, having forgotten all about the actual Jane, in his benevolent intentions towards Jane in the abstract, he drove up to the door of "Ye Nooke," with little Maisie and little Reggie Marchmont clinging one on either of his arms, their eyes limpid with gratitude, their little tender mouths bent into such soft curves that it was almost impossible to believe that they could either eat or swear with them.

Jane had very wisely gone home in the meanwhile and foraged in the larder. She found cheese and apple pie and pickles, and she discovered, furthermore, that a mixture of these provided a meal both stimulating and piquant.

"*Corpo di Bacco!*" she exclaimed, borrowing from her brother's vocabulary, at the entrance of the trio. "Dick, what's all this?"

"These poor children, Jane," quoth the Meddler emotionally, "have been deserted, left penniless on the road by their scoundrelly manager, who had beguiled and deluded them with false promises!" Insensibly his style of eloquence echoed the evening's melodrama. "So I have brought them home to share our warmth and shelter, perhaps only for to-night, perhaps for a few days longer, perhaps even—who knows? We want young faces in the house, Jane."

Jane raised her eyes very slowly and looked first at little Maisie Marchmont and then at little Reggie Marchmont. . . . Sweetly they gazed back at her. . . .



"'Madam, where is your sailor sweetheart?'"

They all three understood each other perfectly.

Then little Maisie Marchmont spoke, in the same consumptive voice that nightly drew tears. "Your guarjunn has been so very, very kind to us. I'd 've killed myself if 'e 'adn't been there, wouldn't you, Reg?"

Carew felt that to maintain this level of high sentiment was too exhausting, and abruptly pulled it down.

"Fall to!" he remarked grandiloquently, with a wave of his hand towards the pickles, apple pie, and cheese. "In other words, get a move on, and put yourselves outside some of that food. Ram in all you can, and thank me not. . . . I prefer not to be thanked," quoth this kind-hearted gentleman simply, and then moved away, quite unduly fearing that his presence might embarrass the two at their square meal.

"Nice, jolly, unaffected brats," he told himself, on his way up to his room. "Nice companions for Jane. Jane was moping a

bit. The girl drops her aitches, but that can soon be remedied. We'll all be all right now."

II.

DURING the fortnight that followed this optimist's impulsive adoption of Reggie showed her that the beloved, though sadly mistaken, sadly blundering, brother was supplying all this array of horrors, from the kettle on the hob upwards to the two ragamuffins, simply for her sake. It was unfortunate that Maisie and Reggie took

"'I'm afraid he was drowned twenty years ago—like all sailor sweethearts, you know. They simply will *not* learn to swim!'"

and Maisie, Jane went through nightmare. She went through it calmly, as was her nature, and also because she did not want to hurt Dick too much; for she *was* growing up, after all, and a new subtlety of intuition such a fancy to her; these twin cherubs had the sort of parasitic natures which fasten themselves wherever they are least welcome. Jane's independence, Jane's imperious commands, and, most of all, the fact that Jane

had coolly taken their measure from the very beginning, had recognised that they were out for all they could get, counted only as so many fascinations to Maisie and Reggie. They would not leave her alone; they followed her upstairs and they followed her downstairs; with Reggie clinging to her left arm and Maisie to her right arm, she went for her walks; with Maisie sitting on the arm of her chair and Reggie crouched slavishly near her feet, she sat between supper and bedtime. Of Carew himself, their patron and rescuer, they took very little notice; he was less than naught to them, except as a general stores to supply their insatiable demands.

The cat sat on the mat before the fire that held the hob that supported the kettle that heated the water that made the tea that nourished the motley inhabitants of the house that Dick built. The cat had likewise formed a passionate attachment where she was least wanted; squatted motionless for hours, gazing at Reggie. At night she sang songs to Reggie, until Jane poured water on her, and then she retired out of water-shot and sang more songs; her ecstasies filled the garden and filled the night and filled the silence.

"There's that beastly cat again," said Reggie.

Such was life at "Ye Nooke."

And still it was not quite as Carew had pictured it in his sentimental rhapsodies. That note of spiritual calm was still missing, that cosy grouping together described in the late Victorian novels which he had perversely taken for guide. More and more he began to tell first himself, and then the others, that what they lacked was a baby. A baby formed a central interest; everybody loving the baby would undoubtedly grow to love one another; and then a baby would gurgle and crow and kick and splash in such a delightful homely fashion, compelling even hard-hearted Jane to respond and to be softened. Deep down in the bottom of his heart the Happy Meddler knew quite well that Jane wanted neither "Ye Nooke," nor the kettle, nor the hob, nor, certainly, the twins, nor Cholmondely the dog, nor Fitzroy the cat, nor even the constant crow-and-gurgle atmosphere of a really well-bred and elegant baby. She wanted the incidents of the road again, and the haphazard companions of the road, and the inn that stood at the end of the long hill. She wanted to hear the creak of the wheels, the even clop-clop of Pippa's hoofs on a frosty evening. For the Meddler was not so stupid as he was now persistently pretending to be, and he guessed that, most of all, Jane wanted his own old self back again, slouching along beside the pony, pipe between his teeth—just the two of them and nobody else. But against these promptings of nature he remained stubborn. It was not a good life for Jane. He had sacrificed himself; he would go on making sacrifices. She was not a child any more; she had left school; she was a young girl. . . . Lounging against the mantelpiece, he looked hopelessly down on her, where she sat surrounded by the eternal cherubs, and he cursed Providence that she had not been born a boy.

"What appeals to me about a baby——" he began aloud . . .

The twins looked at each other, a long meaning look, and Maisie slowly winked.

## III.

On the night of February 13th Carew suddenly remembered that it was St. Valentine's Eve, and, being an inaccurate man, at once proceeded to inaugurate all the time-worn rites and revels of All Hallows' Een. Jane did not care much one way or another; it was quite good fun to melt lead, to dig your teeth into a swinging apple on a string, and to sail a little fleet of walnut boats in a tub of water. The twins were unexpectedly acquiescent; they were in a state of high giggle and expectation that evening, with the result that it was quite the jolliest night that this incongruous family had yet spent in "Ye Nooke." Even after eleven o'clock, when the pseudo St. Valentine rollickings were over, Maisie and Reggie did not retire to bed, nor suffer their adopted parents—if one could so call Carew and Jane—to go to bed either, but kept them entertained by all the greenroom patter of a third-rate company of barn-stormers, with here and there samples from their popular repertoire: "East Lynne," "For the Sake of His Mother," and other choice melodramas. Their voices, twanging louder and shriller every moment, successfully smothered the lisp of the softly falling snow in the garden outside. Finally Maisie, in the character of a pantomime Good Fairy, ranted a scornful Cockney defiance of Reggie's King Demon, and, waving her improvised wand, called on her audience to follow her and see what St. Valentine's sprite had left on their doorstep.

Amused, and lazily wondering what trick

his irrepressible *protégés* might have played on them, Carew followed Maisie, and Jane followed Carew, into the tiny hall, just in time to see her fling open the front door.

Maisie and Reggie had planned a grand climax, but the result multiplied their expectations seven times over. In the shelter of the porch, and arranged in various forms of blanket, shawl, and rug, were seven woolly bundles, seven gifts from St. Valentine. . . .

Nothing like a baby in the home, the Happy Meddler had said.

Seven babies!

It transpired, when reason slowly crept through the hubbub of conjecture, horror, and amazement, that Reggie and Maisie had, in their sweetness and innocence, put a literal interpretation on the Meddler's dissertations on the advantages of a baby in the home, and had done their best to please their kind benefactor by providing the missing stage property. They had put an advertisement in the county newspaper to the effect that anyone who wished to get a baby adopted—"into the bosom of a pure but wealthy family" had been the exact form of phrase they had selected—had only to leave it in the porch of "Ye Nooke," Lackey's Green, between eleven and twelve p.m. on February 13th. It had simply not occurred to them that their appeal would be answered so abundantly. Their pictorial sense, heightened by the profusion of cheap melodrama, which had always been their mental fare, had simply envisaged one single baby on the doorstep when Maisie had flung open the door at midnight on St. Valentine's Eve. The sight of seven, instead of reducing them to repentance, merely sent them rolling and rocking into fits of helpless, joyful laughter. Humanity demanded that the seven babies should be brought in and spread in front of the fire. Not all of them were screaming—in fact, at least two were not. They varied in ages from three months to two years—a baby is a flexible term—so, presumably, must have reflected the seven wicked mothers who had desired to rid themselves of their offspring.

Jane's methods were wholly business-like.

"The first thing to do," she said coldly, "is for you, Dick, to write out another advertisement undoing what these idiots have done. By hook or by crook, and if you have to buy the whole concern and pay the earth for it, that advertisement must get into to-morrow's issue of that same paper. Yes, even if you have to slay the editor. Say that the whole thing was a regrettable practical joke, and the seven babies will be put back in the same place to-morrow night between eleven and twelve p.m. I don't suppose their owners will be so unnatural as to leave 'em there, as we have abandoned them. They're not a bad lot, on the whole, I must say. Get all the milk there is in the house, Maisie, and Reggie, you go next door to 'The Chestnuts' and 'Spion Kop,' and knock 'em up, and get all the milk they have. Reggie, you've got to have half the crêche sleeping in your room to-night, and half in Maisie's. I don't care twopence where you two sleep—beasts, both of you! As we're not going to keep them, they needn't be washed," said Jane in conclusion; "that's one good thing!"

## IV.

FOUR figures sat breathlessly in the dark sitting-room, huddled together, listening . . . Quarter-past eleven, half-past eleven, quarter to twelve. . . . Footsteps up the garden path . . . and then again silence, broken only by the whimperings of presumably six babies. Then again more footsteps, and silence, and the whimpering less by one. So they waited there for the seven little gifts of St. Valentine to be fetched away again—waited for the footsteps that came, and the footsteps that went, not daring to look out of the window for fear that apparition might frighten away those who fetched, and still fetched.

Surely that was only one baby whimpering now? Five minutes to twelve . . . Silence. Complete silence. They had all gone. Then the clock struck twelve. They tiptoed to the door, Jane first, then the Meddler, with Maisie and Reggie bringing up the rear, scuffling and peeping over the others' shoulders. The front door was flung open, and there, on the doorstep, was one bundle—the biggest bundle.

The seventh baby had not been fetched away.

They brought it in, Carew hoping that he might be able secretly to extract the five-pound note pinned somewhere inside the baby's clothing before Jane should discover it for herself. He deluded himself that Jane knew nothing of the seven separate fivers with which he had attempted, in his clumsy masculine way, to compensate seven disappointed parents or guardians for their vain trouble. Jane, of course, had known well enough, being by nature astute, and

highly approved; but, aware that it would not be "good for Dick" to know that she had approved of such hilarious extravagance, had made herself wantonly blind to it.

They kept the last left baby, and called him Valentine.

## V.

RICHARD SPURNVILLE CAREW sat in an attitude of dejection in the sitting-room of "Ye Nooke." Crumpled in his hand was a note. It was the eve of his wedding day, and the note read as follows:

"I cannot marry you to-morrow. I am in despair—for your sake, not for my own. My sailor sweetheart, whom I thought drowned twenty years ago off the west coast of South America—no, not the west; you know which side I mean, the Japan side—has come back to me. His death was a false report. But he has been faithful to me all these years, so, you see, I cannot possibly give myself to another,

Yours repentantly,
Hoping that time will heal the wound,
LOVEDAY GARNET."

Now, the Happy Meddler was himself something of a liar—something, in truth, of an artist at fantasies and exaggeration. He could judge, therefore, when others were bungling what he himself would have rendered so deftly. There was not one word which rang true in the letter, except the slight confusion about the east and west coasts of South America. But what puzzled him sorely was not the "how," but the "why" of Loveday Garnet's dismissal at the eleventh hour. Suddenly he lost his temper. "By the beard of the Prophet," he swore, and probably he swore also by something less innocent, "am I the sort of man for whom it is not even worth while to produce a better excuse than a drowned sailor sweetheart?" And, sweeping up his hat, he departed for the cottage of his late lady-love.

It was one of those charming and expensive Tudor cottages which in Italy, without the slightest hesitation, would have been called a "palazzo"; and Loveday Garnet was the one woman in Lackey's Green who was deserving of her setting. She was not a girl any more—in fact, a young girl would have described her carelessly as "quite old"—and only men of all ages would have known at once that she was indeed quite young and eternally young, though her dark hair was silvered as though there had been a frost in the night, and she wore her clothes with an elderly sedateness that was quite delectable.

"Madam," cried the Meddler, bursting in upon her solitude, where she sat in the low-ceilinged chintz parlour with the ingle-nook where he had so many times, and with such sentimental appreciation, banged his head, "madam, where is your sailor sweetheart?"

She looked up at him once . . . and her eyes danced so that she was forced to veil them. "Oh, Dick, I'm afraid he was drowned twenty years ago—like all sailor sweethearts, you know. They simply will *not* learn to swim!"

"I disbelieved in him," said a very relieved Carew, sinking luxuriously into the armchair on the opposite side of the fire, "from the moment I read in your note that he had never ceased being faithful."

"I am perfectly certain," Mrs. Garnet answered with some heat, "that if he had lived he would have been absolutely faithful to me."

"A low fellow like that?" murmured the Meddler. "Well, well, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* . . . Full fathom five my sweetheart lied. . . . *Why?*" he shot out at her in sudden pleading, "what have I done? Or were you merely 'piquing' me? I am too old to be piqued."

"And I am too old to pique," said Loveday Garnet. "I'm sorry, Dick, I'm bad at invention, or I'd have given you a better excuse; but the impulse was true enough."

"You mean—you're not going to marry me to-morrow?"

"No, I'm not going to marry you to-morrow."

"Why don't you say something?" she asked him, after a long pause.

"I want you to listen to my heart breaking. If I had mourned aloud, you might have missed the slow crackle . . . It was rather poignant in the silence, I think."

"Your heart-break, dear Dick," she informed him, with delicate scorn, "is entirely bunkum. If it had been real, perhaps . . ."

"If it had been real, yes? It is, by the way."

"No," she contradicted. "But if it had been real, I might not have inflicted it. You see, Dick, I can't bear to think of being for the rest of my life just a rather important item towards the furnishing of your happy home, to be paid for by instalments."

She watched the dull colour creep up the

back of his neck, until his face was flushed with it.

For it was quite true what she had said. Failure had only driven him into yet more violent fanaticism. He had intended, at all costs, to provide a happy home for Jane; and marrying Loveday Garnet, that wise and solitary woman with the mischievous eyes and the savour of health and sanity in all she said and did, was his last, his greatest sacrifice. There went his liberty! But surely, she, reigning over the odd bits and pieces which he had collected along with the kettle and the hob, would know how to ring them all into one magic whole; and he and Jane would sit within the circle and be conventionally and respectably contented until the end of their days. So, with this in mind, and furiously closing his imagination to all other considerations, he had wooed her, and had won her promise to marry him, and hastened on the marriage so that it should take place in that very month, which was April, and a good month for fools.

"My dear," began the Happy Meddler, and then, because he did not know what to say, he said "My dear . . ." again, with a rather telling inflexion of broken sincerity mingled with whimsical tenderness. Because he liked Mrs. Loveday Garnet—"Mrs." by eighteenth-century courtesy, for she had never yet been married—yes, indeed, he liked her very much, as one likes a garden, or a day of windy skies and sunshine, or the clear notes of a bugle played on the farther side of a hill. . . .

"I think, Dick—in fact, I am sure of it—that this is precisely what you said to yourself: 'I, a more than usually ignorant man——'"

Carew rose, meaning to be lofty; but he bumped his head, and sat down again. Curse the ingle-nook!

"But I, a more than usually ignorant man, Loveday, yet truly know, and accurately, from which side of America you can see Japan."

"So do I," quoth that delicious woman confidently; "it's from over on the *other* side."

And Carew began to laugh, and, having begun, gave way to laughter utterly. "Oh, geography!" he cried. "Oh, education!"

But she was right, of course; it *was* from over on the other side.

Unruffled, she proceeded in her condemnation: "So you made a list, and as you collected each item you ticked it off: One home, one kettle, one hob, one mat, one cat on the mat, young voices on the stairs, crowing baby, and finally, because all these put together and incantations being said over them, still would not work, finally, Dick, you scratched your head in perplexity——"

"You're wrong, lady!" cried the Meddler. "I am no vulgarian. I scratched the man-in-the-moon's head instead, with the tip of a very long peacock's feather, and asked him for an inspiration. . . ."

"— and then you slapped your thigh and you cried: 'I have it! There is still one item missing, a homely, apple-cheeked woman with bosomly qualities, who will be mistress of this home, and more than a mother to Jane, and to the ragamuffins, and to Valentine, and to me!' And so you sacrificed yourself—for Jane. The sacrifice," said Mrs. Loveday Garnet, "was not so poignant as it might have been, for it has been said that I am not unpleasing. But did you really think, Dick, that I should enjoy being your 'Great Sacrifice for Jane' *all* the rest of my life?"

And then, because he had nothing better to say, for, indeed, she had revealed most excellently his mind's ignoble processes, he muttered lamely: "You know, I would have done my best."

"Of course you would have done your best, Dick; and it would have been such *fun* for me, watching you do your best—wouldn't it?"

"Did you think of none of this before, Loveday?"

"No. I got frightened slowly. I have my own home, you see, my own liberty, my own kettle and my own hob, my own lamplight, my garden, and my books and my samplers and my regular supply of broad nibs for writing to my cronies. I'm very fond of my possessions and my habits, even of my loneliness, and I don't want to give them up. In fact, my home works—as yours never will, Dick. You had better turn your back on it, not to see it crumbling to pieces. The twins have gone. . . ."

"Ungrateful little beasts!" murmured the Meddler.

"But no, dear. Children of Nature; happy little things. 'Loot and let loot' is their motto. They stayed while there was loot, and then ran away when they got sick of it, and when the call of the floats and the drop-scene was too much for them. You couldn't expect otherwise. I liked Maisie and Reggie."

"Lambs!" cried Carew enthusiastically. "Still, I do think they might have left us the cat!"

"Now you will have to get another," she mocked him.

"And a dog, too."

"They didn't take the dog!"

"No, but Valentine did. Didn't I tell you that Valentine has also gone?"

"Run away?" cried an incredulous Loveday, for the gift of St. Valentine's Eve was only two years old.

"No, his young mother fetched him yesterday. But that is another story. She was rather pathetic," he mused, "quite a girl, and very pretty indeed—pretty, and cheap, and deadly afraid of missing her good time. So she left Valentine on our doorstep when she saw those demons' advertisement, and didn't fetch him away again because she hoped that without him she would have a better time. And a month later she found that it was no joke being a mother without a baby if you happen to be fond of the baby, for something had gone wrong with her good time; and when she could not bear it any longer, she came and told me all about it, and went off hugging Valentine, whose baptismal name is Hector, Heaven help him! And the dog went after Valentine, because he loved Valentine better than he loved me. Everybody seems to love somebody better than they love me," he concluded, looking at her for sympathy.

"The home's broken up, Dick."

He sighed. "It was such a trouble to put together and to keep together."

"You will never keep it together, my dear. You have to love things to keep them together. You can't pile up a miscellaneous heap of them, and walk three times round them, and then call it a happy home, and just hope that they will stick." And then, without any romantic wistfulness, but with just a quaint pucker at the up-tilted corners of her mouth, and a queer little twitch of her eyebrows, she added: "If you had loved me, Dick——"

"You're firmly sure that I don't?"

"I was never so sure of anything in my life," said Loveday Garnet, and rang for tea and muffins.

VI.

RICHARD SPURNVILLE CAREW's last thought, before falling asleep that night, was that the man who proposes marrying a woman for tangible, practical, and utilitarian reasons is a half-wit; but the man who, after she has found it out, proceeds to fall in love with her for every other reason under the moon, is no wit at all, but, reading from head to foot, utterly hopeless.

Loveday would never believe him now.

VII.

THE next morning he was awakened by a firm grip on his shoulder.

"Wake up, Dick," spoke Jane's voice, "and come along; the pony's getting restless."

The Meddler sat up and blinked. "My wedding day!" he murmured. And then, curtly, being wide awake: "What pony?"

"Hired at present," quoth Jane; "but if he suits us, we can buy him along with the cart. I fixed it all up last night, after you came home. I was getting rather tired of your surprises for me. This time I've got one for you, a nice bright yellow one, just been repainted—no, not the pony, you ass! It's a gorgeous morning, and the almond blossom'll be scattering down in the wind."

Her brother looked at her steadily; she looked back, and the old engaging grin broke out again on Jane's freckled little three-cornered face. It was a grin of good fellowship, and he could not help responding.

"We're going on the road again, are we?" said the Happy Meddler. He was conscious of a great and tranquil relief that Jane had thus taken matters into her own hands.

"We're somehow not meant for settling down, you and I, Dick."

It was only as he was about to spring on the tilt of the cart, an hour later, that he remembered the responsibilities of the Happy Home.

"Jane, what about this infernal house of ours?"

"*This* about it!" cried Jane, dramatically pointing to the "To Be Sold" board which, by her orders, had been put up the evening before.

They laughed, and drove swaggeringly away, up the low hill.

# ULTIMA.

OH, far way from the garden
Where I plucked Life's wounding rose,
If a man might know the ending
Of the journey that he goes!

If, a tall and splendid pharos,
It might guide his faltering feet,
Like a friend's face seen in vision
On a strange and sordid street!

If the hope that drives him onward,
And the dream none other knows,
And the rose of life, grown thornless,
Might await him at the close!

Yet the journey's greater crowning
May, in Memory's afterglow,
Be to face no dreams' fulfilling,
While content to have it so.

Oh, far way from Life's garden,
Where men pluck love's wounding rose,
Keeping faith with stars, though hidden,
Is to find them at the close.

ETHEL M. HEWITT.

# KEJOK MACKENZIE, WATER-GOD

## By RALPH DURAND

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

IN Ilchester, the little cathedral town in which he lives when he is home on leave from Africa, Douglas Mackenzie is a man of no repute. Because he is reserved, a poor tennis player, as stolid as a Lord Mayor's coachman, and never seems to know any dance step that is not hopelessly out of date, hostesses are apt to ignore him when making out invitation lists. In the Zanzibar club, however, he is spoken of with respect as a man who single-handed saved the Empire from a troublesome and expensive little frontier war. And round about the upper waters of the Kwa-Kwa he is worshipped as a god. That he should be so worshipped is entirely creditable to Mackenzie, but unfortunately he has no sense of humour, and therefore is very rude to anyone who chaffs him on the subject.

It was in Zanzibar, that has not changed its heart since the "Arabian Nights" was written, that I heard why Mackenzie was deified, and it was Ilbrahim Mohammed who told me how it came about. Ilbrahim had been Mackenzie's personal servant for several years, and had accompanied his master as far east as Zanzibar when he last went on leave. Then, being temporarily out of employment, he attached himself to me to brush my clothes, carry my messages, and see that I was not cheated beyond reason when I bought ostrich feathers and Somali spears in the bazaars. The tale as Ilbrahim told it was a tangled story in which a sacred lake, a gramophone, a native rebellion, a sheep, and Mackenzie's pyjamas were badly mixed. I have done my best to disentangle it, and have supplemented it where necessary with information obtained from other sources.

It was among the Maharra, men who claim direct descent from the Queen of Sheba, that Mackenzie held his first appointment as District Commissioner. It was his duty to govern them in accordance with their own ancient laws, and their pagan neighbours according to their particular laws, tempering his edicts in both cases by his own common sense. But his chief care was to persuade the Maharra that free labour is cheaper and more reliable than slave labour, and that they would find honest trade with the pagan tribes more profitable in the long run than the practice of raiding them. He had a small armed force with which to harry those who disobeyed him, but he governed rather by influence than by force, and he prided himself on never using his troops for any purpose more warlike than police and ceremonial duties. He owed much of his success to the very quality that made him a social failure in Ilchester. The Maharra regard anything in the nature of a jest as something indecent, and as Mackenzie could not make a joke if he tried, he never offended their idea of good taste. They have an immense sense of personal dignity, and as Mackenzie's manner verges on the pompous, he exactly suited their notions of the sort of man a magistrate should be.

Three years ago the Government, after the manner of governments, took Mackenzie from the job of which he had made a success and put him to another in which he had to start again at the beginning. They took him from his Maharra and sent him to the other side of the equator to establish peace, civilisation, and respect for the white man's rule among the Ba-Matope, an uncouth, irresponsible people who did not know what respect meant, and set no high value on peace or civilisation.

Nobody would live in the Matope country for choice. It is monotonously flat, inexpressibly dreary. For five months in the year most of it is under water, and for ten the grass is so high that a man has to climb a palm tree to see ten yards beyond

his nose. Its climate is that of a badly-ventilated Turkish bath. It breeds several different varieties of mosquito and a particularly voracious fly whose bite feels like the prick of a red-hot gimlet. The most interesting thing about the whole province is the amazing variety of evil smells that emanate from the Matope villages.

Mackenzie found his new duties among the Ba-Matope almost as irksome as the country was depressing. He considered that their laws, which he had to administer to the best of his ability, and their customs, which it was his duty to respect as far as he reasonably could, were inexpressibly silly. But what galled him most was their absolute lack of any sense of dignity. A great part of his time was occupied in the settling of lawsuits. These suits were usually brought by men whose fowls had been stolen in reprisal for damages committed, possibly many years before, by their own or their fathers' pigs on crops that had been grown by the aggressor's mother-in-law. The giving of evidence invariably degenerated into a slanging match between the plaintiff, the defendant, and their respective friends and relations, that kept the onlookers in paroxysms of ribald laughter over which the District Commissioner had no more control than a pew-opener would have over a church full of monkeys. Mackenzie never took his seat in his open-air court under the great Dom palm in his compound without wishing himself back among the lordly Maharra.

A weaker man than Mackenzie would have moped in the aching loneliness of his uncongenial surroundings. A slacker man would have despaired of doing any good among a people who neither welcomed nor resented his efforts, but merely regarded them as a joke. But he realised that the Government had set him a harder task than he had had hitherto, and he set himself doggedly to master it. It was his duty to try and bring prosperity to a people who lived for part of every year on the edge of famine, and he was given a free hand to set about the job in whatever way he thought best. To obtain money for his purpose he decreed that every able-bodied man should pay an annual hut-tax, and to get the labour that was even more valuable than money, he announced that whoever chose might commute the tax by giving his labour for a fortnight every six months. With the money and labour at his command he made roads, drained swamps, cleared jungle and even ran an experimental farm to see what varieties of grain and pulse and cotton-seed were best suited to local conditions. He had no particular bent either for engineering or farming. He did the work because it seemed to be to the ultimate benefit of the Ba-Matope that he should do it. And the Ba-Matope were not in the least grateful. They did not see why roads should be made or swamps drained. They could not be bothered to learn how the seed gratuitously distributed by Mackenzie should be cultivated. They sighed for the lazy days when no interfering white man had tried to prod them along the path of progress, and Mackenzie sighed to be back again among the Maharra.

The setting of the sun each day did not see the end of the District Commissioner's labours. After he had eaten his tasteless meal of juiceless mutton and tinned abominations, he seated himself at a table under a huge mosquito net and laboured at compiling a dictionary and a comparative grammar of the local language. In this work he had the assistance of an aged Umatope, Adnolquay by name, who invariably smelt strongly of fish, and was therefore made to sit well to leeward of the writing table when they worked together in the stifling heat of the equatorial night, but was in other respects the nearest approach to a civilised being that the country could produce. Having been a slave in Zanzibar in the days of Said Burgash, Adnolquay had a smattering of Swahili, had seen something of the world, and was able dimly to understand the underlying motive of Mackenzie's labours.

The old man's services were paid for in rations and tobacco, but the reward he valued most highly was permission at the end of each evening's work to listen to a tune on Mackenzie's gramophone. Mackenzie's taste in music was crude. He preferred rag-time to Beethoven, and especially liked tunes with a swing to them. One of his records rendered all the marching songs that came into being during the Great War, from " Another little drink " to that triumph of inspired inanity that had for refrain :

> We're here because
> We're here because
> We're here because
> We're — here.

This was Adnolquay's favourite song. He asked for it every night, and taught the children to sing it because he said that

it was a hymn of praise to the District Commissioner's god.

Because no man can successfully rule an alien people without some knowledge of its religious beliefs, Mackenzie questioned Adnolquay as to what gods the Ba-Matope worship. The old man said that there were a large number of different gods whom nobody knew much about, but that their own particular deity was Kejok, the water-god. In the beginning of time, said Adnolquay, when his people first came south out of the forest, they halted in their march on the shore of Kwa-Kwa, a lake near which Mackenzie had built his headquarters. While they were there, Kejok, "girdled with rushes, crowned with a drooping head-dress of duckweed, heralded by lightning and thunder," came up out of the water and mingled with them. For a few months he lived among them, working miracles and teaching them how to make fish-traps. Then he disappeared under water again after promising that if the Ba-Matope worshipped him faithfully and did not neglect to sacrifice sheep to him, he would come back to them when they needed him. Adnolquay, who had vivid memories of the cruelty of the slavers, and had always had a grievance against Kejok for not protecting the Ba-Matope from them, expressed the belief that his people would have no particular need for the water-god's service so long as Mackenzie remained among them. Mackenzie incorporated an account of the myth in his annual report and added to it a scholarly note on the widespread belief in the return to earth of national heroes such as Kejok, King Arthur, and Barbarossa.

In the second year of his administration he heard more about Kejok. Rumours, reported to the District Commissioner by Adnolquay, went about that the water-god had appeared in a dream to Kujur, the tribal rainmaker, and had threatened to send a drought unless the people rose and drove Mackenzie out of the country. The District Commissioner sent for Kujur, warned him that the dreaming of dreams calculated to disturb the peace of the country was an offence for which he was liable to severe punishment, and prayed that the rainy season should come at its proper time.

Understanding of the seasonal rains made all the difference between full granaries and famine to the Ba-Matope. Rain came every summer—far more than anyone needed. But sometimes before the real rains came there fell deceptively heavy showers that were followed by weeks of hot, dry weather. If the Ba-Matope sowed their seed too soon, the young corn came up and withered away before the real rains came. On the other hand, if they sowed too late, the annual floods covered the land and drowned the young corn before it was tall enough to lift its head above water. As soon as Mackenzie realised this local peculiarity, he arranged for weather reports to be regularly telegraphed to him from headquarters. On the strength of these he advised his people when to sow and when to delay sowing. The Ba-Matope found his gratuitous advice quite as reliable as that for which they gave the rainmaker costly presents. Kujur's prestige and income dwindled in consequence. Hence the dreams that the rainmaker dreamed. Fortunately, in that summer the rainy season broke at the usual time, his dreams lost interest, and Mackenzie had no need to carry out his threat.

Next year, however, the rains were long in coming. The tall grass drooped, withered, and crumbled to powder. The iron-hard, thirsty earth cracked and gaped. Sheep and cattle died. Kwa-Kwa, the sacred lake, dwindled till there was nothing left of it but a shallow pool a few hundred yards round. Then the Ba-Matope, repenting of having docked the rainmaker's emoluments, entreated him to bring rain. Kujur referred them scornfully to the District Commissioner. Mackenzie laboriously explained that he could only predict rain, not make it, and sent frantic telegrams to the meteorological office at headquarters. The Ba-Matope went humbly back to Kujur, and the rainmaker profited by his opportunity. Kejok was withholding the rain, he said, and would continue to withhold it while Mackenzie stayed in the country. The Ba-Matope asked plaintively how they could get rid of a man who had a guard of riflemen to protect him. Kujur replied that at the appropriate moment Kejok would turn the riflemen's bullets to water. Meanwhile the Ba-Matope were to wait patiently for deliverance. Adnolquay reported these sayings to Mackenzie, and the District Commissioner's heart sank as he looked at the brazen sky. A native rising would stain his honour and bring to nothing all he had hoped to do.

There came a day of choking heat when the sky was a deep sulky purple, the sun

shone like dull copper through the smoke of distant bush-fires, and lightning flickered all along the horizon. It was no day for a European to be out of doors. Mackenzie, sweating like a pig, clothed only in a thin suit of pyjamas, sat in a darkened room writing to the Chief Commissioner a warning that famine relief would be needed unless the rains broke soon. As he wrote, the Eurasian telegraph clerk brought in a message from headquarters that the rain might be expected to break at any moment. Mackenzie thankfully tore up his letter and occupied himself with routine office work.

An hour later Ilbrahim announced that Adnolquay wished to see the Effendi on very urgent business. Mackenzie, suspecting trouble, went out to him. The old man was so much overwrought with excitement that what he had to say was more involved and took longer to tell than usual. At last, after much questioning, the District Commissioner learned that Kujur had announced that Kejok had appeared to him in a dream, calling on the people to rebel, and promising to protect from harm anyone who struck a blow in his honour. The whole tribe, fully armed, was mustering on the shore of the lake to witness the sacrifice that was to precede the rising.

Mackenzie called for his donkey, pulled on a pair of gum-boots over his pyjama trousers, and rode off towards the lake at the head of twenty of his riflemen. The need for haste was so urgent that he forgot for the moment that he was not properly dressed. Never before in the whole course of his administrative career had he shown himself officially to the people he governed in any costume less formal than he would have worn in the presence of the Chief Commissioner. Adnolquay trotted by his side, offering advice. Kujur had said that none but he could make a sacrifice that Kejok would accept, and that anyone unbeloved of Kejok who set foot in the water of the sacred lake would never return to dry land alive. It seemed to Adnolquay that if Mackenzie waded into the lake and sacrificed to the water-god, he would prove the rainmaker to be a lying impostor and smash his prestige once and for all. The advice seemed good. Mackenzie asked in what manner the sacrifice should be made. He should take a live sheep, said Adnolquay, and push it under the water. If it stayed under the water, the sacrifice was accepted. If it swam ashore, the sacrifice was rejected. How could a live sheep be made to stay under water? asked Mackenzie. Adnolquay did not know. He suggested that Kujur should be allowed to make the sacrifice first, and that Mackenzie should watch how he did it.

On the shore of the lake the crowd was so dense that Mackenzie's escort had to clear a way for him with the butts of their rifles. It was quite obvious that his authority was waning fast. Some of the young men shook their spears at him with taunts and insults, some shouted prayers to Kejok to come out of the water and show his power by killing the white man, but most stood silent, watching Kujur.

The rainmaker, a sheep on his shoulder, was waist-deep in water, wading out into the lake. In the centre was a clump of reeds, and for ten yards all around it the water was covered by a film of duckweed. On the edge of this Kujur paused and held up his hand for silence. In the deep hush that followed Mackenzie could hear him praying to the water-god.

"O Kejok, Lord of the Waters, hear thy people! O Kejok, send rain lest we perish! Arise, Kejok, and smite the foreigner that oppresses the land, the white-faced stranger that brings murrain to the cattle and locusts to the crops!" Mackenzie choked and spluttered at the outrageous libel, but Kujur held the centre of the stage, and protest would have been futile. "O Kejok, hear us and send rain!"

A rumble of distant thunder shook the heavy air. The assembled people, trembling with excitement, muttered responses: "Hear us, Kejok, hear us!"

Mackenzie squirmed in his saddle with exasperation. He suddenly realised that Kujur, having foreseen all day that rain was coming at last, and knowing that the first rain of the season almost invariably fell towards sundown, intended to go on chanting prayers till the rain did fall, and take all the credit to himself.

"Listen to me, you people without understanding!" he shouted, riding down on to the hard dried mud that fringed the lake and wheeling his donkey to face the throng. "The rain will come when it will come, and if you look at the sky instead of at that impostor in the water there, you will see that it is very near. Kujur has said that if I so much as wet my feet in the water of this lake, Kejok will kill me. I am going into the lake to show you that he is a liar. Kujur has said that none but he can sacrifice to

Kejok. I will show you that Kejok will accept a sacrifice from me or you, or anyone who chooses to offer it to him. Kujur is a liar, and you are fools to listen to him. Bring me a sheep!"

But Mackenzie's authority was gone. The Ba-Matope shouted abuse and brandished their spears. The riflemen, irregulars recruited from other tribes, fearing to defy the Matope's god on his own special ground, stood still and looked miserable. It was Ilbrahim, the Mohammedan, who believed that there is no God but God, and was certain that his Prophet's name is not Kujur, who caught one of the sheep that was running bleating through the crowd and brought it to Mackenzie. The District Commissioner dismounted, hoisted the animal on to his shoulder, and advanced into the water.

The next half-hour was the unhappiest of Mackenzie's life, not because his life was in imminent danger—he had the cast-iron courage of a man who has no nerves and no imagination—but because what he feared more than anything on earth was to make himself ridiculous. Ever since he had been his own master he had avoided Christmas parties lest he should be expected to wear a paper cap out of a cracker. Not for a king's ransom would he have stood up in public and sung a comic song. Now from the moment he entered the water he became the one conspicuous figure in a roaring knockabout farce. Soberer people than the Matope would have laughed at the sight he presented, dressed in bright blue pyjamas, very red in the face, a kicking sheep on his shoulder, his pith sun-helmet knocked over one eye. While his feet were still on the hard mud he advanced, in spite of the sheep's efforts to get free, with some semblance of dignity. But at his first step in wet mud he slipped, at the second he slithered, at the third he floundered, and at the fourth he stuck fast.

"A newly-slaughtered sheep was lying at the foot of the verandah steps, and beyond it a mass of dimly-seen figures swayed and stamped, dancing to the rhythm of the tune."

Though he pulled and tugged and wrenched, he found himself a prisoner. Any man who has ever worn loose-fitting india-rubber boots in deep adhesive mud will understand why. The boot sticks fast in the mud, but the foot, when raised, slips out of it till the instep is where the ankle should be. Thus far it will come and no farther, nor can the foot be pressed back again into its right place. Mackenzie wrenched and twisted and wriggled and swore, and grew almost purple in the face, but the boot held fast. And Kujur, who had finished sacrificing his sheep, and hurried back to see what Mackenzie was doing, stood and jeered at him.

"Did not I say, white man," he sneered, "that Kejok would not let you set foot in the sacred water?"

"Don't stand there like dummies!" shouted Mackenzie to the riflemen. "Bring me a knife or a bayonet, one of you."

But to interfere between a tribal god and his victim was too much to ask of grossly superstitious pagan irregulars, and it was Ilbrahim who brought the knife with which Mackenzie cut his boots away from his feet.

And now a new difficulty arose. As he waded slowly towards the clump of reeds in the centre of the lake, Mackenzie realised that while trying to wrench himself free from the mud he had been too busy to see how Kujur performed the trick of thrusting a sheep under water in such a manner that it could not bob up again. At the edge of the film of duckweed he tucked the sheep under his arm, took a deep breath, dived, and did not come up to the surface again till he was hidden among the reeds. It was advisable that the people on the shore should not see too clearly exactly how he did what was to be done.

He supposed that Kujur had contrived to entangle his sheep under water among the stems of the reeds. But the sheep that he himself had brought refused to be entangled. In the struggle it broke away and struck out for shore. Mackenzie followed hard after it, blowing, spitting duckweed from his mouth, looking rather like a sea-monster in a pantomime.

"Aha, Kejok refuses the sacrifice!" shouted Kujur, and all the assembled Ba-Matope whooped and roared with Homeric laughter.

Mackenzie recaptured the sheep, towed it back among the reeds, and there, out of sight of the crowd, pondered. Then a desperate idea occurred to him. He had sacrificed so much of his dignity that what little remained was not worth considering. Holding the sheep by a hind leg, he took off his pyjamas with his free hand, twisted them into a rope, tied the sheep's legs together with the trousers, and with the jacket anchored it under water to the reeds. To his intense relief the knots held. The sheep's protesting bleats died out in splutters.

Nothing now remained to do but to return to the shore and denounce Kujur as a liar and a false prophet, and nothing hindered Mackenzie's return but the fact that he had no clothes in which to make his reappearance. As the Ba-Matope habitually go naked, this would have aroused no comment except one of interest in the discovery that he was white all over his body. But his horror of the ludicrous was returning now that he had achieved his task, and he made himself a girdle of reeds before emerging from the reed clump.

And then a wonderful thing happened. As Mackenzie returned to shallow water, showing first his shoulders, then his chest, then his whole body down to the knees, a hush fell over the crowd. They were puzzled. They had seen enter the water a District Commissioner adequately clothed in bright blue pyjamas. They saw return a nearly naked figure "girdled with rushes, crowned with a drooping head-dress of duckweed." The sky lowered black behind him, and a sudden blast of chill wind stirred the surface of the water all round him. Suddenly there was a flash of lightning, the crack of thunder.

"Kejok! It is Kejok himself!" shouted Adnolquay. "The prophecy is fulfilled! Kejok has come again!"

Before anyone could challenge the statement, the long-pent rain burst with a hiss and a roar. After that conclusive proof who would be so impious as to dissent?

As Mackenzie stepped ashore, the riflemen presented arms and a thousand repentant Ba-Matope bowed their faces to the ground and worshipped.

* * * * *

As he wallowed in his hot bath that evening Mackenzie heard, above the hiss of the falling rain, the sound of hundreds of feet squelching in the mud all round the house. Then hundreds of voices were raised in a familiar chant:

Wehr hehr bekos
Wehr hehr bekos
Wehr hehr bekos
Wehr . . . hehr-r-r!

Without stopping to dry himself, Mackenzie huddled on some clothes and went out on to the verandah. A newly-slaughtered sheep was lying at the foot of the verandah steps, and beyond it a mass of dimly-seen figures swayed and stamped, dancing to the rhythm of the tune.

"Silence!" shouted the District Commissioner. Then, as the uproar died down, he turned to his servant.

"What's all this nonsense about?" he demanded angrily.

"All the same as hallelujah," explained Ilbrahim, who had once been employed as

"While his feet were still on the hard mud he advanced, in spite of the sheep's efforts to get free, with some semblance of dignity."

cook at a missionary station. "They singing hymn of praise to Kejok. They think you water-god."

"Do they?" said the District Commissioner, without stopping to think of the effect his words might have. "Then tell them that if they don't stop that infernal tomfoolery, I'll stop the rain!"

The words were spoken that could never be recalled. Mackenzie had admitted his own divinity. Thereafter no Umatope, except perhaps Kujur, but believed that the

District Commissioner was Kejok, the water-god, incarnate. Mackenzie, realising that even the gods fight in vain against stupidity, did not deny it. Kujur did not consider it politic to deny it. Instead, he came to Mackenzie, whining grovelling apologies and promises of loyalty for the future. Mackenzie, feeling that he could be generous in victory, and realising the advisability of securing the loyalty of the only one of the Ba-Matope who used his brains, granted the ex-rainmaker a pension of one sheep per mensem from the revenues at his disposal, and justified the expenditure in his accounts with a marginal note stating that it had been necessary for administrative reasons to deprive the pension-holder of his normal means of earning a living. Kujur realises that he holds the pension only during good behaviour, but he surreptitiously adds very considerably to the income it gives him by posing as the water-god's high priest, through whom all oblations should be offered.

Not for any honour or reward would Mackenzie have incorporated in his annual report an account of how he dissuaded the Ba-Matope from rebelling; it is of all incidents in his career the one that he would most gladly forget. But grotesque versions of the affair poured into headquarters by bush telegraph till the High Commissioner demanded explanations. When he received them he telegraphed congratulations, and promised to send up Mackenzie's name for the O.B.E. Mackenzie earnestly begged to be spared the honour, but he has no power to renounce the greater honour of being known from Lake Nyasa to Somaliland as "Kejok" Mackenzie.

He will be furious with me for telling the story of his apotheosis to a wider public. I do it for two reasons. One is that I owe him a grudge for snubbing me. I sat next to him at dinner on the night that his homeward-bound ship called at Zanzibar, and without any intention of annoying him—I had not then heard of his nickname—asked him to tell me something about the Ba-Matope. He scowled at me, declared that there was nothing to tell, and turned his back on me for the rest of the meal. But my chief reason for telling the story is that I believe it right that home-dwellers should know something of what men are doing, and may be called upon to do, on the lonely fringes of the British Empire.

# LOVE'S DWELLING.

**WERE it but a thing of walls,**
**However brave, however bright,**
**The dwelling I would house you in,**
**My spirit could not make it right.**

**Not the proud fastness of my breast**
**To haven you would even dare—**
**My breast that must be crumbling bone,**
**Though I should give you all of care.**

**No, there are bastions braver still**
**To fold your long sweet dreaming in;**
**Wide musics that shall have no end**
**Our singing hearts have made begin.**

**So, Sweet, your two hands in my hands,**
**And fare we forth to take our own—**
**We that have found a safer tower**
**Than any build of carven stone.**

**A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.**

# MISS PODBURY'S ADVENTURE

## By DOROTHY ROGERS

*Author of "If To-day be Sweet."*

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

MISS PODBURY had grey eyes and smooth-brushed sandy-grey hair. She had the general appearance of having been tidily tucked in, from the arms, which she usually carried neatly folded above her waist, to the lips neatly folded above her chin. The upper lip, long and curved, pressed over the shorter under one much as does the flap of a purse; there was even a small mole upon it which, to an imaginative brain, might have represented the snap. The same imaginative brain might have wondered whether her lips had taken this shape from sixty odd years' repetition of her own name: Maud Podbury—Maud Podbury. It seemed more than likely. One thing which no amount of imagination would have attributed to her would have been a kiss—a man's kiss—on those tightly-pressed, purse-like lips. Yet that is precisely what she gloats over, in secret and shamefast glee, and will continue to gloat over to her dying day. And this is the story of how that kiss found such an unlikely resting-place.

There had once been an elder sister, but what her Christian name had been none but the church register and the grey family tombstone appeared to know. Miss Maud never referred to her as other than "my sister." After she had died, in 1914, Miss Maud had, contrary to everybody's expectations, remained by herself in the little isolated cottage that looked distantly down upon the village below. Twice a week she went into Freythrop, neatly dressed in black, to shop; twice a week the tradesmen sent up to Hill Cottage; each Sunday morning she descended to Mattins, except on the first Sunday in the month, when, whatever the weather, she appeared at the eight o'clock Celebration instead.

The little garden that surrounded Hill Cottage was as neat and tidy as herself, full of flowers for as much of the year as the keen, upland winds would permit. Half a dozen hens and an arrogant cock minced and strutted in a run made under a few fruit trees at the back. Beside the run was a grey outhouse in which she kept her spare wood and gardening tools and sundry cast-off articles of furniture and crockery. A straight grey highway ran past the cottage in front; on either side it was bounded by wide fields; at the back, beyond the hens and fruit trees, a little clump of beeches, hardly to be called a wood or even a spinney, separated her from yet more stretching fields. Her nearest neighbours were in the village, a mile or so—which meant two good, long country miles—away.

Fortunately, the only things of which Miss Podbury had any fear were drunken men and spiders; fortunately, because the former never lurched so far out of the village. The latter, regardless of the warnings of superstition, she dealt with, aided by one of her own flat-heeled boots.

Adventure, however, comes once to the most secluded life. It came to Miss Podbury on a soaking wet November evening after a day's incessant rain.

Putting on a long brown mackintosh and goloshes and carrying an umbrella, she sallied forth from her warm and glowing kitchen to feed the fowls and shut them up for the night.

The rain swished unpleasantly down, beating on and under her umbrella, dropping in pattering runnels from the roof, sprinkling from a bare tangle of clematis stems that hung beside the door. In the dank and weeping dusk Miss Podbury picked her way

along the narrow gravel path between her gooseberry bushes and winter greens, gripping in one hand the umbrella and in the other a tin dish full of meal. She had nearly reached the end when, beyond the old, gnarled apple trees, she saw something move.

Half hidden by a wire pergola interlaced with the stems and shoots of climbing roses, she stopped abruptly and, getting even

"As the light fell on him, the shut lids opened and he stared at her blankly."

further into cover, peered cautiously round to see what it could be.

Somebody was scrambling over the wall which separated her little garden from the beech clump beyond.

Gripping the tin dish and the umbrella yet more firmly, Miss Podbury waited. She heard the scrape of boots against the stones of the wall, followed by a thud and a sound that resembled a groan—a man's groan. A white face glimmered in the darkness, then the figure staggered uncertainly

"She boldly entered the outhouse and, shading the lamp with one hand, stared about her."

forward, lurched against the door of the outhouse, opened it and disappeared within.

For a few moments Miss Podbury remained rigidly behind the sheltering pergola. Her heart was beating a little more quickly than its wont, but she was not exactly afraid; or, at least, a certain excitement mingling with fear modified its paralysing results. And while she stood there she reflected sagely that she had really very little to fear. Nobody would come to such a small, out-of-the-way cottage to rob, unless a theft of her fowls had been intended; but that, she was sure, was not the case, for she felt convinced that she had not been observed, and therefore there had been no reason why the trespasser should not have carried out his designs.

From the outhouse came the sound of things slipping and falling, as if a clumsy body had displaced them, then silence. After a short while, there being no further sight or sound of the intruder, Miss Podbury's curiosity overcame whatever fear had accompanied it. Very cautiously she stepped forward, dodging the dripping boughs of the apple trees, and approached the outhouse door. Then she was indeed terrified, for, as she neared the place, she heard strange mutterings and heavy breathing. Was it possible that at last a drunken man had lost his way so hopelessly as to have reached her lonely abode?

Suddenly a deep groan interrupted the muttering, then another, such heart-rending groans that they immediately penetrated Miss Podbury's mackintosh and neat, black bodice, and touched a somewhat shrivelled heart that lay beneath. It was a heart that had shrivelled, as will a plant, only for lack of sustenance, and not from any internal flaw of coldness; therefore it responded at once with a sympathetic throb. Even if the man were drunk, he was most certainly ill, and she must as certainly find out what was the matter with him.

Putting down the dish upon the ground, she slopped resolutely back to the warm-glowing doorway of her kitchen and passed inside. From the mantelpiece she fetched a square lantern in which was a small bit of candle. Lighting this, she again sallied forth, picking up on her way the umbrella she had left open on the step, and plodded through the ever-driving rain to the end of her garden. There, without any hesitation, she boldly entered the outhouse and, shading the lamp with one hand, stared about her.

On the ground in an uncomfortable heap, his head propped up against a log fallen from the wood-pile, lay a young man. His face was deathly white and his eyes were closed, but as the light fell on him, the shut lids opened and he stared at her blankly, with incoherent mutterings. Then again he closed his eyes and groaned.

Miss Podbury bent down and put her hand on his shoulder. His clothes were drenched; she could not tell whether or no they were shabby, for their present state of mud and water was not calculated to improve their appearance, whatever it might have been.

"Get up," said Miss Podbury, "and come indoors with me. You are ill."

The heavy eyes opened once more, but there was no other response to her words. Resting the lantern on a small shelf, she put both arms beneath the shoulders of the young man, raising him a little from the ground.

"Get up!" she said again insistently. "Come, I'm helping you. You can't lie here like this; you *must* get up!"

Something of the force of her will penetrated the dull brain of the prostrate man. With a tremendous effort, and much tugging from Miss Podbury, he managed to get to his feet, and there he swayed dizzily against her, nearly knocking her over as he did so. But the little woman had plenty of sturdy strength. Taking the lantern in one hand and putting her other arm round his tottering form, she began to guide him to the door, urging him continually by repeated "Come, nows!" to keep him to a consciousness of what he was doing. How they lurched and staggered down that garden path, Miss Podbury could never remember without marvel.

Her practical mind thought of the fatal risks of a damp bed. It would take time to get one aired, and this man was too ill to wait. There was only one thing to be done: he must have her own. Supporting, pushing, guiding him, she got him at last into her room, and there, as if mounting the steep stairs had been a final effort of his strength, he collapsed in an unconscious heap upon the bed.

For a moment Miss Podbury surveyed him helplessly. Then, realising that his wet clothes would damp her sheets and blankets more thoroughly than ever the weather-chill could do, she once more faced the situation bravely. She was utterly unaccustomed to men. Not one of the other sex had ever entered her life since the death

of her father while she was yet in her early teens. Nevertheless, with a thankful sense of his unconsciousness, somehow she managed to get the sick man undressed and between the blankets. That accomplished, she began to busy herself to and fro, up and down stairs, filling a stone hot-water bottle, lighting a fire in the bedroom, heating milk —after some deliberation between that and tea, which were all she had to administer to him. Once he came round and had a little food, she thought, she would be able to leave him with safety and make up for herself the bed in the other room, which nobody had ever occupied since her sister's death.

Unfortunately, the young man did not "come round." Instead, he lapsed into intermittent delirium, and all through the long night a small, weary, black figure sat beside him, rising now and then to mend the fire or to wring a handkerchief out of cold water to lay upon his burning forehead, the only thing, she discovered, that soothed his restless ravings. He muttered perpetually of some one named "Brownie," his voice rising, at times, to weak calling that ended in a bout of coughing and faint moans.

It was after six o'clock the next morning when at last he fell into a heavy stupor. During those wearisome hours Miss Podbury had debated and planned what to do. It was not a day on which any tradesman called. Not once in a month did the postman bring her so much as a circular. She had, therefore, no means of communication with the village unless she went herself. Having made sure that the sick man was really deep in slumber from which he was not likely to rouse for some time, she put a wire guard carefully over the fire, hastily donned her outdoor garments, and, despite the earliness of the hour, set off as quickly as she could down the hill.

The rain had ceased and a grey morning was breaking into infrequent and tremulous gleams of wintry sunshine. Freythrop, awakened and busy with breakfasts and the sending off of husbands and children to work and school, was amazed to see Miss Podbury's neat, black figure plodding determinedly along its single street. Every head watched her mount the steps of the doctor's big Georgian house, which swaggered a little pompously among the lower and humbler grey buildings on either hand. Her imperative raps upon the large knocker were heard right down the street. They were also heard from within, and she was seen to enter. Within a very few minutes she and the doctor emerged together. He went round to his garage, drove out in his car, Miss Podbury stepped in beside him, and together they sped away through the village and out in the direction of her own home. Leaving Freythrop fairly seething with curiosity, they slid smoothly and speedily upon their way up the steep hill and stopped at her cottage gate.

There was a great stillness as they entered, a stillness which struck her as almost ominous until, going quickly upstairs, followed by Dr. Maugrie, she cautiously opened her bedroom door and found her patient still asleep, one arm flung out across the counterpane.

Dr. Maugrie went to the bedside, looked down upon the young man, and gave a very faint exclamation. Putting out his hand, he gently took hold of the other's wrist. The sick man moved restlessly. Miss Podbury heard his hoarse murmur: "Brownie, I want you!" After a moment he opened his eyes, but seemed to be unconscious of the doctor's presence. She herself caught his gaze, and, with knitted brows and a dazed effort to think, he stared at her blankly, then once more his lids drooped and he sank back into sleep.

After an examination the doctor diagnosed his case as a very severe attack of influenza, with slight congestion of one lung. He rubbed his chin reflectively, looking at Miss Podbury.

"I don't know quite what to do about him," he began. "He can't be left here, and yet——"

"Why not?" she demanded sharply.

"Well, you are all alone in the house and with nobody to give you a hand at looking after him. I think——"

Once more she interrupted.

"I can look after him all right," she said. "He isn't fit to be moved to the Cottage Hospital, and, besides, it isn't necessary. I found him and brought him in here, and I can nurse him."

A queer sense of proprietorship in the unknown man had arisen within her at the doctor's implied suggestion of moving him elsewhere. Across the bed she looked from her patient to Dr. Maugrie with a quick watchfulness which forcibly reminded him of a terrier standing over his bone and resentfully daring anyone to snatch it away. He smiled at her kindly.

"You are a good, kind soul, and he will be quite safe in your hands. I'll——"

"Brownie!" breathed the unconscious lips.

Dr. Maugrie paused, still thoughtfully rubbing his chin, and glanced down at the sick man.

"I'll send him up the physic he wants," he went on in deliberate tones.

Some time later, when Miss Podbury had breakfasted and moved energetically about her small household duties, she returned to the invalid to find him at last awake and fully conscious. He swallowed obediently the food she brought him, and then seemed feebly anxious to talk. His first inquiries were naturally concerned with his own advent into her cottage.

"I remember the wood," he murmured, after she had related how and where she had found him. "I remember the wood. I was feeling awfully shaky and bad--this thing had been coming on for days—and I knew there was a short cut down into the village, if only I could find it. I had walked about six miles, and I suppose it was too much for me." He stopped and sighed weakly, closing his eyes for a moment. "Then I saw a light," he went on. "It must have been from your door when you opened it. I remember trying to get to the light, and—and that's about all."

He regarded her helplessly, then a look of gratitude came into his eyes.

"I say, it was awfully good of you to take me in! I might have been a tramp or something. You don't even know now that I'm not!"

She surveyed him calmly in her turn. His haggard and unshaven face had yet a look of refinement, and the deep blue eyes had a very engaging expression. Moreover, his voice was unmistakably cultured.

"I think I know a gentleman when I see one," she remarked drily.

He stretched out his hand.

"I don't know how to thank you," he said feebly, "but will you shake hands?"

She found her rough, bent fingers enclosed and held in a way that was singularly pleasant. Withdrawing them, however, she observed unemotionally: "Now you'd better stop talking, and keep your arms under and go to sleep, or the doctor will be angry."

"The doctor?" His tone was startled.

"Yes, he came this morning early, before you came to."

"What—what doctor?"

"Dr. Maugrie. He's the only doctor in Freythrop."

The sick man raised himself a little in bed, knitting his brows anxiously.

"Did he see me? Did he—— What did he say?"

"He said you'd got 'flu and congestion of a lung, and that you weren't to be moved."

"Nothing else?" The blue eyes searched her face.

"Nothing, except that he'd send up the physic. Now, keep your arms under! I never knew such a restless man!"

From Miss Podbury's tone one might have imagined that her life had been one endless experience of men of all sorts, ailing and otherwise.

"Aren't you comfortable?" she demanded.

"Yes, thanks. Tell me about this Dr. Maugrie. He—he interests me."

"He's neither more nor less interesting than any other man, I suppose," replied Miss Podbury drily. "They're all alike, as far as I can see. I can't think what women find in them to make such a fuss about, cading them up and spoiling them in the way they do!"

Her patient's eyes roved round the neat little room, from the blazing fire to the daintily arranged tray beside his bed, then back at the small, stiff figure erect on her chair. He recognised not only the pluck that had moved this solitary spinster to bring an unknown sick man into her lonely abode, but he understood, too, the kindliness that lay so very imperfectly hidden by her dry and rather forbidding exterior. He said nothing, but a slight smile just quivered at the corners of his mouth. Miss Podbury was, however, quick to notice it; her face reddened, and she went on more tartly still:

"You've got to look after them when they're ill, but that is neither here nor there; it's common humanity. They're all fools or babies, and they cause all the trouble there is."

She was now working herself up to a fine warmth of indignation, in the heat of which she intended to wither all implied reference to her personal acts of kindness towards one of the despised sex.

"My mother could have told you a tale!" she pursued disgustedly. "Not but what my father wasn't a good enough husband when it came to it, but the trouble he caused, to begin with, before they were married! Huh! He must needs go thinking she was showing too much favour to another fellow—a farmer over Issington way. There wasn't anything in it—she'd only been pleasant and

friendly—but he made such a to-do that my mother, who was a proud woman, sent him packing."

"And how did they make it up?" her patient inquired with interest.

"Well, he had the sense, when he found out his mistake, to put his pride in his pocket and go back and ask her forgiveness—and mighty humbly he had to do it, too!"

"And she forgave him straight away?"

"Of course she did!" almost snapped Miss Podbury. "Women always do. Haven't I told you they are fools about men? They seem to lose their heads entirely. Why, look at the way these village girls run about after their 'boys,' and go sauntering along the lanes on Sundays, kissing in every meadow gateway. They don't even mind your going by and seeing them! Shameless, I call it! *I*'ve never been kissed by *any* man," she announced with acerbity, drawing herself up more primly than ever, "no, nor ever will be!"

The young man smiled absently.

"You haven't much opinion of my sex," he said.

"Opinion? I haven't any opinion one way or the other," the little woman replied with illogical indifference. "I only keep my eyes open and see all the trouble men cause, and thank my stars I haven't any dealings with any of them. Why, here's another case," she exclaimed, with a sudden spark of triumph. "Dr. Maugrie's daughter—Miss Annette—she was engaged to some young man, a nice enough young fellow! they tell me (I never saw him myself; she met him away in London), but jealous! From all I hear, they quarrelled because he seemed to fancy she was getting too friendly with the young *locum* who was here for a bit when Dr. Maugrie had the gout so badly in the spring. And that was broken off. And there's Miss Annette fretting herself thin for a young fool who hasn't the sense to own up that he's made a mistake and say he's sorry. It beats me!" Miss Podbury shook her head solemnly.

The young man moved his head restlessly to and fro on the pillow. "Perhaps he never realised that she could forgive him," he said dully.

"Huh! That's like a man!" retorted the expert. "Didn't want to pocket his pride, that's what *I* say. Well, he deserves to lose her. The pity is that she minds like she does. I——"

At that moment she was interrupted by the sound of a gentle knock on the front door below. Going to the window, she peeped out.

"Why, if it isn't Miss Annette herself with your medicine! She's looking that upset, too. I wonder what's the matter. I'll just go down——"

"Wait a minute Wait a minute!" her patient broke in hurriedly, pulling himself up in bed.

"*Will* you lie down and keep your arms under?" Miss Podbury cried exasperatedly.

"Yes, yes. But before you go down, give me some paper and pencil; I want to send a note to—to Miss Annette. I'll keep under the bed-clothes afterwards, but I *must* write that note."

As she stared at him in mute astonishment, the knocking was repeated below.

"I can't keep her waiting on the door-step," she remonstrated tartly.

"I won't be a second writing it. Please—please!" he said, stretching forth an impatient hand.

She hastily opened a drawer in the dressing-table.

"Well, well, don't agitate yourself. Here's a pencil and a bit of paper. Will that do? Now be quick about it!"

The young man seized both eagerly and hurriedly scribbled a few words.

"Here it is," he said. "Come here. I want you to read it first."

There was a prolonged knocking at the front door as Miss Podbury bent over the page. He grasped her arm, and, as she read, she gave a little gasp of surprise. The note ran: "Brownie darling, I've been a jealous fool. Can you ever forgive me? I want you so! Your lover, Jim."

She stared at him blankly.

Then came the moment that Miss Podbury still gloats over, with a warm and pleasant thrill on the left side of her tightly-fitting bodice, whenever she thinks of it, a thrill qualified, only for her self-esteem's sake, by a thought of the omitted reproof she had been too dazed to utter. With a quick movement of his hand, he drew her suddenly down and planted his lips full on her neatly-folded mouth.

"One man has kissed you, anyway, you good little woman," he said very softly.

Then he pushed her off with weak but eager and impatient hands. "Now go and make her come up, quick!" he said.

# MRS. PRIDGET
# THE MEMOIRS OF A MOTOR MASCOT

## By BARRY PAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LENDON

NEVER will I permit mere personal vanity to deflect me from the ways of truth. The human autobiography is only too often a matter of reserve, cowardice, and compromise. You will find nothing of the kind here.

It was the intention of my manufacturer that I should be a doll—I make no secret of it. I was in the gollywog class. My face was black, my eyes were distraught, my clothes were frantic. My only expectation was a year or so in a nursery, a decline in favour, and then oblivion. It was my lot, and I did not repine. Never for a moment did I dream that it would be my high destiny to ride the bonnet of a proud motor-car.

There must have been something about me—that mysterious something which we call quality, so hard to define and yet so easy to recognise. There I sat in the window of an Oxford Street shop with many others beside me. Not one of the others ever rose above a perambulator. George Baird, as he passed the window, saw me and instantly selected me.

"See that ?" he said to Nancy, his wife, pointing me out. "I mean the lady of colour with the white rims round her eyes and the abbreviated garment of hectic tartan. I am going to buy her."

"What for ? Don't be a fool, George."

"Because I need her, because you need her, and because the car needs her. If ever I saw a motor mascot that was ninety-eight per cent. efficient, I see one in that lady. And she has the additional advantage that she's only one-and-fivepence-halfpenny. I will make her mine."

At this time George and Nancy were recently married. Nancy could say "Don't be a fool, George," in such a way that it sounded like an expression of adoration. She did.

George would not permit the attendant to wrap me in tissue-paper, but dropped me into his pocket.

"And what's the name of this lady you're going about with ?" asked Nancy.

"The lady in my pocket is Mrs. Pridget. Her full name is Agatha Pridget, but we don't know her well enough to call her Agatha just yet."

"No ? Who was Pridget ?"

"Hush, my dear, hush ! We never mention him. He's dead now, and I don't want to go into details, but he was not a nice man. So she became a mascot. Poor soul, she had to do something !"

This was not the only occasion on which I found these two people saying what they must have known to be absolute nonsense. I do not pretend to explain it. I said nothing. It was not for me to speak. I had just been promoted from the position of baby's doll to that of motor mascot. The satisfaction which I naturally felt inclined me to take lenient views.

That evening, after dinner, I was taken to the little garage and attached by string to the bonnet of a small two-seater. The attitude I was compelled to adopt was inconsistent with beauty or dignity.

"And there you are, Mrs. Pridget," said Nancy. "Your legs are anatomically incorrect and you are showing too much of them. Your hat's all anyhow and suggests intemperance. But I like the expression in your off-side eye, and I have much pleasure in entrusting you with the care of this noble little car. Good night, Mrs. Pridget."

"Good night, darling," said George.

The light was switched off, and I was left in darkness.

The following day was a Saturday, and it was principally at the week-ends that the car was active. We drove out into the country and pulled up at a small village inn for tea. The car and I remained outside the inn. Motor mascots never have tea; it is supposed to take their attention from their work.

I had waited some time when there came slouching up the road a young man in a seedy tweed suit and cloth cap. He seemed interested in the car, and walked round it once or twice. Then he went up to the door of the inn and listened. He came back and quickly made his preparations for starting the engine, but before he had time to complete them, George and Nancy came out of the inn and said "Hi!" and other things. I expect that young man is still running. He looked as if he meant to go for quite a long time.

Both Nancy and George were very complimentary. They said, though they did not seem to have noticed it until they were outside the inn, that they had felt me calling them. George went so far as to bend down and kiss me on the hat. When we got back to the garage, Nancy tied a piece of gold thread round my neck and informed me it was the Gold Chain of the Car Defenders.

"He then approached me, cut the strings that bound me to my place, and flung me into a ditch by the roadside."

After that the luck seemed to vary a little. Sometimes things went very well, and George called me star of his soul. Sometimes they went very badly, and he said that I was a horse-faced hag. He had quite a large repertoire of useful words.

And then came the time when the car and I were to take the young couple to dine with Nancy's Uncle Peter.

Uncle Peter was a bachelor, and lived alone in a house that was too big for him. He was probably the most precise and punctual man that has ever been made.

He hated anything impromptu. He always wanted due notice. He regarded his house and the conduct of his house as a kind of exhibition of perfection. And if you caught him out when the exhibition was in some trivial detail not in working order, he very much resented it. He was old-fashioned and somewhat irascible. Nancy was not particularly fond of him, but, after all, he was a bachelor, and had to leave his money to somebody.

His house was only six miles away, and we started in plenty of time. At about the end of the first mile we picked up a puncture in the near-side off-wheel. The car was jacked up and the spare wheel fitted. But it also took time. As George took his place at the wheel again, he called me a worthless trollop, and asked me to pay a little more attention to my job. Half a mile farther on the car stopped dead. The trouble this time was diagnosed as a small piece of grit blocking the pipe that supplied the petrol. This took George a great deal more time. It was quite clear now that they would be ten minutes late, and Nancy said that she definitely did not dare to be ten minutes late. A quarter of a mile farther on the other back tyre picked up a puncture.

"We ought to carry about a hundred and nine spare wheels on this car," said George bitterly. He then approached me, cut the strings that bound me to my place, and flung me into a ditch by the roadside. He said he could make a better mascot out of an old match-box. By the time that the car was ready to start again, it became a question whether it was worth while to go on to Uncle Peter at all. They would be half an hour late at least. Nancy thought it might cause less unpleasantness if they wrote later and said they'd mistaken the date. So they turned homeward, leaving me in a ditch with damp dead leaves and large worms, and the Golden Chain of the Car Defenders round my neck. It was a very trying time.

On their return to their house they found a telegram awaiting them from Uncle Peter, which had apparently been delivered two minutes after their departure. It ran as follows:

"Greatly regret that, owing to sudden and very unexpected domestic trouble, I must ask you to postpone your visit."

"There you are, George," said Nancy. "And what did you say and do to poor Mrs. Pridget? We didn't know anything about it, but she did."

"Well," said George penitently, "we must eat something, and then, when we've done that, I'll take the car back, pick Mrs. Pridget out of the ditch, and put her back again on the bonnet. What do you say?"

"Oh, I'd like to come along. Mrs. Pridget's beginning to frighten me rather. She knows too much."

It was only after a long search that George found me. He apologised profusely for having called me a cock-eyed walrus, and said that he unreservedly withdrew the imputation. It seemed to me that on this occasion, as on many others, he talked much nonsense. However, I was safely restored to my old and honourable position.

The next morning a letter came from Uncle Peter, in which, through mists of euphemism, the salient fact emerged that Uncle Peter's tried and trusted butler had selected the previous evening as a suitable occasion to get most thoroughly and tempestuously drunk. Uncle Peter expressed the greatest satisfaction that his telegram had reached them in time. The butler had apparently rather made hay of the dining-room.

Nancy has now tied a second piece of gilt thread round my neck, and informs me that this is the Golden Cordon of the Friend of Owners. This is, in its way, gratifying.

I have no doubt whatever that I shall now retain my position until the time of my final dissolution, and this, I am sure, will be postponed as long as possible. The moment any part of me tends to become unstuck, Nancy is prompt in the work of repair.

ACCORDING TO PLAN.

MOTHER (to small daughter doing too well at Christmas dinner): Remember, Barbara, there is plum-pudding coming.
BARBARA (seriously): Yes, I know, I'm saving my neck for that!

# THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### TACT.

***By K. W. Simpson.***

"I AM searching for inspiration," said the Professor in his gentle way.

"You won't find it 'ere, sir," said his housekeeper briskly. "I've dusted this desk, and there's nowt on it but what you see." She gave a final flick with her duster, and the Professor's eyelids fluttered nervously.

"I thought perhaps you could help me in the matter, Mrs. Perkins," he said deprecatingly. "I want to buy a Christmas present for a lady."

"Sakes alive! And what sort of body may *she* be?" asked his guardian angel, not without asperity. This was the first time she had ever known her master remember Christmas, and that there should be a lady in the question—— No, it would never do.

"Is she a young lady, sir, or old like yourself?" This nonsense must be nipped in the bud at once.

"Old, Mrs. Perkins?" said the Professor with a start. "Would you call me old? I am only fifty." He looked at her quite pleadingly.

"There are fifties and fifties," said Mrs. Perkins firmly. "I expect you wos old at twelve, sir—one of them lads with his nose stuck in a toom."

"Tomb?" said the Professor faintly.

"One of them musty books. I expect they're called tooms because they smell like one."

"Tomes, Mrs. Perkins, tomes!" said the Professor. "So you think I was that sort of boy, do you?"

"I guess you never played leap-frog with the other boys, sir."

"Leap-frog? No, I don't know that I ever played leap-frog," said the Professor. "Do you think a good warm fur, Mrs. Perkins? Ladies always like a pretty fur, don't they? What sort of thing are they wearing now?"

"Don't you be spending your money on no furs, sir," said his housekeeper earnestly. "They'd 'do' you, sure as eggs is eggs. You'd be a child in their 'ands. You don't know a skoonk from a rabbit."

"Well, well!" said the Professor helplessly. "Have you *no* ideas on the subject, Mrs. Perkins?"

"There's H.'s catalogue, that might help you," said his housekeeper half-heartedly.

"Ah, this is better!" said the Professor, turning over its gaily illustrated pages. "Dressing bags, hats, camisoles—what are camisoles, Mrs. Perkins?"

"Eh! You can't give 'em things like that," said his housekeeper, scandalised. "I don't know who the body is, but you'd better stick to chocolates."

"Chocolates?" said the Professor, his face falling. "This is for an old friend, Mrs. Perkins, one who has always been very kind to me."

Mrs. Perkins sniffed. "Let it be chocolates," she said firmly. "She can't build on chocolates."

"Build?" said the Professor, feeling out of his depth.

"Well, chocolates is chocolates," said his housekeeper. "If you sent her jools, she might think you meant more than a merry Christmas."

"Dear, dear!" said the Professor, wiping his spectacles. "I had no idea that gifts had so much significance."

"You wouldn't!" Mrs. Perkins replied, looking at him compassionately. "You live among them tooms, and you know as much about the world as a new-born babe. All ladies like chocolates, sir. Take my advice."

So chocolates it was, and when Mrs. Perkins found the box on her plate on Christmas morning, her thoughts lay too deep for tears.

"To think I might 'ave 'ad a skoonk fur or a new 'at," she said to the interior of her tea-cup. "He's never thought of giving me 'owt before, and now I've wasted the chance of a lifetime. Why couldn't 'e ask me straight out what I'd like? I suppose that's what you call tack? Well, I never *did* think much of tack. There's always a catch somewhere!"

An American firm advertise themselves as the world's largest manufacturers of "musical instruments and saxophones." This confirms our suspicions about the saxophone.

TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE NURSERY.
Street Arab: 'Old yer 'oss for ye, Guv'nor?

### A MARTYR TO FASHION.

*By T. Hodgkinson.*

Muriel and I have long been admitted to be the leaders of the smart set in our suburb, and such a position wants living up to. Especially is this so when it comes to entertaining. Our reputation demands that any party of ours must be run on the very latest lines. To give our visitors an egg for tea, when Mayfair has transferred its allegiance to watercress or shrimp paste, would be our social ruin.

That is why we are among the most diligent readers of that part of the press that devotes itself to the doings of Society, and that is how we gathered the details of the very latest in hospitality.

Briefly, the latest idea among the Bright Young Things of the day is to create mirth by including imitation viands among the real, and enjoying the mystification of the guest who has, for example, helped himself to a plover's egg of wax in mistake for the genuine article.

"How wonderful!" said Muriel reverently, when I read the tidings out to her.

"Blood will tell," I agreed, and, having thus paid our tribute to our superiors, we turned to the consideration of practical matters. It was about time we ourselves gave a party, and the

THE FESTIVE "BORED."

question of introducing a touch of novelty into it had been rather worrying us.

"Just the very thing. They'll love it," Muriel went on, referring to our guests.

"Better leave it till late in the meal, so as not to spoil their appetites," I suggested.

"Right till the very end," she said.

"In that case," I pointed out, "we might use those cigars your father gave me; they look exactly like tobacco." But Muriel rightly remarked that the best humour should not savour of cruelty, and I left the menu to her.

As a sportsman, I even agreed to take my chance with the others, and remain in ignorance of which particular comestible was spurious.

I cannot say that I really enjoyed my dinner that night. The consciousness that every dish might contain the fashionable fake produced upon me much the effect that dining with the Borgias must have had on their contemporaries.

In fact, it is not too much to say that as it neared its end I heaved a sigh of relief. Evidently Muriel had found it difficult to get the necessary imitations, or had decided to leave

her joke until we had a larger company, or one which did not include the Browns.

The Browns are charming people—he is alleged to pay super-tax—but they are undoubtedly old-fashioned and unlikely to appreciate a practical joke. Indeed, at the close of the meal they gave us an example of their obsolete views.

For it was solely at their request that our little Beatrice was allowed to come down to dessert. Mrs. Brown was longing to see her, and expressed the opinion that it was such a sweet idea having the darling in to jog Daddy's elbow and remind him to share his port with the tablecloth and not keep it greedily to himself.

Beatrice likes Mrs. Brown, but she loves fruit, and she lost no time in making her wishes known.

"Want a banana!" she said, and, having helped herself from the dish, began to peel it, oblivious of the company.

EQUAL TO THE OCCASION.

LITTLE GUEST (at party, to his hostess): No, please don't bother to send any one with me, I'm not a bit frightened to go home in the dark by myself—I'm an awfully good runner, y'know!

The company, for its part, was resuming the conversation which her entrance had interrupted, when suddenly Beatrice gave one strangled scream and started foaming at the mouth.

It broke up the party, of course. I hastened to carry her upstairs, the company tactfully withdrew, and Brown, at my request, asked the doctor to call without delay.

But by the time he arrived I had been told by Muriel what was the matter with Beatrice. My unfortunate child had only taken the soap banana which had been enclosed in a real skin to make it more realistic.

The doctor, however, attributed her "fit" to over-excitement, and insisted on calling (at the same price) the following day. Blackmail, I call it.

### THE ENDLESS SONG.

THE proposal to broadcast Eskimo songs from the Arctic Circle is interesting, but I am afraid that although the Eskimo has not much to make a song about, he takes a long time over it.

The colder the climate the longer the songs is the general rule. Icelandic and Scandinavian minstrels were notorious for non-stop ditties, and have been known to wear out two or three harps during the performance of one saga.

Unless stunned by well-aimed beef bones early in the proceedings, they would go on and on and on after dinner till all the guests disappeared under the table. In fact, a minstrel who knew his job could spread one song and an encore over the entire season.

### ERMYNTRUDE MEANS WELL.

*By Ada Leonora Harris.*

ONLY a day or two ago Enid and I were saying that we should certainly have to part with Ermyntrude, otherwise we should not have a relation left.

I pass over the affair of the beef which she boiled in the saucepan in which she had previously dyed a red jumper, having forgotten to scour the saucepan between the two proceedings.

It made the beef a beautiful colour, and Aunt Jane had two liberal helpings, and wasn't a ha'porth the worst. In fact, she doesn't know to this day that the joint she praised so highly was indebted for its rich colour to Ermyntrude's jumper.

OVERHEARD IN A "PEA-SOUPER."

"Oh, please could you tell me, am I on the other side of the road—or haven't I crossed over?"

And yet Ermyntrude is such a good worker, and so good-tempered, and always means so well.

The unfortunate affair in connection with Uncle Amos Higgins, my well-to-do bachelor uncle, whose favourite nephew I was once supposed to be, was simply owing to Ermyntrude's passion for cleanliness, especially with regard to glass and silver.

"I *do* like to see it all clear and shiny," she has remarked more than once.

On this particular occasion she had detected signs of sediment at the bottom of the port wine decanter.

When Uncle Amos, who is devoted to port—it is his proud boast that all Higginses of the male persuasion die of gout—happened, most unluckily, to drop in the same evening, and I offered him a glass of port, I had no idea that the fluid I poured was a decoction of salt, soda, and tea-leaves which Ermyntrude had left "to soak."

It looked like port in the twilight; what it tasted like only Uncle Amos knows.

Ermyntrude was apologetic to tears.

"Pore old gentleman!" she exclaimed, after the door had closed behind him. "I don't wonder he was annoyed. But I meant well. As for his langwidge, I didn't think nothing of that. I've got a uncle in Billingsgate Markct."

"I put a good heaped teaspoonful and then some," she remarked cheerfully.

Uncle Parker stirred it, waited some moments for it to cool, and then took a deep draught.

Heavens! His strangled gasp and the contortions which passed across his countenance struck terror to our hearts.

At the same moment there were hasty steps in the hall, the door was burst open, and Ermyntrude appeared, wild-eyed and incoherent.

"I hope I haven't poisoned the pore gentleman, but the tins must have got mixed, and the colour's so alike you can't hardly tell 'em apart. P'r'aps if he was to take some salt and water——"

THE USEFULNESS OF LITERATURE.

HOST: Now, please, make free use of the library.
GUEST: Oh, thanks, but I've given up cross-word puzzles. They've been out of fashion for weeks!

Still, we thought this would be a warning to Ermyntrude, and she would be more careful in future.

So when Enid's uncle, John Parker, came to spend an evening, we felt that, as he was an abstainer, a non-smoker, a vegetarian, and several other things I can't remember, nothing could very well go wrong, especially as the chief supper-dish was a leek pie which Enid had compounded herself.

Well, the evening turned chilly, and water seemed a cheerless beverage at supper-time. Uncle John Parker declined coffee, as it kept him awake. If a cup of cocoa were obtainable—

Ermyntrude was summoned.

"Make it nice and strong, please," said Enid.

Ermyntrude reappeared shortly with a steaming cup.

"What is it? What have you done?" burst from Enid and me.

"It's curry powder. And I put a good heaped teaspoonful and a half. I meant well, but what his pore inside must be feeling like——"

It was pretty much the same thing over again. Uncle John Parker's remarks were less forcible than those of Uncle Amos Higgins, but we felt that we should have to part from Ermyntrude.

Then, about a week later, came a letter the tone of which was much more friendly than we could have expected, and one sentence of which I quote:

"The chronic indigestion from which I suffer has been much better since my visit to you. Is it possible that the curry powder had a beneficial effect?"

### A GOOD EGG.

**Once a turkey egg was I,**
**Lying with a dozen others,**
**All shelled out successfully,**
**Sisters five and seven brothers.**

**On a moorland farm we thrived—**
**Near a high-road through the heather—**
**Those amongst us who survived**
**Welcome Spring's unwelcome weather.**

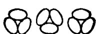
**Two plump poults, who loved to roam,**
**Passed away with scarce a pang,**
**Hustled off to their long home**
**Underneath a charabang.**

**Still the traffic claimed its spoil,**
**Two bold brothers, growing strong,**
**Shuffled off their mortal coil**
**Underneath a charabong.**

**Rats accounted for the rest,**
**I remained of all the brood,**
**Rearing a majestic crest,**
**Eating quantities of food.**

**When your board begins to groan,**
**When I hold the pride of place,**
**Don't forget on me alone**
**Rests the triumph of my race.**

***Jessie Pope.***



### THE TIME-TABLE.

"I'M not surprised at your being unable to keep a servant for any length of time, my dear," said Mr. Smithers to his superior half. "It is certainly due to lack of system."

"Perhaps you would like to have a shot at it, then. I don't mind saying I'm absolutely fed-up with the business." This from Mrs. Smithers.

"A house," continued Smithers, "should be run on a schedule. A new maid is coming to-morrow. Let us now compile a time-table setting forth her duties for the week, so that no minute of the day is unoccupied."

It was done and stuck up on the kitchen door. On the morrow the master of the house received the new domestic personally in the kitchen. "That," he remarked, waving his hand towards the lengthy document, "is your time-table."

"Ho," she said, "that's my time-table, is it? And very nice, too. But if you think I'm a blinkin' locomotive steam-engine, you've made the mistake of your lifetime!"

***R. H. Roberts.***

AN operatic tenor, we learn, has had his nose remodelled in order to improve his singing. We are not told whether it has been merely waved or fitted with a permanent turn-up.

ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

MOTHER. Why do you cry here in the dark? You don't cry at home when it's dark.
LITTLE BOY: Yes, but it's not the same dark!

### JANE AT THE SALES.

**" Splendid ! " cried Jane, as she seized the sales catalogue.**
**" I'll make a little list out, before I start to buy ;**
**I'm nothing (said Jane) if I am not methodical.**
**Lend me your pencil, dear—my fountain pen's run dry.**

**Two pairs of sheets, say, and half a dozen pillow slips,**
**Stockings for Stephen and a petticoat for Prue ;**
**Boots for them both and a saucepan for the scullery.**
**I *won't* get a jumper ; I can make the old one do."**

**I left Jane busy with her pencil, but presently**
**She called at the office to collect some extra cash.**
**" Men talk such rot," she said, " about the bargain mania ;**
***I'm* not, at any rate, the sort to fall for trash ! "**

. . . . . . .

**Home in the gloaming came Jane with her purchases,**
**Tired were her feet, but triumphant was her eye.**
**She hadn't got the sheets, nor the half a dozen pillow slips,**
**She hadn't got the stockings,**
**And she hadn't got the petticoat,**
**Boots she hadn't got,**
**Nor the saucepan for the scullery,**
**(" List, dear ? I lost it when I first began to buy . . .")**
**But she *had* got a lampshade,**
**She *had* got some lingerie,**
**She *had* got a hat**
**And a jumper and a cushion,**
**Hankies for Prue,**
**And an attaché case for Stephen,**
***And she had got* (for me) a fierce and futuristic tie.**

***B. Noël Saxelby.***

THE EXPLANATION.

DISAPPOINTED ANGLER (to ditto, as he examines stuffed specimen fish at angling inn): Of course, old man, you must remember these are pre-war fish !

" YOU give your clerks two weeks holiday every year, don't you, Mr. Jones ? " asked the friend.

" A month," grunted Jones.

" A month ? " remarked the friend.

" Yes," said Jones, " the two weeks when I go for my holiday and two weeks when they go on theirs."

A GLASS merchant's truck had drawn up at the kerb, and from it a gang of workmen were taking a big plate-glass pane to be placed in the shop window.

As, carefully bearing the big pane, they proceeded toward the window, there gathered the usual crowd, including two small errand-boys, who evinced much more interest in the proceedings than anyone else.

When fifteen minutes had passed, one of the youths, growing weary of the extreme deliberation of the workmen with the glass, turned to his companion and said :

" Well, we may as well be moving, Tom ; they're not going to drop it."

" So Dauber has found a purchaser for his Academy picture ? "

" Yes, through a lucky accident. They hung it the wrong way up by mistake."

NO ESCAPE.

"How terrible your father suffers from dyspepsia!"
"Yes—we all do."
"No—really?"
"Yes—from father's dyspepsia."

MORE EXPENSIVE.

PASSENGER: I want the Bank of England.
CONDUCTOR: That'll be another penny, ma'm.

One of the famous movie stars tells a good story of a young actor who recently made his *début* on the screen, and soon afterwards was talking about it to a dramatic critic.

"It was a staggering experience," he said, "actually to *see* myself acting."

"I suppose it was," said the critic. "Now you know what we critics have to go through."

The Mistress: Sarah, tell my husband I'm ready now.

Sarah (returning): Mr. Wiggs asked me to tell you that he's been ready several hours, and now he's got to shave again.

A scientist declares that he has discovered a method of producing blue and green shrimps. There is some talk of making him an honorary member of the Brighter Crustaceans Society.

A Norwegian has invented a projectile by means of which war can be waged without men. But this gets us no nearer to the solution of the problem of how to wage peace.

Diner: Waiter, there's no grouse on the menu.

Waiter: Yes, sir, beg pardon, sir, *coq de bruyère*. French, sir.

Diner: Dash it all, haven't you got any English grouse?

Society ladies are now dyeing their pet dogs to match their frocks.

Fido: If my mistress means to wear tartans when she goes North for the shooting, I shall jolly well stay at home.

Editor: Can't you think of something more snappy for this wedding report than "The presents were numerous and costly"?

Reporter: How about "The gifts were multitudinous and of intrinsicality"?

Sir Sidney Low is of the opinion that man is a comparative new-comer on this planet. Yet some people seem to think they own it.

The discovery that some fishes can sing is not very surprising. Look how they are always practising their scales.

Mr. Newrich was walking round the grounds, and remarked to Mrs. Newrich: "Maria, there's something wrong with this sundial. I never hear it strike."

"Speak to the gardener, dear," she said. "I expect he's forgotten to wind it up."

SAFETY FIRST.

"I must have a room with a piano; what will be your terms?"
"I'll wait until I've heard you play before arranging."

"My dear, I'm quite alarmed! I believe our gardener is a Communist!"

"How dreadful! What makes you think so?"

"Well, the only things he grows in the kitchen are beetroots, red cabbages, and scarlet runners!"

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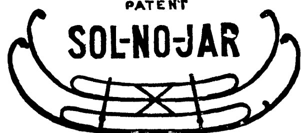


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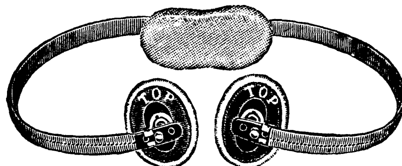


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Modern education was being discussed, Jones saying it was of little value, while Johnson protested it was a good thing. "Now, here's my son Jack," said the latter. "Only eight, but ask him any question, and he'll answer it."

"Well, Jack," murmured Jones, "how many are seven and four?"

"Twelve," came the prompt reply.

"There you are," said the proud father, "only missed it by one!"

that you cannot help to try your own case?"

"Well," said the baffled one ruefully, "I did think I was in luck."

A scientist states that several million years ago the days were only four hours long. These must have been the "Good old days" we hear so much about.

THE PROSPECT.

Labourer: Can I 'ave the afternoon orf? I wants to see abaht a job for the missus.
Foreman: Will you be back *to-morrow*?
Labourer: Yus, if she don't get it!

A civil action was being heard in a certain court, and counsel, having opened the case, called the plaintiff, whereupon a member of the jury rose, left the jury box, and made his way to the witness box. Asked what he was doing, he stated that he was the plaintiff. "Then what are you doing on the jury?" said the judge.

"I was summoned to sit on the jury," said the man, producing the summons.

"But surely," said the judge, "you know

Actor: I brought down the house last night, laddie.

Candid Critic: Yes, I heard that some one threw a brick at you.

There is some talk of erecting a statue in America to the man who introduced the Prohibition law. We don't like this revengeful spirit.

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HOUNDS BEFORE THE START.

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"'Tell me what you thought,' I said, as the old man paused. 'I thought that there had been a struggle between the Powers of Good and the Powers of Evil, and that the Powers of Good had prevailed.'"

# GREAT OAK

## By ELLEN THORNEYCROFT FOWLER

### ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED SINDALL

I SUPPOSE there come seasons in every married woman's life—provided that the married woman is also the head of a household—when she feels that the next meal of which she has the ordering will stick in her throat and choke her, and that, for a short time at any rate, she must either eat meals which some other mind than hers has contrived and ordered, or else she must die of starvation. It was when such a season had come to me, without any apparent reason whatsoever, that my husband—who is a doctor, and therefore understands these strange happenings—ordained that I should take a thorough holiday with my great-uncle at his lovely little vicarage in the heart of the New Forest, and leave my husband to the tender mercies of our most excellent cook, and my children to the equally tender mercies of their nurse and governess.

This ruling I implicitly obeyed, according to the express conditions of my marriage vow, and speedily regained health and poise in that fairyland which was new in the days of William Rufus, and is equally new to-day with that newness that is older and more abiding than age and decay can ever be—the newness of youth and spring and the dew of the morning. After three weeks in that enchanted land I found myself eating and sleeping as I had slept and eaten in my childhood, and walking from morning till night, through dappled shadows on

velvety sward, without a sensation of fatigue.

My great-uncle had held a family living in the Forest for sixty years. He was now considerably over eighty, and kept two curates to do most of the heavy work; but he still preached once on a Sunday, and still visited such parishioners as were in need of his ghostly counsel, and no one who asked for his comfort and advice was ever sent empty away.

To me there is always something magical and mysterious in the atmosphere of a forest. Trees seem to be sentient, living creatures, yet endowed with a life and a consciousness which are quite different and apart from the life and consciousness of human beings. In all primeval religions trees were regarded either as objects of worship in themselves, or else as closely connected with the gods. Gods and nymphs could turn themselves into trees at will, and the heathen altars were usually raised in the midst of a grove, so that the tree-spirits might take their parts in the rites. Moreover, the symbol of "Man's first disobedience" is the partaking of the fruit

> Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe.

I expressed this idea of mine to my great-uncle in one of our many talks together, and he said: "I agree with you, my dear, that there is a strange power given to trees, but it is not always a power of evil. Remember that there was a Tree of Life in the old allegory as well as a Tree of Knowledge, and that the Tree of Life is still to be found in the vision of the New Jerusalem. But that trees have some strange connection with the supernatural world, I cannot deny. Like ourselves, they seem susceptible both to the Powers of Good and the Powers of Evil."

I had been staying for three weeks in the Forest, and had thereby regained health and strength, when one afternoon, during one of my lengthy tramps, I came upon a spot which I had never seen before. On one side of the woodland path stood a very old cottage with the enticing legend of "Teas provided here" stuck up in the window, a very attractive legend to me at that particular time of day; but for the first few moments I could pay no attention to it, so engrossed was I with the vision of beauty on the opposite side of the path. In a small clearing or glade, covered with velvety grass, I saw the most beautiful tree I have ever seen in my life, a thing so perfect in itself that it caused me to stand and gaze with wonder at its marvellous beauty. It was a huge oak—so large that the forest trees which surrounded the glade looked mere shrubs in comparison—and yet a thing of absolute grace and loveliness, arrayed in the gold-green foliage of early summer. The air was very still just then—not a leaf shook, not a bird twittered—and this wonderful tree reared itself on high like an embodiment of the essence of all natural beauty. I stood still, lost in amazement at the glory of the sight, and sighed with pure joy that I had accidentally come across so magnificent a monument to the departed spirits of the old pagan world. At least, that is how it struck me at the time, and I smiled to myself as I felt I understood how it came to pass that our far-off Druid ancestors worshipped oak trees. If the oak trees of their days were as beautiful as this, who could blame them?

As I stood gazing at the marvellous old tree, a strange thing happened. It lost nothing of its great size and perfect symmetry, but it seemed suddenly to become less substantial, and as I stood transfixed at this weird phenomenon, I gradually saw through its widespread branches the smaller trees at the far side of the glade. Slowly it grew more fairylike and unsubstantial, until at last it faded away altogether, and left me staring at a perfectly clear and open space in the midst of the Forest.

I rubbed my eyes, but no oak tree came back again; and then I wondered if perhaps I was overtired—though I did not feel so—and if my need of my tea was making me a prey to hallucinations. So I hurried up to the old stone cottage and knocked at the door. It was opened by a stout, middle-aged woman, who cheerfully bade me enter, and offered to prepare for me as quickly as possible an appetising meal. I waited, glad of a rest, in her beautifully proportioned parlour while she rapidly fulfilled her promise; and when she was waiting upon me as I did full justice to her delicious tea and poached eggs and home-made bread and creamy butter, I questioned her about the place of her abode.

"It is a very old cottage, ma'am," she replied, "hundreds of years old, I believe, and it has always been called Great Oak. A funny name, you'd say, considering that there are no oak trees near it."

"Then why was it called Great Oak?" I asked, pricking up my ears at this unexpected confirmation of my vision, which

I had so far thought it better not to mention.

"Well, folks say that years and years ago, in that open space you can see just opposite this window, there used to stand a wonderful old oak tree, the largest and the oldest tree in the whole Forest, and that the cottage was called after it. But that was long before our time, and my husband and I have lived in this cottage over thirty years."

"And was there no tree when you came?"

"None whatsoever, ma'am, nothing but the open space you see now. My husband is one of the foresters, so this cottage suits us; besides, I make quite a nice little sum by providing teas in the summer months for passers-by. You'd be surprised how many passers-by I get, considering the place looks so lonely and out of the world."

"And it is very picturesque," I added.

"So the artists say who come here, and there are plenty of them, I can tell you. But that sort of thing don't have much weight with me and my husband. We're plain folks, and don't go in for fal-lals of that kind."

I could see that she was plain—there the good woman spoke quite accurately—I could easily believe that she had got a husband "to match" (which is what most women get, though they are sometimes slow to recognise the fact), but where I could not see eye to eye with her was in her description of a thatched stone cottage, hoary with age, as a "fal-lal"—a term much more applicable to the jerry-built tenements of to-day.

"My husband and me don't mind about its being pretty, since you live inside your house and not outside it, as you might say, and I will own that the thick stone walls make it very warm in winter and cool in summer; but we do mind about its being cheap, which it is and no mistake, owing to the queer stories there are about it."

"What sort of stories?" asked I, on the alert.

"Oh, all sorts of nonsense that my husband and me don't hold with. Fal-lals, we call them, and take no heed."

"Please tell me something about the fal-lals," I pleaded.

"Well, ma'am, they do say that hundreds of years ago, long before the time of William the Conqueror, there were queer goings-on under the great oak tree that used to stand in that open space."

"What sort of goings-on?"

"Heathen goings-on and things of that kind. They do say that the heathen folks of that day made gods of oak trees, and that this particular oak tree was one of their special favourites."

"The Druids, I suppose you mean," I suggested.

"I believe they were called by some such name, ma'am, but I'm bound to say that it isn't a religion I know much about. I've always been Church of England myself, and so has my husband since he married me. He was brought up Baptist, but after our marriage he joined the Church, me always having been used to it and not liking a change. But as for Druids, or whatever you call them, I know little or nothing about them; but I fancy it wasn't a very nice religion, and that they didn't have very refined services."

I was thrilled with interest. "I don't think they did."

"No more do I, ma'am, judging from what I've heard. I've heard that they sacrificed human beings in that very clearing—burnt them to ashes, as you might say—and I don't hold with any religion that does things like that."

"Do you mean that human sacrifices were offered up under the great oak tree?"

"That is what folks say, but I can't answer for the truth of it, there having been no tree there in our time, and we've lived here for over thirty years."

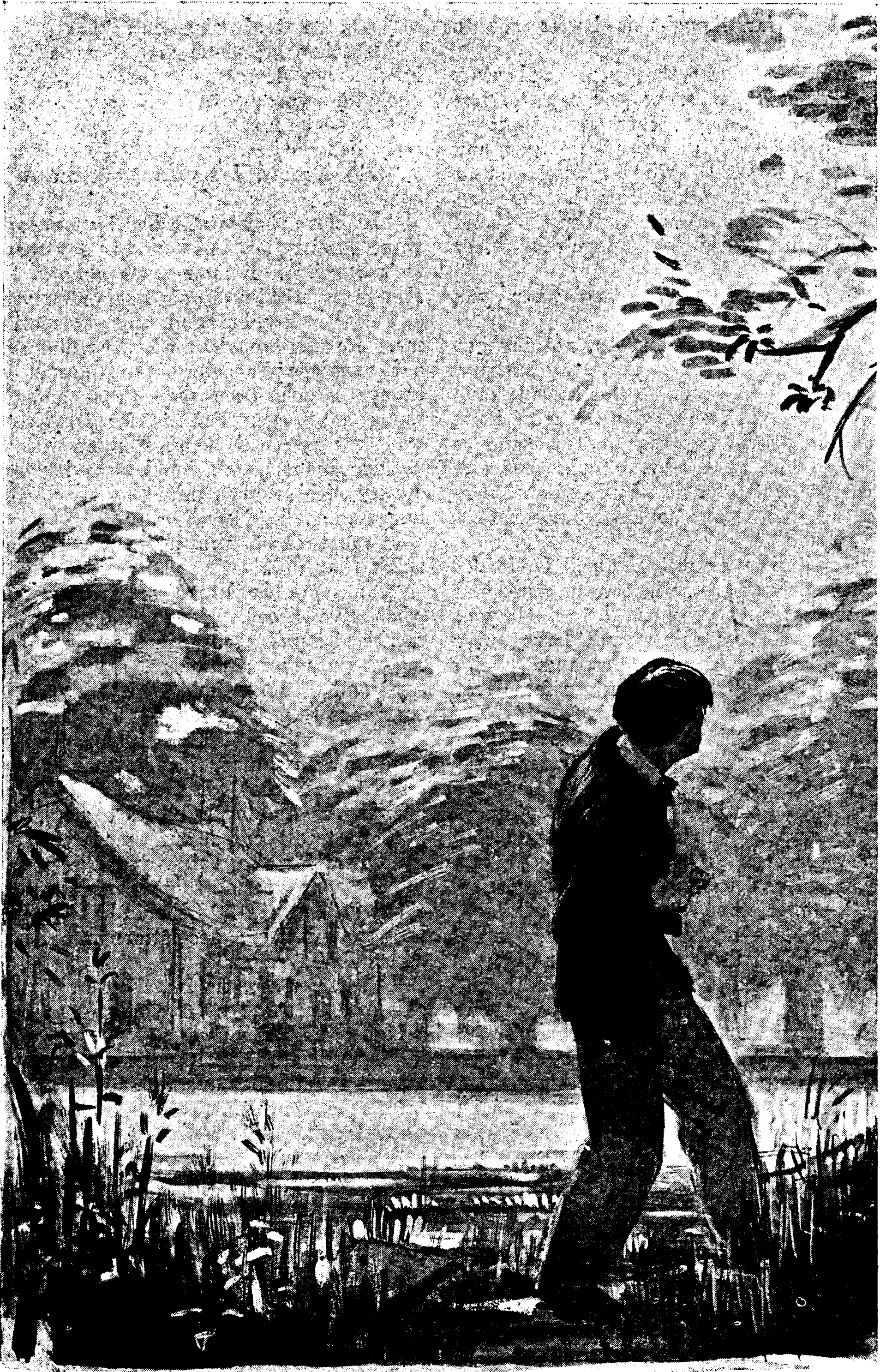
"But why does all this make the cottage cheap?" I asked. "I should have thought that such exciting associations would have added to its value."

"Well, you see, ma'am, those unpleasant old heathen services have given the place a bad name, as they say—made folks call it haunted, and rubbish of that kind. In fact, it is said that queer things have been seen here from time to time up to the present day."

"What sort of things?" I asked, consumed with interest.

The good woman was delighted to impart information, even though it were information she considered unreliable. "Some folks say they have seen big men in long white robes hanging about the place, and others even go so far as to say they have seen the great oak itself. But my husband and me don't pay no attention to such nonsense."

"It is very interesting nonsense," I remarked.



"'He was, naturally, enchanted with the manifold beauties of the Forest; but he was unnaturally absorbed by the perfections of one particular tree.'"

"That's as may be, but we make no objection to it as long as it lowers the rent. And they say that hundreds and hundreds of years ago, before the time of William the Conqueror, as you might say, there was a circle of big stones under the great tree, which stones were used later for building the cottage."

"Have you or your husband seen anything yourselves?" I asked—a foolish question, I fully admit.

It was answered with the scorn that it deserved: "Not we. We aren't that sort; we've no patience with fal-lals, we haven't. But of course we're glad of anything that lowers the rent."

I felt that my present audience would not be a sympathetic one with regard to the story of my vision of the great oak, so I held my peace on that score, and contented

myself with asking one final question. "Are there any special times or seasons when people see these queer things?"

"It's funny you should ask this, ma'am, because there are. The shortest day and Midsummer Day are the dates when the people that see things here expect to see them, them being the principal Church Festivals of those queer old heathen folks, when they held their special services with human sacrifices and the like."

I then paid for my excellent tea and took my leave, heartily thanking my garrulous hostess for all her interesting information. As I passed out into the afternoon sunshine I looked hard for the giant oak, but there was no sign of it; the velvet sward of the little glade was smooth and unbroken.

But I was thrilled with fresh excitement when I suddenly remembered the date—it was Midsummer Eve.

I reached my great-uncle's vicarage in good time for our evening meal, and when that meal was finally despatched, and we were sitting chatting in the study, whilst he smoked and I knitted, I told him the whole story of my afternoon's adventure.

He heard me through, in absorbed silence, from beginning to end. Then he said: "My dear, this is very interesting, and you will find it even more interesting when I have told you the history of the great oak—that is to say, as much of its history as anybody living knows, and what nobody living knows except myself."

"How lovely!" I exclaimed. "Do begin at once, there's a dear."

So he began. "When first I came here as incumbent over sixty years ago, I had a very great friend named Oliver Allison. He was an artist, and he and I had been friends from boyhood, having gone to the same school as little boys, and having been at Winchester together. So when I set up in a home of my own, he was my first guest. He was, naturally, enchanted with the manifold beauties of the Forest; but he was unnaturally absorbed by the perfections of one particular tree—that tree, my dear Mabel, which, through some mysterious working of the unfathomed forces of Nature, you have been permitted to see this afternoon."

"I suppose it was a living tree then?" I said.

"It was, my child, and was known far and near by the name of Great Oak, since it was the largest and the most perfectly formed tree in the whole Forest. And, more than that, local legend said that originally it had been a sacred oak tree of the Druids, and that there was once a ring of stones at its foot."

"A sort of 'chapel of ease' of Stonehenge, I suppose."

"Precisely."

"Then what became of the sacred stones?" I asked.

"I believe that later they were used for building the little house which is still called Great Oak, and which stands quite near to the glade where the oak tree originally grew."

"And what happened to the tree, Uncle George?"

"Ah, that is the point of my story. Oliver Allison was so delighted with the Forest, and found so many subjects for his pictures therein, that he decided to live here altogether."

"And probably he wanted to live near you, too," I suggested.

My great-uncle smiled. "You are very flattering, my dear. At any rate, Allison decided to take a house in the Forest, and was quite wild with delight when he found that the old cottage close to the great oak was to be let, and was to be let very cheaply, as it had the reputation of being haunted, which, of course, added to its value in Oliver's eyes."

"It would in mine."

"At first Allison was delighted with his new home, and the beauty of his surroundings caused him to paint some exquisite pictures. But after a time I noticed a change in him. His admiration of the Forest seemed—if you understand what I mean—to focus itself upon the oak tree at his door, and this became an obsession with him. During my long life I have noticed that it does not make for health or happiness when people bestow upon *things* the intense affection which ought by rights to be given to their fellow-creatures. I have known people to be consumed with passionate love for a place, or a house, or an animal or a beautiful work of art, and I have never known such love to lead to any good."

"I think I see what you mean," I said, "though it never struck me before. Then do you think it wrong to love mere *things* so much?"

"Not exactly wrong, but unnatural; and what is unnatural can never be healthy. It seems to me that well-being consists in order and harmony and symmetry, and to give to a *thing* the love which ought properly

to be given to a *person* is out of harmony with the ordered rules of existence. Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, render unto Nature the things that are Nature's, but do not render to Cæsar or to Nature the things which you owe to God and to man."

"I agree with you, Uncle George. And I suppose you felt that Oliver Allison's attachment to the great oak tree was unnatural?"

"Undoubtedly it was; it became an absorbing obsession. He sat gazing at it from his door or his window; he painted it from every point of view; and he lay resting in its shadow for hours and hours, and appeared to hold some sort of strange communion with it. Gradually it became the one subject of his thoughts and his conversation. He was constantly picturing to himself—and to me, his frequent companion—the scenes which formerly had been enacted under those huge spreading branches: the heathen rites, the human sacrifices, the weird mysteries by which the ancient Druids celebrated their great festivals at Midwinter and Midsummer. The great tree, which had been hallowed (or the reverse of hallowed) by the rites and the mysteries of a bygone religion, appeared to have retained its ancient powers of commanding worship; that is the only explanation I can offer for Allison's strange infatuation, for he came to regard it with an unnatural devotion which was little short of adoration."

I shuddered. "How very queer!"

"It was very queer, my dear, and it made me very uncomfortable, for the obsession threatened his nervous system and his whole mental balance. He began to see white-robed figures hiding in the shadow of the tree, and to hear strains of wild, primeval music. I remonstrated with him, and begged him to go away for a time; but it was no use. He seemed to have ceased to care for me or my friendship, or, in fact, for anything save that beautiful and horrible tree."

"How did it end?" I asked.

"I am coming to that, my dear. On an early morning of one Midsummer Day a frightened messenger came to bid me go at once to Great Oak. I went as fast as I could, and there I found the body of Oliver Allison hanging from a bough of the huge tree, self-slain. The great oak had claimed its accustomed human sacrifice on Midsummer Eve, and the early sunbeams of Midsummer Day had gilded the dead body of the victim."

"Oh, how terrible!" I exclaimed.

"It was. The coroner's jury, of course, returned a verdict of suicide, and the doctor added that Allison's lonely life and artistic imagination had unhinged his mind. But I had other views?"

"And what were they?"

"My verdict, which nobody asked for and nobody got, was that the Powers which the old Druids had located in that tree had never died, and that Oliver's quick response to their dormant influence had roused them to activity once more. As you are aware, the quality which we call faith is the sole link between the material and the spiritual—even God Himself has chosen to make this the only channel whereby Man can come into touch with Him—and I hold that inversely the same quality, turned, so to speak, upside down, is Man's only way of access to the Powers of Evil. As through faith we open our souls to the Powers of Light and are filled with them, so through faith we open our souls to the Powers of Darkness and bid them enter; and this is what I believe poor Oliver had done."

"Then do you believe that the old heathen gods and goddesses still exist?"

"I do. I believe they are identical with St. Paul's 'principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places,' and with the fairies and gnomes and goblins of countryside legends, and with the fallen angels of the Christian Church."

I was silent for a moment, thinking over what I had heard. Then I said: "Is that the end of the story?"

"Not altogether. I was so firmly convinced of the evil power of that terrible tree that late in the evening of the same day—so late that the superstitious fears of the foresters had given the place a wide berth—I went there by myself to make an effort to combat those powers; and after offering up a prayer to the God of Truth that all false gods might be cast down and overthrown, I carved a cross upon the huge trunk of the tree. Whilst I was thus engaged a strong wind sprang up, and the great oak swayed to and fro and waved its huge branches in the air with sounds like the groans and cries of a lost soul; but I stood firm until my task was accomplished. Then I went home and slept like a child, in spite of the fact that there was a tremendous thunderstorm. Of this storm I

knew nothing until next morning, when I heard that the great oak had been struck by lightning and split in two, the right half of the tree falling one way, and the left half of the tree the other, no part being left standing above the level of the ground. The foresters said that was often the way with very old trees; they rotted inside until they became as brittle as china. But once again I thought otherwise."

"Tell me what you thought," I said, as the old man paused.

"I thought that there had been a struggle between the Powers of Good and the Powers of Evil, and that the Powers of Good had prevailed."

# THE WILD WEST WIND.

HUNTED across the blue,
Chased by the wild west wind,
Clouds of snowy and slaty hue
Are huddled, crumpled and thinned,
Till through a rent the sun bursts through
And with radiant patchwork paints the view.

Belts of luminous green
Chasing a belt of dun;
Tiled roofs spring to a fiery sheen,
Stacks gleam gold in the sun—
Upland and pasture, first blurred, then clean—
A changing mosaic chequers the scene.

Now it will rain!
A minute passes,
But look, again
Those gathering masses
Scatter and tatter, cleft in twain,
And vivid sunshine scours the plain.

JESSIE POPE.

# THE INDIAN TRIBES OF CANADA

## By CHIEF BUFFALO CHILD LONG LANCE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

FORTY-FIVE years ago the Indians of Western Canada were roaming the plains as free as when Columbus first placed the standard of the Spanish crown on American soil. The white man had not yet come into their country. To-day they live on large reservations situated far out from the towns and cities that have since grown up, and therefore they have seen very little of the white man since. For these reasons they may be said to be the truest type of aboriginal North American left on the continent. They retain all their old customs, they are non-English-speaking, and they still paint their faces and wear much of the native raiment.

CHIEF RUNNING RABBIT.

The Indians whose photographs appear on these pages belong to the tribes of Blackfeet, Sarcees, Bloods, Crees, Assiniboines, Sioux, Musqueams and Stonys, of Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia and the North-West Territories.

All of these tribes, except the Sioux, Assiniboines, and Stonys, are indigenous to Canada. The two bands of Sioux here sought refuge in the Canadian North-West following the Minnesota Massacre of 1862—when they slew five hundred white people at Redwood, Minnesota—and the Custer Massacre of 1876, when Sitting Bull wiped out the 7th United States Cavalry on the Little Big Horn River in Montana. In spite of countless representations from the United States, these bands of Sioux have staunchly refused to return to that country.

Many who have written about the Indian have gained their knowledge from one tribe or district; then, believing that they have learned all that is to be known about the race, they have proceeded to write a volume on "The Indian." Even an Indian cannot do that. All Indians have so-called red skin, but further than that one cannot generalise with safety. There is as much difference between the plains tribes and the bush tribes as there is between the Englishmen and the Turk. The plains Indians, and especially the Blackfeet and the Sioux, are proud, independent, defiant; they cannot be driven. The bush tribes of the Far North are docile, slovenly, and rather inclined to dodge a fight.

Without this knowledge that Indian tribes differ just as white nationalities, many well-meaning authors have done more harm than good to the Indian race. One group portrays the Indian as a romantic god. Another group depicts him as a shiftless, irresponsible good-for-nothing. The reader of the romantic writer happens to see his first Indian in a country where the natives have been long associated with the worst elements of civilisation, and the unexpected contrast arouses a repulsion that would never have existed had he not received a first-impression that all Indians are alike. On the other hand, writers of some Western novels and cheap motion-picture plays have probably never laid eyes on a representative of one of the plains tribes or a pure-bred Indian.

I have sometimes felt like putting a bullet through a movie screen on which I have seen a made-up "Indian" bowing and salaaming to a master like a native of some Far-Eastern country. That is not in Indian nature, not even the peaceful bush Indian. An Indian bows to no master. He retains his dignity in the presence of his highest chief. Again, I have seen the Indian portrayed as a treacherous timber-wolf. The Indian is not treacherous. The word of the pure Indian is as good as his life laid in one's hand. It is true that Indian blood mixed with certain foreign bloods produces individuals who are too crooked to trust even themselves; but these disreputable characters are no more Indian than they are white. French blood mixes very badly with Indian. Scotch blood mixes better with Indian than any other.

BIG DARKNESS.

CHIEF CALF CHILD.

This leads me to answer the oft-asked question: "Has the Indian a sense of humour?" I dare say there are few races with a deeper vein of humour than the Indian; but his humour inclines to funny situations and actual happenings rather

than toward manufactured jokes, which seldom "get over" with him. If a person tries to be funny, then he is not funny in the eyes of an Indian. Instead, he is ridiculous, and though he may sometimes bring forth a ripple of scornful laughter, this "mirth" easily freezes into stolid-faced contempt.

People often ask me about the Indian tribal "dialects." Among the score of tribes with which I am acquainted, there are no such things as dialects. Distinct tribes have distinct languages, more different from each other than English and Russian. For instance, the words "white man" in the Blackfoot language is "apeeqwan"; in Sioux, "washeechu"; in Cree, "monias"; in Squamish, "whulwhul-laten."

It is interesting to note that the Cree word for white man, "monias," means "a

SPOTTED EAGLE.

MANY DUCKS.

helpless person with little experience." The white man first impressed the Crees as being helpless because he had to carry around with him so many things that seemed unnecessary to the Indian, such as compasses to find his way about, razors, toothbrushes, soap, cooking utensils, drinking-cups, combs, and so forth. The Indian found his way about by the bent of the wind-swept trees and prairie grass, and at night by the dipper-stars and other celestial bodies. He never needed toothbrushes, because he ate nothing which stuck to his teeth, such as bread and other civilised articles of food. He pulled his whiskers out one by one as fast as they grew. For soap he used the soft, clean mud at the bottom of running streams. He cooked his food directly over the fire, drank his water from the palm of his hand, combed his long hair with his fingers, and used the placid surface of a spring for his mirror. Even to-day the Sioux word for mirror is "he peeped into the water at himself."

The Cree language has produced three words which have attained universal usage in the English language, "moccasin,"

"squaw," and "Eskimo." Eskimo comes from the Cree word "Iyeskimo" (eaters of raw flesh), the descriptive cognomen by which the Crees referred to these residents of the Polar region when the white man first came among them. Squaw is derived from the Cree word "esquao," which means, literally translated, "the lowest of beings."

Some will wonder why the above Indian words mean so much when translated into English. This arises from the fact that the languages of the tribes belonging to the Algonkin stock are agglutinative—that is, words meaning whole sentences are made by taking a root syllable from each word and grouping them together in one short word. In order to show the brevity of these roots, and at the same time show why hyphens are always used in such Indian words and names, I shall give here the longest word in the Blackfoot language: Ma-ta-pi-mat-o-kots-i-tu-tui-sup-i-ksix-is-tu tu-kiu-ats-ests. This word means a whole paragraph, almost as long as the one in which it is here printed. It will be noticed in this word that certain letters in the alphabet do not occur in the Blackfoot language, namely, l, b, r, d, f, z and g. It is full of gutturals, very staccato, and spoken with great stateliness. On the other hand, the Sioux language, belonging to the Dakota stock, contains more of the above consonant letters than any others, and it is full of such soft sounds as ch's and sh's.

CHIEF BUFFALO CHILD LONG LANCE.

The Indian languages are very elaborate instruments. Blackfoot has nine conjugations; it takes forty-nine pages of foolscap to conjugate one verb in all its modes and tenses. It has modes inexpressible in English. Cree has twelve words for "snow," each expressing a different condition of snow, and each requiring a sentence to express it in English. It also has three third persons, enabling one to refer with pronouns to three third persons without having to repeat their names, as must be done in English. Blackfoot nouns have four forms—masculine, feminine, animate and inanimate. There are no swear or "cuss" words in any of the Indian languages. The worst word in Cree is "muchastim," meaning simply "bad dog." Any Cree will fight when that word is applied to him. The Indians of the North-West have no such words as "Hello," or "Good-bye." When

they meet they either say nothing or utter a gruff, nasal grunt: "Hanh-h!"

Indians are perfect in their grammar. Not to be able to speak the language correctly lowers one to an inconsequential position in the tribe. Hence the first duty of the mother is to teach the child from infancy to speak with grammatical precision. This is a tedious and painstaking job, owing to the fact that Indians have never put their language into written form. How, without a system of writing, they have been able to maintain such an elaborate language through all the ages—and some of these languages are said to be more elaborate than even Sanscrit—has always been a puzzle to scientists.

There are certain outstanding characteristics which may be attributed very generally to all tribes of Indians. Among these I would mention in the order of their pre-

WOLF COLLAR.

YELLOW TEPEE.

dominance, their deep religious nature, their love of sport, their fidelity to friends, their calm acceptance of the inevitable (called stoicism), their simple honesty and truthfulness, their great power of physical endurance, their dislike for manual labour, their inborn dignity of bearing, their great understanding and adaptation to mechanical things, their equanimity, their deep respect for the aged, their love of ceremony, and their unfailing concern for the poor. I would add to this their inability to appreciate the value of money; their innate desire to turn money into something which can be eaten or used.

The restless, aggressive Blackfeet are a very tall people, averaging well over six feet. They are of a dark, copper hue, with retreating foreheads and long, crooked noses. They stick to the custom of painting their faces according to the way they feel when they arise in the morning—happy, angry, warlike, or sad. They are expert horsemen, and are never more contented than when they can remain in the saddle

from dawn to sunset. They live on a large reservation, fifty miles long and ten miles wide, near Gleichen, Alberta. Once a year the entire tribe, numbering seven hundred, journey to the Skunk Tallow Flats, along the Bow River, to hold their famous sun dance for two weeks. They pitch their tepees in a large circle, about a half-mile around, and in the centre of this camp they erect the big green sun-dance lodge, where, hidden from the eye of the white man, they carry out their ancient religious rites.

Terrible suffering attended these sun-dance ceremonies until certain rites were made illegal by the Canadian Government a few years ago. With a sharp knife all the participants in the dance cut a deep slit on either side of their chest, and through the flesh intervening between these slits they inserted strong rawhide thongs which were tied to the central sun-dance pole. The dancer then jerked upon these thongs, danced and jerked, until the flesh gave way and he was freed. Sometimes they would dance all night before being able to break these heavy sheaths of muscle. When all efforts had failed, a horse would be hitched to the other end of the thong and they would be dragged around the lodge at top speed until the flesh broke away. Little children would run in and jump on the back of the brave, to give added resistance to the pull. If the thong should still remain in the brave's chest after this means of releasing it had been tried, the horse would be backed up four or five feet and driven forward with a tremendous jerk. Then, with a slishing sound, the flesh would break and the warrior would be freed. All men of the tribe had to go through this ordeal before they could enter the ranks of the "braves," and thereby gain the right to go out and fight with war-parties. When caught in a tight place in battle, a brave would sometimes make a vow to the sun that he would again go through the sun dance if he should be spared ; and he invariably kept his vow. Others would vow to go through the dance if a sick relative or friend should be spared from death. These ceremonies are now greatly modified.

I am often asked how Indian names are acquired. As almost every one knows, Indian names are descriptive—that is, they always mean something. Every Indian has at least two names during his life. He is given one at birth, descriptive of some peculiar circumstance at the time of his birth, and this name carries him up to young manhood. Then, when he is able to go out on his first war-party, or to demonstrate his prowess in some other physical way, he is given the name, which will stick to him the balance of his life, unless at some future time he earns a still better one. Therefore Indian names are quite comparable to military decorations ; they tell the story of the bearer, what sort of fellow he is, a brave or a coward. For this reason, no Indian will tell anyone his

CHIEF WEASEL CALF.

own name, invariably turning to a third person to do this for him. He is too modest to brag of his prowess. The tribe, presided over by the chief, must always award these names at a special ceremony attended by the entire tribe. No two persons in a family have the same name.

Indian names involving the eagle, the grizzly, the buffalo, the moose and other courageous animals, are excellent ones, while such names as Crazy Snake, Spotted Dog, and so forth, are not so good. Sometimes the name will be entirely descriptive of the act in battle which earned it, such as Uses-

Both-Arms, Kills Four, Charges-in-the-Night, and so on.

While in England and France, as an officer in the Canadian Army, I met with a lot of misunderstanding concerning the Indian. Some asked me how long we had been in America from India, confusing us with the natives of the Far East, to whom we are in no wise related. The Indian has absolutely nothing in common with Oriental races. He was given the name "Indian" by Christopher Columbus, when he discovered America in 1492, because this *voyageur* thought he had discovered a new route to India. However, the North American Indian never refers to himself as an Indian. Each tribe has its own name. Where the Indian came from, no one knows, but there is no evidence to show that he ever came from anywhere except where he is —America. Indeed, recent scientific discoveries tend to show that he has been here longer than the white man is supposed to have existed. The Goma Man, lately unearthed in California, was found embedded in a strata containing fauna which was supposed to have existed before man made his advent upon the earth. Of the twelve hundred Indian languages in the Americas, not one of them in any wise resembles any other known languages of the remainder of the earth.

Indian languages are grouped into linguistic stocks, such as the Algonkin, Dakota, and Athabascan stocks of Canada. Every language in a given stock has the same grammatical structure, though the vocabularies are different. There are fifty-eight such linguistic stocks north of Mexico, embracing more than two hundred languages, or tribes.

Canada is the home of 106,000 Indians and 11,000 Eskimos. The United States has 300,000 Indians. Indians and Eskimos, it may be mentioned, have always been deadly enemies of each other and have never intermarried, though they live right alongside each other in the Far North. They have definite lines running from east to west across the northern continent, south of which no Eskimo ever trespasses and north of which no Indian ever wanders.

The Indian is gradually decreasing in North America. There is every evidence that two hundred years from now he will have passed entirely off the face of the earth. Before the white man came he died only of old age, contagious diseases were unknown, and the average span of a generation was more than one hundred years. Centuries of freedom from disease have left him without any antidote in his blood to combat the germs of influenza, tuberculosis, and other ailments brought in by civilisation. That proportion of the race which will not die off will be assimilated by the white race. The healthiest Indians to-day are those who have had the least contact with civilisation. Their blood still is pure, but their day will come when the arms of civilisation have extended more broadly into the bosom of the North-West.

Although the Indians of the older generation who were here before the white man came appreciate some of the better things that civilisation has brought, they cannot be said to be pleased with the new era. They fret in their stolid way under the restrictions which now exist. Until a few years ago they were rovers of the wide open plains, and they will never learn to like their present mode of existence, where there is no buffalo to hunt, no adventure in sight, no outlet for their wandering, warlike instincts.

The old people spend their waning days sitting in their tepees, going over their deeds of yesteryear, reminiscing back into those days that can never be again. Sometimes they walk along the prairie with one hand over their mouth, singing their song of sadness: "We are no longer braves; we are no longer men; we are a dying people."

Such is the condition among the older people. The younger generation is groping between the old and the new way, rather dazed sometimes, but trying hard to comprehend things as they are. The older people will soon die off, and then, without the haunting background of the freedom that was, the younger generation will perhaps go forward more rapidly. In time they should become useful citizens of the civilisation which will envelop and absorb them. But it is to be hoped that they will hold on to the true Indian character which is still possessed by them, and which is so easily lost, once an Indian has mixed with the lower elements of other races.

In closing this article I shall quote the concluding entreaty of all Blackfoot speeches: "Mokokit-ki-aekakimat" (Be wise and persevere).

# THE RESTLESS HEART.

MY restless heart fares forth again
From the quiet lanes of home ;
Through the black night, through wind and rain,
My restless heart must roam.
It will not nest among my dreams
In sheltered boughs apart :
Ever for a new road
Seeks my restless heart.

A far gleam pricks the ominous night,
And faintly a far cry
Disturbs the peace of sure delight—
My restless heart must fly.
It will not play with my memories
In the warm light of the fire ;
Ever on a new road
Lies my heart's desire.

My restless heart fares forth again,
Who knows what voice it hears ?
And if the quest is all in vain,
The end foredoomed to tears ?
It will not drift among my prayers
By the altar rising meek—
Ever for a new road
My restless heart must seek.

VALENTINE FANE.

"'Sit down, Miss Cleator. I've got a proposition for you.'"

# THE TEST

## By W. L. GEORGE

### ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

OLD Robroy padded over the loose gravel of the road. At times he tossed his head, irritated because he had been turned from the soft turf which lined it. Upon his back, on a frayed saddle that shone with age, rode a figure that sometimes we may see in the country, a sunburnt girl, rather too tall, rather too thin, coltish and impudent, with a firm mouth, cool grey eyes, and a dark bang of hair under the hard hat. She wore a riding habit of equivocal black, spotted with rain, rusty with sunshine. The gauntlets had been mended at the finger-tips. Lady Jessica Cleator was in her working clothes, and now she had done her work, gone to two cottages with babies' socks and calf's-foot jelly. She did not need to watch old Robroy, who knew his way and found the soft places, so she gazed out in front of her along the winding lane, framed with hedges where the blackthorn had set its white flowerets, and where in the moisture of the spring the primroses looked up, like the little yellow eyes of jealousy. About a mile ahead, upon a knoll, stood the object familiar to her for twenty-four years, Burwith Castle, her home, a vast ugly building of grey stone, with mullioned windows and a tower awkwardly placed at a corner to survey the countryside. Jessica was introspective that morning, for it occurred to her that from that tower one might watch and that nothing came. It had stood for four hundred years, and sights had been seen from it—Cromwell's soldiers in iron and leather, Cavaliers in dirty finery, with tangled ringlets, the gathering of a few recruits from the village to join Burgoyne and make war upon the American rebels. Then the nineteenth century and nothing,

except that sometimes a crack extended or a stone fell.

She thought: Nothing happens except that everything dies. Robroy, knowing that she forgot him, stopped to take breath, disagreeable. He stood before a gate that led into the field, and Jessica looked at it. It hurt her. She had visited cousins and friends, and had seen gates as they ought to be, solid gates of seasoned wood, painted white and well hung. Here was the only gate they could afford, an old gate retaining one good bar, the others replaced by poles of green wood, and the hinges—the pathos of a broken hinge which in its decrepitude cannot hold up the gate and lets it sag down into the mud. In the sweetness of the morning, under the sun so easily benevolent, Jessica felt grow within her the weariness of youth confronted with decay. It was at that moment that round the bend of the lane appeared a figure she knew well, her father, the Earl of Farnshire, Lord Lieutenant of his county, chairman of the bench of magistrates, a man of fifty, with hands and face browner than hers, clad in a negligent tweed coat and breeches, carrying a heavy stick, and slowly taking his exercise, a pipe in his mouth.

"Hullo, Jess! You're back early."

"Yes, daddy. Old Mrs. Frisby is too ill to want to talk."

"Congratulations. Her conversation is so limited. But what are you doing here, looking at nothing at all?"

"Oh, I don't know. I was looking at that gate, really."

The Earl was silent, following her gaze, swinging his stick. He was handsome, the years having only added to his good looks. His hair, though grey, was thick, and he had his only daughter's distant grey eyes. Standing so, with a slightly frayed collar and a badly knotted tie, he held the certainty that saves. But he was annoyed, and he showed it.

"What's the matter with it?" Jessica did not reply. "Of course it ought to be repaired, I know, but what's the good of talking about it? Don't I know that as well as you do?"

Jessica hesitated, playing with the bridle, while Robroy tested the grittiness of the gravel. "Sorry, daddy. Didn't want to make you angry, only you know what I mean."

The father looked up at his daughter, telling himself that she was beautiful. Jessica was indeed almost as beautiful as her father thought her, beautiful like an ill-tamed, uncertain animal. There was in her no visible sweetness, or it was a sweetness enclosed, which none yet had touched. Perhaps he would have resisted if he had seen tears in her eyes, but she looked so firm, so well composed, of wiry white flesh, so immovable, that in his weakness he needed her.

"Jess," he said in a low voice.

"Yes, daddy?"

"We're done, you know. That gate—all of a piece with everything else. Everything's going to the devil. You know that. I've had the tenant up. He wanted to see me as well as Ruan. Only wonder what he thought I could do! Every gate on the estate is the same. Ruan said we could give the labour if Chale found the material. Silly ass! We can't afford to pay for the labour. I haven't got the labour. When I was a boy we used to have two masons, three carpenters, a whole lot of fellows. Now"—his lips took on a sneering expression—"it's all we can do to pay a handy man." He looked away from his daughter and spoke as if to himself. "We get the rents, yes, but we pay the taxes. It doesn't leave much over. We daren't turn anyone out because we can't buy out his improvements. If we get a new tenant, he wants everything put in order, wants a house with a roof without a hole in it, and a tank that doesn't leak like a sieve. I don't blame them. Where's the money to come from? Why, we can't even pay our way at home! It's a shame, that's what it is! I'd like you to have a couple of hunters. We want a new car. Silly of me, I suppose. I've had to raise something on Perrott Farm, just to keep going."

"Oh, daddy," said Jessica in a low voice, "you haven't done that, have you? We've got a mortgage on——"

"I know," said the Earl in a tone which closed his daughter's lips. "I know we're going to the deuce. Mortgage after mortgage. Mortgaging one farm to pay the interest on another. What else are we to do? Shut down and go and live in a boarding-house?"

Jessica did not know what to say. She felt awkward, since never before had her father spoken openly of the disaster which was slowly overwhelming the English countryside. It was hideous that he should speak, for she was accustomed to find things kept quiet, whether they were kept within brains or within hearts. It was indecent that he should expose himself like this. So she

was sorry for him. "Cheer up, daddy," she said. "Things will mend, perhaps."

"Oh, you needn't worry," said the Earl, jaunty again, hurt by his daughter's pity. "You'll be looked after."

"I suppose so," said Jessica, and indeed she was sure that she would be looked after, because women of her caste had always been looked after.

The father looked up and reflected: "By Jove, she's a stunner!" Aloud he said: "After all, one of these days old Mortimer may die."

A blush rose up the girl's cheeks and stood there for a moment. "Oh, daddy," she said, "you're an optimist, that's what you are."

"Well, I'm going on," said the Earl, breaking off with maximum awkwardness a situation that was too tense for his habits.

After a while Jessica rode on, but now her eyes were sharper. She saw the hedges that ought to have been trimmed before the sap rose, but most of which stood out ragged, here and there broken into holes through which soon cattle would escape; she passed a field that lay fallow, soiled with dead campion, dead brambles, forgotten from the previous summer. She went through the iron gates that led into the park, gates where the paint was cracked and peeling. She saw too well that which she knew—the grass growing on the gravel paths, the flower-beds invaded with young weeds, the unlopped trees. And as she reached the stables, where a sulky groom took her horse, she was conscious of every detail. Many windows were shuttered, for the rooms were not used. There was silence in the stable-yard, since only two horses occupied twenty-one boxes. Burwith Castle stood grey and strong outside, but within there was nothing, nothing but that emptiness which poverty loves to inhabit.

Jessica went round to the side-door and let herself in. As she strode along the corridor which led to the staircase, Lewes, the old butler, came to her.

"Oh, m'lady, I was looking for you. Mr. Mortimer is in the gun-room."

"All right, Lewes. Tell him I'll be there in a minute." She ran upstairs to wash and tidy her hair, two steps at a time, and ran down again, for no mental depression could affect the unconscious vigour of her limbs. It was nice to see Tony, she reflected, but a little awkward after what her father had said. She expected he would want to stay to lunch. Well, he could have cold shoulder of mutton, pickles, and bread and cheese, like the rest of them. She went into the gun-room, where the cases were locked, since the shoot was let and the guns were idle. Here were half a dozen basket chairs and a Cromwellian table. Characteristic of Jessica, it was her uncomfortable sitting-room, where a bunch of primroses were stuck in a vase, where upon the table cheap editions of a few novels made another touch of colour. Modernity had set a typewriter on its little table. Just now there lounged at the window a young man not much older than Jessica, only slightly taller than she, and dressed in loose grey tweeds. As she entered he turned to show his rather sulky, good-looking face, burnt by the air into every fold. He had a reddish skin, the effect of which was carried out by a burnt-looking reddish moustache, close-clipped over the lips, fine blue eyes, hair growing low upon the brow and making a peak. Only the mouth prevented Anthony Mortimer from being the handsomest man in the county, for it was together sulky and weak. Either the under-lip hung slightly, or it was drawn into a shape full of resentment.

"Hullo, Tony! Been waiting long?"

"No. How are you, Jess? Feeling fit?"

"Rather! What have you been doing lately?"

"Oh," said Tony, "same old thing—messing about. You weren't at the dance at Burwith. Why not?"

"Hadn't got a frock," said Jessica.

"Oh, rats! Any old thing would have done for a show like that. Wish you'd come."

"Don't be sentimental, Tony. I'm told you spent half the evening with Susie Dorridge. You'd better go in for her. She has pots of money."

"Not for me," he said, "not with a face like that."

"You're too particular. It doesn't suit you."

"No use rotting a fellow," said Tony. His mouth took on a familiar sullen air. "Why don't you go in for some one with pots of money yourself?"

Jessica did not reply for a moment, and looked away. Mortimer realised that he had said the wrong thing. Everybody knew that old Farnshire was practically on the rocks, so he came close.

"Sorry, old girl. I've put my foot in it again." He took her hand. Then she stood back.

"It's all right, Tony. Everybody knows

we're broke—getting more broke every day."

"Cheer up, we'll soon be dead."

"That's all very well, but it'll take a long time."

Mortimer made an effort. "Oh, something's sure to turn up. Why don't you marry me and get it over?"

Jessica smiled. "That doesn't seem likely to settle anything. We aren't even engaged."

"Not my fault," said Tony. "Been stalking you for years."

Jessica did not at once reply. She was suffering, not because she loved Mortimer, but because she realised that he was penniless, and that he was not trained to work and earn her. She liked him—she was very fond of him. She had been half engaged to him for seven years, and they could only wait, wait to be destroyed by slow decay. She was waiting, probably waiting to get married, while Tony waited for Uncle John's legacy that might not come. And the only thing which did not wait was the mildew slowly marching from beam to beam, from life to life.

"'Get out of the way!' said Tony. 'She's mine!'"

"Oh, Tony," she said wearily, "let's talk of something else."

He obeyed, for he, too, wanted to talk of something else. He wanted to escape the tenseness; he did not like this difficult situation which would settle itself somehow, sometime, when somebody did something.

That evening, after dinner, when Jessica sat in the drawing-room upon the Louis XV chair whose back was safe, while her father read "Jorrocks," and Lady Farnshire, with moving lips, worked her way into her twentieth year of "Patience," Jessica suddenly said:

"Daddy, I'm going to Town. I'm going to take a job."

"A job? Whatever do you mean?"

"Shorthand typist. I've been thinking of it in a way for years. That's why I got the machine out of Captain Ruan. And as for shorthand, I've been taking down the sermons. The Rector's too slow, but I've been going round to Burwith, and Mr. Dunning is splendid. Keeps up a steady hundred and ten. Of course I haven't got a job yet, but I was thinking of going to stay with Aunt Hettie."

"What's that?" said Lord Farnshire. Jessica repeated her announcement. "Girl's mad," he remarked, as if to himself.

Lady Farnshire, however, knew Jessica, who was still the child who at the age of ten

had dominated a disagreeable pony after being thrown seven times.

"Oh, Jessica, you couldn't do that! What would people say?"

"They would say," replied Jessica, "that it was the first time a Cleator had tried to make an honest living."

"Mad," soliloquised Lord Farnshire, "raving."

The struggle lasted for six weeks, during which Jessica, in whom a strain of hysteria developed, demonstrated to her parents that she wanted to live, that she could not wait until the castle roof fell upon her, until Tony killed Uncle John. To the end consent was refused, but Jessica went to stay with Aunt Hettie. She was not to take a job, but she was to go to her Aunt Hettie. It was a solution that pleased Burwith Castle, for it seemed to solve nothing.

Gas Corporation. It had happened rather than was done. Aunt Hettie, in tears, was confronted with the fact that on a Monday morning Jessica, who had been answering advertisements since the day of her arrival, was engaged at thirty-seven and six a week.

"But what will your father say?" she wailed. She clasped her Pekingese so hard that the dog lost its temper. A letter came from the Earl, saying more or less that he forbade the adventure, suggesting also that if she did not obey he did not see what he could do. Tony wrote in sentences of six words. He also strongly objected, objecting, however, without arguments. And Jessica relentlessly carried her trunks to a boarding-house, accepting rather guiltily an allowance of thirty-five shillings a week.

She was miserable at the office. She was not accustomed to working from ten to six;

"Bramshaw looked up at the mounted man with a smile upon his face. 'Suppose you get off your horse,' he said in a quiet tone."

## II.

Seven weeks later Jessica was a shorthand typist at the Consolidated Oil and Natural

to take down correspondence about oil was not the same thing as taking down sermons. One did not know what it was about. One

took down remarks about pockets, gushers, derricks, and such-like meaningless things, and one made an awful fool of oneself. Jessica was more or less attached to one of the departmental heads, Mr. Shader, a mild old gentleman entirely devoid of sense of humour. He liked Miss Cleator, as she decided to call herself, knowing that her title would make her absurd, because he was fatherly, and he looked upon her as a sweet young thing with no nonsense about her. Possibly a certain incident pleased him. He had dictated this sentence : " It is necessary to expand in the Namaca Field, since the older area is producing very little this year." Jessica read her shorthand well, but the word " older " she could not make out. The shorthand dictionary showed a possible mutilation of the " d." Finally she produced this : " It is necessary to expand in the Namaca Field, since the olive area is producing very little this year."

Mr. Shader drew a hand through his white hair. " Olive ? Olive area ? How do you mean, Miss Cleator ? "

" Isn't it olive ? " said Jessica shyly.

" My dear young lady, why should it be olive ? "

"Oil comes from olives," said Jessica.

Mr. Shader nearly laughed, but he was not in training for this exercise. Instead he stood up and solemnly said : " You will excuse me for a moment, Miss Cleator—I really must show this to Mr. Bramshaw."

Miss Twigworth, secretary to Mr. Bramshaw, gave Jessica scornful information later in the afternoon. Oil did not come from olives only, not that sort of oil. Was Jessica born yesterday ? This had something to do with making her unhappy, since another girl told her that she must not listen to Miss Twigworth, and that though oil did not come from olives, it did not come from the ground, either. Oil was made out of hair, and that was why it was called hair oil.

Jessica was tired, dust got into her finger-nails, she had no time to get waved, and it was more difficult to live on seventy-two and six a week in a boarding-house than to live in poverty at Burwith Castle. She realised also that to earn one's living may be noble, but is not bracing. She had brought with her a foolish vision of a phenomenal rise, not only in salary, but in position. Yet after six months she was earning not a penny more than when she arrived, and though she could now perform her work, even understand it, it had ceased to inspire her. Perhaps her dislike of Mr. Bramshaw helped to sustain her. He had been rude to her.

Henry Bramshaw belonged to the new type which is dominating the world. Escaping at sixteen from a school where he had been taught everything that would be useless to him, he became a junior clerk. Four years later he was a staff clerk. At twenty-two he realised that there are only two types of men—those who give orders and those who receive them. He opened a shop and sold gasolene. Finding that motorists buy gasolene by night as well as by day, he kept his shop open by night as well as by day, sleeping at intervals. Soon he had two shops. He made money, so did less work. At thirty he owned a chain of gasolene stations. Now he was thirty-six, controller of oil shale mines in Scotland, with dominating interests in Persia, Asia Minor, and Burma. He was a rich man.

Otherwise a rather young-looking man, bigly built, with thick, well-tended hands, a thick, well-shaved jaw, hard eyes, and, so far as anyone could see, no capacity for romance. After being engaged by him, Jessica did not speak to him for three months. Then Miss Twigworth was ill, and she was sent up to him. Bramshaw treated Jessica as she had never been treated before. He did not look at her, dictated, then picked up a report and studied it. She waited. She waited a full three minutes, during which Bramshaw studied the report. She realised that he had finished, and with flushed cheeks, tears rising, she went out of the room.

" I hate him ! " she whispered to herself. " Beast ! "

Jessica was feminine enough to become a schoolgirl in her irritation. Thus she would have been flattered if she had known that Mr. Bramshaw's eyes followed her to the door, appreciating the straight lines of her back. She could not know that he had observed every detail of her hands, that he had gazed at her downcast face, the long lashes, the proud lips.

" That's the girl for me," reflected Bramshaw. He had spoken to her only twice, and that was why he wanted her ; he found vanity in deciding swiftly upon important deeds.

Thus for another three months Jessica was assisted to increase her hatred of her employer, since he sent for her from time to time. Sometimes now he spoke.

" Miss Cleator, look up the spelling of this man's name. I've forgotten it. Take

two carbons and give me one for myself. That will do."

One afternoon Jessica found rushing to her lips this reply: "Do you never say 'please'?"

Bramshaw leant back in his armchair and looked at her with approval. "No," he said, "I don't. Why should I? You're paid to do what I tell you. Why don't you come in here every Saturday and say 'Thank you' for your salary?"

He was right, she reflected, for she was rather akin to Bramshaw. She had his hardness and his courage. Perhaps she disliked him less after this curious incident. Still, she was surprised when a few days later he rang for her.

"Sit down, Miss Cleator. I've got a proposition for you. I want to marry you. Quite a good proposition. You're getting thirty-seven and six a week. If you marry me, you'll have the spending of"—his business caution intervened—"of as much as you like. I'm thirty-six. No education except the one I've got hold of, no manners except when I choose. I'm in love with you. You're not likely to do better. Is that all clear?"

In an unconscious way Jessica had felt this coming, for this man's brutality increased when he spoke to her.

"No," she said.

"Good," said Bramshaw. "I didn't think you would say this was so sudden, or complain that I wasn't romantic. If you had you wouldn't be the girl I think you are. Why won't you?"

"I don't know."

"Don't say that again," replied Bramshaw. "I hate people who don't know why they don't want a thing or why they do. Is it because you're not in love with me? If you were, it would soon blow over."

"You know," said Jessica, smiling, "you can't have proposed very often."

"Never," said Bramshaw, "otherwise I should be married."

She liked him. She could not help it. The thunderous audacity of the man, his disregard of her feelings, made her feel like—like a shrinking oil deposit that is going to be captured. "Mr. Bramshaw," she said, "I won't marry you."

"Very well," said the lover. "You'll change your mind. Now take this down: 'Messrs. Gilwith, Harrison,' and don't forget to put a full-stop after 'Messrs.' I hate sloppy copy."

III.

This had happened a week before Christmas, when Jessica was given a five-shilling rise and four days' holiday, which she spent at Burwith Castle. It was queer to go back to a place where everything was mature, where dinginess gracefully clothed the worn brocade of the drawing-room chairs. Especially it was odd to be called "m'lady" by Lewes, who had not altered in the last twenty years. Queer, too, to meet Tony, just the same, with the same moustache. Her father and mother eating cold mutton at lunch. Jessica had a vision of the leg of mutton on which Burwith Castle had lived for centuries.

It made her happy, and she liked Christmas festivities, the march past of the servants to receive Christmas boxes. Once there had been nine gardeners, seven men in the stables, and eighteen indoor servants. Now only the groom, the chauffeur, Lewes, a pimply boy who helped him, and three maids came to take feudal toll. A footman had gone since Jessica left, and she missed him, for he had amused her, when she was a little girl, by showing her how to snare birds.

"Daddy," she said, when on the third day, the feast ended, she found herself alone with her father, "why has Charles gone?"

"You know all about it," said the Earl. "Can't pay him his forty pounds."

Jessica did not question him, but she found out a great deal during those four days. She spoke with Captain Ruan, who told her that Perrott Farm had now been, not only mortgaged, but sold. The cracks in the tower were extending. The gardener had ceased to combat the weeds. Now in winter they gaily thronged the gravel paths, for in the summer there had been no one to hoe them up. "Weeds," thought Jessica, "weeds!" and her newly sharpened imagination exhibited her race lying upon the ground, with the weeds coming nearer and nearer, getting stronger and stronger.

She felt heartless, but she was glad when she left home. She could not help liking the office with the broad windows and the new paint, the clattering machines, the telephones, the place where something was done, something created, where the weeds did not grow. She was glad to be with Mr. Shader again, who seemed so foolish and was so efficient, glad even to encounter Miss Twigworth.

That state of mind had something to do with the tremor which ran through her frame when, a week later, she was sent for by Bramshaw. Without looking at her, he dictated. She saw that he had finished and was about to rise, when he said : "One moment, Miss Cleator. You're upset."

"How do you know that ?" cried Jessica, angered by this intrusion upon her privacy.

"It's my business to know," said Bramshaw. "It's when people are upset that I beat them. Your left little finger has been trembling all the time. This is the moment for me to ask you to marry me."

"I hate you !" said Jessica. "You're so brutal, so self-assured. I do feel rather cheap, and you want to take advantage of me."

"What else should I do ?" asked Bramshaw. "Always stab in the back; it's safer. Always hit below the belt; it's softer. Of course I want to use your weakness. I love you, so I want to gain my own ends."

"But this is absurd !" cried Jessica. "Really, Mr. Bramshaw, you don't understand me ! Look here, I ought to tell you something I've hidden from you. My name isn't Miss Cleator. I'm the daughter of Lord Farnshire, and really I'm——"

"Yes ?" said Bramshaw. "Go on. Do you expect me to be stunned by this revelation ?"

Jessica felt vulgar. He had to know her name and her position, but she knew that she had put it in a snobbish manner. "Of course, I'm telling you, but—I don't attach much importance——"

"Oh, yes, you do," said Bramshaw. "Now you're ashamed because you've told me something that ought to be understood. You've lived in a world where people don't refer to each other as Lord Mornington, but as Bobbie Mornington, and your difficulty is to tell me that your name is Lady Jessica Cleator without underlining the word 'Lady.' Still, set your mind at rest, Jessica ; I don't look upon your birth as an impediment."

"You know," said Jessica, playing with her pencil, but her voice suddenly small, "I think you're wonderful, but I don't—I'm not sure that I quite like you."

"You're getting away from hatred pretty quick," said Bramshaw. He rose from his desk, put an arm round her shoulders, and, raising her face, laid upon her lips a kiss in which she discerned an odd ferocity. She was too terrified to resist. Indeed, her ears only registered vaguely words of love. "I adore you !" she heard him say at last. "I'd die for you !"

When he released her, Jessica said : "Very well, I'll marry you. I don't promise you love, or affection, or even decent behaviour. I think you're coarse, crude, bad-mannered. I shall blush for you before my friends—indeed, I intend to tell them that I'm selling myself to the highest bidder."

"Find me a bit of paper," said Bramshaw ; "I want to measure your third finger."

## IV.

Letters came from home. Lady Farnshire was delighted that Jessica should get married. Lord Farnshire came to Town, called at the office, and retreated to his club, where he spent several hours in a state of coma, a condition fortunately not uncommon among its members. Aunt Hettie wept. Miss Twigworth and the rest of the staff tried to compromise between their desire to call Jessica "Your Ladyship" and their fear of speaking to her at all. Bramshaw formally dismissed Jessica, and a month after the proposal accompanied her to Burwith Castle.

She had come to know him better in the interval, and found a certain pleasure in his company. Out of the office he was much the same as within, curt and decisive. Also she could not resist the satisfaction of entering a Rolls-Royce which purred its way at a high speed. She liked the fact that he bought three stalls when he took her to the theatre, so that no man might sit on the other side. It was real conquest. But she also gained the price of conquest, for Bramshaw never took her out without buying her something. One afternoon he bought her an emerald pendant in Bond Street and a penny bunch of violets in Piccadilly Circus.

"Now, Jessica," he said, "both these gifts are equally meant. Which do you like best ?"

"The pendant, of course," said Jessica.

"Brave girl," said Bramshaw, pressing her elbow.

Yes, she liked him—liked him as one enjoys thunder. He was the one man she had met whose remarks she could not forecast, and occasionally his caresses pleased her. They prompted her to this question : Why do I like him to kiss me and don't want to kiss him ?

All this grew more pronounced when Bramshaw reached Burwith Castle. His luggage was too new, his education was too

sound, and he himself was too big a man. He needed—a little weed. It had not mattered in the office, where he harmonised with the dictaphones, the telephones, with the pictures of oil derricks, and the core sections. Here he seemed to shout. He was not vulgar—for he was clever—but he overwhelmed.

"I don't make him out," said Lord Farnshire to Jessica. "I thought I ought to talk to him about a settlement—you ought to have a settlement, of course—so I said, 'What about ten thousand pounds?' and he said, 'That's absurd. I'll make it fifty.'"

"How like him!" said Jessica. "He never buys anything cheap."

"My dear child," said the Earl, making a disgusted gesture, "how can you be so vulgar?"

"It's catching, daddy," said Jessica brutally.

Meanwhile Jessica had heard nothing from Tony, and her parents were too discreet to mention him, but on the eve of Bramshaw's departure Lewes came to her and whispered that Mr. Mortimer was in the gun-room.

Jessica felt awkward as she approached the gun-room. Though she had never been engaged to Tony, she was now affianced, and to a man—how could she explain that man to Tony? She was not prepared for what she saw, for a changed Tony, thinner, more negligent, more disreputable than a man should be. He stood near the window, leaning against it, his brown hands grasping a riding-crop, his blue eyes narrowed, tweaked up, as if he were suffering, and yet his head thrown back with an air of defiance, like something in a state of collapse that is somehow holding itself together, forcing itself to stand up.

"Oh, Tony," she said, "how do you do? Why haven't you come before?" Her voice sounded false.

'Sorry. Been busy lately. Congratters, old girl. What you been doing lately? Had a giddy time in the village? I'll have to run up some time. Paint the old town red."

She could not answer him. The staccato speech, the jaunty, tortured tone, all this was new in Tony, and she could not help admiring him as she realised that he was facing anguish and standing up before her as before a firing squad. She came closer.

"Tony, old man, don't take it so hard! Sorry, Tony!" She put out a hand and touched his arm, but at that he stepped back, looking away from her, his mouth at last trembling, as her contact shook his self-control.

"You . . . you," he said in a low voice, "don't touch me! Driving me crazy, that's what you want! What am I to do?"

She was frightened of him. There was a look so wild in his eyes that with horror she realised two things—that a man might go mad before her eyes, and that she might watch this happen without power to prevent it.

"Can't talk here," he said. "Come out with me."

"Tony, I can't."

"Come out. Get a riding habit on. Let's go for a run over the hills—like we used to, Jess, just for the last time!"

She could not say "No," so nodded her head, and after a while came down in the old, dirty, rusty riding habit. But Robroy was lame, so she rode Punch, who was still capable of a gallop.

They went at a foot-pace down the weedy avenue and through the gates, then through the village and across the downland. The pace quickened, as if the horses felt the agitation of their riders. It was another soft morning, and a warm wind blew. The horses rode so close together that sometimes their flanks nearly touched. They were describing a circle, for the downs were limited.

"Jess," said Tony hoarsely, "you can't do it—can't! He's not your sort."

"Tony, what else can I do?"

"Marry me. You know we can. We'll mess along."

She caught a glimpse of the burnt chin, the fine lips. His good looks, his identity with her own kind, nearly made her say "Yes." But she knew that it was hopeless. "Tony, dear Tony, it's no good."

"Jess, do you love him?"

"I don't know."

He put out a hand, but failed to grasp her arm, for the going was heavy. "Jess, you love me—always did. I'm made for you. I'd die for you!"

These words horrified Jessica. Another man had said them to her. They aroused in her a wild instinct to flee, and she touched Punch with the spur. He gave a bound, and she thought that he was going to buck. He galloped ahead. But almost at once Tony caught her up, and now at last grasped her arm.

"Then, Jess," he said thickly, "all right, you won't—you won't! Very well,

he shan't have you—shan't! Shoot him first. If you won't marry me—well, he shan't have you. Come on!" he shouted, and brought down the hunting-crop on the flank of his horse.

Suddenly Jessica understood. At the turn of the downs lay a quarry, towards which they were racing. In his madness, in his despair, Tony was driving her to death. She set her teeth into her lower lip and galloped on: she might as well die and be done with it. But the air was too soft and life ran too strongly through her body. "Stop, Tony!" she cried. "Let me go!"

He did not reply, and she struggled to free herself. For a moment there was a struggle between the two mounted figures, while the horses, disturbed by the agitation, plunged and nearly fell. But still they drove on towards the quarry, when Jessica, while she struggled, perceived a figure she well knew—Bramshaw.

He had seen them coming, stupefied. He had walked out to the quarry, hoping to find some workable stone with which to help the fortunes of the house, and now he saw his betrothed struggling with a man on a horse. He ran towards them while they galloped towards him. He saw Jessica strike at Tony with her hunting-crop, so that he released her, surprised, while she reined in her horse and fell, slid on the turf at his feet. Meanwhile Tony, a few yards from the quarry's edge, had managed to wheel his horse and came back at a trot.

"What's this?" said Bramshaw.

"Get out of the way!" said Tony. "She's mine!"

Bramshaw looked up at the mounted man with a smile upon his face. "Suppose you get off your horse," he said in a quiet tone.

Tony dismounted, letting his horse stray. He was past argument, past fairness. Uttering a hoarse sound, he leapt at Bramshaw's throat.

For nearly two minutes they fought, while Jessica, half fainting upon the turf, told herself disgustedly that she was merely the prize for which they were fighting. She felt all the helplessness of woman. Bramshaw was older and stronger than Tony, but, all the same, he was getting the worst of the struggle. His nimble antagonist freed himself and walked round him, delivering blow after blow. All that Bramshaw could do was to follow him, raising to the other's fist bruised and bleeding features, ready to take with endless strength more than strength could deliver at him. Then the end came, for Tony, seeing the other's disarray, struck him on the jaw. Bramshaw fell, and Tony stood over him, waiting for him to rise again.

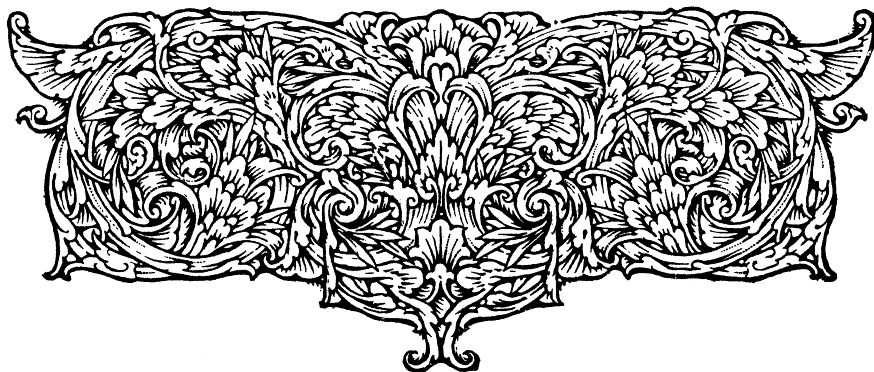
Then Jessica, risen on trembling knees, ran up to them and, throwing herself on the turf, raised Bramshaw's head upon her lap.

"Jess," said Tony, sobered now, "I'm sorry. Come away; we'll send somebody."

"Go away," said Jessica in a low voice.

"Jess"—he hesitated, but had to say it—"I won you in fair fight."

Jessica was not listening, but bent over the man, who now opened his eyes. She laid her cheek upon his forehead. "He fought for me," she said. "He did not fail me."



# SKI-LORE

## By JOHN BUTCHER

### ILLUSTRATED BY REGINALD CLEAVER

"DO these passports require to be viséd for Switzerland?" Peter Quaile, who was changing some French notes left from a recent business trip to Paris, looked round to see a dainty girlish figure of about twenty-two, in close conversation with a clerk at Cook's tourist agency.

"And I want two first-class 'sleepers' for Davos Platz," continued the girl.

Peter was twenty-five, full of the joy of life, and as he strolled to his office his mind was entirely absorbed by a vision of the girl. "Going to Switzerland," he mused, "winter sports—ski-ing! Lucky blighter! Wouldn't I like to go!"

Great Heavens! His thoughts went back to the time when, at college in Geneva, he had startled all his friends and even his guide and teacher, Hans Sachs, by his prowess on skis. For years he had hardly seen an inch of snow worthy of the name, and he pictured the grandeur of the snow-clad heights, the dry cold air, and the ring of the frost-bound snow beneath his feet. What a holiday a fortnight with the skis would be! To feel the sun beating down on the powdery snow of a perfect ski-ing slope, far away from the inhospitable streets of London in January!

He stopped suddenly and laughed aloud. Why shouldn't he go? There was nothing to prevent him. Why not take his holiday now and follow this girl to Davos? He would beard his chief in his office at once.

"Come in!" thundered the great one, Stevens by name, in answer to his knock.

"I've come to ask you if I might take my holiday next week, sir?" said Peter.

"What! Holiday in January?" spluttered Stevens. "Now—this time of the year!"

"I thought of going to Switzerland, sir."

"Oh, well, of course you know best, but I can't understand why so many people go there in winter. Can't see any pleasure in it myself. Yes, you can go, and I hope you make a habit of it, then we shan't have you away when you are really useful."

"Thank you, sir." Peter departed, hardly able to contain himself.

Wherefore in due course he found himself getting out of the train at Davos Platz.

It was too late to think of ski-ing that afternoon, and he would have to buy a pair of skis. The thought of hired skis did not appeal to him at all. To Peter these were very intimate things—far too intimate to be casually picked up and dropped when not required.

Coming across an unobtrusive shop which apparently catered for those who knew good skis when they saw them, Peter decided that here should the purchase be made. The selection was not large, and he soon found a pair to suit his taste. He arranged to bring his boots along later to be fitted and to call for them in the morning.

Five minutes' walk found him at the Salvador Hotel, where he was warmly welcomed by the proprietor. Having changed, he took his ski boots to the shop, and on his return found most of the other guests already at dinner. Always interested in his fellow-creatures, Peter studied the faces of those around him. A French girl talked animatedly to a compatriot across the room, apparently quite unconcerned that most of those around her were also listening. An elderly German was carrying on a long and serious conversation with his wife, who never seemed to get a word in. Peter wondered how anyone could talk for so long without apparently requiring either comment or question from his listener. A single Englishman sat in stony silence, staring dejectedly in front of him.

Dinner finished, the Kursaal seemed a likely place for a little distraction, but was so full that Peter decided it was better outside, and the lights twinkling in the hillside chalets suggested a peace and solitude which appealed to him more.

He strolled leisurely back to the Salvador, deciding to be up and doing early on the practice slopes. He wanted to feel his feet and find out just how much of his old skill still remained.

By nine o'clock next morning he was on his way to the shop. Everything was ready, and, shouldering his skis and sticks, he set off in the direction of the slopes. Several others were out—novices mostly, endeavouring to master the secrets of balance and rhythm, and an occasional instructor demonstrating turns to pupils whose proportions must have seriously interfered with their sense of balance.

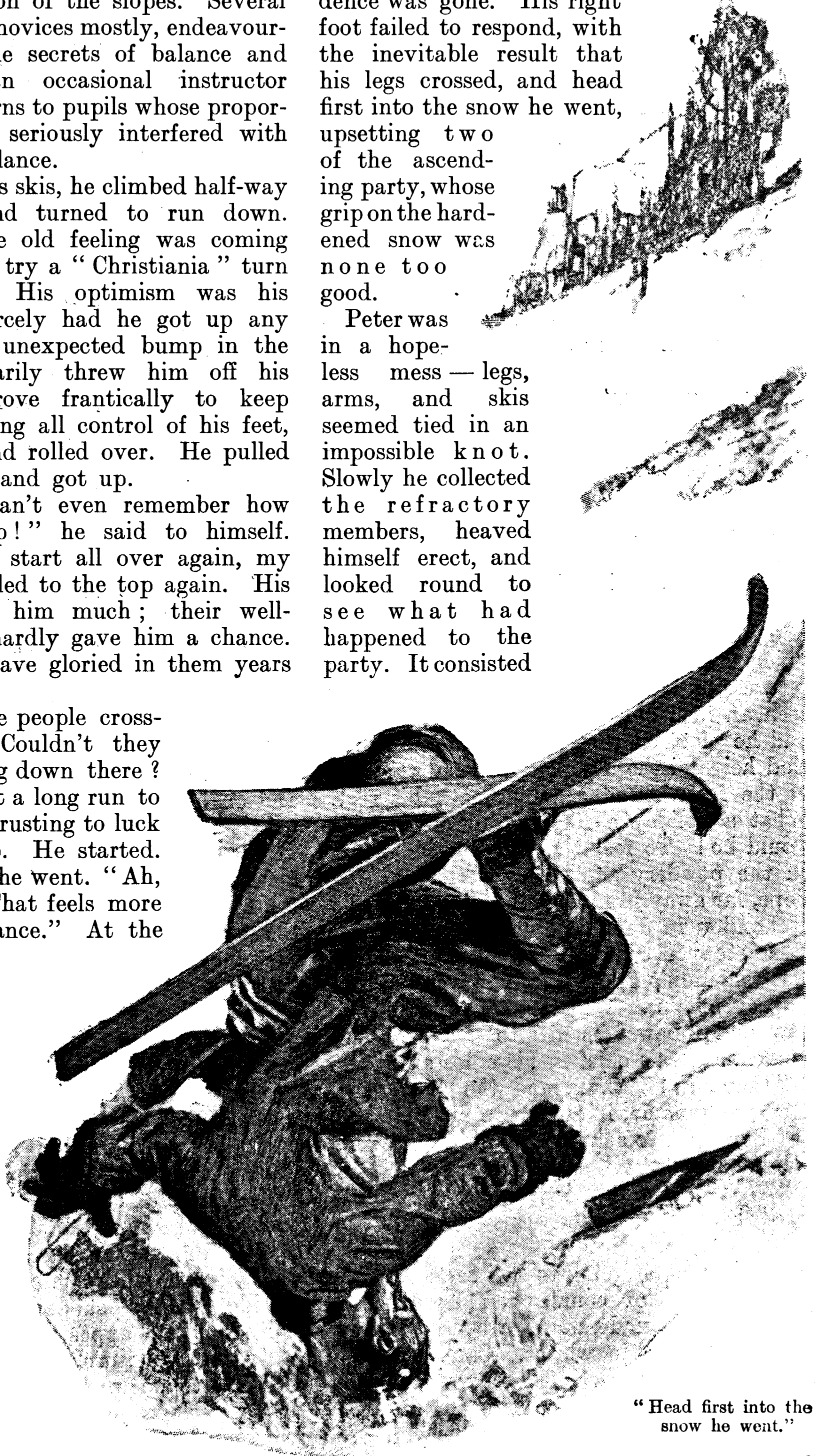
Having fixed his skis, he climbed half-way up the slope and turned to run down. Something of the old feeling was coming back. He would try a "Christiania" turn at the bottom. His optimism was his undoing, for scarcely had he got up any speed, when an unexpected bump in the ground momentarily threw him off his balance. He strove frantically to keep upright, but, losing all control of his feet, bumped down and rolled over. He pulled himself together and got up.

"Hang it! Can't even remember how to take a bump!" he said to himself. "You'll have to start all over again, my lad." He struggled to the top again. His skis didn't help him much; their well-waxed newness hardly gave him a chance. How he would have gloried in them years ago!

Confound those people crossing the slope! Couldn't they see he was coming down there? He wanted to get a long run to test his balance, trusting to luck to be able to stop. He started. Faster and faster he went. "Ah, that's better! That feels more like the old balance." At the bottom he would try a right "Telemark" turn to finish. Ye gods, the people he had seen before were coming straight up! He must do his "Telemark" now or crash into them.

Years ago by the faintest movement he would have steered round them easily or perhaps pulled up with a perfect "Christiania" turn. He started his turn. His left leg swung forward into the "Telemark," but his confidence was gone. His right foot failed to respond, with the inevitable result that his legs crossed, and head first into the snow he went, upsetting two of the ascending party, whose grip on the hardened snow was none too good.

Peter was in a hopeless mess — legs, arms, and skis seemed tied in an impossible knot. Slowly he collected the refractory members, heaved himself erect, and looked round to see what had happened to the party. It consisted



"Head first into the snow he went."

"Upsetting two of the ascending party, whose grip on the hardened snow was none too good."

of two girls and two men. He had upset one of each, and the two untouched members were assisting them out of somewhat similar predicaments to his own. Hastening to express his apologies, he nearly collapsed again. The fallen girl was "she"—the girl he had seen in the agency, the girl who had, all unconsciously, drawn him to Davos.

"I'm most awfully sorry," spluttered Peter. "Couldn't get round properly. I do hope I haven't hurt you."

"Oh, that's quite all right—I'm not a bit hurt. We ought not to have come up that way. It's difficult enough with no one about, isn't it?"

She had spoken charmingly, a voice sparkling like the sun on freshly fallen snow. They moved away.

So that was to be their first meeting, was it?

Gee! But what an exhibition! And he

rushed down what remained of the slope to finish with a beautiful "Christiania."

"Now, why the blazes didn't I do that just now?" he growled, but it made him thrill all over. He did it again and again—"Telemarks" and "Christianias" all seemed to have come back in a flash. He felt he had found his "ski feet," but she—she had passed out of sight, and her first impression of him must remain a "super-clumsy novice."

Having tired of the slopes, Peter decided to do a short tour in the afternoon, and on his way back called at the ski shop to purchase "skins" for climbing.

A familiar figure he would have known anywhere was leaning over the counter. "Sachs, by all that's wonderful! Whoever would have thought of seeing you here?" He almost fell on the guide's neck.

"Mr. Quaile, Mr. Peter Quaile, how good—how good to see you once more in Switzerland!"

"And what brings you to Davos, Sachs?" exclaimed Peter, when his emotion had somewhat abated.

"I come for the big ski race over the mountains to Kublis next Thursday week. Oh, it is good you are come, Mr. Peter; now we can race together."

"No good, Sachs," said Peter. "I haven't been on skis for years, and I've just upset a party on the slopes. Think of it, Sachs—can't even do a decent 'Telemark'!"

"That is not true, Mr. Peter. You come with me this afternoon. We will soon make you as good as before—better, perhaps—you are so much bigger and stronger now."

"Do you really think so?"

Peter's eyes sparkled. He had implicit faith in Sachs's judgment. Oh, if he could only win the race, or even be amongst the first, surely that would wipe out the awful impression of the morning!

It was now well past lunch-time, but Peter didn't care. Just this meeting with his old friend and guide was needed to wipe out the memory of the morning's exhibition.

At three o'clock he was back at the shop. Sachs was waiting for him. They started at once along the road, but soon turned off towards the pine-woods which fringed the valley on either side. They did not talk; it had never been their custom to talk much when out together, and quite naturally they fell into the old habit. They had climbed to the edge of the woods and stopped for a rest.

"What about a run down, Sachs?" said Peter. "It looks good from here."

"Not yet, my son; we will go a little further."

Another of the old customs had asserted itself; Sachs had always called his pupil "my son." They trudged on into the wood. A path ran just inside and parallel to the edge of the trees. Peter was in front, and presently realised the old guide's intention. The path wound backwards and forwards, rising and falling in its course almost like a switchback. He was constantly called upon to "stem" down little steep places, turning at the bottom only to rise again. Sachs noted with satisfaction that Peter negotiated all these places in good style and speed.

"We will stop here!" called out Sachs.

They had come to a place where the path ran out of the wood, skirting the top of a magnificent stretch of snow reaching down to the road half a mile away at the bottom of the valley. Without a word, Sachs turned out on to the slope. Peter should have a run, but on clean, untrodden snow which would give him a chance to feel his feet and balance. The slope went away steeply from the path. In a second Sachs was making the descent, a flying figure perfect in grace and rhythm, the snow scudding away from his closely locked skis. He had given Peter no warning of his intention—he didn't want him to have time to think. Peter followed. Down, down, faster and faster he flew. This was the real thing. Why hadn't he had patience enough that morning to find a stretch of real untrodden snow?

Sachs arrived at the road, checking his pace in masterly manner, Peter arriving a second later.

"Excellent!" exclaimed Sachs. "In two or three days you will be as good as ever, and we will begin real practice for the big race. Now, I think that will be enough for this afternoon; it would not be wise to do too much before your joints are thoroughly loosened. To-morrow, if you like, we will go up to the Strela Pass. It is a nice little tour, with plenty of good places to practise on."

"Nothing I should like better, Sachs. I'll put myself in your hands entirely whilst I'm here."

They returned along the road and reached the outskirts of the town. A party of four skiers turned out of one of the side-roads leading from the practice slopes. Peter

recognised one of the figures as that of the girl he had upset in the morning. Sachs stopped to speak to a friend, and Peter, saying he would meet him at the funicular station at ten-thirty in the morning, hurried on, intending to follow the girl and find out where she was staying. The party seemed in great spirits; he could hear them laughing and joking as they went along. They turned into the Grand Hotel, and he felt that in having found out where she lived some progress had been made.

Arrived at the Salvador, he put his skis away, and was asking for letters, when he was hailed by a cheery "Hullo, Quaile, here you are, then! We were wondering when we should find you."

"Mr. and Mrs. Beecham! How topping!"

"Stevens told us you were coming here. We are staying at the Salvador, too."

"Better and better. But how was it I didn't see you at dinner last night?"

"We were spending the evening with friends over at the Grand," answered Beecham. "Are you going to the ball there to-night?"

"I should rather like to."

"Do join us, then; our friends over there are an awfully jolly crowd," said Mrs. Beecham.

Beecham, a successful man in the City, had known Peter for some time. They frequently met in course of business of one kind and another. He held a very high opinion of Peter's ability, and knew that Stevens shared his view, but was too selfish and short-sighted to see that it would be in his interest to take Peter into partnership. Beecham had come to the conclusion that Peter's capacity was not being used to the best advantage, and intended on his return to offer Peter the position of junior partner in his own firm and to give him an interest in it. However, that would keep. Peter would be all the better after a holiday like this.

"Are you out here with a party or all alone?" queried Mrs. Beecham.

"I came out by myself," said Peter. "As a matter of fact, I only decided on the spur of the moment to come at all."

"In that case you must join us at our table. I always think meals alone in hotels very monotonous."

"It's awfully good of you—I should be delighted."

"That's right," said her husband.

"We'll see you later, then," said Mrs. Beecham, as they stepped into the lift.

"Yes, thanks very much," rejoined Peter, who, having a room on the first floor, went up by the stairs.

He enjoyed dining with the Beechams—both were very good company and interesting talkers. They had been to Davos for nine years on and off, and spent most of their time skating, both being expert. The Davos rink offered some of the best in Switzerland.

Peter was rather glad they were not skiers; had they been, his disappearance every morning with Sachs would have appeared unsociable.

"I think we had better go along to the Grand at once," said Beecham, as they finished their coffee. "It's always such a job to get a table when you're late."

"Yes, the last ball was terribly crowded—one could hardly move on the floor—but they are awfully good fun," added his wife.

It was a wonderful night. The air was almost intoxicatingly crisp and dry. As they walked along to the Grand, the snow crackled underfoot; overhead a few stars twinkled from a black pall, against which the snow-clad mountains were faintly outlined.

"I hope the Austins have reserved a table. It looks as though there is a crowd here already," said Beecham, seeing the rows of wraps in the cloakroom.

"Here you are at last! We've been waiting for you. Come along; we've got a table," laughed a merry voice behind them.

"Oh, I'm sorry if we're late. I'd no idea we were so long at dinner, but we met Mr. Quaile, a friend of my husband," answered Mrs. Beecham. "Let me introduce you, Jean. Mr. Quaile, this is Miss Austin."

Peter by this time was reduced to a limp rag—he had recognised the girl at once. Pleasure and mortification fought in him for mastery, for this girl was none other than "the girl"—the girl he had so clumsily knocked down in his headlong flight down the practice slope that morning. Finally pleasure asserted itself, and only too truly he said: "This is great luck for me, Miss Austin. Now I can make a proper apology for my clumsiness this morning. I hope there was no damage."

"Oh, not at all. I remember, when I was learning to ski, I ran into a whole party of experts, who gave me a terrible harangue. They were annoyed," she laughed.

Peter was charmed by the gracious way in which she had accepted his apology, but was nevertheless rather taken aback to

realise that he was unhesitatingly classed as a beginner. He resolved to play up to this *rôle*. By this time they had reached the ballroom, and Peter was introduced to the other members of the party—Mrs. Austin, Jean's mother, Mollie Travers, evidently Jean's friend, Jerry Dean and John Stacey, friends of the Austins.

The latter had a table in one corner of the ballroom, which had been cheerfully decorated with orange and yellow artificial flowers. Each side was divided by lattice-work into arbours decorated in the same manner. All the tables were occupied by parties of various sizes.

The orchestra was playing a fox-trot. Jean danced with Jerry, and Mollie with John.

Peter was what would be known as a good but commonplace dancer; he was acutely sensitive to time, but his repertoire of steps was somewhat limited. Even so, he loved dancing.

He found Mrs. Beecham a very congenial partner. He did not anticipate many opportunities of dancing with Jean, as Jerry and John appeared to exercise an almost exclusive monopoly there. However, as she returned to their table, he said: "May I have the next?"

"With pleasure," she answered, with a delightful smile.

The band started. Peter hesitated a moment, struggling to keep his heart from beating too perceptibly.

There are some girls who seem to fall into the rhythm of the man's step from the very first, and it was so with Jean. Peter was about half a head taller than she, and their figures seemed to match perfectly.

Peter was in heaven, and Jean—well, she couldn't help feeling that here was a partner of a different calibre to most. She was keenly interested in her fellow-beings, and, although a very vivacious girl, was always happy when an opportunity arose for study and observation of them. Peter never talked when he danced. She liked him for that. Jerry and John were rather of the type that never seem to appreciate the mutual sympathy necessary to a perfect dance. During the evening they danced together many times, and the end of the ball came far too quickly for Peter.

On the way back to the Salvador Peter felt he must express gratitude to some one, and said to Mrs. Beecham: "I'm really very indebted to you for this evening. I enjoyed it immensely."

"I thought you would," she said. "They really are such a jolly party. I am very fond of Jean Austin—she's a topping girl."

Peter found himself in entire agreement; he would like to talk about Jean for evermore, but remembered that he must—at any rate, for a little while—keep his feelings moderately in check. He felt, however, that Mrs. Beecham would prove a good friend, and he meant to enlist her support in his cause as soon as possible.

When they had got to their room, Mrs. Beecham remarked to her husband: "Didn't Jean and the Quaile boy dance beautifully together?"

Beecham laughed and, walking over to his wife, he kissed her, saying: "You wicked old matchmaker, up to your tricks again! You've been pretty successful so far, but I don't think you will be wanted this time."

Peter's cup of happiness was full to the brim. All day he was out with Sachs, and every evening he joined the Austins at the Grand.

Under Sachs's vigilant care he was making good progress and rapidly regaining much of his old skill. All he required now was a certain amount of practice in the woods, as several miles of such country had to be traversed in the race. They had already been over the course twice. The first time was more of a surveying expedition than a test of time, and Sachs, who knew the run well, carefully initiated Peter into all the details of the route. The second occasion they went "all out," and Peter had finished very little behind the guide.

The run started from a point well up in the mountains above the Parsenn ski hut, and was reached after a two-hours' climb from Wolfgang, a village two stations down the line from Davos. From the top it fell away very steeply, winding down over perfect ski-ing fields and threading its way through heavily wooded country, finishing up with a wonderful straight run down a very steep slope into the village of Kublis, nine miles away.

It was on Wednesday evening over at the Grand that Peter learned that Jerry and John had entered for the race.

"Mollie and I are going up to the Parsenn hut with them," said Jean, "and we shall go on to the top to see the start; then we will come down again to Wolfgang and wait for the train which brings them back from

Kublis to Davos. Like that, we shall hear all about it while they are still in the full tide of victory!" Her eyes twinkled.

"Don't be an ass, Jean," said John. "You know we're only going for fun. What chance do we stand against all these guide fellows who live on skis? Of course I know they are put in a separate class, but, anyway, lots of these Swiss amateurs are just as good as the guides themselves."

Jean turned to Peter, saying: "Won't you join Mollie and me and see them start?"

He saw no way of escape. "I should love to, but, as a matter of fact, I've entered for the race myself."

"But, my dear chap," exclaimed Jerry, "it's not a beginner's job, and what would happen if you broke a ski? Every one would be so keen on the race, they wouldn't want to stop to help you."

"I suppose in that case I should have to walk," said Peter in a way which closed the discussion.

Seeing his determination, and secretly admiring him for it, Jean said: "Well, in that case we shall have three heroes to bid *bon voyage*, and we can all go together."

They all went to bed early, arranging to catch the ten-o'clock train to Wolfgang. The start was to take place at one p.m. from the top, and that would give them about an hour's rest after the climb. Peter had arranged to meet Sachs at the top. He had no fear that anything of his secret would be seen on the way up. Anyone could climb; it was the race down that would give him away.

Jean and Mollie Travers, with Jerry and John, were already at the station when Peter arrived.

"I believe you've thought better of it and tried to miss the train," laughed Jean, as she helped to bundle the skis into the luggage van. The train was packed—all Davos seemed to be going.

In a few minutes they arrived at Wolfgang, and in due course, after an uneventful climb, they arrived at the hut, where they took off their skis and sat down to rest. Sachs was already there.

From a spectator's point of view it was a wonderful place to start a race. From their very feet the slope went straight away down for half a mile, gradually flattening out to a long level run; from thence it fell steeply over a long stretch of even snow till finally it joined the woods two miles away down in the valley. The competitors would be in full view over the whole of this course, and a good idea of their merits could be formed from the way in which they negotiated the slope and made use of the ground to keep up their speed. There were thirty-one starters.

Jean and Mollie stood watching them as they put the final touches to their skis. In a few minutes they would be off. Peter had already bid them *au revoir*, and was talking to Sachs.

The race was to be decided by time, and the men were started at half-minute intervals, the guides going first.

Sachs was the last of the guides, and Peter, being No. 3 of the amateurs, would start a minute and a half later. Jerry and John were Nos. 11 and 12 respectively.

The second amateur had already gone, and Peter stood ready. Every part of his body tingled with the joy of anticipation. The starter gave him the warning, then the signal to go.

Jerry and John fairly gasped, and Jean, whose excitement had almost upset both herself and Mollie more than once on the slippery snow, unconsciously gripped her friend's arm.

Peter had gone down that slope like a flash. Within a few seconds he was little more than a speck far below. They watched him swerving, first one way and then another over the ups and downs of the "level" piece at the bottom. He seemed to have an uncanny ability for selecting that part of a downward slope which gave him the fastest run.

By this time he was almost out of sight, having already passed the two amateurs who had started before him. It was not until he had finally disappeared amongst the trees away in the distance that Jerry spoke.

"By Jove, John, to think we've been calling him a beginner! Whatever must he have thought of us?"

"Might as well pack up and go along back with Jean and Mollie," answered John. "What chance do we stand against that chap? Talk about ski-ing after having your leg pulled like that!"

"Gee, but didn't he go!"

Nevertheless, they both started; but their enthusiasm had completely evaporated, and, knowing they had plenty of time for the train at Kublis, did not trouble to race. They were, therefore, not a little surprised and very perturbed when, on arriving about an hour later, they heard that Peter was not there. They had naturally anticipated

finding him already being fêted as the victor.

What could have delayed him?

Jerry and John were very worried. If they went back to look for him, they would miss the train, and the Austins would be anxious. If they didn't, they felt they would be deserting Peter.

Finally they decided that, as there were plenty of guides available if a search-party was necessary, it would cause less consternation if they returned, leaving Peter to follow by the next train.

"I don't think we need worry, though I wish he was here," said Jerry. "He evidently knows all about ski-ing and a bit more. Probably broken a ski."

All the amateur competitors had got into the same compartment of the train at Kublis, and the conversation naturally turned on Peter.

"Who was he?" "Where did he learn to ski?" "If all had gone well, the race was a gift for him," were common remarks.

"I'll bet his time would have been better than most of the guides," said John. "He certainly took that first stretch as fast as any of them." The race itself had become quite a secondary consideration compared with the advent of this new champion.

Eventually the train arrived at Wolfgang, where Jean and Mollie got in.

"Well, did he win?" asked Jean at once. There could be no mistaking to whom she referred.

Jerry hesitated, John looked out of the window.

"Why, what's the matter? Where is Peter?" she asked.

"Fact of the matter is, Jean, Peter didn't turn up at Kublis, neither did Sachs, the guide he was talking to up at the top. Something must have happened—broken ski probably. I expect they'll come along on the next train all right," Jerry added reassuringly. Their natural high spirits soon reasserted themselves, however, and they couldn't help laughing when they thought of the way Peter had fooled them.

"Serves us right for being so presumptuous," said Jean, who, for all her show of high spirits, was really anxious. She couldn't quite understand why she should feel like that. She had a very good idea, but at the moment she didn't feel like admitting it even to herself.

It was a somewhat subdued party that sat down to dinner. They had had no news of Peter, so evidently he had not come on the next train. Jerry and John began to feel they ought to have stayed to find out what had happened. After dinner they all moved to the lounge, where, except on gala nights, dancing was always in progress.

"What about going over to the Salvador and making inquiries?" Mollie Travers suggested.

Jean's grip of her arm when Peter had started on that wonderful run, had not been without its meaning for Mollie, and she had a shrewd idea that Peter's safety meant a great deal to Jean. She knew what anxiety the latter must be suffering.

"Hullo, everybody!" said a cheery voice which could not be mistaken. Peter, changed and immaculate as ever, stood in their midst—he seemed to have appeared from nowhere. "Why, whatever is the matter? You look as though you've all been attending a funeral!" he laughed. Then, suddenly becoming serious, he asked: "Has anything really serious happened?"

Jerry was the first to speak. "Serious—you silly blighter! First you give us the shock of our lives by starting off on the race like any old 'pro.' when we all thought you a beginner; then, when we get to Kublis, you haven't turned up; finally, nobody hears a word about you for hours, until you suddenly spring on us and ask if anything's happened.

"Why, we've all been picturing you languishing somewhere with a broken neck, only we haven't said so, and cursing ourselves because we came home and apparently left you to your fate!"

"Anyway," broke in Jean, "here you are, so tell us what you've been doing. By all the rules of the game, you ought to be wearing the laurel wreath of victory."

"Well, as a matter of fact, there has been a little accident which delayed us—nothing much, but it made me too late for the train, that's all," exclaimed Peter. "I'm awfully sorry if I've caused any anxiety." And that was all the information he seemed inclined to impart.

"Look here, Peter," said Jerry, "you owe us all something for the way you've pulled our legs about ski-ing: now tell us all about it and how you came to be so expert. What a pity it is your last night! We could have had a great time, with you to teach us."

Very simply Peter told them all about his early ski-ing exploits and all about Sachs.

At that moment Beecham, who had been looking for Peter ever since dinner, burst into the lounge. "I say, what do you

"'Picks him up and carries him, if you please—carries him—the rest of the way to Kublis.'"

think? I met a guide in the village, who told me all about Peter to-day. You old villain, why didn't you tell us? It appears that his friend, the guide Sachs, met with an accident almost at the finish. They took a different cut in the woods only half a mile from Kublis—that's why you didn't pass them. Sachs caught a ski in the branch of a tree which had been bent over with the weight of the snow and frozen into the ground, and twisted his ankle. Our hero, Peter, who, as you know, started after Sachs, comes along, and although he had the race in his pocket—both of them were minutes ahead of every one else—chucks up the race and stops to attend to Sachs; fixes up the ankle in as good a splint as possible with his ski sticks, picks him up and carries him, if you please—carries him—the rest of the way to Kublis, where they just caught the next train. There you are, Peter," finished Beecham triumphantly. "now blush for all you're worth!"

During this narrative most of the other people in the lounge had crowded round to hear. Peter's health was drunk many times over. He had never felt so uncomfortable in all his life. When they had calmed down somewhat, he begged for a dance, and gradually the uproar subsided.

Jean held him very tightly while they danced. Could it be——he wondered. And she, like Peter, she had never felt so overcome as when the story of his afternoon's exploit was being told. She had been hard put to keep back the tears which would have told the tale of her emotion.

As the party broke up that night, Jerry said: "Take us all up the Strela Pass to-morrow, Peter, for the last time—you'll have plenty of time to pack before your train."

"Sorry, old man," said Peter. "I've promised to go and meet a fellow on rather an important matter to-morrow morning. Good night!" And away he went, leaving Jerry feeling that again his leg was being pulled. As a matter of fact, Peter was going up the Strela Pass. He was going to meet himself there, and make up his mind how he was going to ask Jean to marry him.

Accordingly the next morning he caught the ten-o'clock funicular to the Schatzalp and started to climb. A thick mist hung about the mountain peaks, making the snow on the slopes look like one level mass, unrelieved by contour of any kind. The weather, however, was of little account to Peter; his business was too important to be affected by such trifles.

Gradually he approached the top and

could dimly discern through the mist the edge from which the slope descended into the valleys on the other side of the pass.

What was that? Was it a figure standing close to the edge? No, it must be a rock—it was quite still. Yet he did not remember seeing it there before. He was getting nearer. Yes, it was a figure, confound it—just when he wanted the Strela all to himself! The figure moved: it was a girl. She was coming towards him.

"Jean! Great Scot, what on earth are you doing up here in this weather alone?"

"I'll tell you when you've told me why you came up. I've been here some time, and haven't seen anyone who might be the fellow you are going to meet."

"Well," said Peter, taking his courage in both hands, "as a matter of fact, I came up here to think out how I was going to ask you to marry me. Will you, Jean?"

"Of course I will, Peter. That's just what I came up here to answer."

He jumped towards her, as near as his skis allowed. "Jean, you darling!"

Then those four kindly skis slipped, and, close together, Peter and Jean sat down in the snow.

The sound of approaching voices roused them to the realisation that sitting on snow for a prolonged period is liable to melt it. At that moment the sun burst through the mist and a shaft of light fell upon them. They recognised Jerry's voice.

"There they are—look at them!" they heard him shout. And presently the heads of Jerry, John, and Mollie appeared over the slope.

In a flash Peter had jumped up and, lifting Jean to her feet, linked his arm in hers.

Away down the slope they sped. "See you down below!" he shouted as they passed.

"Sold again," said John.

"Sold again," said Jerry.

"In fact, sold out!" laughed Mollie.

# RONDEAU.

To My Mother, asleep.

**Ere I forget the patient face,**
**Lined with sweet lines of thoughtful days,**
**Eager to ward from jar or fret**
**My every hour, whate'er the let,**
**May darkness fall on all my ways;**

**No song from any joy of May's**
**Leap to my heart as always yet**
**My heart has leapt to give God praise,**
**Ere I forget.**

**O frail sweet body full of grace,**
**O loving lips, slow tender gaze,**
**O love that leaves me aye in debt,**
**First shall death and I have met**
**Ere I forget.**

**E. B. W. CHAPPELOW.**

"The transfer took some time, for the article proved to be some thirty feet long."

# THE SHORT LANE

## By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of "As Other Men Are," "And Five Were Foolish," "Berry & Co.," "Valerie French," "The Courts of Idleness," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

"I AM credibly informed," said the courier, "that the barge will be ready on Saturday afternoon. When would you like to embark?"

"A week from to-day," said Patricia firmly.

"May I protest?" said Pomfret.

"No," said every one.

"Very well," said Pomfret resignedly. "Go your ways. Evacuate the Garden of Eden—voluntarily, and then, when you're well outside, turn and abuse me because you can't get back. Upon my soul," he added violently, "I'd rather associate with a bunch of blue-based baboons. They mayn't have much sense, but they have got instinct."

"Soon get tired of baboons," murmured Simon sleepily. "Snatch your food away."

Before Pomfret could reply Eulalie lifted her head.

"We're very good for you," she said. "But for us you'd stagnate. Oh, look at that falling star."

"I want to stagnate," said her husband, ignoring the interjection. "I can't imagine anything more desirable than stagnating in a bed of roses."

"More beds to come," murmured Simon. "You see. Gog says——"

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"Yes, I know what Gog says," said Pomfret, "but I'm a man of simple tastes, and to be in occupation of a spacious apartment in Paradise is good enough for me."

"Don't be so unenterprising," said Patricia. "It's no good visiting Oxford and spending the whole of your time in Christchurch hall."

"But this isn't Oxford," screamed Pomfret. "Or Scotland or Texas or Chile or any civilised state. It isn't even Madagascar. It's Etchechuria—'The Lost Country,' with a code like a nursery rhyme and a set of manners and customs which you can't even parse. As for the personnel—well, half the time you can't see their bonnets for the bees."

"Don't be ungracious," said Eulalie. "You've never been done so well in all your life."

Pomfret swallowed.

"That," he said, "I most frankly and freely admit; but the point I'm trying to make is that this is no ordinary country: some of it's very charming and some of it's highly dangerous. It's all very well to call the barge pretty names and talk about gliding down-stream. What about the riparian owners? Supposing one of them's a giant who's off barges."

"Brother," said Gog gravely, "barges are used to convey all the produce of Date, and ninety per cent. fetch up as right as rain."

There was a pregnant silence.

"Well, of course, that clinches it," said Pomfret shakily. "Not to go now would be idiotic. What—what happens to the other ten?"

The courier shrugged his shoulders.

"You can't make an omelet," he said, "without breaking eggs."

"Don't be original," said Pomfret. "What happens to the other ten?"

"They just fail to arrive," said Gog, rising. "But that's usually because they never start. You see, they're non-existent. It's an old custom, you know. In fact, 'the bargee's ten' is rather like 'the baker's dozen,' only the other way round. Sleep well."

The next moment he was gone—amid silvery laughter.

So soon as he could speak—

"Of course I can do that," said Pomfret. "Easily. Think of a number, perform any arithmetical rites you like upon it, add the size you take in gum-boots and the answer's nineteen. If it isn't, it's because you thought of the wrong number."

"My dear," gurgled Patricia, "you and Gog are the best sword and buckler I know. Between you two no riparian owner would stand an earthly. And now let's wake up Simon and go to bed."

"Curfew," said Eulalie, nodding. "Date's closing down."

It was true. The exquisite night was as dark as a night can be: there was no moon, and all the company of heaven seemed to be hoarding its brilliance. Only, low down, what had been a punnet of stars was rapidly dwindling to a curve of fairy lights, that is to say the lanthorns upon the walls, which except for those at street corners which could not be seen, alone were left burning, till Dawn came to sketch the city once more into the picture of the universe.

Lingering upon the beauty of their environment, the four got to their beds.

The Mayor and City of Date had proved a most handsome host. For all their charm, it had been recognised that the apartments at The Guest House were inconveniently small, so, since the weather was set fair, a site had been chosen on a hill three miles from the city walls, and there a camp had been pitched for the use of the visitors alone. This was royally appointed. The top of the eminence was smooth and flat, and here had been erected a pavilion some thirty feet square, in front of which stretched an awning of the same magnitude. This faced due South and commanded a magnificent view, for the ground fell down by terraces to a most noble park, with the little town in the distance and mountains beyond. Upon either side of the tent rose two others almost as large, facing East and West. These stood for bedrooms, upon each of which two satellite tents, serving as bathroom and wardrobe, waited respectfully ten or twelve paces away.

A natural semi-circle of firs screened the encampment to the North, and below the trees the slope of the hill swooped into a broad platform which accommodated admirably the kitchens, stores and stables as well as the quarters of the swarm of servants and grooms who had been detailed to anticipate the visitors' desires.

The substance and luxury of the pavilions, which were thickly carpeted with skins and hung with silk, the massive furniture in which they were found, the excellence of the fare and the quiet dignity of the constant service, lent the establishment an air of

permanent magnificence, which with the privacy the place afforded and the absence of any worldly cares suggested the occupation of his summer palace by a monarch who is off duty, though it is doubtful whether any sovereign was ever more agreeably maintained.

The weeks passed swiftly enough. The Garden was a pleasance of inexhaustible beauty, and the country about was full of interest. Upon most days the four rode and bathed, upon some they fished, upon others they visited Date to be shown the arts and mysteries for which the city was famed. Fifty square miles of country, wild and natural as the dawn, yet without the blemish of a weed, or a dead bough, or even a flower or a leaf that was past its prime, was an everlasting wonder, but expeditions which took them beyond The Garden made them acquainted with fresh marvels of which they had not dreamed.

One day they rode to a wood clipped into the faithful shape of a minster church. Towers, flying buttresses, clerestory—all were rendered with the precision of masonry that has been piled by a master's hand, while the great wheel-windows, triforium and chancel stalls, fashioned entirely from the living green, chanted of a patience, labour and devotion that made the senses reel.

Gog dismissed the miracle lightly enough. "Of course the wood was planted with this idea, and then, you see, it's taken about six hundred years to build. And Nature's a wonderful workman. Still, it's a fine piece of work, and they keep it very well."

Another day he brought them to The House, a mellow feast of brick-nogging and grey old oak, with fire-places like chambers, a kitchen like a chapter-house and for precincts the comfortable smell of brewing, refreshing the summer day for half a mile. Behind the manor stood the brewery, surprisingly simple to have achieved such fame, with a staff of a hundred brewers, busy as bees about their business, and fifty porters to handle the sacks of malt and the barrels of beer.

Ten master-brewers dwelt in The House itself, with the Clerk who bought and sold and kept the score. He it was who entertained the strangers in a cool low-pitched hall, humbly begging their pardon for the homely fare, naïvely explaining that he and his company were old-fashioned, and perspiring with pleasure before Pomfret's incoherent hosannahs.

Before they left they were given a fine silver-rimmed black-jack, "so-called," explained Gog, "after the founder of The House, whose ways were as handsome as his eyes and his hair were black. Though he saw old age he had never one grey hair, and was as hale and hearty at eighty as are most men of thirty-five, which speaks very well for brewing and the beer which he brewed, for he never drank anything else from dawn to sunset, at which hour he regularly retired, to sleep the sun back into the sky."

In this way and the like six weeks had drifted by—weeks so rich and careless, that there was much to be said for Pomfret's argument. Save for the presence of The Clock there might have been no time, but that great reckoner was always there, miles to the north, ten thousand feet above The Pail. Face there was none—only a row of figures set on the steep of a crag. To these a shining hand, seemingly suspended from above, pointed in turn, imperceptibly swinging from West to East and taking exactly twelve hours to run its course. Precisely at noon and midnight the hand swung from East to West with the sweep of a sword, thence to begin again its sober journey. This was the only timepiece in all the land, and, since it overtopped all obstacles and was visible by day and night, there was no need of any other. Still, The Clock told only the hours, and, but for forty odd notches which Simon had carefully cut on the stem of a pipe, no one of the four would have known how they stood with the calendar. Not that that mattered in a way: yet they were not of the breed that can let the world slip for long. They were young, and there was health in them. Even Pomfret believed in action. The latter detested rising and invariably postponed the process, but he never breakfasted in bed. That they should desire to move was therefore natural, and, when it had learned their decision, Date had at once made ready to speed its guests. A lordly barge had been built in the space of three days and was now being fitted with as much extravagance and zeal as is lavished by a coach-builder upon an exhibition car. The four were in good hands. Labour, materials, craft—everything out of Date was superfine. If milk so rich could be said to render cream, that was offered by Date to the strangers without her gates.

When seven days later the four were drifting down stream Simon observed

several spiders clinging to the silk of the awning above the poop. At once he put a hand to the ceiling, shaking it gently to disperse the brutes before they should fall to the deck. The spiders never budged. This was because they were painted upon the silk.

In response to his exclamation of amazement at this supreme imposture—

"No, it isn't a joke," said Gog. "The idea is that you shan't be troubled with flies."

Pomfret covered his face.

"Don't find anything else," he said. "To consider such hospitality upon an empty stomach is more than I can bear. Possibly after luncheon . . ."

* * * * *

"It's too easy," said Gog. He pointed to a track that rose between stout yew walls from the river's bank, climbed the slant of a meadow and stole into a tall beechwood.

"That's The Short Lane. The river's just going to curve in a horseshoe bend, and The Short Lane will take you across the heel. It's fifteen miles by water and four by land, so if you want a stroll . . ."

"Are you perfectly certain," said Simon, "that we can make no mistake ? "

"All things are possible," replied the courier ; "but from what I've seen of you I don't think you're qualified to bring it off. A blind idiot who had been carefully misdirected might possibly miss the way, but as you can all see . . ."

"Thank you," said Pomfret. "That's very prettily put. And if ever you want a reference, just let me know. It'll be no trouble at all."

"I don't imagine," said Gog, "that I shall ever leave you. I like fat men. Never mind. It's now two, and the barge'll be round by five. Can you do four miles in three hours ? "

In dignified silence Pomfret descended the gang-board to join Patricia and Eulalie, who were already ashore. Simon followed, and the four strolled up the lane. As they came to the beechwood they turned, to see the barge under way and Gog standing rigidly on the figure-head with one leg and presenting arms with the other.

"Now, not too fast," said Pomfret. "For once in our lives we've a reasonable distance to go in a reasonable time ; don't let's abuse the opportunity."

"Will a mile an hour do ? " said Patricia, stooping to stroke a rabbit which had stopped in the middle of a meal to watch their passage.

Pomfret shook his head.

"I couldn't bear to keep Gog waiting. No. The best thing to do is to cover the first two miles at a steady two miles an hour. Then, having broken the back of the business, we can take an hour off. After that we can go as we please."

"Why not rest first ? " said Simon. "We've only been sitting still for twenty-six hours, so a sleep would freshen us up."

"Why not recall the barge ? " said Eulalie. "And say we've changed our minds ? I wish it was fourteen miles instead of four."

"If my legs fail," said Pomfret, "you must build a litter of boughs."

"Let's hope they won't," said Simon. "I haven't wattled for years."

"I will direct you," said Pomfret. "If you haven't a knife you just break or b-bite off the branches, and then, proceeding to the other end of the alphabet, weave the warp and w-woof which you have won into a web. Oh, and who called this woodwork a lane ? It's more like the Hindenburg line."

There was something to be said for the comparison.

Sunk either between walls of yew, which must have been ten feet thick, or between curtains of foliage so impenetrable that the tree-trunks themselves were seldom visible, the lane twisted, curled and doubled so persistently that progress began to consist of rounding a series of bends, and two people who were no more than twenty paces apart might have walked the same way for miles without becoming aware of each other's propinquity.

It follows that Simon, who was strolling ahead and moving rather faster than the others, was almost at once out of sight—a fact to which Patricia was on the point of demurring, when his voice was heard calling them in a tone which suggested that he had made a discovery of unusual interest.

The three quickened their pace.

Simon was standing in the fairway staring upon his right foot. This was no longer shod with leather, but enshrined in a shoe of metal, glowing and rich to look at and yellow as the midday sun. In all other respects the shoe resembled its fellow, and might have been one of a pair of which the left had been fashioned of leather and the right of gold.

"Pure gold," said Simon simply.

"But what—how—why . . . ? "

"I haven't done anything," said Simon.

"All of a sudden my foot seemed rather heavy, and I glanced down to see why it was. . . . Then I saw this."

"You must have stepped in something," said Pomfret.

"Don't be absurd," said Eulalie, bubbling. "When did it happen, Simon?"

"I really don't know," said Simon, "but it can't have been very far back. As a matter of fact, I was rather busy with the lane, trying to discover why it's been made like a maze, and, though I was conscious that there was something wrong, for a moment or two I didn't get it. Then, as I say, I looked down."

"Can you walk?" said Patricia.

"Oh, yes," said her husband. "It's heavy, but comfortable enough. It's my shoe all right, you know, just turned into gold. But I don't suppose I'll be able to go very fast."

"Thank Heaven for that," said Pomfret heartily. "Of course, this is a judgment. I told you it was indecent to go bursting along, and now Nature has put it across you for defying her laws."

"Just so," said Simon, knocking out his pipe upon a shining heel and slightly denting the metal with every tap. "Still, when we feel like a run I can always take it off, can't I? I rather like being shoeless, and the going's perfect."

"True," said Pomfret gravely. "And a golden calf would be most becoming, wouldn't it? And then we can worship you. And now I'm going to lead," he added, turning to resume the advance. "Should my trousers turn into lapis-lazuli, one of you might draw my attention to the matter." Here an overhanging bough dipped, and a squirrel alighted upon his shoulder. "Why, here's Douglas." He put up a hand to caress his pretty tenant. "I must warn you, my fellow, that while I am prepared to convey you for an indefinite distance in the direction in which I wish to go, that's on the distinct understanding that you leave my shoulder in at least as good condition as——"

Amid a shriek from the girls the rest of the sentence was lost.

But caution and laughter alike meant nothing to Douglas, who, with a forepaw on Pomfret's hat, was peering under its brim and into his ear. Of the suitability of this member as a *cache* he was at length apparently satisfied, for to the inexpressible content of Patricia, Eulalie and Simon he presently took a nut from his cheek and proceeded with a brisk movement to stuff the dainty into his improvised repository.

The next moments were full of action.

With the roar of a wounded bull Pomfret leaped into the air, Douglas, considerably astonished, sprang for safety on to a neighbouring bough, and the three lookers-on released that true explosion of mirth which only a drollery which one has seen coming can ever provoke.

With his eyes on the living roof, Pomfret was talking to himself.

"Thank you very much. . . . No, there's nothing to see, but the drum is entirely destroyed. . . . Yes, it was great agony, but I don't suffer as I did. . . . Well, to be frank, it was a squirrel: I was befriending the little animal and it did in my drum. . . . Well, just blinkin' well did it in—before my wife's eyes. . . . Oh, it was terrible for her. Such a shock. Even to-day she can't speak of it without laughing. . . ."

"How very dreadful," said a voice.

Pomfret started, and the others stood up and looked about them, wiping their eyes.

"You know," continued the speaker, mincing from behind a tree, "I am distressed beyond measure by this most lamentable history." Here he paused, swallowed and blinked long and violently as though to convey that he was unable to proceed for emotion.

He was a thin, unpleasant-looking man, with watery eyes and a retreating forehead, the line of which was produced into a long, red nose, suggesting great vacancy of mind. His red hair was long and bushed behind, and the crown of his tall, black hat was banded with gold. His short sky-blue tunic was tightly belted to the waist and cut low at the neck, revealing a yellow silk shirt: his hose were of blue and yellow, and his black pointed shoes were split upon either side and peaked before and behind.

"You must know," continued the stranger, "that a few weeks back I lost a harp in somewhat similar circumstances. I had been playing to the fowls of the air when a bear approached and, perceiving me upon the opposite side of the strings, assumed that I was in a cage from which it was his mission to deliver me. At least, from the frenzy with which, when I last saw him, the dear fellow was reducing the instrument, I have always supposed that to be the case. Was it a bass drum, brother?"

"No, a lyric soprano," said Pomfret shortly, "with semi-comfort tires and a spotlight. I've never driven a more responsive

tumbrel—I mean timbrel. But never mind. Was yours an Æolian harp ? Or used you to blow it ? "

" Mine was a harpsichord," sighed the stranger, " done in dove-grey picked out with bird's-egg green. I used to pluck at its strings and gather melody with both my hands. Was your drum decorative ? "

" No," said Pomfret. " It was inlaid with aunt of pearl, but otherwise quite plain. Almost severe. I used to scratch myself against it. There was a fox-trot in every bite."

" This is most fortunate," said the stranger, beaming. " My name is Pouch," he added suddenly, with a bow and a sweep of his hat. " You can't have heard of me."

" How d'you do," said every one.

" Not at all," said Pouch pleasantly. " To continue, you can't have heard of me, because I'm unheard of. Are you going down The Lane ? "

" That's the idea," said Simon. " Our barge has gone round by water, and we're going to pick it up at the other end."

" The other end of the barge ? " said Pouch.

" Of The Lane," said Simon.

" You can't pick up a barge," said Pouch. " It's too heavy."

" I meant ' rejoin it,' " said Simon.

" But I thought you said it had gone round."

" So it has," said Simon. " By water."

" Never heard of the place," said Pouch. " Where did you see it last ? "

" Listen," said Patricia. " We left the barge at the end of The Short Lane. While we're walking down the lane, it's going to follow the river——"

" Don't be silly," said Pomfret. " The lane can't follow the river." He turned to Pouch. " It's quite simple. Both we and the barge are aiming for the same spot. Never mind how or why. We just are. There's the spot." He marked the turf with his heel. " Well, the barge is going this way "—he stooped to trace the course with his finger—" and we're going that."

" Go on," said Pouch attentively.

" That's all," said Pomfret.

" All what ? " said Pouch.

" All," cried Pomfret. " A double L."

Eulalie's shoulders began to shake, and Pouch pushed back his hat.

" I thought you said," he said, " that you were going to rejoin it."

" So we are," shouted Pomfret. " That was the motif of my demonstration."

Pouch looked around.

" No barge," he said, " will ever get round these curves. In fact, unless it's very narrow——"

" You know," said Pomfret grimly, " I don't think you're trying."

Simon bit his lip, and Patricia covered her face.

" You said," said Pouch, " that the barge was going this way."

Pomfret expired.

" I said," he said shakily, " that it was going *that* way." He squatted down and viciously scratched at the turf. " Not that actual way. This is only a map. It's going to float round this wood—that's the wood—on a lot of wet stuff. Some people call it water. Well, it's going to float round the wood as far as THAT." He dabbed at the indenture he had made with his heel. " Not that actual spot, but the place that spot represents. Meanwhile we shall walk —on dry land. That's The Short Lane cutting across this—this protuberance, and——"

" What's a protuberance ? " said Pouch.

Pomfret put a hand to his head.

" I wish you wouldn't argue," he said. " Besides, we're doing geography, not grammar. *This* is a protuberance. If it hadn't been, I shouldn't have said it was. And now I've lost my place. . . . Oh, I know. Well, we're going down The Lane *also* as far as THAT. Very well. By the time we're across the barge'll be round."

" I thought you said it had an end," said Pouch.

" Well, I didn't," said Pomfret, " but it has. Two of them."

" And now it's going to be round," said Pouch. " Why, you won't recognise it, will you ? "

" Take me away," said Pomfret violently. " Take me away and test me to see if I'm sane. Oh, and try and find the bear that did in his rotten harp. Let's see if he meant to release him."

" Be quiet," wailed Patricia, clinging to one of his arms, while Eulalie, helpless with laughter, clung to the other. " Do remember you're in Etchechuria."

" ' Remember ' ? " screamed Pomfret. " D'you think I'm likely to forget ? D'you think any other country could breed such a septic ass ? Burn it, the man can't construe. And look at the earth in my nails. . . ."

They calmed him somehow, and presently the five proceeded, for Pouch seemed

delighted with his company, and announced that he dwelt at Fiddle, a village through which they must pass.

"Gog never mentioned a village," said Eulalie.

"It's on The Lane," said Pouch. "In fact, The Lane acts as its streets. It's very convenient. Now, The Long Lane would have been useless. That has no turning at all. Very remarkable, but most uninteresting. Here's a milestone."

"Where?" said Eulalie.

"There," said Pouch, pointing to a huge hornbook, the handle of which was planted in the ground. "Three hornbooks or six samplers go to a mile, so if you can add you always know where you are."

"I don't understand," said Simon. "We're more than a third of a mile from the river bank."

"Possibly," said Pouch. "A milestone only indicates that you've still got some way to go. There are never more than nine hornbooks to any league. They may be all together in the first hundred yards, but until you've done your league you won't see the tenth." Here they rounded a corner to see seven mighty samplers hanging like arras upon the hedge. "There you are. Now, when you've seen five more hornbooks you'll know that you've done three miles. Or ten samplers."

"In other words," said Pomfret, "an exceptionally fine mathematician with a phenomenal memory can always tell where he is to within six miles. I see. And what a good idea to call them milestones. . . ." He swallowed deliberately. "If you're making for Fiddle, I suppose that's how you know when you get there."

"That's right," said Pouch excitedly. "You've got it. It's a great safeguard."

"Oh, godsend," corrected Pomfret. "Godsend."

"It is indeed," insisted Pouch. "The moment you see Fiddle, you add up the samplers you've passed and divide them by eighteen. If the answer's the same as the number of leagues you've come, that shows that Fiddle can't be more than twelve miles off: and as it's the only village for twenty miles it must be it."

"Always presuming," said Pomfret, "you know where you started from. I see. Personally, I always walk by square measure as the crow flies. When I've done four antimacassars and seven chained bibles, then I know I'm out of my mind. And now let's discuss philately, or don't you believe in ghosts?"

"One moment," said Pouch. "Let me lend you a handkerchief."

Pomfret stared. Then he turned to his wife.

"Is there any foundation for this solicitude? That you can perceive, I mean?"

"None whatever," breathed Eulalie.

Pomfret returned to Pouch.

"Thanks very much," he said. "But it appears that I don't need it. Incidentally, I have one."

"But I must insist," said Pouch, producing a red and green wonder from a wallet by his side. "I couldn't think of refusing."

"I'm sure of that," said Pomfret, "but the question doesn't arise. It's I who decline the, er, honour—with many thanks."

"Granted," said Pouch irrelevantly, "but it's a matter of principle. If I don't lend I lose interest. I've got a most lovely punch-bowl, but, you know, I've never lent it and now I don't care about it. It's such a beauty, too. It's porous."

"Ah, I expected it'd have some virtue," said Pomfret, raising his eyes to heaven. "A porous punch-bowl. Did you have it specially made?"

"The idea is," said Pouch, "that you can't overfill it. So, you see, not to borrow this handkerchief would be almost brutal."

"Perhaps you'd better," said Patricia in a low voice. "There may be some custom. . . ."

With an awful look Pomfret stretched out his hand and the handkerchief passed.

The transfer took some time, for the article proved to be some thirty feet long, and towards the end of the operation the reluctant borrower's face was presenting so striking a picture of astonishment and speechless indignation that it was only with the greatest difficulty that his companions could maintain their gravity.

"And that's that," said Pouch cheerfully, as the end of the silk disappeared. "D'you know you remind me of a sexton I used to know? He was a bigamist."

Pomfret removed his hat.

"Somebody else," he said, "can converse with this gentleman. I've taken up enough of his time—as well as his laundry." With that, glancing at his bulging pocket with eyes that protruded as though in sympathy, he stalked majestically ahead, while Pouch, apparently oblivious of his displeasure, began to discourse to Patricia upon a movement in

which he was interested towards the education of bats to abandon night-life and pursue their calling by day.

In this manner they came to Fiddle, a tiny town through which, as Pouch had intimated, The Short Lane wound and writhed so persistently that it served the back and front of every house in the place. There seemed to be no one about, for which the four were grateful, for it seemed possible, if not likely, that Pouch's neighbours would prove to be as peculiar as himself, and they had no mind to extend their acquaintance with a fellowship, intercourse with which was so embarrassing. Moreover, the town itself was so remarkable that a chance of observing it freely and of being able to stare without seeming to pry was most refreshing.

The houses, though small, were of great age and beauty, while their condition and the meticulous care with which they were manifestly kept, suggested that wind and weather either had no footing in Fiddle or had been bought off. Wrought iron gleamed like silver, brick and stone were as fresh and clean as snow, and all the woodwork, of which there was a great quantity, was entirely devoid of any paint or varnish, but highly polished by hand. Link-extinguishers, casements, beams, barge-boards, patently burnished faithfully for many years, had every one acquired a natural sheen which immeasurably enhanced its quality and set the shady streets aglow with that subdued brilliance which wood and iron can shed, but is seldom to be seen outside some favourite closet in a show-house.

Dumb before the evidence of such bewildering industry, the four were gaping at their surroundings, when the demeanour of their remarkable companion began to compel their attention.

On entering Fiddle, Pouch had fallen silent, and before they had traversed two streets seemed strangely perturbed. He muttered and whimpered to himself, shaking his head and raising his watery eyes as though in distress, and when presently Simon inquired what was the matter, emitted a hollow groan. As they proceeded, his concern became more pronounced, while his actions began to suggest that he had lost a valuable. He peered within his wallet, felt his tunic all over and shook his sleeves, expressing his dismay so vigorously that windows began to be opened and heads thrust out.

"For heaven's sake," said Eulalie, "what have you lost?"

Pouch, however, seemed too overwrought to reply and, as they emerged into a tiny square, let out a bellow of complaint. Indeed, he began to roar like any infant, with his mouth wide open and tears streaming down his cheeks, standing quite still with his arms hanging down by his sides, and making no attempt, however instinctive

"Simon was standing in the fairway staring upon his right foot. This was no longer shod with leather, but enshrined in a shoe of metal, glowing and rich to look at and yellow as the midday sun."

or feeble, to suppress or disguise his emotion.

As soon as he could speak—

"Egg-bound," said Pomfret. "Must be. Or else he's seen himself in one of those doors. Never mind. We'd better be moving on. There'll be a crowd in a minute."

The words, however, were hardly out of his mouth when the doors of the houses and buildings upon the square began to open and their occupants to emerge, while the two mouths of The Lane began to disgorge two fast-swelling streams of neighbours, all of them running to learn the truth of the trouble.

"Too late," said Simon, pointing. "We can't breast a tide like that. Besides, it'd look funny—strolling away from the row. Still, we may as well stand in the shade."

With a glance at Pomfret, he stepped to a mighty chestnut. The others followed, Pomfret nodding abstractedly, while the girls regarded the scene with the keenest interest.

"Oh, look at the beadles," cried Patricia. "And there's a sedan-chair."

"The whole town's out," said Eulalie. "And I don't blame them. Just listen to that note. I wouldn't have believed one man could make such a noise."

"He'll burst a blood-vessel in a minute," said Simon.

"I should regard such a casualty," said Pomfret, "with mixed feelings. Only just mixed. In fact, the percentage of sorrow would be almost negligible."

"I must confess," said his wife, "I'm curious to know his trouble. I suppose he's lost something valueless."

"Well, stand by," said Simon. "The darling's going to explain."

This was evident.

Neighbours were now about Pouch, asking him this and that, and from the welter of sobbing responses began to emerge. These, however, were mostly in the negative, for his questioners seemed to assume that he was in pain, and attempted by a process of exhaustion to locate the agony. Finally, however, it was established that what pain he was suffering was mental, and then, the ground having been prepared, the victim relapsed into speech.

"Robbed," he yelled. "I've been robbed."

"'Robbed'?" cried every one.

"Robbed," screamed Pouch. "*By a fat fair man in loose hose with a dent in his hat.*"

Pomfret raised his voice.

"Let's be clear about this. I don't suppose you mean me, but——"

"*That's him,*" shrieked Pouch, starting forward. "*He's stolen my handkerchief.*"

There was a moment's silence. Then—

"You abominable liar," said Eulalie.

"That," said a musical voice, "remains to be proved." Here the door of the sedan-chair opened and a little man in Court Dress, with a black satin tie to his wig, stepped on to the ground. "Officers," he added, nodding in the beadles' direction, "kindly arrest the four—three as vagabonds and the fourth as a rogue. I'll try them at once."

* * * * *

"To begin with," said Pomfret, "the Court isn't competent. Secondly, I don't understand the procedure. Thirdly, if anyone here present thinks that anyone but a broken-down draper in his second childhood and subject to hallucinations could have the slightest use for a dozen yards of fourth-rate muslin, hitherto employed by an idiot to wipe his rotten nose, all I can say is they ought to be watched."

"I quite agree," said the Magistrate. "Does anyone here think that? If so, let him stand forth."

No one stood up or replied, so after a little while the Magistrate said "Admitted," and the Clerk wrote it down.

"And now go on," said the Magistrate. "I'm more than interested."

In his failure to follow the procedure Pomfret was not alone. Nobody present understood it, and the confusion and disputes which had arisen suggested that Fiddle's experience of the administration of justice was of the most elementary kind.

The setting itself was eccentric.

The open-air court stood in a corner of the square and was shaded by four great oaks, two of which rose like pillars upon either side. In addition to the Bench, the dock and the witness-box, its features included a minstrels' gallery, a well of water and a pound—the last two right in the middle, and since all three accessories were used throughout the hearing for those purposes for which they are usually employed, concentration upon the issues was a matter of considerable difficulty. Of the three the well appeared to be held the most important, for a man who was blindfold and clad entirely in white continually hauled up water which was carefully scrutinised by apothecaries before being poured back into the depths, but no little fuss had

been made about filling the others before the proceedings began.

Four fat musicians had been empanelled in the gallery, and a magnificent jackass inducted into the pound, and when at last the Magistrate took his seat the burst of melody which greeted him was, to judge from his reception of it, extremely gratifying and quite unexceptionable.

Then the trouble had begun.

First, there had been a dispute as to who should enter the dock. The Magistrate had declared that that was where Pouch should stand, while the Clerk had stubbornly maintained that Pomfret if not all the strangers were meriting the reproach. Finally, one of the beadles was so rash as to back up the Clerk, whereupon he was instantly ordered to enter the dock himself, while Pouch was put in the pound and Pomfret and his friends were accorded seats on the Bench. The Magistrate seemed highly pleased with this arrangement, and insisted that the girls should sit, the one on his right and the other on his left, and after complimenting them upon their beauty, formally dismissed the charge of vagrancy and said that it should never have been brought.

Then came the question of witnesses.

The Clerk had produced a list and called out a dozen names, to each one of which some spectator or other had responded. These had then been commanded to enter the witness-box, but several had protested that they had given evidence before and so were exempt from service. This had aroused great discussion, in which the minstrels joined, but at length the Magistrate repealed the law of exemption and ordered the objectors to obey. A further demurrer that the box had been built to hold but one at a time was denounced as trivial, and the unfortunate twelve were crammed within its walls.

Then summonses were issued for the attendance of Pomfret and Pouch, and each was solemnly served. A bench-warrant was issued for the arrest of the beadle in the dock, and a search-warrant was handed to his colleague with instructions to search the witnesses without delay. This charge the latter deputed to his victims, who all searched one another as best they could. After that the spectators were sworn, the minstrels were formally cautioned, and Pouch was given five nobles out of the poor-box.

Finally Pomfret had been called upon and politely asked if he knew of any reason why the Court should not give him judgment.

"I said 'Go on,'" said the Magistrate.

"D'you mean," said Pomfret, "you want me to tell my tale?"

"Any tale," said the Magistrate. "Why did you steal the handkerchief?"

"I didn't," said Pomfret.

"Then why didn't you?" said the Magistrate.

Pomfret frowned.

"Because," he said, "I am neither a thief nor a fool."

"That's a very serious statement to make," said the Magistrate. "Did you hear what you said?"

"Well, only just," said Pomfret. "I find the band rather selfish. And I suppose Arthur couldn't stop cranking that well. I shall begin to go round myself in a minute. I mean, I should hate to deflect the course of Justice, but what's the use of lugging the water up and then chucking it back? Why doesn't he drink it, or wash in it, or go and put it under a bridge?"

"He's trying to get at the truth," said the Magistrate. "He may extract it any minute. I've sat on this Bench for over fifty years and I've never seen it yet, but"—here he lowered his voice—"I believe it to be nude. That's why the wheelman's blindfold. As for the band, people will talk in Court, so the music's to drown the conversation."

"And why the ass?" said Patricia.

"That's The Law," said the Magistrate. "Look at his points. Haven't you heard of 'pound-foolish'?"

Before Patricia could reply—

"Are you going to grant bail?" said the Clerk.

"That's a most impertinent question," said the Magistrate. "I've a great mind to commit you." He raised his voice and smote upon the desk before him. "If anyone interrupts again I shall bind him over. Right over." After looking furiously about him, he turned to Pomfret. "Which of the witnesses do you wish to call?"

Pomfret shrugged his shoulders.

"I've really no choice," he said. "To my knowledge none of them saw anything, so they're all equally valuable. Now, my friends here can bear out my tale."

"Yes, but they were present," said the Magistrate, with the triumph of one who indicates a palpably fatal flaw in his opponents' contention. "And now do state your case. I'm longing to hear it."

Here the orchestra let out a gust of frightfulness which made every one present jump almost out of his skin and The Law shy against Pouch and crush him against the wall. Between his yells, and the angry shouts of the witnesses, who had no room to start and had consequently hurt themselves in the attempt, and the efforts of the musicians to drown these several protests, such order as there had been was rudely deposed, and it was quite five minutes before any condition worthy of the name was presently restored.

So soon as he could make himself heard—

"I refuse," said Pomfret warmly, "to say another word unless you stop that band. I've never talked against a bassoon yet, and I'm not going to try now. It's—it's undignified."

"So it is," said the Magistrate. "You voice my own thoughts, sir. I'm very pleased to have met you." He rose and glared at the minstrels. "Either," he said, "you have not practised what you have been playing or you have not played what you have been practising—conduct for which, as all thinking men and women will agree, there is no shadow of excuse. Unfortunately my dead cats are at home, and I have come out without a rotten egg, otherwise I should have not had the slightest hesitation in discharging some of both these tokens of disapproval consecutively in your direction. And now leave your weapons where they are and go into the pound."

Looking very glum, the four musicians descended from the gallery and joined Pouch and The Law, who, after regarding their arrival with manifest suspicion, turned his back upon them and laid back his ears in a way which left little doubt as to his opinion of their deserts. Perceiving and mistrusting this contempt, the unhappy artists sought to outflank the danger by a turning movement in which, as the pound was small, Pouch was immediately involved. This conspiracy, however, to defeat the ends of Justice was unsuccessful, for The Law perceived the movement and began to revolve with the five, who were soon treading one upon the heels of the other in an endeavour to respect the danger zone. Indeed, when once they had all got going, a bird's-eye view of the pound would have conveyed the impression that it contained a Catherine-wheel which moved occasionally jerkily, but on the whole at a steady three miles an hour, and gave no indication of coming to rest.

"So perish all wasters," said the Magistrate. He put on a pair of horn spectacles and turned to Pomfret. "For the third and last time, have you anything whatever to say?"

Before Pomfret could reply—

"If you ask me," said the Clerk, "he's mute of malice."

This was too much.

"The trouble with you," said Pomfret violently, "is that you don't know your job."

"Can you prove that?" said the Magistrate.

"Well, not what you'd call 'prove,'" said Pomfret. "I can demonstrate that he's grossly ignorant of his duties and better qualified to dispense pig-wash than justice, but . . ."

"Ah, that's very different," said the Magistrate. "Never mind. What is your version of this distressing affair?"

Pomfret cleared his throat and rose to his feet.

"I was accosted by the being whose name I understand to be Pouch about two hours ago. At that time I was in The Short Lane about a mile from this town. He appeared without warning from behind a tree and engaged me in conversation upon the subject of musical instruments, particularly deploring the fact that his harp had been demolished by a bear—a creature, I may say, with whom I feel I should have much in common. I was rather short with him, because I'm rather particular about the company I keep, and, while I can suffer a fool, a poisonous fool tends to elevate my gorge. However, it soon became obvious that nothing short of violence would drive him away, and as I'm of a peaceable nature I resigned myself to my fate. After some discussion regarding our movements, in the course of which he demonstrated that he is a congenital idiot of the first water, he announced his intention of proceeding with us to Fiddle. This he accordingly did. At first he did nothing but offer us information which was incredibly obscure and utterly worthless: then, without any warning, he begged to be allowed to lend me the beastly chattel which is the subject of the present dispute. I declined. Pouch, however, was importunate, insisting that I should be doing him a service by consenting to receive his property, and in the end I agreed. Had I known its dimensions, nothing would have induced me to house the rag, but these only became apparent after I had consented to accom-

modate it, so against my better judgment—which was, I may say, to ram the material down its owner's throat—I suffered the set of my coat to be irretrievably ruined. This out of sheer good nature, which he almost immediately rewarded by a most offensive remark. We then went on our way. Hardly had we entered this town when Pouch began to display symptoms of restlessness and to search his vile body as though some animal had secreted itself about his person. We inquired what was the matter, but he made no reply, merely continuing to advertise his disgust with life, until upon entering the square his advertisement could no longer be ignored by anyone within earshot.

"Well, there are the plain facts. I dare say he'll deny them, but I can't help that. I can only say, first, that I am not accustomed to associate with, much less pilfer from, vulgar imbeciles: secondly, that I have always understood that the first principle of theft was that the object to be stolen should not be entirely valueless; and thirdly, that a treacherous and malignant maniac who makes it his practice to molest strangers, saddle them with his filthy belongings and then accuse them of felony ought to be officially immured at his own expense."

When Pomfret sat down there was a great deal of applause, in which Pouch joined heartily, while the Clerk turned round and insisted on shaking the speaker's hand, stating that he never remembered hearing a plea of guilty more sympathetically presented.

"And now," said the Magistrate, "have you any objection to being cross-examined? If so, I must overrule it."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," said Pomfret, "but I've none whatever."

"It can't be helped," said the Magistrate. "Let the plaintiff take the chair."

At that the wheelman stopped working, and the bucket, which he was about to lower, was detached from the rope. In its place a chair was made fast: to this Pouch was conducted, and when he had taken his seat, the chair and its burden were swung out over the depths, and then suffered to descend until to those upon the Bench only the complainant's head was visible.

"Now he'll be well advised," whispered the Magistrate to Eulalie. "We always do that. And if they get above themselves we just, er, abase them."

Here the Clerk, who had produced a huge skin of parchment shaped like a roller-towel, lighted a fat candle and picked up a stick of sealing-wax.

"I must warn you," he said, holding the wax to the flame, "that everything you say will be taken down and used against you." And with that he scrawled "FIRST QUESTION" upon the sheet, making a great business of the labour, lowering his face to the table and protruding his tongue as though his life were depending upon his formation of the words.

"What were you doing," said Pouch, "in The Short Lane?"

Pomfret frowned.

"I was living, moving and having my being there," he said.

"Do I understand you to say," said Pouch, wagging a finger in a highly professional way, "that you were living there?"

"Since you ask me," said Pomfret, "I don't think you can understand anything. To my mind, your gifts do not include the faculty of comprehension."

"Ah, I thought we should get at something in a minute," said Pouch, rubbing his hands. "A little bird told me. Now listen to me. You say I assaulted you."

"As a matter of fact, I said 'accosted,' but it's the same thing. To be addressed by you is to be mentally assaulted."

"Exactly," said Pouch, with the air of one who has secured the very answer he desires. "And if that is so, how came I to appear without warning?"

Pomfret shrugged his shoulders.

"I should think the answer's a bunch of carrots," he said. "I can't think of anything else."

"His point is," said the Magistrate, "that you must always give audible warning of an assault, and his suggestion is that you failed to do so."

"Now, let's be clear about this," said Pouch, tapping the side of the well. "You spoke of a protuberance."

"Unhappily I did."

"Was that before or after you had failed to appear?"

"Neither," said Pomfret. "It was underneath. If you remember, I sang a song without words. 'Protuberance' was one of them."

"Do you produce it?" said the Clerk.

"The song or the word?" said Pomfret.

"The protuberance, stupid," said the Magistrate.

"No," said Pomfret, "I don't. It's too

big. Besides, it's got a forest on it, and I should disturb the resident mammals."

"Then why," said Pouch, "did you surround me?"

"I did not surround you," said Pomfret. "I remember denying myself. The temptation to play 'Here we surround The Gooseberry Fool' was awful, but I trod it under."

"Under what?" said the Magistrate.

"Great provocation," said Pomfret. "But then I'm like that."

"Just so, just so," said the Magistrate as though Pomfret had evoked a mutual understanding to which they alone had been admitted. "Have you nearly finished?" he added, turning to Pouch.

"Very nearly," said Pouch. "I just want to test his memory. How were you dressed when you assaulted me?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow," said Pomfret. "The gift of prophecy is not among my powers."

Pouch raised his eyebrows.

"You prophesied about your harp," he said. "You said it was going to be round."

"I never heard of a round harp," said the Clerk.

"He's mixing his consonants," said Pomfret wearily. "What I said was that the *barge* was going to be round."

"Or a round barge," said the Clerk.

"I didn't mean 'circular,'" said Pomfret. "I meant—— Well, when I said that it'd be round——"

"What would be round?" said the Magistrate.

"The harp," said Pomfret. "I mean the barge. When I said that the barge'd be round I meant that it would have finished going round. When you've finished going round a thing, you're round, aren't you?"

"I'm not," said the Magistrate.

"Well, I am," said Pomfret.

"D'you mean you're circular?" said the Magistrate.

"No, oval," said Pomfret shortly. "And you can have the point. I don't care."

"You said," said Pouch, "that the harp——"

"I never mentioned the blasted dulcimer."

"Yes, you did," shrieked Pouch. "You asked me to lend it to you."

"You said that a bear had done it in," said Pomfret.

"Done what in?" said the Magistrate. "The barge?"

"No," cried Pomfret. "The harp."

"Well, what if it did?" said the Magistrate. "Bears do do in harps."

"Do do they? I mean, I don't know. He just stated the rotten fact."

"But what's the point?" said the Magistrate.

"Don't be silly," said Pomfret. "There isn't one. He says I asked him to lend me his harp."

"And what do you say?"

"I say I didn't because, for one thing, it was already within my knowledge that he hadn't got a harp to lend."

"Quite so," said the Magistrate. "Besides, you had a harp."

"No, I hadn't," said Pomfret. "Neither of us had a harp."

"Then how could you lend him one?"

"Look here," said Pomfret violently, "the answer is in the unmentionable negative. I never saw, heard, possessed, borrowed, or lent any harps, bears, or other musical instruments. It's against my principles."

"You said," said Pouch, "that——"

"If you say 'you said' again," said Pomfret, "I shall cause you grievous bodily harm. Why the devil can't you say something *I* said—I mean, *you* said?"

"He mustn't repeat himself," said the Magistrate. "That's why."

"Do you deny," said Pouch, "that you passed a milestone?"

"You gave it that name," said Pomfret.

"Come, come," said the Magistrate. "A milestone's a milestone."

"Well, this one wasn't," said Pomfret. "It was a hornbook."

"Did you or did you not pass it?" said Pouch.

"Of course I passed it," said Pomfret. "We all passed it."

"Was that on your way to Fiddle?"

"It was."

"Then the milestone would have been on your right."

"I don't know where it would have been," said Pomfret. "In fact, it was on our left."

"That depends which way you were facing," said the Clerk. "If you'd been walking backwards——"

"I wasn't walking backwards," said Pomfret.

"Then you should have said so," said the Magistrate.

"Will you take it from me," said Pouch, "that that milestone is the only one for several miles?"

"That," said Pomfret, "from what I've

seen of this district, I can well believe."

"Then it follows," said Pouch in a voice quivering with triumph, "that if you passed that milestone you must have been in The Short Lane."

"Of course you must have second sight," said Pomfret. "That's quite obvious." He sighed. "Give the gentleman a bag of nuts, some one. With full instructions."

Here everybody applauded very loudly, and the Clerk stood up and waved the skin of parchment, the circuit of which had almost been completed.

The Magistrate turned to Patricia.

"A very skilful piece of work," he said. "You see, he's been arguing in a circle, and now the circle's complete. His next question would naturally be, 'What were you doing in The Lane?' and that, if you remember, was his first."

"I see," said Patricia politely. "What do we do now?"

"Now we identify the prisoner, and after that we pass sentence." He turned to Pomfret. "Just stand over there in a row, will you?"

"I'd know him anywhere," said Pouch. "He's got a dent——"

"Abase that man," said the Magistrate. "He's defying the Court."

"I shan't," screamed Pouch. "I'm a——"

What he was, however, was not disclosed, for the chair was let down with a run, and a continuous but not unpleasant booming was all that was left to declare the complainant's existence.

The band was then commanded to join Pomfret, and the five were drawn up in line.

Considering that his companions were clad in apple-green doublets and scarlet hose, that Pomfret was the tallest of the five by at least eight inches, and that no one of the four bore the slightest physical resemblance to the prisoner or could have been reasonably mistaken for anyone but himself except upon the darkest of nights, the odds, if any were offered upon the result of the identification, must have been unattractive.

For what it was worth, however, Pomfret removed his hat—as it proved, a valuable precaution, for when Pouch had been hauled to the surface and confronted with his task, he stared upon the five in a bewildered way. Indeed, it soon became manifest that he was not at all certain whom to touch, for he began to prowl to and fro before the parade, plucking at his chin and muttering after the manner of those who are mentally embarrassed. At this every one present began to laugh, and soon every hesitation of the complainant was greeted with ironical cheers, which the Clerk led, in which the Magistrate joined. Flustered by these attentions, Pouch began to dance up and down, wringing his hands in a perfect agony of indecision—behaviour which immediately provoked roars of delight and a swelling storm of gibes and abusive exhortation. Indeed, to crown his discomfiture it only remained for the fellow to pick the wrong man, and this he eventually did, selecting the bass viol after a final paroxysm of vacillation.

The bellow of derision which properly greeted his action must have been heard for miles and entirely obliterated the orders which the Magistrate was shouting for Pouch to be apprehended and put in The Pillory at once. The Clerk, however, transmitted this horrid command by alternately assuming the traditional attitude of those thus punished and hurling imaginary missiles into the air, to the delight of the bass viol, who instantly informed the crowd and kicked Pouch in the stomach out of sheer exuberance. The latter was then borne off by the way he had come, the Clerk, the Magistrate and the Beadles all assisting vigorously at his translation, while The Law, who had emerged from the pound, followed the rout after the manner of a rearguard, occasionally squealing and kicking as though to proclaim his approval.

So instant was every one present that the sentence should be carried out that the witnesses were forgotten, and even their howl of execration which greeted this selfish oversight was disregarded. Simon, however, wrenched the panel away, receiving a shower of blessings for this kind act, after which the captives turned and ran like so many stags in the direction of the promising disorder.

Pomfret watched the crowd out of sight.

"There are times," he said, "when Retribution is painfully slow, but—well, she does get there. You know, that was a most beautiful kick. All among the digestive organs. Brother Pouch'll be on slops for a month. That is if he survives. I asked the bass viol to call an egg after me, and he swore he'd shout, 'A present from Pomfret' with *the first two dozen he threw*. It appears that attached to The Pillory is a munition factory in the shape of a poultry farm: and all the eggs are stored against

happy afternoons. Such a comfortable thought."

* * * * *

"A quarter past nine," said Simon with his eyes on The Clock. "If she doesn't fetch up soon . . ."

"I refuse," said Pomfret, "to return to Fiddle—for private reasons. Or to allow my woman to retrace her steps."

"I was going to suggest," said Simon, "that I went out on patrol. If I swam upstream for a while——"

"Thanks very much," said Patricia, "but as you're my only husband I'd rather have you under my eye. This isn't a country to take any liberties with."

"To say nothing of the fact," added Eulalie, "that there's something wrong with the water. That we know."

"It's all right here," said Simon, who was lying flat on his face with an arm in the flood. "If I swam——"

"Nothing doing," said his wife.

"I agree," said Pomfret. "We don't exactly love you, but we're used to seeing you about. And now let's pretend that we're better without food. It's a most exciting game. The one who pretends best is eaten last."

"Be quiet," said Eulalie. "I think I hear the oars."

Every one listened intently, but the distant cry of an owl and the stealthy thrust of some creature in the thick of the woods were all that rewarded their ears.

They had reached the end of The Lane soon after six, fully expecting to find the gang-board down and Gog a little uneasy on their behalf, but the barge was not at the meeting-place, and the lovely reach was empty except for the shining fish which whipped to and fro in the brown water and occasionally leapt like harlequins into the lazy air.

It was not like Gog to be behind his time, and when half an hour had gone by and there was still no sign of the barge, it seemed certain that some misadventure must have befallen it.

Suddenly Eulalie had thought of regarding her ring. . . .

At first they had seen nothing. Then out of the great emerald a miniature picture had grown, full of life and colour and astonishingly brilliant and clear-cut, so that even the smallest detail could be observed without difficulty. There was the barge in mid-stream, and beyond it a rising meadow, where an open order of haycocks stood up to the sinking sun. The oars had been shipped and the oarsmen were poling the barge with all their might. That the work was heavy was plain, for the lackeys and even the cooks had been pressed into service, while Gog and the Barge-Master were sharing the largest pole and thrusting as though possessed. When a pole was drawn out it seemed to be covered with slime, and a waterman right in the bows was continually heaving the lead and turning to cry his report to his labouring governor. From behind a haycock on the bank a head occasionally appeared, as though there was somebody watching who had no mind to be seen, for it was protruded with evident caution and withdrawn in a flash if any one of the toilers seemed likely to turn that way.

Then the picture had faded and the four were left to digest the emerald's tale.

That the barge had encountered a mudbank seemed fairly obvious, but whereabouts in the fifteen miles of river the mishap had occurred no one could tell. The barge might be one mile off or it might be ten. Still, however far it might be, it was in the horseshoe bend, and anyone following the stream would be bound to meet it.

To follow the river, however, by using the bank was none too easy, and might well have proved unprofitable. For the last half-mile the ground had been falling fast till The Lane had sunk from a combe into a veritable gorge, with cliffs upon either side two hundred feet high. These were not to be scaled, and as they fell down sheer into the river itself, the only way to surmount them would have been to retrace one's steps. The heights were densely wooded, and though, by following the gorge, to strike the river would have been simple enough, to accomplish this would have taken half an hour, and since there was nothing to show how soon the cliffs gave way to lower ground or even how close one could safely keep to the edge, all idea of walking to meet the barge was soon abandoned.

There was nothing to be done but wait.

The four had peered at the emerald till it was too dark to see, but if the gem held them it resolutely declined to disclose any further secrets.

And now three hours had gone by, and Night had stolen upon her heritage. . . .

"I firmly believe," said Patricia, "that that man behind the haycock is mixed up

in this." She laid back a beautiful head to stare at the crescent moon. "Why didn't he want to be seen?"

"You may be right," said Simon, with his eyes on the river's bend. "But unless he's another Goosegog he can't have created the shoal."

"Why," said Eulalie, lacing her delicate fingers about a shapely knee, "why should he want to do us down?"

"I can't imagine," said Patricia, "but he gave me the clear impression of somebody who's set a trap and is watching it work. And then look at Pouch."

"What about Pouch?" said Simon. "You don't suggest——"

"That he was anything more than a mischievous fool? Well, I'm not so sure—as I was."

"In other words," said Pomfret, "my lady's suggesting a plot. An enemy in the background, and Pouch and 'Enery 'Aycock two of his myrmidons. Well, that may or may not be so. But if it is, all I can say is that if his agents are all as good as Pouch, we've nothing to fear. Secondly, who in his senses would employ Pouch upon any mission more delicate than that of a caretaker to a disused swinery? Thirdly, if some one really wanted to put it across us, how singularly simple it would be. We're alone and unarmed and we've no idea where we are. No questions would be asked, and if they were, the blame could always be awarded to a nomadic ogre. Nobody'd try and find him to question him."

"You forget," said Patricia, "that Logic's unknown within The Pail. Their plan of action's certain to be absurd."

"In that case," said Eulalie, "we can ignore it."

"As far," said her husband, "as our safety's concerned I'm with you. But as for our convenience, if we've got to thank some wallah for hanging up the barge—well, I'd like to meet him. That's all. I shouldn't use any eggs. I should just enlarge his nose. I should——"

"Here we are," said Simon, as the steady light of lanthorns swam into view up-stream.

"Thank Heaven for that," said Patricia fervently. "And now I'll admit that I was getting anxious."

"So," said her husband, "was I."

"Never again," said Pomfret. He got to his feet and lifted his wife to hers. "In future, if I must have a walk, I'll walk by the side of the barge—within reach of the necessities of life. You know, I'm like Nature. I abhor a vacuum."

Eulalie said nothing until Gog had answered Simon's hail and the oars were being shipped for the barge to glide alongside. Then she raised her clear voice.

"And now I may tell you," she said, "that we were followed from Fiddle and that somebody has been watching us ever since."

* * * * *

"It was treacle," said Gog. "Not mud. Over a mile of it—opposite Boy Blue Farm. It took us five hours to get through. I'd give something to know who did it. I rather thought the idea was to keep me out of the way. That was what worried me so. If I'd got stuck and Pouch had won his case, it might have been awkward. And it's perfectly clear that some one is out for blood. What was he like—that fellow behind the hay?"

The four described the suspect as well as they could, but the courier only frowned and shook his head.

"Never mind," he said. "Whoever we're up against has lost his match. His only chance was to get us before we were wise." He pointed to Simon's shoe. "And now just tell me as near as ever you can where you became so valuable. It's most important."

Simon did so.

"It's a very good thing," said Gog, "that it happened before you met Pouch. And no one in Fiddle referred to it?"

"No one," said Simon Beaulieu. "They probably thought it was a fashion."

"I doubt it," said Gog. "'Leave the pudding and eat the bag' is Fiddle's motto, and they live up to it. It's the silliest village within The Pail. Simple Simon was born there. They always rest their brains between two and five, or I'd never have let you go."

Here the barge, which had been going very slowly, came definitely to rest, and anchors were let down.

The courier rose to his feet.

"I'm going to leave you," he said. "But not for long. I shall be back by dawn. You see, there's only one Sovereign Touchstone in all the world, and that was lost twenty-five years ago. And now since Simon's found it, it seems a pity not to bring it along. It may be useful."

*A further episode in this series will appear in the next number.*

# CINNAMON LANE.

## A DORSET DITTY.

I DON'T much hold wi' vurren parts;
  I'd give a year an' a day
To smell the mud o' the ebb an' the vlood,
  An' the wind vrom Wareham way.
There bain't no vun vor a mother's son,
  An' zo I will still maintain,
To be var vrom Darset, var vrom Poole,
  An' var vrom Cinnamon Lane!

These vurren plazes haves no charms,
  Vor cheerin' a whum-sick boy;
I wish I wor in "The Shipwrights' Arms,"
  Or the bar o' "The Portsmouth Hoy."
Oh, I be zeveral kinds o' vool,
  An' that I tells myself plain,
To be var vrom Darset, var vrom Poole,
  And var vrom Cinnamon Lane!

But I med hope, in "The Antelope,"
  To be zettin' me down right zoon,
To zee the ships on Hamworthy slips,
  An' the quay beneath the moon:
Zince I do aim, zome marnin' cool,
  To be whum-along-bound again—
Whum to Darset, whum to Poole,
  *And*—whum to Cinnamon Lane!

MAY BYRON.

" 'We'll expect to see you,' she concluded, 'some time this afternoon.' "

# HAPPINESS MUST BE EARNED

## By CECIL B. WATERLOW

### ILLUSTRATED BY C. FLEMING WILLIAMS

THERE was a crash in the hall, with sounds of breaking crockery, and muttered curses that were really quite mild in the circumstances. Christopher Repton came into the cosy, lamp-lit sitting-room in which his host sat smoking his favourite pipe in a deep armchair before a blazing fire. He apologised for stumbling in the narrow hall and smashing two cups and saucers.

"Come to think of it," he said, "I haven't been anywhere where there isn't electric light for some years now. There's plenty of coffee left. I'll find some more cups. Pity I didn't bring an electric torch."

"I put up with electric light in London, telephones, Tubes, typewriters, and other horrors. Here we shall be simple and true to ourselves."

"It seems to me rather complicated to have to light lamps *and* clean them. Why don't you get a little engine and wire the house yourself? It would cost less than any one of the pictures in this room."

"Because my ideas of value are different from yours, and this cottage happens to be mine. We are not sufficiently friendly and intimate to quarrel, so we will say no more about it. Besides, your hair is so thick that it annoys me. I noticed it when you bent over the saucepan in which you did the scrambled eggs for tea. It is unreasonable to be so youthful."

Christopher of the ample crop of hair was not in the least annoyed at the apparent rudeness of his eccentric host. He put his hand up to his untidy brown head, reflecting that he could not get it properly cropped until he returned to London in a week's time. A week in the remotest of Wiltshire villages, in the dilapidated cottage of his curious cousin, was now his fate, and all because some unwonted impulse had moved him to send a contribution to a philosophical magazine, not knowing that its editor was a cousin of his whom he had never seen.

John Algernon Vane was the editor of a magazine not very well known to the general public—the people in the street who go to the movies. He was large of frame, with drooping shoulders, a heavy moustache, and thin, iron-grey hair. His magazine dealt with things said to lie on the border-line between two worlds, and it ran a section in which readers were invited to contribute brief opinions and experiences, preferably spiritual.

Christopher Repton was surprised and gratified when his little appreciation of a sensational American super-film had thus appeared in print. It was a film in which many marvels were flashed before the multitudes that sat in darkness—a flying horse, a magic carpet, fire-breathing dragons and monsters. The hero had but to scatter burning powder from an enchanted casket for each puff of smoke to become the soldier of a great white army, ready to destroy the powers of darkness. Here were moments of unearthly beauty coming through to a smoke-laden auditorium from a world quite other than that of common experience.

Such had been the gist of Christopher's comment, and, to his surprise, the editor had sent for him and had expatiated at some length upon the sublime inspiration that had burst upon the world through that film. He said that it gave him sensations comparable to those produced by the grandest passages of the Bible and of Shakespeare.

Then they discovered that they were cousins, so that there was thenceforth a twofold bond between them. The invitation to the country was issued and accepted.

Christopher had been astonished at the deep impression made by an American super-film upon one whom he had supposed to be an arch highbrow. His own brain was dominated by certain ambitions. "The worldly hope men set their hearts upon" controlled his attitude towards all such things as American film production, country cottages, and electric light. Having cleaned up the mess he had made, and provided steaming hot after-dinner coffee for his host and himself, he stretched his legs in a comfortable chair before the fire and gazed moodily at a highly coloured landscape painting which was a distinguished product of the modern French impressionist school.

John Algernon Vane sat on the other side of his hearth, puffing in silence. A rich red Persian rug lay between them, and the lamp, which he himself had trimmed, shed a mellow light upon a table loaded with books and papers. Outside the curtained windows of this cosy room the night was impenetrably black and heavy with impending rain.

Mr. Vane's thatched cottage nestled in a fold of the Wiltshire downs—the very heart of England. Strange, prehistoric tumuli and grass-grown dykes abounded in the district. A few miles to the south lay the Kennet valley, with the Bath Road and the Great Western main line—an artery along which the life-blood of our country circulates perpetually. But no sound of circulation penetrated to this remote spot.

Christopher Repton, who was used to London life, felt the silence to be oppressive, felt himself to be suspended, with a somewhat uncongenial companion, in a little oasis of warmth and light, around which lay the blackness of Old Night. He wondered what effect a week of it would have upon him—a week of wandering by day through woods and over sweeping downs, of making omelets and coffee, and cleaning and trimming lamps in the evenings. The new motor-bicycle on which he had flashed down the Bath Road that morning would doubtless languish in the garden shed until his time was up. Nothing could happen to break the monotony.

Suddenly the silence was broken by an unwonted sound from the lane at the bottom of the garden. There were voices outside, hesitating, then came a tap on the front door.

"Whoever can want to come here at this time of night?" muttered Vane, rousing himself to go to the door. He found three people standing in the damp garden, muffled in voluminous coats, and in the lane beyond the lights of a large closed car were shining brightly.

The intruders, two women and a man, gave Mr. Vane no time to ask any questions.

They explained themselves, or, rather, an agreeable female voice with an American accent explained from behind the collar of a big fur coat.

"We're absolutely stalled. Mr. Smith here says the magneto's internal wiring has broken down, or broken up, so I guess we'll just have to stop in the village inn, if there is one. Yours was the only light we could see, so we hoped that this might be an inn, or you could tell us where to go."

"There is no inn near here where you could stop," replied the recluse resignedly. "My humble cottage contains but four beds, for which there now appear to be five candidates. But it is dark, and the night is cold and wet, therefore it would ill become me to refuse you such shelter as this place can offer."

"You've got right down to it in one, Mr.—— ?"

"Vane—John Algernon Vane."

"Mr. Vane, allow me to present my mother, Mrs. Reynolds, and our fellow-countryman, Mr. Smith who drives the car for us. I guess Mr. Smith will make himself just as comfortable as you can imagine in the car, and it won't go, anyway."

"If I may say so, Miss Reynolds, you also have hit the nail on the head."

"And what a perfectly lovely room this is! That picture over the mantel is a genuine Monet, or my name isn't Nellie Reynolds, and these others—why, they're just priceless!"

She gazed straight over Christopher's embarrassed head as he stood with his back to the fire; then she removed her hat and emerged from her big coat, these garments being taken by Mr. Smith, who was hovering in the background. The effect was exactly that of a dazzling butterfly emerging from its chrysalis. The two men, forgetting their manners for an instant, stared in amazement, for to both of them the vision that they now beheld was somehow familiar. Mr. Vane supposed that she must have recalled to his mind some picture, a Madonna by one of the Bellinis, perhaps. But, unlike a Madonna, she was clothed in a wonderful Paris creation of orange silk trimmed with fur.

Mrs. Reynolds, also removing her cloak, was revealed as a comfortable, middle-aged lady, in whose kindly, homely face were strength of character and great vitality. She smiled benignly at the astonishment caused by her daughter's appearance.

Mr. Smith was directed to stow the wraps in the car and there to consume the remains of their picnic lunch and to make himself as comfortable as possible for the night.

Mr. Smith was a lean and hungry-looking fellow, tall and narrow, with dark, close-set eyes and long, lank, stream-like hair. He made his exit with the ladies' fur cloaks, returning presently with their handbags. His status was evidently different from, and somewhat superior to, that of an ordinary English chauffeur.

"I've only just bought this car," said Miss Reynolds, "and I'm mad that it should go back on us right now. We got Smith through an agency that recommended him, and we took him on trust because he's an American. Those fellows who drive big cars in London look grand, but somehow you can't talk to them."

So this apparition in orange silk, who looked little more than twenty, had just bought an expensive new car. She moved about the room inspecting books and pictures, apparently quite at her ease. The two men, who had been such distant cousins before this American invasion, now felt mysteriously drawn together. There was something definite for them to think about in common, and the blood bond between them asserted itself.

The ladies were installed in the two armchairs, protesting volubly at thus disturbing Mr. Vane's fireside. Christopher busied himself making more coffee and rummaging for cups and light refreshments. Mr. Vane, although by no means poor, kept no servant in his country cottage. He described the extreme simplicity of his life to his guests with unusual affability.

"When I am here, a country woman undertakes to come up from the village every morning and do for me."

"I'm glad she does not succeed," responded Miss Reynolds.

"And does the good lady cook for you as well?" her mother inquired.

"Oh, no! I love this country very well, and the country folk are as good as any in England, but their feeding habits are deplorable. I eat no meat, and the little cooking that I require I do myself, though my young cousin promises to be very useful this visit, which is just as well for him."

"So that boy is your cousin. I thought——"

"You thought, Miss Reynolds, that he might be my son. True, there are twenty years between us."

"I had no business to think about it at all."

At this moment Christopher re-entered with coffee and biscuits on a tray, and animation in his face such as had not appeared there before the strangers arrived. The ladies described their journey from London, including a visit to Avebury, which historic, or, rather, prehistoric, spot had enchanted them.

"My daughter came specially to see the wonderful tumulus there—on important business, you know—and then we were going on to Bath for the night."

But neither the fertile imagination of John Algernon Vane nor the curiosity of Christopher Repton could form any idea of what important business could bring an exceedingly pretty American girl, in a new saloon that she had just purchased, to look at the prehistoric tumulus at Avebury.

"The two men, forgetting their manners. . . stared in amazement."

In due course they all retired for the night, Mr. Vane apologising for the primitiveness of the accommodation, and the ladies declaring that it was just the cunningest little cottage they had ever seen, and finding cobwebs and candles delightful and curious novelties.

"What about Mr. Smith ?" asked the owner of the cottage, who did not relish the idea of an unknown American chauffeur spending the night among his sacred books and pictures.

Divining this, Miss Reynolds, who evidently ruled the roost, replied: "I guess he'd rather stay just where he is. He'll have more rugs and coats than he'll know what to do with, and he's got the electric light as well, you know, and the saloon can't run away, anyway."

But morning told a different tale. Christopher was the first down, and he soon discovered that the lane was innocent

of the presence of any large luxurious car. After a night's sound sleep, he might have been tempted to believe that the experiences of the previous evening were only a dream, but for two circumstances—a marvellous apparition in orange silk that presently appeared in the doorway, and the fact that all the pictures had vanished from the walls of his cousin's sitting-room.

* * * *

Suspicion is a state of mind fostered by darkness and ignorance. It was dispelled immediately from Christopher's mind as he turned to Miss Reynolds and heard her exclaim: "Why, Mr. Repton, whatever is the matter?"

"The matter is that a certain member of the

"The effect was exactly that of a dazzling butterfly emerging from its chrysalis."

great Smith family has vanished in the night, taking your car and my cousin's pictures with him. I thought the tale about the ignition of a new car breaking down completely on the first day out sounded a little thin."

"So that guy's a crook! It's the bunk!"

"It certainly has that appearance."

Rapidly recovering her composure, she began to tackle the situation in the way that was natural to her, saying: "I'll have to get a hustle on. Tell me how far it is to the nearest place where I can hire something, and where there's a town with a police station. If I pay your cousin full value for his pictures, that won't bring them back again."

"I have a motor-bike here on which I could get to the nearest town in a quarter of an hour."

"That's fine. And you'll take me with you?"

"There's no side-car, but——"

"Oh, I should love to sit up behind you! In my work I often have to go in airplanes."

What could be the work that took this brilliant creature at one time to visit prehistoric remains and at another up in an aeroplane, and also provided such wealth as was represented by the car that had vanished? However, he had to act.

"First we must have breakfast," he said. "I'll set about getting it."

"And I'll set about helping you. But Ma is first-rate at that job. She was a cook before I started to earn big money."

As they set about the various jobs involved in preparing breakfast, Christopher hoped that both Ma and his cousin would oversleep themselves.

"As soon as I can get to the end of a wire," she said, "I'll talk to a friend in London, who'll get busy right away; and if Smith isn't caught, it won't be our fault."

Mrs. Reynolds put in an appearance just in time to have the situation explained to her. If the truth be known, she had been peeping from her bedroom window, and had judged the right time to descend in accordance with what she saw. Christopher was just getting his machine into the lane, with one of the best cushions strapped on the carrier, when his bewildered cousin also emerged, demanding explanations. These were left in the capable hands of the mother, who was quite undisturbed at her daughter's departure on the carrier of a motor-bicycle behind a complete stranger.

The sun was just coming up, and a keen breeze from the east was sweeping away the sodden clouds. But it was not the dawn wind that made Christopher's face burn and glow as he flooded the carburetter and operated the kick-starter. He had to tell his pillion rider that she must hold tight, and she did. As they took the road, the sounds emitted by a powerful twin-cylinder engine and the flaps of his leather cap were not treated by her as a bar to conversation. The steed on which they rode ceased to be a mere mechanical contrivance on two wheels, and became a shining Pegasus whose cloudy wings swept these two away in the everlasting romance of youth; and before Christopher's eyes, intent upon the narrow road though they were, there flickered constantly a phrase, a message that had been flashed at him from a cinema screen: "Happiness must be earned."

Speaking very close to one ear, she informed him that the friend to whom she proposed to telephone was a most desirable kind of hustler, and also that he was in the same line of business as herself.

"He'll get Scotland Yard on the job right away, and then I guess he'll come in his car and pick us up. We're used to stunting. But I'll keep you guessing about that just a little longer."

Happiness must be earned, and it seemed as though the unknown friend's earning capacity was assured.

Arrived at the nearest town, Miss Reynolds lost no time in establishing telephonic communication with London. She gave the number of a well-known and expensive hotel, and then the number of a room in that hotel, and then: "Is that you, Joe?"

Evidently it was, and if Christopher had been able to apply the necessary high-tension current, Joe at the other end of the wire would certainly have been electrocuted.

Ready to come to her aid at a moment's notice, and in the same business as herself, Joe evidently filled the position in her life for which he could only imagine that there must have been the keenest competition. He felt sure that Miss Reynolds was betrothed to Joe, from the cheery familiarity with which she talked both to and of him. But she described her whereabouts and the details of what had happened with clear precision, and evidently received his assurance that he would "get a move on."

"We'll expect to see you," she concluded, "some time this afternoon, if Mr. Vane hasn't turned us out of his shack by then."

She turned to Christopher, beaming with delight at the good start she had made towards "copping" Mr. Smith and regaining the stolen car and Mr. Vane's precious pictures. She was the very embodiment of youthful vitality and charm, and she dominated her companion's whole being. Their surroundings, the country hotel from which she had telephoned, the sleepy little town and the bleak winter landscape, all these things were half obliterated from the young man's vision. They were pushed out of the foreground of his consciousness by the girl who, by the strangest freak of chance, had dropped into his life like a shooting star from another world. At the age of twenty-four admiration is aroused easily, but all previous occasions on which it had been aroused he now forgot completely.

The mysterious Joe, luxuriating in a most superior London hotel, his fancy invested with the most monstrous attributes —a sinister, smooth-tongued villain who, from selfish and mercenary motives, was

luring the most beautiful and talented girl in the world to a matrimonial disaster.

She must be talented, he reflected, to be earning big money at her age, by means of which she had raised her mother from the status of cook to that of a portly and comfortable lady who rode in a luxurious car. Perhaps she was a great contatrice whose fame had failed to impress his unmusical mind, or perhaps——

He tumbled to it at last. The revelation that she must be a cinema star also explained his first impression that he must have seen her before. During the night he had concluded that this impression was due to the fact that she was the fulfilment of his dreams and ideals of beauty. Now he knew that he had seen her recently on the screen as the heroine of that very film that he and his cousin had discussed so enthusiastically.

He was diffident about declaring his discovery, chiefly because he thought himself an ass for not having made it sooner. There was something in the way she hung up the telephone receiver that had brought back to him in a flash the screen picture he had seen. But the existence of Joe cast a hopeless gloom over him, which was not wholly dispelled even by the ride back to his cousin's cottage.

Mrs. Reynolds, it transpired, had contrived a very excellent breakfast for her host, in the preparation of which she had respected his vegetarian convictions, and at the time of their return she was working at the production of lunch. Mr. Vane had walked to the village to buy provisions.

"Nellie, darling," she exclaimed, "Mr. Vane has been just too sweet! At breakfast he began talking to me about his soul, and I told him to park his soul and drink the coffee while it was hot, and that I'd just love to hear all about it while I was washing up afterwards; and he then said he didn't understand what I meant, and I was terribly afraid I'd said something bad."

There was no compromise about Mrs. Reynolds's American accent as she imparted this information to her daughter, who reproved her gently, saying that it was not safe to leave her alone with a strange man. She also described in full detail her ride and telephone conversation; but, to Christopher's annoyance, she gave no other name but Joe to the mysterious individual at the other end of the wire.

"Why, Nellie, darling, it seems you can't leave stunting even when you're not acting."

Having said this, the good woman looked dismayed, realising that she had let out information that her daughter, for reasons of her own, wished to withhold. Christopher came to her aid by admitting his discovery.

"It's all right, Mrs. Reynolds: I've seen your daughter on the screen, disguised as an Eastern princess, so I know that she is a great artist whose screen name is familiar to millions. It is less than a week ago that I saw that particular film which stirred me to the depths of my soul. In fact——"

"Young man, you had better forget it whilst you help me lay the table."

The young man complied.

Mr. Vane returned, bringing bananas, apples, cheese, and an enormous cauliflower, and this most strangely assorted *partie carrée* sat down to lunch.

Christopher thought that Fate delights to play tricks with helpless human beings. Fate, or chance, or whatever it might be, had brought them together—himself and a star that outshone all others—and had then outrageously provided Joe to spoil his hopes of happiness, aroused now as they never had been before.

They did not have long to wait for the coming of Joe. He burst in upon them with a radiant smile—a smile that has smiled round the world upon millions of people. Christopher got his full share of the smile, and his own features responded slowly with a grin as he realised that this great man, whose features were more familiar to the general public than that of any Prime Minister, was not free to be betrothed to anybody. Needless to say, the name by which this meteoric personage was so widely known was not Joe, though the American ladies greeted him gleefully by that title.

"Your cops are smart," he announced. "They nailed Mr. Smith, alias several other names, at Reading; and there's where your car is, and they've got Mr. Vane's pictures. And you being here like this! Why, the whole thing's almost worth filming!"

"I've been studying that prehistoric business for 'The Cradle of Mankind,'" remarked Miss Reynolds. "Avebury is the loveliest place, with just the right atmosphere, and we'll have to have a look at Stonehenge as well."

"May all the ghosts of those sacred places rise up against you," said Mr. Vane, the modern philosopher.

"Oh, we won't mind them, so long as they don't print out on the film," she replied.

Beside these brilliant and energetic people, whose histrionic performances were a joy to millions of their fellows, John Algernon Vane, the unknown philosophical writer, presented a remarkable contrast. To Christopher he seemed to be no more than the shadow of a real man. And yet his own ambitions had lain in that direction—to express himself as a writer. What chance had he of realising them with the fullness that his youth and energy demanded? He could not reasonably hope to make upon the world any impression comparable with that made by these dazzling stars of the screen. He felt himself to be condemned to insignificance. Then Joe addressed him.

"Say, Mr. ——?" Christopher supplied his name. "I hope you won't think me too familiar if I say that you are a good looker, and husky, too. How would you fancy playing a part with Miss Reynolds in the new film, 'The Cradle of Mankind'?"

Christopher turned red and fumbled in his mind for a suitably temporising reply, whilst instinct told him to jump at the offer. The heroine herself intervened before he could find words.

"You might not quite like the dress for the part. It's a bit sketchy—only bits of skins and fur here and there, you know."

Having already turned red, he now turned scarlet, and looked down, trying to collect his wits, so that he did not notice the glances that passed between the two stars.

She continued: "And you might find it awkward, acting in public like that at Avebury, with all the country folk looking on. They'll come to see us from miles round, I guess."

"Whoever does the part," put in Joe, "will have to rescue the heroine—that's Nellie here—and climb a tree with her hanging on to him. He'll have to let his hair grow till it's like a mat, and yours looks to be the right stuff."

The same phrase kept on flashing before Christopher's mental vision: "Happiness must be earned."

He spoke up at length, to the horror of his austere cousin. "I'll come, if you really want me, though I find it hard to believe, since I have no experience, and there must be enormous competition for such a job."

"It isn't always the right kind o' guys that come along."

"If I'm the right kind of guy, then I suppose 'that's good for me.'"

"I guess it may be, and if your face goes red, like it is now, when they're taking the picture, it'll come out dark, like we want it for a prehistoric man, without any paint."

"And I hope," said Miss Reynolds, "that Mr. Vane won't disapprove of your trying your luck with us."

"Oh, I have no influence in the matter," responded the philosopher, "and if I had, I should not exercise it, for I believe in letting the young go their own way. I presume that, in this case, the way will lead to Western America. I have been charmed, and my eyes have been opened to new possibilities, by your unexpected visit. Moreover, the film in which I happen to have seen you act made a deep impression upon me, and I am inclined to undertake the journey to California myself, in order to study this strange new way of life."

"Why, that'll be fine!" said the heroine. "We'll be a very happy little party."

"But what about the acting at Avebury and Stonehenge?" put in Christopher.

"I guess we'll build up those places easily enough over at Hollywood. Don't you see we were kidding you, just to find out—well, to see if you really meant it?"

A little later the two of them went outside to inspect Joe's super-sporting, hundred-mile-an-hour car, whilst its owner entered into a keen discussion with Mr. Vane about the particular super-film that had so oddly brought them all together.

Mrs. Reynolds retired upstairs, ostensibly to pack her things, but perhaps once more she peeped at her daughter and Christopher, as they stood close together in the lane, admiring the elegant lines of Joe's projectile.

"If I'm all right in this film," said Christopher, "if it turns out well, will you—I mean, shall we stick together?"

"Oh, if it makes good, I guess I shall be able to retire."

"But then don't you want to give your life to the screen, and marry some one who does the same?"

"That's the last thing I want. I want peaceful home life."

He stuck for a moment, then got out: "How can I convince you that I'm in earnest?"

"About what?"

He decided to dash at it, neck or nothing. "I mean, in earnest about wanting to marry you."

"I don't know, I'm sure," she replied very quietly.

Then it was not long before he succeeded in convincing her of the depth and sincerity of his feelings.

"His master . . . turned again to admire the baby camel."

# A WAIF OF THE DESERT

By LIEUT.-COLONEL GORDON CASSERLY, F.R.G.S.

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

LEANING on an iron-shafted spear the veiled man—for the end of the dark-blue cotton cloth wound turban-like about his forehead was swathed across his face, hiding all his features except the cruel eyes—turned to the negro slave beside him and said :

" By the Prophet, it is worthy of its sire—and he for years has borne me bravely in fight and foray ; and never a foeman of the Azdjer has overtaken me, not even their Amenokal when I bore away across my saddle his weeping favourite."

The negro nodded emphatically ; and his master, this tall, gaunt Targui tribesman of the Ahaggar Mountains, the grim hills deep in the desolate Sahara, turned again to contemplate admiringly the baby camel standing beside its resting dam. It was a graceful, slim-legged animal three feet high,

with speckless white coat of closely curled woolly hair and a small, finely shaped head that told of high breeding. Already its nostrils curved haughtily in the insolent sneer with which its race ever regards all created things. Its large eyes stared indifferently straight before it; and it took no notice of the two men or of the group of almost naked children, some fair-skinned, others black as jet, behind them. When its owner tickled its groin with his long fingers it still did not trouble to look at him; but one thin little hind-leg shot out at him in a vicious side-kick.

The tribesman laughed under his veil.

"A fighter already. It will be a leader among camels. Amr'ar, the Chieftain, shall it be named. My son," he continued, turning to a boy about fifteen who had come up to join him, "this shall be thine when it is strong enough to bear thee to raid and rob the cowardly dwellers in the oases as a true man of the Imochar should do."

Thus these fierce desert robbers name themselves—Imochar, "raiders." Only the ignorant Arabs and Europeans call them Touareg—in the singular, Targui.

The stripling, Abbah, was clothed like his father in long, flowing garments of cotton of a blue so dark as to be almost black, a voluminous-sleeved blouse-coat over loose trousers reaching to the bare feet thrust into broad-soled leather sandals. He wore no sword; but a sheathed dagger, cross-hilted, was strapped along his left forearm, the handle at the wrist. His veiled face could show no emotions; but his eyes, that were like a young hawk's, glittered with delight and scanned proudly his promised possession.

To a man of the Imochar a good camel is a great gift; for these nomad tribesmen inhabit the sterile wastes of the Southern Sahara and live by war and by plundering the peaceful cultivators in the oases or the traders in the caravans that cross the desert at the constant risk of death from the weapons of merciless robbers or of a more terrible ending beside some dried-up well.

A woman watched the group, a woman fair complexioned and blue-eyed, almost English in colouring, of the true Berber type that shows plainly its prehistoric European origin. She stood before one of the two low leather tents pitched under a stunted tree, on the thorn-studded branches of which a tall white camel was browsing. Inside the other tent two negro slave-women were pounding to powder in a mortar dried *tazia* bulbs to make the coarse, bitter flour, which with sheep's and camel's milk is almost the sole food of these desert wanderers. Two or three other camels, a few donkeys and a small flock of goats and sheep—the Soudanese variety that have hair instead of wool—grazed on the scanty tufts of vegetation dotted over the rocky ground. They were herded by a black boy clad only in short leather breeches, his head bare and his fuzzy hair cut in a cock's-comb crest from forehead to nape of neck.

Deep in the heart of the Sahara was the small, patriarchal encampment; yet the scenery was all unlike the usual desert picture. No far-stretching plain of level sand or heaped-up golden dunes, but a gloomy gorge between frowning walls of steep hills a thousand feet high, their strata of limestone up-ended by some terrible convulsion of Nature into jagged, saw-toothed peaks. But in the gravelly soil of the gorge-bottom was a little green patch of reeds and rushes under a couple of thorny trees; and in the unusual vegetation feebly bubbled a minute spring of clear water that fell into a tiny pool in which fish swam.

For the baby camel's birthplace was among the rugged foothills of the giant Ahaggar Mountains—a thousand miles deep in the great African desert, yet snow-clad most of the year—that shelter and give name to one branch of the strange race of the Touareg, a branch always at war with the other, the kindred tribes of the Azdjer Hills far to the north-east of them. Amr'ar was a miniature of his sire, the big white camel placidly chewing the long thorns with apparent enjoyment, although blood ran from his pierced mouth. And when the spindle-legged infant's mother rose from the ground she began to munch as contentedly a low, sharp-spiked plant that looked as pleasant to eat as a packet of pins. But the baby nuzzled her breast and drank deep of the nourishing milk that was to make him strong to face the stern life before him.

In a few days the animals had eaten to the wooden stems the sparsely scattered plants and emptied the pool faster than the drying-up spring could refill it. So their master, Moussa of the tribe of the Kel-R'ela, judged it time to move on to fresh pasture, if the scanty vegetation, each tuft of thorny plants yards from its neighbours, could be called such a name. But it was all that his animals had to feed on; and, desert-bred as they were, they managed to thrive on the meagre fare. Their human

companions could rival them in endurance. Even in the awful heat of the Sahara summer the men, women, and even the children, could exist for a couple of days or more without food or—harder still—water. Generally a few handfuls of flour made of the dried berries or seeds of thorny bushes were their sustenance. It was usually only when an animal died a natural death or on the rare occasion of a rich man's wedding or at the feast accompanying the election of a tribal chieftain that they ever tasted meat.

But just at the moment the caravan was in luck's way. Water and grazing were comparatively plentiful in the region; and in a narrow ravine the black slave had chanced upon and killed a gazelle doe and her young fawn, so that Moussa's family and dependants had fed well on the tender flesh.

The camel-dam's udders were full of rich milk; so that, though only a few days old, Amr'ar was able to trot beside her when the little party made its way down the gorge in search of a fresh camping-ground. At every check of the pace the sturdy baby thrust his muzzle against his mother and greedily sought refreshment; while its young future owner watched it with the pride of possession and angrily drove off the children when they offered it some green plant that it was not old enough to eat. He stroked and fondled it until it came to know him and look for his caress.

The caravan made a picturesque procession. First stalked in stately fashion the great white camel on which Moussa rode, a grim figure in the sombre-hued garments, the face hidden by the dark veil and only the gleaming eyes visible, hawk's eyes that closely scanned every gully, every cranny of the rocky pass in search of lurking foe. For in the desert every man's hand is against his neighbour. His saddle was so highly perched on the animal's back that his bared feet rested on its neck, a leg stretched out on either side of the lofty-peaked pommel surmounted by a cross. His right hand held the iron-shafted spear, along the inner side of his left forearm was bound the typical Touareg dagger, and a cross-hilted straight sword hung from his waist. A large shield of deer-hide was fastened to the saddle. Around his neck were suspended many small leather or metal boxes containing amulets to guard him from harm.

There was some resemblance between him and his mount; for the *abidedj* or white camel that carried him was tall, gaunt, and as silent and mysterious as its master. Amenokal, Chief of Chiefs, it was called. It was a *mehari* or riding-animal of the purest blood, the best strain in the Sahara, and differed as much from the pack-camels as an English thoroughbred from a cart-horse. It showed its high race in every graceful line of its small head, slim but muscular legs and spare yet wiry body. No rein was needed to guide it, a word, a gentle pressure of the bare foot, was enough; and Moussa would as soon have beaten or cursed his wife—and women are valued highly among the Touareg—as the noble beast which he held almost as dear. To shield it from harm it, too, wore many amulets around its snaky neck.

Twenty yards behind them followed the negro slave on a camel of a coarser breed, strong and powerful, but not as swift or enduring as the master's. He was similarly armed; but the shaft of his spear was of wood. Some distance after him came the little caravan of women, children and animals. At its head rode Fedada, the wife of Moussa, on the thoroughbred she-camel that her husband had given her as her dowry. She was dressed in white—a sleeved chemise and a skirt, over them a sort of woollen shawl, her veil thrown back in strange contrast to her husband's hidden face, on her head a large-brimmed, flapping straw hat adorned with red wool. She was hung with many ornaments of silver, glass and horn. Her saddle was altogether unlike the men's and, placed above the camel's hump, consisted of a square wooden framework—with a net stretched tightly between—supported on knobbed wood uprights, the lower ends of which were kept clear of the animal's sides by ring-shaped leather pads. Her feet rested on the withers.

Abbah, her eldest son, fully armed like his father, rode beside her on a piebald *mehari*, every now and then quitting her to circle the caravan and whip up stragglers or, full of boyish importance, hustle his younger brothers and sisters mounted on the lighter-loaded baggage camels or the donkeys. The slave-women and children were afoot, driving the goats and the long-legged hairy sheep that tried ever to loiter to graze on the scattered plants; for the ravine along which the route lay was an empty river-bed, beneath which the long roots of the vegetation reached down to the deep-buried water.

Amr'ar trotted beside his mother, haughtily ignoring, like the little chieftain that he was, every one and everything but her and the frequent satisfying of his healthy young appetite. She moderated her pace to suit him, she that was so speedy that she was named Tamerouelt, the Hare. Proud as her offspring was, he did not quite realise his supreme importance; for it was really he who set the pace of the caravan and decreed the length of the march and the frequency of the halts, for Moussa from time to time turned to watch him and stopped them all when he thought that the sturdy baby needed rest. Across the back of a pack-camel was slung a double sack, one bag hanging down each side of the animal; and up out of the open mouths peeped, on the right, the sleek heads of two kids, and, balancing them in the other, a lamb and a shaven-pated black infant, all too feeble to walk far. Amr'ar looked disdainfully at them; for, younger than any of them, he scorned the thought of being carried, he a *mehari* of the purest blood, the noblest strain, of the Ahaggar.

But, despite his spirit, he welcomed the halts, when he could double up his thin little legs and lie down to rest. And he was glad when the day's march ended and in a rocky chasm grimmer and gloomier than the one that they had left Moussa held up his hand to stop the caravan.

While master and man trotted on to search the narrow gullies that split the tall cliffs and on either hand ran down to the ravine the rest dismounted and the baggage camels knelt to be unloaded. This they did silently and of their own accord—very unlike their fellows among the Arabs, grumbling, complaining, snarling brutes that make the race a byword and a reproach among animals and men.

With the swiftness of constant practice the tents were raised and propped up by low poles, sand and gravel scraped away from the almost hidden mouth of a well, skin buckets lowered and drawn up filled with stagnant water, and a fire of dried roots kindled, around which the children crowded. For deep in the desert though they were the nights in the shadow of the mighty mountains were bitterly cold. And Amr'ar huddled close to his mother for warmth as, their long legs doubled under them, they lay down to sleep on the rocky ground apart from the other camels. The humans, after a frugal supper consisting chiefly of sour milk, followed their example, the men and Abbah with weapons ready to their hands. Dawn came, the sun flushed the sky with rose; and the camp awoke to life and a new day of toilsome journeying; for Moussa decided that the time had come to resume the march to the south interrupted by Amr'ar's birth. For the caravan was on its way to trade in the French Soudan. So now for weeks, day in, day out, the same routine was followed with monotonous regularity, only the length of the daily march varying with the position of wells and the increasing strength of the precious baby camel.

The character of the country changed as they left the mountains behind in their journey towards the sun. The hills, the precipitous cliffs, the rocky gorges with their frequent pools ringed by green vegetation under thorny trees, vanished as they advanced farther into the desolate desert. Sometimes a level expanse of firm sand stretched away to the rim of the distant horizon, sometimes the soil was gravel, rock or loose stones. Occasionally the plain was broken by high conical mounds or strangely shaped pillars of earth, from which portions split off and fell to the ground to crumble eventually into dust. Often the caravan wound between or boldly climbed yellow dunes, where Amr'ar, used to harder soil, was amazed to find his sprawling feet sink hock-deep in the yielding sand. Here it was harder for the little legs to keep up with the long ones of his mother; and the watchful Moussa, whenever he could, shortened the marches to spare them.

It was not always easy to do. For now the wells were fewer and farther between; and when they were left each day the pack-animal's loads were heavier, as they were forced to carry filled water-skins for man and beast to guard against the ever-present danger of death from thirst. And sometimes not only the camels and the other quadrupeds were unable to drink for two or three days, but their human companions as well. However, necessity trains the Touareg and their belongings from birth to extraordinary endurance; and the youngest children did not murmur when for fifty hours no water passed their lips.

Even Amr'ar had to go short, for he was deprived at such times of some of his mother's milk, but still he had sufficient left him to thrive on; and the longer marches, although distressing, strengthened his young legs.

As he trotted beside his dam over sand or stones with silent footfall he drank in

with her milk the Desert Wisdom of the Camel gleaned through the centuries since first the race came to Africa to help the cruellest of all created beings, Man, to spread death and suffering among his fellows over a wider range than his own powers could carry him. He learned from Tamerouelt that Allah has placed no life-destroying four-footed beasts in the Sahara for men or animals to fear—because it breeds the most terrible of their foes, Thirst. And with that devouring monster to guard its solitudes it needs no lesser horror. Where Nature seems kinder, down in the far south where water falls regularly from heaven and everywhere there is succulent grazing in the green spaces north and south of that marvel, a river that is always full—the Niger, men call it—savage lions prowl around the camp-fires at night and devour unwary camels that foolishly stray away from the guardian flames.

But they are poor things compared to the Terror of the Desert. When the sun flares in a sky of brass and the burning wind drives the flying sand before it in stifling clouds that overwhelm, smother and entomb, then the parched throat, the cracked lips, cry for water. But if the way is lost or if at the limit of endurance a well is reached and found dry, then the mocking laughter of the Monster is heard in the howling of the scorching wind and Death follows at his heels. The kindly sand softly draws a pall over the shrunken corpses of man and beast, their race run.

But little camels must know that even when no water can be met with the grim Terror may still be baulked, if only they can find the scattered plants that hide in their leaves and stunted stems the life-saving sap that replaces the precious liquid and keeps thirst away. They must learn to recognise them, to disregard the sharp thorns that guard them, to distinguish between the good and the bad, between the green things that nourish and those that twist the careless eaters with agonising pains that end in death. Amr'ar was told how, when about to go far into a waterless land, to drink deep before the start and fill the storage tanks that Nature had dowered him with in his inside and how, if need be, to do without water for five days at a stretch.

These were the worldly, the material lessons. But sometimes at the halts and in bivouac the great white camel, his father, deigned to notice him, to saunter to him with lordly gait and nose him questioningly as if doubtful whether to acknowledge him as his offspring or not. Apparently the examination was satisfactory; and he taught Amr'ar other lessons, the moral maxims and rules of conduct that every little camel of good birth and breeding should know and follow in life, knowledge meant only for the aristocratic *mehari*, not for the low-born pack-animal.

The haughty patrician told his son of the exceeding nobility of his descent and impressed upon him the necessity of never bringing disgrace upon the family into which he had had the honour and good fortune to be born. A family that could trace its descent to the earliest immigrants of the race from Asia, that numbered among its members the camel that bore the first Byzantine general that landed in Africa and chased the Vandals out of it. A family that was old before ever the upstart Arabs saw the far-spread wastes of the Sahara.

A scion of such a race must bear himself nobly. He must always remember that a Targui *mehari* was swift, silent and stealthy as the horned snake that slides like a shadow across the sand. Only beasts of low birth, like the splay-footed camels of the Chambâ, were noisy in camp or on the march when, perhaps, the faintest sound might doom a caravan to destruction or betray a gallant raider to his death. It was undignified—as well as useless and bringing swift punishment—to snarl and bite. Man was their race's best friend. On him their welfare depended. Without him what would become of them? Let the strayed camel, lost in the desert, ignorant of where to find water, unable to dig for it even if knowing where it lay under many feet of burning sand, answer! The common sort, bearers of burdens, might be pardoned their hostility to their masters who weighed them down with back-breaking loads or the slaves that drove them with cruel blows.

But the *mehari* had no master. His man was his friend, his comrade, who divided his last skinful of water, his last handful of grain, with the faithful companion who shared his dangers, his fate in weal or woe. So the nobly born camel must never forget that fidelity and staunchness to death were the badge of his race.

Amr'ar hearkened and took it all to heart, young as he was. Blood will tell; and the high breeding of the *mehari* shows in him from birth. The baby camel, even of the common class, is not a frolicsome infant like the young of most other animals. He is

stolid and old in his ways. And Amr'ar's consciousness of high birth would have restrained any tendency to frivolity, if he had possessed it. But he was by nature staid and dignified; and he looked with wondering contempt on the playful antics of the lambs and kids of the growing flock that accompanied the caravan.

In the lonely desert seldom did they see signs of life, other than a solitary gazelle or a bent-winged partridge rising up under Amenokal's feet. Rarely indeed did they sight any human beings—and when they did the male riders looked to their weapons.

But Fate was kind to Moussa; for no robbers swooped down upon him to serve him as he had served others so often and deprive him at one stroke of life and property. And despite their privations and sufferings in the dreary land through which they had passed, he had lost none of his animals and he was approaching a more fertile country where water was plentiful and the pasturage rich and abounding.

For they were drawing near the Iferouane district of the Aïr; and soon, the barren desert left behind, Amr'ar stared in amazement as they marched along the bed of the *oued*—that is, the river or ravine—Terhiou, which was almost blocked with thorny trees and big bushes with green leaves and bunches of small and globular seeds giving forth a sour and peppery smell. After the bleak mountains and the dreary desert the effect of the comparatively luxuriant verdure was overwhelming. The penetrating odour of the *abisga* bushes drove the pack-camels wild, and, forgetful of the discipline of the march, they broke away to feast on this plant so beloved of their race. Even the *meharis* found it hard to preserve their high-bred calm and refrain from scuttling to feed as greedily as their undignified fellows.

Moussa took pity on them and halted to allow them to eat their fill. And Amr'ar, by his mother's side and surprised at her unusual excitement, tried to nibble a few tender leaves and liked their piquant flavour. The blacks rushed as eagerly as the camels to gather the seeds, which, when dried, would be soaked in water for hours to produce a palatable liquor like dark red wine that was a favourite beverage among the Touareg. It took Moussa a long time to collect the scattered caravan and get it on the move again.

To the desert-born little camel the thick jungle where the dry beds of the Terhiou and the Irhazar met to form one ravine choked with vegetation was a revelation. Used to the sparsely scattered plants that dotted the sand and the stony soil of the Sahara, he was amazed at the green world in which he found himself as he followed at his mother's tail along the narrow paths that wound through a veritable forest of *korunka*. And even his ancestral calm was forced to give way to a lively curiosity when the caravan approached the first village of the Aïr and, staring like a camel of low birth, he saw houses, gardens, fields. True, the houses were but scattered beehive huts made of mats of *nirokba* stalks or else hovels of mud bricks. And the hedged fields under the few stunted palms produced meagre crops of barley, wheat and millet of so poor a quality that husbandmen in happier lands would scorn to harvest them.

But a polar bear brought from regions of eternal snow and ice would not be more astonished at the first sight of a tropical forest than Amr'ar at the tangled jungle, the thick vegetation, the brakes of gum-trees, the tall jujube-trees. And, used to the silence of the desert, he started when the harsh shrieks of the ungreased pulleys over the wells watering the cultivation sounded all about him as the caravan passed in single file along the narrow hedged lanes between the gardens of the village to its camping-ground beyond the huts. The inhabitants came out to welcome and trade with the new arrivals; and the chattering crowds somewhat alarmed Amr'ar, who did not know that there were so many human beings in the world. The little black children swarmed around the young camel, eager to caress it, offering it dainties and trying to stroke it affectionately. This was more than the offended dignity of a small *mehari* could bear. Surely a vicious kick or two might be permitted him—and one astonished infant, receiving a hard little hoof full in his round black stomach, was knocked heels over head with not enough breath left in his body to howl.

But Amr'ar soon grew used to crowds. This village was but the gateway to a populous and pleasant land. And now for months the way of the caravan lay through what, after the hardships of the desert, might well seem a paradise to the animals full-fed and contented in the luxuriant pastures of the Aïr and the Damergou through which they journeyed towards Lake Chad. And the weaned Amr'ar grazed as greedily as any and waxed fat and strong

on the tasty green things that abounded.

So when at last the caravan was headed northward again and the refreshing verdure gave place once more to the sand, the gravelly *reg* and the black hills of the Ahaggar, the young camel stalked on well-muscled, though spindly legs beside his mother with the air of a veteran. He trod the changing desert with the light step of a returning exile; for after all he was its child, he was home again. The crisp, dry air of the Sahara was more welcome to his lungs than the balmy, heated atmosphere of the tropical jungles that he had left behind.

Once more the solitude of the waste spaces spread around them; and the silence was strange after the humming life of the green lands to the south with their chattering blacks, the incessant piping of birds, the rustle of the scurrying guinea-fowl in the undergrowth, the eerie shrieks of the hyenas and the hungry roar of a prowling lion startling the night. Strange, too, it was to see the horizon on all sides with never a living being within its far-rimmed bowl but themselves.

As out of a clear sky falls the thunderbolt, so out of the peace of the desert suddenly leapt tragedy. As the black darkness paled into the grey light of dawn came a swift rush, the crack of muskets, a scream of agony rising up to the silver sky. On the sleeping camp swooped on fleet-footed camels a band of black-robed men with shrouded faces; and the steel of sword and lance, rose-flushed in the first rays of the sun, was crimson when they fell and rose again. On the sand that drank their life-blood Moussa and his son Abbah lay on the body of their faithful negro slave; while a score of veiled men, a raiding party of their eternal foes, the Azdjer Touareg, rounded up the booty—the women, children and animals.

But not all. Maddened by the pain of a wound from a stray bullet, Tamerouelt was racing wildly over the desert, her head lowered, her long neck stretched out; while beside her Amr'ar galloped in panic. Their escape was almost unnoticed, as they had fled at the first volleys when the raiders were intent only on crushing the few defenders who, taken unawares though they were, battled to the death. And when the fight was over the raiders were too busy in collecting and driving off their captives as quickly as possible to think of tracking and pursuing them, valuable as they were. For the robbers were within the territory of the Ahaggar tribes; and it behoved them to quit it as quickly as possible.

Miles away from the scene of the battle the two fugitives sank on the sand, panting, blown, utterly exhausted. The mother, sobbing with pain, tears streaming from her eyes, lay in agony; while Amr'ar, his spirit shaken by the crashing to ruin of his little world, rose and stood over her with heaving flanks, staring in affright about him, snuffing with dilated nostrils the blood that oozed slowly from her on to the yellow sand. After a time the wounded *mehari* dragged herself painfully to a solitary tuft of herbage and chewed it mechanically to alleviate the awful thirst that burned her up.

Then began for these two poor waifs a sad pilgrimage, a weary wandering over the hostile desert where want and privation pressed closely on their heels. For a week they tasted no water and only kept themselves alive by the juices of the scattered plants. But the mother, devoured by the raging fire of the fever of her wound, was at her last gasp when they stumbled on a *ghedir*, a drying-up pool of water left by one of the sudden rainstorms that at rare intervals sweep over the face of the Sahara. Around its margin green vegetation had sprung up like magic; and a solitary beast, an *iz'zem*, the long-horned antelope from whose tough hide the Touareg make their shields, was browsing on it as the wretched mother and son dragged themselves painfully to the heaven-sent oasis. Used to associating camels with the arch-enemy Man, the animal bounded away in high jumps at their approach and left them in sole possession.

For blissful days they lingered here until the pitiless sun drank up the last drops of the water and they had eaten the plants to the wooden stems. Then sadly, reluctantly, they resumed their aimless wanderings.

Their mournful hegira lasted for weeks, each day seeming harder to bear than the last. The desert mocked them with wild flowers, sheets of mauve, small clumps of tall purple bells, tiny white starry plants dotted about the sand or the rocky soil, but gave them little fit to eat. They were forced to trudge far each day to find enough scattered herbage to satisfy Amr'ar's appetite. For Tamerouelt wanted little. Her wound never healed. Deep within it the bullet was lodged, festering and poisoning her flesh, slowly draining her strength. Unlike the plebeians of the camel race who

lack the courage to fight against death, but at its approach lie down and yield to it at once, she struggled gallantly against the encroaching feebleness and day after day dragged herself painfully on to accompany her son who in the selfishness of youth strode swiftly in search of food.

But the end came at last. One morning she scarcely could rise from the ground; and she staggered on weakly for a few hundred yards behind Amr'ar. Suddenly she collapsed and sank to the ground. She tried bravely to get up again; but the slim legs that had borne her thousands of miles now had lost all their strength. She strove again and yet again to struggle to her feet, but in vain; and her head sank helplessly on the sand.

Her son turned impatiently to chide her for lingering; but, seeing her lying prostrate, he turned back to her and smelled her inquiringly. She raised her head and looked up at him with wistful eyes, while her sides heaved as she breathed with pain. Amr'ar rubbed his soft muzzle against her and wondered why she failed to respond to the caress, this mother of his who had never left him before.

High up in the pale, brassy sky floated a speck almost invisible. Suddenly, swiftly, it grew in size; and in all quarters of the heavens similar specks appeared. And as the young camel nuzzled his dying dam with plaintive little whimpers a shadow swept across the sand, and throwing back his head, he saw a vulture sailing over him on outspread wings; while from every side others flew swiftly through the air to follow their guide to the dread feast.

The dying camel saw them and struggled with all her poor strength to rise; for she knew the errand of the grim harbingers of death. But with the silken rustling of wings they planed in circles above her, then one by one came down to settle on the sand in a wide circle around her. Realising that their time was not yet come, they feigned to ignore her, pruned their feathers and with angry squawks and threatening curved beaks pecked jealously at each other. Amr'ar, infected by his mother's panic, stared stupidly at the great birds, then, instinctively understanding their mission, rushed at them with bared teeth.

The foul scavengers, hideous with their long, featherless red necks and ugly bald heads, hopped awkwardly away before his attack and fluttered up off the ground. But behind him others closed in towards the prostrate camel and forced him to turn swiftly and charge them too.

Thus for long hours of gasping heat, under a scorching sun, the faithful Amr'ar guarded his mother against the ring of hungry ghouls. Again and again he drove them off, sending each in turn rocketing up into the air only to drop down again behind him when he swung round to repel attack from another quarter. All through the hot night he stood over Tamerouelt, scarce understanding what it all meant, her helplessness, her groans, her laboured breathing. He only knew that she suffered and that in some way these loathsome birds were her enemies and designed her ill. So he continued to guard her under the stars that shone with great brilliancy in the dark canopy overhead.

The sky paled and the grey light of dawn showed the circle of patient watchers by the death-bed, the unwinking eyes fixed on the dying beast. And as the sun rose over the rim of the great basin of the desert and its rays flushed the golden sand-dunes pink, Tamerouelt tried for the last time to struggle up, gave a little moan, and then her head fell back. A convulsive shudder shook her wasted body—and then she lay still, her brave heart stilled for ever.

Through the ring of waiting ghouls ran a tremor, and with one accord the vultures stretched out their necks and clashed their beaks preparatory to falling on the long-delayed feast. But Amr'ar, faithful to the last, would not cease his guard; and the evil birds scattered and scuttled out of his way as he charged them and drove them off.

The sun blazed down on him through the day. Hunger and thirst assailed him, but he never deserted his post and the exasperated carrion-feeders were still baulked of their expected prey. They hopped clumsily over the sand towards the dead camel, rose into the air and swooped down on it; but ever the faithful guardian threatened them with bared teeth and drove them off.

For two days, two nights, he kept them at bay; and noon on the third found him, tottering with fatigue, utterly exhausted, still standing by the sun-withered carcase of his mother, while the disappointed vultures circled overhead, shot up high in air and swept down again on planing wing. But his strength was ebbing; and they knew it. Starvation, a burning thirst, the want of rest, the constant wakefulness, enfeebled him. Before long he must give in; and

"Tamerouelt was racing wildly across the desert . . . while beside her Amr'ar galloped in panic."

then his own body would lie across Tamerouelt and the ghouls would have a double feast.

Intent on his struggle to keep his feet, to baffle his foes, his dimming eyes did not see the party of camels that suddenly topped a high dune half a mile away. They carried men; and as the leader sank to the ground a figure in white slipped from the cross-pommelled saddle and raised a pair of field-glasses.

"*Sapristi!* what is happening?" he exclaimed. "*Maréchal de logis*, look at that! A hero!"

The *sous-officier* put up his binoculars.

"You are right, *mon lieutenant.* The camel is defending its dead comrade from the vultures."

"Poor beast, it must be lost in the desert. Let us save it."

He swung himself into the saddle; and his *mehari* rose to its feet with jerky movements and the little troop swept over the sand. It was a patrol of a company of that wonderful Camel Corps that in small posts lost in the waste spaces uphold the honour of the Tricolour of France and guard the peace of the Sahara.

And as Amr'ar's failing strength deserted him and he sank on the burning sand he was dimly conscious of the rushing sound of wings as the baffled vultures rose and flapped heavily away. Then his heavy head was lifted and his mouth forced open, as the kind-hearted French officer poured a welcome cool draught into it from his own water-skin. And refreshed by it Amr'ar staggered to his feet again with the courage of his race, while a murmur of admiration and words of praise in a familiar tongue came from the veiled men about him. For these desert-riders with the two whites were Touareg, men of the Ahaggar who serve under the banner of France. The young *mehari* was with his own again.

He stretched out his neck and rubbed his muzzle gratefully against the officer's arm, as he had been wont to do with the dead Abbah. Then he looked round for his mother's body.

"A true *mehari*!" exclaimed the lieutenant, stroking him. Then, as his trained eye read the meaning of the tragic scene and noted Tamerouelt's wound, he continued:

"You'll carry me one day, *mon brave*, to avenge your dead mother on the villains who killed your owners and her. We will not leave this poor carcase that you defended so gallantly to the vultures after all."

So Tamerouelt had a soldier's funeral in the sand, ere her son was led away by his new friends to the well for which they had been making, and which was only a few hours' travel away.

Then in years that followed, when at last a President of the French Republic came to see with his own eyes something of what France has done for the desolate regions of the Sahara and of the brave men that bring peace to it in her name, the stately white camel that carried Captain Charles de Vauselle at the head of his veiled riders past the saluting base bore the scars of honourable battles under the Tricolour. And the Commandant of Insalah told the interested President the story of the first meeting of rider and steed, as the graceful *meharis* of the Compagnie Saharienne went by behind Amr'ar.

## NEW MOON.

**SLIM is she, white, and young,**
**Slender and sweet and fair,**
**A queen the bright stars among . . .**
***So is my love, my dear.***

**Pure is she, spotless, high**
**Beyond envious earth's control,**
**Calm, steadfast, gentle, shy . . .**
***So is my darling's soul.***

GRACE MARY GOLDEN.

"Nina rose and went about her duties."

# THE GATE OF HOPE

By A. R. GRAHAM

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

THE hills come rolling down in humping terraces of sunlit rock. The grey heights gleam hazily, the near-by precipices from a thousand broken facets reflect a hard metallic light, and to the north lies the sea—too bright and blue for unshaded eyes—with a strip of forest between it and the National road. It skirts the forest, this road, for its whole length before turning southwards to a shining limestone massif that marks a salient of the Atlas.

At the turn lies Bab-el-Reja, straggling pitifully under its mantle of dust and sun, with just one solid tenement—a diminutive white-pillared inn.

A mystery hangs over Souk-el-Reja, and distinguishes it from a hundred other such encampments along the coast-line east of Algiers. The residents have a certain local fame; not for their wealth or wisdom, or their beauty or their wit, nor even for poverty, which seems to belong—for nothing, in fact, that is easily explained.

People just shake their heads over Bab-el-Reja, and a cloud hangs over it. It might even have been, in part, curiosity as to this, together with a perverse misanthropic intention to get away from his friends, that had brought Marsden there.

He leaned against a pillar of the inn verandah and watched the Kabyles unloading his kit from the dust-grey diligence. A conventional long-limbed Englishman,

wearing at that moment a grave, stern look that meant nothing at all. It was a counterfeit expression assumed for reasons of self-respect. For on the whole coast from Algiers to Djidjelli there was probably no place less suitable for a convalescent sick-leave fever patient than Bab-el-Reja in the heat of the year, with its inhospitable background of heat-reflecting rock and a foreshore of forest merging into undrained swamp—and Marsden knew it.

As he made the acquaintance of the *patron*, and was introduced to the curious little guest-room, with a bare red-tiled floor and the damp, sour smell that comes from long disuse, he realised more acutely than ever the extent of his unwisdom, and forced still more the stern and purposeful air.

Perhaps the huge landlord was deceived, and took him for a reasonable being in pursuit of business-like ends—or perhaps he wasn't. With that face it was impossible to say—a mask of a face that held one's unwilling attention.

At lunch in the absence of the man, the foreground of Marsden's mental perspective was still filled distastefully by M. Minaud's blank, immobile features, to the exclusion of things superficially much more interesting. A disturbing mask of a face it was, set on top of a herculean frame, with a truly immense expanse of chest under the white shirt, and great limbs showing, as he moved, under the vast loose folds of his baggy trousers.

The man seemed altogether too big to be confined to the restricted environment of the *auberge*, and there was something unwholesome in the complete absence of expression, that reminded Marsden again of the sinister reputation of the village.

He was waited on by the daughter of the house, but her wild gipsy beauty hardly distracted his mind from his host. She merely gave a certain point to his mood of distaste for humans, with her tawdry finery and soiled white shoes and stockings, all eloquent of the intention to fascinate, minus the character and self-discipline to achieve orderliness of person.

Nevertheless, on the whole, Marsden was not bored in his new environment; in fact, since he set foot in Bab-el-Reja his mind had begun to work again, and something of his invalid apathy seemed to have gone.

After a rest in the unfamiliar discomfort of his room, he set forth to view at close quarters the circumstances of his exile, and this excursion, through the forest and swamp land of the old raised beaches, marked the beginning of a new and subversive phase of his life—a brief chapter devoid of incident, but cram full of sensation. In retrospect it seemed to have been planned in advance. Some omniscience must have known what was coming, and led him on. So it seemed to Marsden, who alone knew the genesis of his awakening and the deep-rooted logic of his subsequent behaviour that so astonished the small world of his acquaintance and friends.

In front of the inn ran the National road. Marsden stepped across, right out of his past, with its familiar landmarks, into the unrelated future. But there was nothing to mark the moment fitly.

His life had run smoothly, from public school to a City office, and from there to a branch office in Algiers. Then came malaria, with subsequent depression and some slight disturbance of long unquestioned values, then a few steps across the road at Bab-el-Reja, into the long grass at the far side.

Nothing moved down the length of the village street; in the shadow of a crazy wall two natives slept in their dust and rags, with a halo of flies round each. Immediately in front the inevitable beggar arose and displayed his sores with unintelligible commentary and solicitation.

Marsden shook him off and faced towards the eastern end of the forest belt; there the river passed, and it would be cool and quiet. The course made a line running obliquely with the forest, across an untidy wilderness of shrubs and tall grass.

In a few moments he passed out of sight of the inn, and realised how much he had longed to be alone. With a great sense of relief he strode on, filling his lungs with the warm, enervating air, and began to examine the locality with critical detachment.

On all, over all, there fell a strong yellow light, and the sky was painfully bright. Underfoot the hard ground crunched softly. There was a noticeable absence of colour. Drab dun was the hue of the burnt grass, and the few green leaves drooped dustily and had a faded yellow look.

Unexpectedly a smooth lane of still water opened at his feet. Marsden stopped to look around. "A dull place," he thought, peering from right to left. "A dull, dirty place." He walked on, but the stagnant waters of the creek kept drawing his attention. The opaque water, the muddied

reeds, the hard blue glint of the sunlight, offended his eye.

Farther on, numbers of isolated pools appeared with the same unexpected suddenness amongst the grass and shrubbery, all filled with a foul and sluggish liquid and fringed with soiled and tired-looking reeds.

The place was rank and unwholesome, silent, desolate, and mysterious. A vague corruption brooded over the stagnant water, and the stillness itself was ambiguous, only a feint of death under the cruel and garish sun. Perhaps at night things moved. . . .

Marsden entered the forest, and immediately was in another world, or, rather, the same world with another aspect, for the forest, too, was strangely lifeless and still—no birds, no sounds, but a cooler rankness and a darker desolation. As he came from the hot sun, the shade struck chill—not pleasantly cool, but dangerously and uncomfortably clammy and cold.

Looking upwards, he saw that the topmost trunks were swayed by no refreshing breeze. They stood straight, and still, a regiment of tall enigmas, waiting, year in and year out, for nothing, of course.

Marsden walked on to where he knew the river must pass, considering, as he went, the unusualness and unreasonableness of his depression. "It's all my imagination," he thought, and wondered that he had never before been so troubled by his own mind.

He had a vague idea that the river would redeem the landscape, and increased his pace. Abruptly he topped a small rise and looked down on a wide and sullen flood rolling purposefully towards the sea.

There was no comfort in it, no rest, none of the peaceful reflections and shady backwaters he had unreasonably expected, but a suggestion of steady haste, inexorable necessity, and Fate.

The water was muddy and yellow, but farther on lay the sea. There, at any rate, would be wide spaces and refreshing air, a clean-washed beach to sit upon and the old magnetism of the far horizon and the passing ships. So he continued until the forest thinned out, and sand and sea grasses underfoot took the place of rotting leaf-mould.

He was scarcely disappointed in the beach when he reached it, because at the bottom of his heart he must have known that it would be all of a piece. But he did not stay. Such a hopeless prospect of monotonous shingle foreshore would have been repellent in any mood. The forest and the flats were preferable.

On the way home he strove unsuccessfully to come to grips with his morbid fancies, and reached the inn at last, tired out and still wondering weakly at the world in general and Bab-el-Reja in particular. There seemed that night, as he ate mechanically what was put before him, to be no worth-while meaning, importance, or hope in anything.

And the next day was of the same order as the first, and the day following that. Each day he wandered far across the flats. There was plenty of space—for leagues the facts repeated themselves, without a noticeable break.

Marsden's mind adapted itself. He seemed to become a philosopher in the space of days, not unduly pessimistic, but aware of the underlying ugliness of things. He considered that he had lived in a world of illusion; now he understood. Everywhere, behind the mask of appearances, lurked the shabby reality. Now, purged of the truth-defying effervescence of his youth, he thought he could face things squarely.

The inhabitants of Bab-el-Reja appeared to be only a little different from other folks. With less publicity to encourage regard for outward effect, forgotten between the feverish swamp lands and the giant, forbidding rocks, they drifted rudderless in obscurity. The death and decay of their undrained flats—these, too, to Marsden, lurked everywhere behind the outward show.

But withal this amateur philosophy left him strangely apathetic and dull. More hollow-eyed than ever, he drifted towards the latter end of his convalescent leave.

Then Fate moved, without haste, without warning, with no appearance of doing anything of particular importance. Casually, as it were, shaking together the ingredients of his destiny, Fate placed a branch across his path and turned him to a new direction.

A week had passed, and he had no thought of moving to a more healthy spot. On the eighth day he set out as usual to accomplish the old unrevivifying routine. Arrived at a tolerable section of the river bank, he sat down where the trees came and leaned over the water's edge, an unlighted pipe between his teeth, and fell at once into a profound reverie. He was finding a growing pleasure, at that time,

"Again he saw her, on the water this time."

in the sense of absolute detachment that solitude had taught him to attain. His mind hovered outside his body, including, in fact, the earthly tenement in its impartial survey of the earth and its contents.

Behind him, in the supposedly untenanted depths of the wood, he suddenly heard a branch crack, then the sound of steps, as if some one had sprung lightly down and then run forward. Marsden shrank behind his screen of reeds and branches, and a girl came leisurely down the path to within a few feet of where he sat, and paused.

Obviously English, tall, trim, and healthy, she stood regarding the river a while, and then passed on. Perhaps, in fact, she was

"Drifting down-stream with the current, while she gathered up her long pole."

just a fine young woman. To Marsden she was an Angel of Light.

How long she stopped in that intimate proximity Marsden never knew. His ordinary powers of conscious perception ceased to function for a time, and he was aware of nothing but the warm and beautiful life before him.

Thoughts he had none, but a miraculously increased sensibility by which he felt, rather than knew, the full sweetness of her presence. In that space of time he learnt something, by vivid experience, of the mystery of individuality. For he became in a few moments the intimate—if unknown—friend of her joyous spirit.

Later, when he found himself on the flat world again, he had time to marvel at the certainty of his conviction. For nothing, at the time, would he have moved or spoken, or done anything to break the enchantment.

She passed on and disappeared behind a thicket: Marsden could hear her getting into a boat. Again he saw her, on the water this time, drifting down-stream with the current, while she gathered up her long pole.

Her craft was an old punt; at the far bank she turned up a tributary creek, and five minutes later a grey Arab pony, carrying a girl who rode as one born to riding, cantered in and out of the scattered bushes and was finally lost to view where the foothills met the plain.

With a faintly bewildered expression, Marsden returned to the inn, where he matched M. Minaud himself in silent uncommunicativeness.

On the days following he revisited the river end of the forest and sat on a big tree-trunk by the water's edge. The strange thing was that he did nothing—nothing, that is, to trace or identify the fair lady who had so fired his secret soul.

A restlessness grew upon him by degrees, and he took to wandering down the creeks, minutely observing the sparse life amongst the reeds. A red-billed coot and her family became a regular subject for prolonged and careful study. Day after day, stooping low and treading like an Indian, he approached his viewpoint and sat down to wait. After a time he would see her, the anxious mother, piloting her unruly brood with marvellous caution to the fringe of the reeds.

Marsden began to know the whole family, and noted the growing indiscipline of certain individuals—how they began to linger for an instant after the mother's warning cluck, and how their concealment was sometimes ridiculously inefficient and obviously perfunctory. Had she been crying "Wolf!" too often? Or must they always, as they grew up, relearn by perilous experiment the lessons of their early days? Marsden seriously considered these irrelevant problems.

Of course he knew that he was just marking time, but he felt unable to think of the things that mattered. In the deeper levels of his consciousness was a great confusion of chaotic emotions. At times he would sit and stare at nothing visible. He seemed to see that white-clad girl as plainly as if she had really been there.

Most distinctly he could remember every movement and glance, though one day it seemed that her eyes had been grave and sad, her demeanour quiet and composed, with a pretty little air of self-reliant fortitude. And another day he was certain that she had smiled to herself faintly, with an unmistakable twinkle in her eye, as one who, when alone, carries still the joyous marks of a comradely jollity.

In all her remembered aspects she was straight and tall, free-moving and supple. There was no doubt of her slimness, her trimness, grace, and strength, and though his mind might play him tricks in the matter of her expression, he was yet unfailingly certain that he knew her very well.

Somehow his mind had contacted hers, and all that inmost nature—its purity and tenderness and charm—was now his to love. And he loved her with a single-minded intensity through all the wide length and breadth of the land of dreams.

At last his spirit was free, released at her touch from the dull bondage of a workaday existence. Nothing would be, nothing *was* too difficult or remote. Together they scaled, in his imagination, the heights of achievement, and never failed of joy. Such a marvellous emancipation of intellect and long-neglected power came as an inspiration, a revelation from the high Source of life and love.

And then there were reposeful interludes—not all the time they spent in glorious adventure. There were many days when all was quiet and still, when they idled together in the best-beloved castles of Spain, days charged to the brim with abiding peace and the slow perfection of domestic joy. He learnt more from a little tender smile of hers than all the philosophers of the earth had known. By love he could see into a human heart, and understood at last the unity of the gods and man. His whole mind expanded like a flower.

But the setting sun brought him back to earth again, and homeward to the white-pillared inn. And on the way he reasoned, and certain things became clear.

It seemed to him important at such times that he should not make a fool of himself. He must think things out, and when he acted it would be as a man of the world, not as an impetuous boy. The impulse to set out precipitately to find her,

and then at once to claim her as his own, was absurd.

Meanwhile the whole outward expression of him altered without his knowing it; he now walked with a spring across a bright world of woods and waters, remembering with difficulty how sad and bad it had all once seemed. The great hills, too, at the back of the plain now filled him with happiness, as through the days he watched the light play in and out of deep ravines and round the corners of high, bold spurs. In a week he shed the marks of years of living, and M. Minaud's Nina wondered unceasingly at the change in him. What could he be doing over there, *dans la brousse*?

She even went to see, tracking him one day at a safe distance, returning perplexed and angry, more convinced than ever of the madness of the English, particularly the madness of Marsden. This she seemed, strangely, to take almost as a personal affront.

Then Fate stirred again. The Moving Finger wrote the names of Marsden and others, and moved on.

That evening, as he returned from his wanderings, M. Minaud met him and asked, with genuine concern, had he heard?

But no, of course not. Out there he would not have heard. It was so sad. She was charming—every one loved her—the English mademoiselle, the sister of the manager of the big mines across the river, up in the hills. It was said that her pony had fallen on the rocks. . . . She was killed instantly.

For him, M. Minaud, it was a veritable loss. He had always thought her so charming; it was a pleasure to see her come in and ask for a vermouth, and ride away, so pretty, so smart, and so cheerful. *Mon Dieu!*

Marsden felt nothing—nothing much, that is to say—just a slight physical sickness and a curious contraction of the muscles of his face. This latter he had time to wonder at, and then realised that it was just the unconscious effort to control his features. He could feel his face set like a mask, like the expressionless disguise that M. Minaud habitually wore.

"Of course," he thought. "How stupid of me! He, too, has something to conceal—some grief, perhaps."

Then suddenly the full realisation of his own loss fell upon him like a blow.

The one obvious thing to do now—to get away to some place of less painful memories and more healthy surroundings, Marsden obstinately refused to consider. He got an extension of leave and stayed on.

It was only after a long period of self-centred, unobservant retreat within himself that he saw something that shaped his future and showed the change that had befallen him.

It was on one hot day that he sat under the shade of the verandah vine. He looked up and saw Nina Minaud regarding him steadily. There was no mistaking the look of tenderness; she evidently meant him to see and understand.

In the old days he would have been dreadfully embarrassed. Now he felt pity and understanding, and would have spoken from his heart, but Nina rose and went about her duties in the house.

Marsden had time to reflect. On the next day he took her aside and told her the facts of his situation—as much as he was able to put into words. And it did not seem absurd to Nina; she cried with a soft sympathy that did something to lighten his load of regrets.

It seemed to him strange to find such gentleness and tender feeling in the world now, and he looked at Nina and guessed that she was even following this thought.

Suddenly he was appalled to think of the years that must pass over her at Bab-el-Reja. He thought of the narrow ignorance of the only humans she would meet, their cynical disbelief, the slow, sad withering of her young generosity.

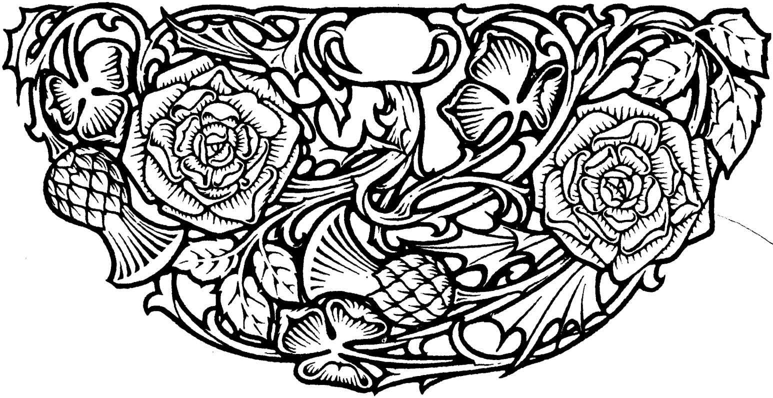
All this unsuspected sweetness in her would surely die, he thought, and she, too, would be desolate, without her heart's desire. All the weight of his own deep sense of loss he lent, in imagination, to her bleak future, and once more the world seemed clearly cruel and sad, till at last the obvious truth dawned upon him that for Nina, at any rate, he could make it otherwise. At least, he could give her a wider outlook and a happier environment than that sorrowful village by the sea.

And so it came about that Nina, a fortnight later, accepted gladly what was left of his life, and Marsden returned to Algiers with a wife, an innkeeper's daughter, to the consternation of his friends.

But as time passed they spoke of the change in him and decided that matrimony had improved him enormously. All the new tolerance and sympathetic under-

standing they put down to his beautiful wife, the daughter of old Minaud at Bab-el-Reja.

And since Time is merciful, and she loved him well, no doubt, in part, they were right.



# GALLOPER.

WE walked a foxhound puppy here when I was only six,
But I remember Galloper and all his funny tricks—
How once he stole the butter-print when Susan's back was turned,
And when at last he let it drop, that Mother had it burned.

His buried treasure would include, beside a bone or two,
A hairbrush and a handkerchief, and Peggy's Sunday shoe;
He even tried to bury once, because he prized her so,
A wretched kitten, till we ran and made him let her go!

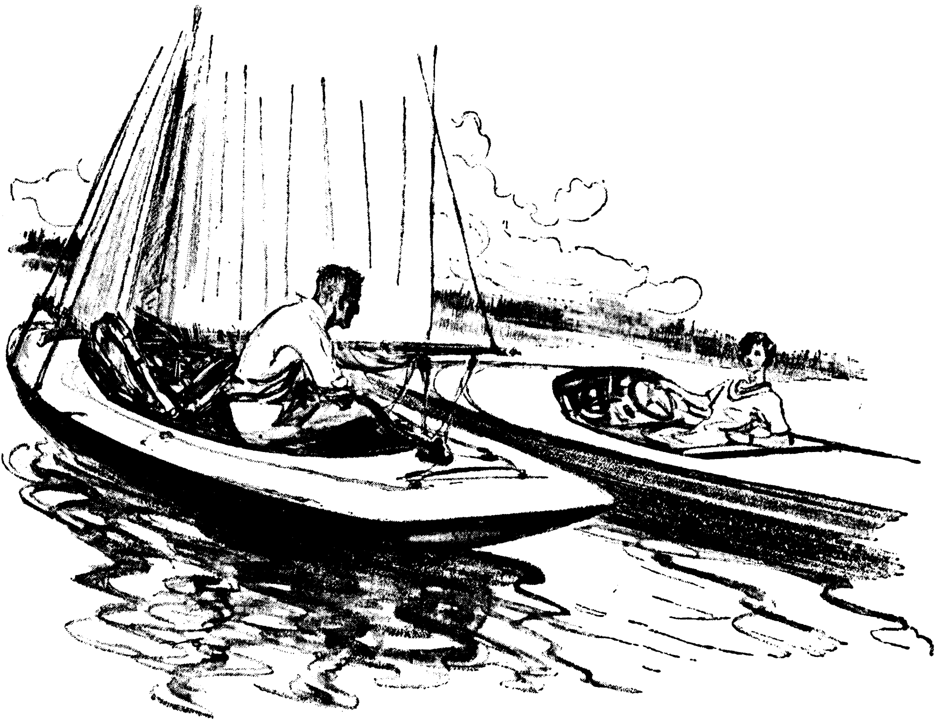
And even now I wonder why the huntsmen always talk
Of having charge of puppies as taking them "to walk."
I only know our little legs grew weary in the chase,
The vain pursuit of Galloper, to save him from disgrace.

Yet when the Kennels claimed their own, we children shed some tears;
We missed his brown, expressive eyes, we missed his flopping ears:
But, most of all, his mischief and his unexpected ways,
For when our goods were safe and sound, we spent much duller days.

* * * * * *

We saw him later at the Meet, no longer racing free:
A Galloper in discipline, a well-trained dog was he,
And while we watched him with delight, we scarcely wished him back,
For Galloper—our Galloper—was best of all the pack!

MURIEL KENT.



"'Where do you think you're going?' asked the girl."

# THE ACUTE SENTIMENTALIST

## By SELWYN JEPSON

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT

BILL MELHUISH is convinced that the narrowness of his escape from eternal bachelordom was due to his sudden determination to embrace it, and to nothing else. He says that the absence of luck which attended all his earlier efforts to persuade certain girls to love him dearly is to be attributed to the energetic fashion in which he flung himself at their successive heads. He says that the more you show a girl how devoted an admirer she has gained in you, the less likely is she to contemplate a family hearthside with you in the chair opposite. Of course Bill is mainly wrong. He always is. But there may be something in what he says as far as he is concerned, for he is an odd fish—very odd indeed. Look at the way he always wanted to get married. The moment he set eyes on a pretty girl he would begin thinking along the same lines. Often he would begin writing to "Furnish Out of Income" firms before he had taken her to the second theatre.

I suppose girls feel that sort of attitude, and in these days of higher education for women and higher still price of household requisites, they fight shy of marrying a chap without a lot of thought beforehand. The good old days of marrying in haste in

order to repent at leisure, or whatever the saying is, are at an end. Some marry, but most do not—that's how it goes in our days.

Nobody, then, could have accused Bill of running his head into it. In fact, before he went away he said loudly, over the grave of a friend: "Not another girl for me, James! I'm through. For me the lonely pipe and the mug of ale in the village pub o' nights! Marry? Not me!"

This, then, is vaguely what happened.

On the beach of one of the many islands that clutter up the Farrow Estuary, and annoy the captains of ships, an old gentleman sat by the water's edge with a little rake in his hand. He wore grey flannel trousers with a much-patched seat, an ancient brown shooting jacket with leather shoulder-pieces that had never been touched by a gunstock, a disreputable soft hat, and blue spectacles. He was Professor Hardcastle-Tyne, known for his exceptional grasp of bacteriology, enjoying a holiday. He was hunting for shells. He was quite happy. He scratched in the pebbly portion of the beach with his little rake, and peered from time to time at the specimens of subsoil that he excavated. His blue spectacles glinted in the sun, and the world was all his that quiet afternoon.

Presently he moved his position and got to work again. He shifted round in a semi-circle, and encountered a small stake, that stood upright in the stones, with that part of his old flannel trousers which had been reinforced with a patch. He murmured his annoyance in professor-like terms, for normally, if left alone, he was a mild-mannered man. He contented himself with dragging out the stake and casting it on to the face of the waters, where it would be out of his way. He noticed that a piece of string was tied to it, but it signified nothing to him, he being merely a professor of bacteriology.

He had scarcely accomplished this—indeed, he made but two scrapes downward with the rake—when a harsh, rasping voice came unexpectedly upon his consciousness out of what he believed to be a deserted world.

"What the deuce are you at, you old fool?" it cried, and the Professor looked up, to perceive a small boat within a few feet of the beach, manned by a rough-looking man in a tennis shirt and dirty white flannels, who stood in it with a boat-hook in his hands, preparing to land. This individual continued to abuse the bacteriologist in no uncertain terms.

"Can't you leave things alone, bother you?" he said. "Must you interfere with everything that doesn't concern you? Don't you know a fish-line when you see one?"

"Fish-line?" murmured the Professor. "Fish-line?"

"I said fish-line!" snapped the aggressive man irritably. "What about my dinner?"

"Your dinner, my dear sir? I haven't got your dinner," expostulated the old gentleman, and watched the agility of the other's leap ashore with alarmed eyes. He tightened his grasp on his little rake.

"No, but you've thrown it away. At least, I'm sure that there was something on it. Do you realise that I have not eaten a bite of food since breakfast, and I'm hungry—dashed hungry."

"If sixpence——" began the Professor gingerly.

"Goat! I don't want your sixpences. Can't you see that you've dragged up the stake to which was attached twenty feet of excellent fish-line, to say nothing of a hook, bait, and possible monster of the deep?"

The Professor, after a careful scrutiny, decided that the stranger was not as bad as he seemed.

"Ah, that piece of stick—indeed, I noticed the string. How very unfortunate! Dear me, Mr.—er—I didn't catch your name?"

"Because I haven't given it," snapped the man who had lost his dinner. "It's Melhuish, if you want to know—William Melhuish, of the Farrow Estuary, late of the fashionable world, although you wouldn't think it, to look at my attire."

"I'm very pleased to meet you, sir, and let me introduce myself—Hardcastle-Tyne, of the Royal Societies. Perhaps, as I am the unwitting thief of your evening repast, you would honour me with the delight of your company to what small, insignificant meal there may be awaiting me on yonder island, where I have my encampment. You are, by some glad chance, interested in sea-shells?"

"Only as far as their inhabitants supply the fish of the estuary with food that makes them fat," replied Bill. "As for your invitation, I accept it thankfully. You've no idea how hungry I am."

The Professor, remembering the first aspects of the enraged Mr. Melhuish, had his suspicions. He turned toward the

island just as Bill remarked: "Another of those confounded motor-boats!"

He enjoyed the sailing man's hearty dislike of all machine-propelled craft. The motor-boat was bearing down on the beach of the island on which they were. A figure sat at the wheel 'midships.

"Ah, here we are! That will be Betty," said the Professor. "But a motor-boat is extremely useful, my dear sir. I should be lost without one."

The craft in question ran her nose gently on the pebbles and a girl jumped ashore. She took no notice of Bill whatsoever, but said sharply to the Professor: "Father, that unspeakable Mr. Tarson has just arrived in a big motor-yacht! He came ashore while I was frying the steak, and said that you'd invited him to come along and join us. Is that true?"

The Professor looked at the sky and the estuary, and then at his little rake, as if he expected it to speak for him. He waggled it sheepishly, and, still avoiding his angry daughter's eyes, said apologetically: "Forgive me! Betty, this is Mr.—er—Mr.——"

"Melhuish," supplied Bill.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Melhuish. He's coming to dinner. By some stupid carelessness I threw his into the river. A fish-line attached to a piece of stick. I didn't notice——"

The girl, who, Bill noticed, was uncommonly attractive, made no more acknowledgment of the introduction than was contained in a short nod in his direction. She was manifestly disturbed by the advent of this Mr. Tarson. She cornered her father with a brief: "You may as well admit it, father. You *did* ask him, after promising me that you'd never have anything more to do with him."

"It was the vaguest sort of invitation, my dear. Ah—um—he was very anxious to—er—see you again."

"Oh, all right," she said, with a sudden gesture of surrender, and, sighing heavily, turned to Bill.

"There's not much to eat, Mr. Melhuish, but you're welcome, of course. Shall we tie your boat to ours and tow you over? There's not much wind."

"Thanks," said Bill, and walked to where his craft was floating. As his face was turned from the girl, he muttered severely to himself: "Now, no silly foolishness, Bill Melhuish. You steer clear. It's unfortunate there should be one of 'em around, but there you are. They fill the bally universe."

And Bill Melhuish took notice. Nothing could have been more determined than his decision to avoid sentimentality of any kind. He had had enough of it; his lesson had been learnt. As he steered his boat in the wake of the motor-boat, turning his nose from the stink of its noisome exhaust, he began to think of the girl as he would of some inanimate object in the landscape—just for practice. He observed the sullenness of her frown as she showed him where to moor his craft when they reached the island on which the Professor had his camp. Her frown was directed mainly at a brand-new eighty-feet motor-yacht which swung at anchor in the fairway.

Bill wondered who this unwelcome Mr. Tarson could be, at the same time feeling prepared to extend him the sympathy of one male for another in the presence of an antagonistic female.

But he admitted to himself, when he saw the owner of the motor-yacht, that the gentleman was of a type well fitted by thoughtful Nature to withstand the barbed shafts of all opponents. Physically and mentally he had every appearance of possessing the skin and, indeed, the habits of a rhinoceros. He was a small man, fuller in the lower chest than in the upper, sporting a small, bottle-brush moustache, and was very black and sleek of hair. His thin nose curved in a predatory manner over a wide, rather sensual, bright red mouth, and his eyes were curiously pig-like in their black intentness. He had no eyelashes that Bill could discern, and his voice rasped in and out of an oily bath—at least, that was how it sounded to Bill, who found himself in an unusually critical frame of mind. Perhaps the newness of the motor-yacht, combined with the fellow's coarseness, prejudiced him. At all events, he watched with interest the greetings exchanged between Mr. Tarson and the Professor.

"Ha, ha!" cried the new-comer briskly. "And how is our Professor to-day? Still scratching for shells, eh? Good hunting, my boy? How goes it? Dash me if I'm not pleased to see the last of the City for a time! Business very brisk, y'know, very brisk. And whom have we here?" He turned brightly toward Bill.

The Professor introduced them nervously, again forgetting Bill's name. Mr. Tarson listened to the story of the fish-line with cheerful humour, but he deduced from it the fact that Bill was an interloper as far

as the family party was concerned, and his cordiality toward him died at birth. He was not actually rude, but he came very near it in the sudden off-handedness with which he proceeded to treat the young man. Bill did not mind—indeed, it suited him. The man's furious good-fellowship was a little sickening to watch, and to have been the object of it would have been even more unpleasant.

again his view of the City in summer. He gave the impression of being very much a big gun in the financial world. While they waited for dinner to be served, sitting cross-legged round a neatly laid cloth, the man from the motor-yacht talked to the Professor as an old and valued friend.

"He turned brightly toward Bill."

The girl had disappeared under the trees which fringed the side of the island, and the smell of frying steak was wafted toward them with appetising fragrance. Mr. Tarson smacked his bright red lips and repeated

"How are the experiments getting along, my boy? I heard the other day that certain people expected great things of you."

"Yes, yes," agreed the old gentleman

quickly. "But it is slow work. I grudge the holiday, but I felt the absolute need of it. And—er—thanks to——"

"No, no! Don't. I know what you're going to say. Don't say it. It's all in the quick one, eh? Well, well, well! I'm as hungry as a hunter. Dash me, I should think I am! A girl who can't cook is an abomination—don't you agree, Professor? I don't care how many spondulics a man

"The professor introduced them nervously."

day's work with me, y'know—all in the day's—— Ha, ha, here's the little fairy! Well, Betty, my dear? You rushed away to fetch paper before I had a chance to say 'How do?' to you. Always the little may have, let him choose a wife who can cook. She knows! There won't be any slovenly served food in the house *she* runs."

Bill was not sure whether he was alluding to Betty or some nebulous generality of a

girl, but he was quite certain of this particular girl's dislike of Mr. Tarson. It shone honestly and frankly from every movement and gesture that she made. But the man did not see it. He was as blissfully blind to it as the pebbles on the beach. It was incredible. Bill knew that if a girl hated him an eighth as much, he would immediately and without delay hasten to put a thousand miles between himself and her the moment he discovered it.

She took no notice of Mr. Tarson's efforts to be conversational, and later, when good food having rendered him expansive, he leered at her with unpleasant fatuousness, she steadfastly occupied herself with other things.

And among these other things, to Bill's discomfort and amazement, was Bill. In an instant his wariness and the memory of his ill-luck with fair women returned to him, and he put up a mighty, unscalable wall of reserve. She smiled at him, she directed remarks to him, she moved her position after the meal so that she might sit next to him, and she drove him into inviting her to a sailing expedition on the morrow the very moment after she had refused a plea of Mr. Tarson's that she should let him take her and her father for a speedy run down to Gravesend and back in the yacht.

At this Mr. Tarson's little eyes blinked, but he said nothing. His good humour, over a fat and full-flavoured cigar, did not perceptibly diminish.

As for the Professor, Bill had rarely seen a man so palpably nervous after a meal. He fidgeted, and pulled fretfully at the full-flavoured cigar which Mr. Tarson had thrust upon him, and all the time he eyed his daughter and Mr. Tarson alternately, as if he expected them to burst into sudden flame—a flame which he would not be able to extinguish.

Bill, to put it mildly, was puzzled; but since most of his energy was directed toward maintaining his attitude of slightly bored detachment as far as the girl Betty was concerned, he had little or none to give to the task of solving the riddle of what it all meant. He certainly asked himself what on earth Mr. Tarson wanted on this inaccessible mud island in the Farrow Estuary, and what the Professor wanted with Mr. Tarson, who was so manifestly out of his type and class, and for whom his daughter had conceived so violent—and reasonable—an aversion. But he reached no point where he could answer these questions.

Finally he took his leave, and was accompanied to the water's edge by the girl. As he climbed into his boat and got out the sculls, she said: "I shall expect you early to-morrow, Mr. Melhuish—you won't fail me?"

He knew what she meant by that, and he promised, telling himself that he was a fool, and all the rest of it.

Before he turned in that night, after anchoring in a sheltered inlet of the island where he had made his headquarters and dumped his stores, he assured himself that nothing in the world would drag him out of his shell. He had determined to be a hard case, and a hard case he was going to remain, whatever the Betties of the world might do in trying to serve their own ends. For that, he could see, was what she was doing. She was serving her own ends. She did not like the disagreeable Mr. Tarson, and she did not propose to be bored by him. Therefore she had decided to make use of the providential Bill Melhuish to stave off the tired business man, Mr. Tarson.

He wondered, as he fell asleep, what sort of business Mr. Tarson was engaged in. That it must be a fairly lucrative one was evident from the motor-yacht and the full-flavoured cigars.

"Blighter!" said Bill to the lapping whisper of the water, and slept.

On the morrow he sailed, and Betty sprawled in the stern and contemplated the blue sky with brooding eyes. She spoke little, which pleased Bill, and her manner of the previous evening was absent. She did not fling herself at his head in the slightest. She merely thought her own private thoughts and left him to himself. Indeed, he did not seem to have any real existence to her in her mood.

When he was not concentrating on handling the boat, he watched her, and more than ever approved of the look of her. She had a face that grew on one quite a lot. One wanted to see what expression would come to it next—always it was different. He noticed that at moments she bit her lower lip, as if some recurring thought was more than ordinarily troublesome. She did not look as if she were used to troublesome thoughts—her features were so happy in their moulded calm.

Suddenly he asked a foolish question: "What does the Princess think about so deeply?"

She turned slow eyes upon him and, after an appreciable pause, said: "That Fairyland is a long way off, and that it is more than most princesses of this sordid earth can do to find their way to it. Alone they find it very difficult."

"It lies in the hands of the Prince," he replied, "to lead the way."

She shrugged her shoulders and stirred, so that the sun glittered in her hair.

"There are princes—and princes."

"And not all of them charming, eh?"

"Precious few of 'em," she returned, and added: "What ridiculous nonsense we're talking! Now I must get back to the island and see about lunch. You'll lunch with us?"

Bill hesitated and refused politely, pleading the necessity of a trip to Horton to post some letters. He did not want to have to deal with a similar situation to the one he had found himself in the night before.

Besides, any more of this would drive him into the sentimentality which he abhorred; as it was, the recent fragment of conversation with the girl had verged perilously near that trap. He had found himself experiencing a sensation that was not far removed from curiosity mingled with pity. He had, for a moment, wanted to know what was troubling her, and at the same time a desire to help her. It was just as well to keep away for a while.

"You'll be back by tea-time, then?" she said.

"I can't tell, with the wind as uncertain as it is," he hedged, "but I'd like to drop in some time later."

"Do," she said cordially. He pulled up the centre-board and ran the boat inshore so that she could land.

As she reached the beach, Mr. Tarson came to meet her, and put forth a hand to assist her, though she had landed nimbly enough.

"Glad to see you back safe and sound," he said pleasantly. "Come along, and I'll watch the magic touch with which you wield the frying-pan." And he put his hand on her shoulder as they moved into the trees. The last Bill saw of her was the quick movement with which she wriggled from his touch.

"The Professor may be a dashed good snarer of sea-shells, but he's as ignorant of the way to look after his daughter as he is of how to treat a staked-down fish-line," said Bill to himself ungrammatically as he pushed off with the boat-hook.

That afternoon he actually wrote a couple of letters and took them into Horton. Besides being by nature honest, he also wanted to see if there was anything for him at the post-office. It was in several ways lucky that he chose that afternoon, for amongst a bunch of redirected missives was a telegram from a friend who was returning from Egypt, and who proposed to dine with him on the twenty-third—that night.

Bill stuffed the rest of the unopened correspondence into his pocket, beached the boat and gave it into the charge of the postmaster, and caught the 3.17 to London, pleasantly elated at the prospect of spending a night in Town after ten days in the wilds.

He established himself in an empty compartment, lit his pipe, and began to go through the accumulation of letters that he had received from the post-office, which in its conscientious way had redirected everything, including the circulars. There were several of these, which he left to the last. Amongst the letters was an effusive invitation from a gay friend who wished to include him in a party to the forthcoming race meeting at Gatwick. He had, it appeared, a perfectly topping girl for Bill to make friends with. Bill smiled cynically and tore open the next letter.

When he got to the circulars, he found three of them to be from wine merchants who believed him to be a thirsty but still discriminating fellow, and one—the last—from an enterprising gentleman who was prepared, out of sheer good nature, it seemed, to advance Mr. Melhuish any sum he might require, from five to five thousand pounds, on note of hand alone. Bill was used to such circulars, as, indeed, is every man who occupies a suite of bachelor chambers in Jermyn Street, and he was about to crumple this generous offer into a neat ball and toss it out of the window, when the name of the philanthropist caught his eye and immediately arrested his attention. It was *Mr. Albert Tarson.*

"Tarson!" said Bill to his pipe-bowl. "Albert? Was his name Albert?"

He read the letter again, and a vivid picture of the owner of the motor-yacht floated before his eyes. The predatory nose, the sharp, bright eyes—cunning eyes—and the character of his voice—its alternate harshness and softness—were all typical things of a man who lived on the misfortunes of others. And "Tarson" was an uncommon name—indeed, Bill had never come across it before. Conviction

came to him that he had stumbled upon the vocation of the unpleasant guest of the Professor's. He put the circular on the seat.

On the face of it, however, there was nothing particularly significant in the discovery. It was nothing to do with him how another man made his living. He pressed down the smouldering tobacco in his pipe, and for a while lost himself in thought. Once or twice he shifted uneasily, as if something was coming into his mind which was not over-pleasant to dwell upon. He frowned, and allowed his pipe to go out. He used three matches to relight it. After a moment he picked up the circular again and re-read it, noticing the office address from which it had been sent—Mincing Lane. He observed that a call at any time would meet with immediate attention and be treated as strictly confidential. If the Albert Tarson who lent money to improvident gentlemen was the Tarson now on the Farrow Estuary, he must have left his office in charge of some one capable of carrying on the business—a senior clerk, perhaps. Bill put the circular away in his pocket-case and resumed his deep thoughtfulness.

The face of the girl Betty floated before him, defiant, troubled, anxious, and he could not help but recall what she had said about Fairyland and princes, charming and otherwise.

" Dash it," he said suddenly to the empty air, " I've got to watch out! I'm getting sentimental—almost! Let's think. What show shall we go to to-night ? "

And thereafter he told himself that the Farrow Estuary, and whatever might be happening on it, did not matter a tuppenny curse.

But the following morning he was staring intently at a small brass plate on the door of a block of offices in Mincing Lane, and although he made two definite efforts to turn his back on it and walk away, he presently found himself opposite a thin, weedy individual who sat behind a desk in a small room. There was an air of gentle, sticky welcome about the fellow. Bill regarded him thoughtfully.

" Mr. Albert Tarson ? " he inquired.

" Mr. Tarson is unfortunately out of Town at the moment, Mr. —er——"

" Melhuish," said Bill.

" Exactly, Mr. Melhuish. He's out of Town. But if there is anything I can do—— Anything you wish to discuss will be accorded——"

" I've called," said Bill, with a sudden rush of determination which utterly dumbfounded himself. " I've called to discuss the matter of Mr. Albert Tarson's loan to Professor Hardcastle-Tyne."

" Ah, yes ? " replied the thin one, rubbing his hands.

Bill knew, then, that his guesses had not been so far wrong. He sat down in the chair which the money-lender's assistant indicated, and touched his breast-pocket furtively to see if he had remembered his cheque-book. But he knew quite well that he had remembered it. It had been the first thing with which he had equipped himself before setting out for Mincing Lane.

Bill cleared his throat with a little cough which was a tribute to his own private opinion of his own great foolishness, and said: " You have his promissory note, I suppose ? "

At the same moment he took out his cheque-book. The thin one turned to the safe behind his chair.

* * * * *

" Good afternoon ! " said Bill to the back of the dilapidated sports coat, and the Professor, sitting on a boulder, peering earnestly at a fragment of a mussel-shell, turned and saw him.

" So there you are ! " he said. " We were under the impression that you had decamped for good. Betty was quite worried that we had not seen more of you while you were in the islands." The old gentleman sighed, as if the mention of his daughter was painful to him, and began cleaning the teeth of his rake with the tail of his coat.

" I notice that the motor-yacht has left her anchorage," remarked Bill, and sat down by the side of the boulder.

" Yes, the two young people went off to Stanton to tea."

" *Two* young people ? " exclaimed Bill.

" Why, yes," replied the Professor, and with an air of pathetic conviction added: " My friend Mr. Tarson is quite a young man."

" He is fifty if he is a day," said Bill with uncompromising brusqueness.

The Professor tapped twice at the rock. " Oh—er—yes, I suppose he is."

" And poor fun for a girl of Betty's age," the young man went on.

" Oh, no ! They get along famously. In fact, I've an idea they're well—er—mutually attracted in quite a serious way." The geologist frowned at the water.

"Betty must have discovered it rather suddenly."

"Well, you see, when I explained to her—after tea the day you left, I think it was—she understood at once. She is a very sensible girl."

Bill was quite certain that the old man did not realise that he was talking to a comparative stranger. He seemed to be discussing aloud the thing that was worrying him, that he might convince himself. He was a pitiful example of a man trying to believe something against every reason and instinct in him.

Bill studied his shoe-laces. "On the table in your tent," he said gently, "you will find a document which I think will help you to put things right—with your conscience and your daughter. But I must ask you not to tell her who—er—was able to find it. I'm going along now. Good luck, sir, and—well, you've learnt what kind of bloodsuckers that kind are. I won't presume to advise you. Good day!"

And Bill leapt up and hastily boarded his boat before the gentleman on the boulder had quite realised the drift of his final words. The last he saw of the bacteriologist was an excited figure dashing ungracefully under the trees in the direction of the tent.

"Now for a good stiff breeze," said Bill, and hoisted the mainsail hurriedly. A mile down the fairway a motor-yacht had come into view, and he wanted to put as much water between him and the Professor's camp as possible. He had been quite enough of a sentimentalist without running any more risks by being told so by the girl Betty. He never wanted to see or hear of her again.

The good stiff breeze did not fail him. It lifted him along in fine style, so that the water ran along the gunwale within an inch of the top. The island faded from view, and in a little while he passed Farrow Buoy and was well away.

Then the breeze dropped dead, as if it had never existed, and left Bill drifting on the tide at a miserable two knots an hour. He shaded his eyes to scan the horizon astern, and sent up a prayer that nothing untoward would happen.

He cursed the breeze for its treachery in befittingly nautical terms, and in order to employ the time—which already hung heavily upon his hands by reason of his fear of what might happen sooner or later—wrenched open a tin of sardines and consumed them. There were boxes and boxes of the beastly things, for he had had to break camp and load up with all his stores before he descended upon the Professor, so great was the urge to get away.

"Never again!" said Bill, and pitched the empty tin overboard, but he was not alluding to the sardines.

He sat down 'midships, where the bundles would permit, and hummed a gay little tune which he did not find in accordance with his mood. Occasionally he glanced casually astern—at least, he tried to make believe that he was casual.

Suddenly he stiffened after one of these inspections of the distance, and stared. A black speck had appeared on a bearing which was too exact to admit much hope. For a while it grew larger, soundlessly, and then larger with a faint pop-pop of an engine exhaust. Bill waited, drifting at his miserable two knots. The motor-boat was doing ten or twelve—probably twelve, her fullest speed.

Bill wished he could get out and run, but he couldn't, and to get out and swim would be undignified. And he had got to be dignified; he had got to be firm. But he was neither.

The motor-boat, with its one occupant, came alongside, and the panicky Bill tried to meet with unaffected brazenness the eyes that regarded him.

"Where do you think you're going?" asked the girl, after a silence, which Bill hoped was a battle of wits, but which he knew was nothing of the sort.

"Er—home," said Bill helplessly.

"And where is that?"

He waved his hand aimlessly in the direction of the wide world. Never had he felt so awkward, so very much alone. There was not even a piece of floating driftwood on which he could look with hope of comfort. The waste of waters was all about him.

"Do you realise what you have done—for me?" the girl went on. "That you have given me back everything at a time when I had lost everything? Do you think it's quite fair to run away without giving me a chance of showing just a little of my—my gratitude—but that is such a poor word."

"Oh, that's all right—all right—er——"

"Please, please come back, won't you?"

Bill fingered his collar. "I have a lot of important business to——" he began hurriedly.

She shook her head. "I'm not going to let the most wonderful man I ever came across slip out of my clutches like that. Throw me your painter. I'll make it fast and tow you back."

"But——"

She looked at him, and this time he could not escape her eyes, nor keep from his own the things he was feeling. He could not help seeing the sun in her hair, and the parted lips.

He suffered an attack of acute sentimentality. It came on him there and then, and somewhat luxuriously he gave himself up to it.

He threw her the painter.

* * * * *

And that was the beginning of the affair which sent Bill back to Town a married man in a most ridiculous, fabulous state of happiness. And it cost him only six hundred and fifty pounds!

But he swears he didn't care a fig about the girl at the outset, which is manifestly inaccurate. He is always wrong about things like that, Bill is.

# LOST YOUTH.

**YOUTH left me on a rainy day in Spring,**
**Laughing he left, and lightly took away**
**The dreams I dreamed, the songs I loved to sing,**
**The prayers I loved to pray.**

**I shut the doors in my deserted house,**
**Darkened the windows, and was sadly lying**
**Alone with Grief, nor ever wished to rouse,**
**When Love came, crying.**

**Love at the window, crying "Let me in!"**
**Love beating on the door with wings forlorn.**
**"Go hence," said I, "for entrance none can win;**
**We have lost Youth; we mourn!"**

**Yet still she fluttered at my silent eaves,**
**And drowned my weeping with her plaintive voice**
**Till "Enter, then," said I, "this house that grieves,**
**But dare not to rejoice!"**

**Smiling she came, and, shadowed by her wings,**
**Led home by Love to fill my bitter lack,**
**A little graver for his wanderings,**
**But laughing, laughing still, my Youth came back!**

**VALENTINE FANE.**

"On top of the pile lay a large sheet of paper which said: 'NOT to be opened till WE are there.'"

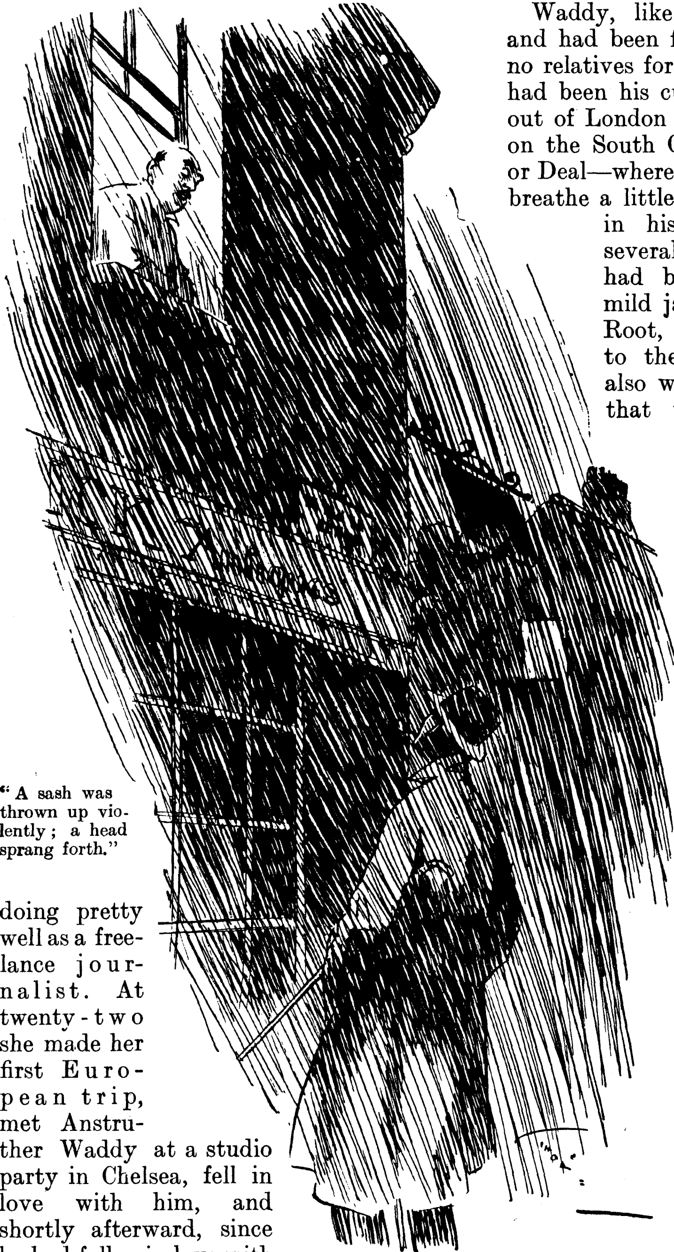
# THE AMERICAN SCALE

## By WILLIAM CAINE

### ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

LAURETTE MAY was born and brought up in Virginia, and so acquired the attitude towards Christmas which prevails throughout the elder Southern States of the Union. Here in England our position is that we fork out a few presents—one apiece—to our nearest and dearest quite, as a rule, without grumbling; but we don't let Christmas go to our heads. In Virginia and her neighbours they do. Christmas, to a good Virginian, means presents by the dozen from everybody to everybody. The father gives the mother a new parasol, six pairs of white kid gloves, five dozen handkerchiefs, a ruby and diamond bracelet, a travelling bag, fifty pounds of chocolates and a bouquet of roses. The mother gives the father a cabinet of cigars, a pearl tie-pin, a gay sweater that she has knitted with her own hands, a pair of sock-suspenders, and the works of O. Henry. The father gives his daughter—but no doubt you catch the idea. I don't want this story to look like a stores catalogue. All I ask you to note is that people who are born and brought up in Virginia take the question of Christmas presents seriously.

Laurette May's father was prosperous for thirty years and unprosperous for two. He then died, and Laurette, at eighteen, found that it was necessary for her to earn a living. She had six thousand dollars, a bright brain, and no incumbrances, for her mother was long dead and she was an only child. So she went to New York with one introduction, and six months later she was



"A sash was thrown up violently; a head sprang forth."

doing pretty well as a free-lance journalist. At twenty-two she made her first European trip, met Anstruther Waddy at a studio party in Chelsea, fell in love with him, and shortly afterward, since he had fallen in love with her, married him. And so much for that.

This man Waddy was an artist of moderate renown. Etching was his line of goods, and he made it pay pretty well—quite well enough, at any rate, to allow of his marrying a girl who could dispose of a story now and then. They were comfortable, you understand, just comfortable. It was unlikely that they would ever roll in money, nor did they want to. All they wanted was to go on being comfortable.

Waddy, like Laurette, was an orphan and had been for many years, and he had no relatives for whom he greatly cared. It had been his custom for a long time to go out of London for Christmas to some place on the South Coast—Brighton or Hastings or Deal—where he could get a little golf and breathe a little fresh air. It made a break in his winter's work. And for several consecutive years now he had been accompanied on these mild jaunts by his friend Wilfred Root, illustrator and contributor to the picture magazines. Root also was an orphan. I am sorry that there should be so many orphans in this story—it doesn't seem very artistic, does it?—but it's not my fault. Besides, if Root hadn't been an orphan he wouldn't, probably, have been able to spend his Christmases with Waddy; and everything hangs on the establishment of this custom.

For when Laurette had been married to her Anstruther some four months, December came, and, because the two of them were going to spend their Christmas, as Anstruther loved to do, by the sea, the problem of Root presented itself. Was dear old Wilfred to be allowed to spend his Christmas in solitude, deprived of the companionship of his Anstruther or not?

Laurette was falling every day more and more deeply in love with her Anstruther and he with her. They didn't want Root to spend their first Christmas with them in the least—well, no, not that. Let us say that they weren't actually eaten up with their desire for Root's company, and for this, I think, nobody can blame them. At the same time they were both very fond of Root, and very unwilling to be unkind to him. Laurette, moreover, was a very sensible girl, and she greatly desired that the friendship of her Anstruther and his Wilfred should persist. And so far it had persisted splendidly.

Laurette intended that Anstruther's marriage should make no difference to—well, anyhow, Root was asked to spend Christmas with the Waddys.

He accepted gladly. He had been feeling a little gloomy about Christmas—just a little orphanish.

## II.

Root put (among other things) into his kit-bag the pound of chocolates and the box of Straight Cuts that he had bought for Laurette and Anstruther, pulled the straps tight, banged his studio door behind him, went out into the King's Road, Chelsea, and hailed a cab.

An hour and thirty minutes later he was in Broadhaven.

As he drove along to the Waddys' lodgings he kept his nose pretty close to one of the cab's windows, while his observant artist's eyes busied themselves with the life of the pavements. A clear Christmas Eve had brought everybody out of doors, and trade was brisk. Root observed the shops, a busy butcher's, the array of bottles in a wine company's window, a grocer's appetising display, a promising little antique dealer's place, a blazing sixpenny bazaar, a big draper's, a chemist's. The cab turned into a side-street of semi-detached villas, proceeded, halted. Root had arrived.

The door of Sea View opened. Laurette and old Anstruther on the steps. Howls of delight. Dear old Wilfred! And how are you? Come right in.

They dined, talked, smoked, and drank whisky till eleven, and then went to bed.

Root's bedroom was on the ground floor, next the sitting-room. Laurette and Anstruther slept upstairs.

## III.

As soon as the young couple had shut their door behind them, Laurette went to the wardrobe and began to take parcels out of its lowest drawer. "Now," she said, "we'll give him half an hour to get to sleep, and then you're going to steal down and fix these things in a pile on the sofa. They'll be the first thing to strike his little old eye when he comes in to breakfast, and they'll look real impressive to him. Then we'll wave him to them from our places at table, and when he sees they're all for him he'll have a fit."

"Don't you think," said Anstruther, "we'd better wait to put them out till the morning? Suppose he comes in to breakfast before we get down."

"He won't," said Laurette. "He mustn't. Besides, if we wait till the morning to carry them down, we'll meet him on the stairs going to his bath, and that would kill the whole thing. He's just *got* to come in and find them there waiting for him. But say, just in case we're *not* down, I'll write a notice to tell him he's not to touch a thing till we come." And this she did.

"Poor old Wilfred!" said Anstruther doubtfully. "It's playing it a bit low on him, I'm afraid. What I mean to say is, how would *you* like to have a whole lot of parcels given you on Christmas morning with nothing in them but lumps of coal and tin whistles and babies' bibs and such-like tripe? Suppose we don't do it."

"No," she said, "you'll see, it'll be lots of fun. He'll be just tickled to death. You wait. It'll start our Christmas Day in the rightest kind of spirit. And then, when he's got through, we'll give him his *real* presents. *They'll* heal his wounds for him all right. With a box of cigarettes and a woolly waistcoat and three silk handkerchiefs, he'll have no call to kick. But if you think I've put in some of the hardest hours of my life doing up all these parcels just to leave them to rot in a drawer, you've got another guess coming, honey. And it was your idea, anyway."

"Well," said Anstruther, "I'd rather forgotten the real presents. And, as you say, it was my idea. All right. We'll do it on the poor old blighter. Heavens! I can see his face from here as he takes out that shell box."

People who have gaily planned an elaborate practical joke and happily worked upon its preparation often, at the last moment, feel these doubts and timidities; but if they have worked very hard, they are apt to persist. They can't bear the thought of wasting their trouble. And Laurette and Anstruther had worked very hard. The wrapping up of the parcels had alone occupied a lot of their time, but far more had been spent in hunting through the sixpenny bazaar for the awful things that the parcels contained. They simply couldn't give their little joke up. They couldn't.

And they didn't.

Perhaps it was just Fate fulfilling itself. And if so, of course there's nothing more to be said.

Anyhow, they did it. Yes, and slept soundly afterwards.

IV.

ROOT fell asleep the moment he put his head down; woke and, striking a match, consulted his late father's magnificent gold watch. A token of esteem, it had been given to the old man by his employers on his retirement, after thirty years' service, from the job of Common Law managing clerk. It informed Root that the hour was three in the morning. Root turned over confidently, but sleep declined to come back. After half an hour of it he decided to smoke a pipe. He got up and hunted in his jacket pockets. No pipe. He now remembered that he had left the thing on the sitting-room mantelpiece.

He opened his bedroom door cautiously, took three steps along the passage and cautiously opened the door of the sitting-room. He didn't want to wake people up. He entered the sitting-room, clicked on the light and uttered an ejaculation. "What the deuce——" said Root.

He approached the sofa and examined its fantastic load of parcels. They were of all sizes and shapes and colours, some tied with white, some with red, and some with green string, and to each was gummed or tied with string a label carefully inscribed. On top of the pile lay a large sheet of paper which said: "NOT to be opened till WE are there."

At three o'clock in the morning of the 25th of December the significance of this collection was not to be missed. Obviously presents.

"My head!" thought Root. "Laurette has often told me that they make rather a business of present-giving at Christmas in her country—but—— Now, I wonder whom all these things are for? Dash it all, there are only Laurette and Anstruther and myself and the landlady and the slavey in the house." He lowered his head and examined a label. On it he read in Laurette's large, enthusiastic handwriting: "For Wilfred from Laurette."

"Well," he thought, "that's nice of her, and I'm glad I remembered to get those chocolates. What's this one say?"

He read, again in Laurette's writing: "From Anstruther for Wilfred."

"Dear old soul!" thought Root. "And to think that I almost didn't buy those fags for him. Thank goodness I did!" And one or two reflections passed through his mind relative to the humanising influence of women, for he and Anstruther had, naturally, never before thought of buying one another presents at Christmas-time.

He examined a third label. He read: "To dear old Wilfred from Anstruther and Laurette." Laurette had written this one too. Indeed, they were all her work.

"Dash it," thought Root, "I wish I'd got something for the pair of them—a record for their phonograph or something." Simultaneously he read: "Mr. Wilfred Root from Mrs. Anstruther Waddy."

"Hang it!" he thought. "That girl must be crazy to spend money—— Dashed good of her, all the same!"

He read: "Wilfred from The Waddys." Then he read: "From Laurette for Wilfred." Then he read: "W. Root from A. Waddy."

To abridge, every one of the fifteen parcels on the sofa was addressed to Root and purported to come from one or other or both of the Waddys.

Root had been so astounded and, to tell the truth, so happily excited while he had advanced towards his final discovery that the implications of those that led up to it had continued to escape him. Now, like a thunderclap, the situation rammed itself into his consciousness. "Fifteen!" he moaned. "All for me! And I've got nothing for them but a hundred stinkers and a pound of rotten chocolates!"

He sat down heavily in a chair and gazed at the heap of parcels with haggard eyes. They were, you must understand, very attractive-looking parcels, done up carefully in strong brown or white paper. You could see that many of them were large solid boxes—not at all the sort of boxes in which rubbishy things were packed. Root could almost swear that one of them contained long, fine cigars, Coronas probably.

He took his head in his hands. "Tomorrow," he told himself, "nay, to-day, at breakfast-time—in less than six hours—all these fine things are going to be poured out on me by these madly generous creatures, and I shall have, to set against them, a hundred cigarettes, price seven-an-sixpence, and one pound of chocolates for which I gave six bob. I am going to show up as the stingiest swine in creation. Oh, why didn't I break a window and go to gaol for Christmas? Oh, why had Anstruther to take an American to wife? If Laurette had been English, it would have been a necktie from her, and a diary—if that—from him, and my gifts would have been as right as ninepence. But things

being as they are, I shall look like the Mean Man from Montrose. Something "—he jumped to his feet—" has got to be done! But what?"

He sat down again. "Oh," he whined, "what have people got to go and marry for?"

## V.

The human organism is seldom at its most efficient in the small hours of the morning. The vitality is low, the mentality is feeble, the stomach is empty, the spirit depressed. Troubles that in the small post-luncheon hours of the afternoon would seem the merest bagatelles, loom enormous, become obsessions. Anything that a man may decide to do at 3 a.m. is almost certain to be wrong.

All this is quite commonplace. I only remind you of it so that you may possibly accept what I am now going to tell you, which is, that after thinking it all carefully out, Root decided to go forthwith and buy some more Christmas presents for Anstruther and Laurette.

Three in the morning is not the best hour for shopping, and this Root, feebly though his mentality was functioning, realised very well; but his situation seemed desperate, and for it desperate measures alone might suffice. If one hammers and rings at a door long enough, one is bound to rouse somebody. And shop-keepers have pockets to be appealed to, if not hearts to be softened. Still, at three in the morning their pockets may take a good deal of appealing to. Root saw clearly that he couldn't hope to get the proprietor of that nice-looking little antique shop to do business with him unless he should make it quite clear that he was going to spend largely. Well, that was what he had to do if he was to make any sort of appearance at breakfast. He would require at least a dozen gifts, and these not mere things out of the half-crown tray.

And he had only brought about thirty shillings with him from London.

Well, he had his father's watch. He pocketed it, for by this time he was clothed for the street.

The next thing was to get out of the house. How fortunate that he had been put in a ground-floor room! And his windows were French windows. Did they lead on to a balcony? Yes. Had the balcony a staircase to the garden? It had. Said Root to his soul: "I am going to pull this off. If only it wasn't raining!" However, it was, and Root had to make the best of it.

He pulled the windows together, raised the collar of his mackintosh, and descended into the garden. Then with infinite caution he made the half tour of the house which brought him to the garden gate and so into the road.

Five minutes, and he was outside the antiquity shop. "If only the fool doesn't live somewhere else!" thought Root. "But he won't. He can't. He's *got* to live here!" Root rang the bell, knocked, rang, knocked, rang, knocked. "I do wish," he reflected, "that it wasn't raining." Again he rang, knocked.

All of a sudden a window on the second story was illuminated. A sash was thrown up violently; a head sprang forth; a voice, harsh with indignation, inquired: "What on earth do you want?"

Root had just enough self-control left to be polite. "I want some Christmas presents," he said, making his voice as sweet as a flute.

"You want some Christmas presents!" screamed the man at the window. "You want some Christmas—— If you don't clear off, you drunken idiot, I'll come down and give you a Christmas present you won't like!"

"About ten pounds' worth," said Root, always mildy.

"What's that?"

"I said about ten pounds' worth. Perhaps more."

"I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir," said the dealer. "You must excuse me. Being wakened up like that, I thought the house was on fire, perhaps; and then I suppose you was having a joke with me. But if you really want to buy a few things, I'll be down directly." He disappeared.

In the matter of antiques Root was fairly knowledgeable. He knew a good deal about china and glass, furniture, prints, silver, ivories, jades. He wasn't, I mean, entirely easy to satisfy. Nor the sort of person upon whom you can push off your fake Waterford goblets and your twentieth-century Bow tea-cups. The *séance* was protracted, for Root was determined to do this thing properly, since he had set his hand to it. He winnowed and sifted, felt, weighed, rang, smelt, held up to the light, examined through the dealer's magnifying-glass, turned things down with contempt, set other things aside for consideration—in a word, inspired the dealer

with a good deal of respect and a great deal of hatred.

Still, the old man had a reasonable number of possible articles in his stock, and by five o'clock Root declared himself content. When the account was made up, it was found that for what he had chosen he would have to pay fifteen pounds twelve shillings and sixpence.

"Throw in the fan," he said, and "make it sixteen quid." The fan's price was thirty shillings.

"Why, sir," said the dealer, "since it's you—yes, I'll do it."

He wanted more than anything in the world to get back to bed, for the cold in the shop was deadly, and he had been sniffing for some time. So had Root.

"Good," said Root, blowing his nose. "Then make up all these things, each in a separate parcel, and I'll be off."

The dealer, raging, did as he had been bidden. Nineteen neat little packets were now ranged along the counter. They contained:

(1) A jabot in Point de Venise.

(2) An exquisite Chinese goddess in ancient creamy porcelain.

(3) A very small comfit box in white enamel decorated with pink roses.

(4) A pair of old apple-green glass toilet bottles.

(5) A small jade rabbit.

(6) A strip of Oriental embroidery suitable for a collar or belt.

(7) A small Lowestoft vase imitating the Japanese.

(8) A carved ivory fan.

(9) ——

But this story again threatens to become a catalogue. The rest of these objects of virtue may very well be left to your imagination.

"Put a bit of paper round the lot," said Root, and this was done.

"Here," said Root, "is a watch. It's worth thirty pounds, and you needn't say it isn't, because it is. I've often pawned it for ten. Write me out a receipt for it, and I'll bring you your money on the day after Boxing Day."

"Well," began the dealer hoarsely, after a dumb pause for collecting himself, "if I'd known—if I'd suspected——"

"Shut up!" shouted Root. "Shut up! The watch is worthy thirty pounds. It's solid

"Enter Root, staggering under weight of assorted packages."

gold, and look at its maker's name. But of course if you don't care about taking it, you've only to say so, and I'll wish you 'Good night' and a merry Christmas." He blew his nose.

"I've a good mind," said the dealer, "to give you in charge to the policeman I telephoned for. He's been outside ever since I let you in. I say I've a good mind——"

"Splendid!" said Root. "Fetch him along. And what's your charge, you silly old ass? I'm leaving a thirty-pound watch behind me. What's your charge?"

"Oh, you be hanged!" snarled the dealer as he began to write a receipt for Root's watch.

## VI.

We now skip two hours and a half and a considerable number of houses, back yards, gardens and a few streets. This lands us in the bedroom of the Waddys at half-past seven.

As her travelling clock chimed that hour Laurette cried, "Wake up, honey, and a happy Christmas!" and clicked on such lights as were not yet burning.

Anstruther stirred in his little twin bed, opened an eye, and found that his young wife was bending over him, her eyes dewy with love and sparkling with excitement beneath the highly becoming boudoir cap she had bought ten days previously in Regent Street to grace this occasion.

"Same to you, Wonder of the World," he said, yawning and putting his hand under his pillow. He produced a small cubical parcel. "A present," he said, "for a good girl."

Laurette screamed and tore the thing open. It contained a ring—a large amethyst surrounded by tiny diamonds. As this has nothing to do with my story, I shall not tell you how many kisses she gave him for it. I mentioned the incident only to show you that even practical jokers can do the decent thing occasionally.

"Laurette at last found some words. 'Wilfred,' she cried, 'you've not brought all these things for us—you've *not*!'"

"And now," said Laurette, when she had exhausted herself in praises of his gift, "see what Laurette has for her boy." And she indicated the sofa.

Anstruther's eyes bulged, for the sofa was

loaded with parcels to an even greater extent than was the one downstairs, the one in the sitting-room, the one he had himself loaded seven or eight hours previously.

"All for you," crowed Laurette. "From me."

"Good Heavens!" said Anstruther. "What do you mean, all for you from me—I mean from me for you—I mean from——"

"Never mind what you mean, honey," she said. "Get right up and open them. Or shall I bring them over to you in bed?"

"Yes," he said faintly, "do that! This has rather taken my wind for the moment. I'm not accustomed to having Christmas presents dealt out to me at this rate."

"If you don't like it," she said, as she deposited a double armful of parcels on his bed, "you oughtn't to have married a Virginian."

"Oh," he said, "I like it. I like it enormously. Here, give me some scissors."

A catalogue—and this one I mustn't abridge—of the gifts presented to Mr. Anstruther Waddy by his wife on the morning of Christmas Day, 1925:—

A fine purple silk-quilted Japanese dressing-robe.

Six pairs of fine variously coloured silk socks.

Six silk neckties to match, very fine.

Six silk handkerchiefs to match, equally fine.

A handsome, fine beige-tinted Malacca cane.

A set of platinum and mother-of-fine-pearl shirt studs and cuff links.

A pair of fine ivory hair brushes, initialled in silver A. W.

A pair of exceedingly coarse woollen hand-knitted bedsocks.

Ten pounds of crystallised fruits in a large wooden box.

A terrine of pâté de foie-gras.

A jar of caviare.

Six phonograph records (tangos and fox-trots).

A bottle of crême de menthe.

A pair of lemon-coloured wash-leather gloves.

A pair of dark grey doeskin ditto.

A Japanese netsuke of a badger with an enormous stomach.

A bowl of shaving soap.

A ball of string.

A scarf of white Angora wool, very voluminous.

What Anstruther said to his young wife while he brought these various desirable articles to light would make very pretty reading, but this story has got to be told, and I can't hang it up while a doting husband gives expression to his amazement, his delight, his gratitude, his admiration, his worship, and I don't know what all. You must be satisfied to know that Anstruther was absolutely thrown off his perch with excitement and pleasure. Never in all his born days had he so much as dreamed of such a Christmas morning. By the end of this experience he was almost feverish and his eyes were glazed with beatitude.

"But," he cried about half-way through, "you must have absolutely broken yourself, you scoundrel!"

"Oh," she said, "don't you worry about that, my child. I swore that your first Christmas Day as my husband should be a real dandy one, the sort we have home in the South. And so I saved up and saved up and saved up, and what if I am set back a bit? I'm not in debt, anyway, and I sold that story last week. I'll soon catch up on myself. But you *are* enjoying your Christmas, honey, aren't you?"

Whereupon he hugged her for the sixteenth time and kissed her for the—but enough of this.

The ceremony concluded about eight o'clock. Then Anstruther, exalted as he had never been in his life, and Laurette, with her new cap considerably askew, set about the dull business of dressing for breakfast. This done, they descended to the sitting-room. Time, eight-fifty-one.

As he passed Root's door Anstruther beat on it, threw it open, thrust his head in, howled "Merry Christmas and buck up!" and ran to rejoin Laurette in the sitting-room. She was putting a few feminine touches to the pile of parcels on the sofa.

"He's almost ready," he said. "I say, do you really think we ought——"

"I certainly do," she said firmly, as she concealed Root's real presents in the sideboard. "Ring the bell, honey."

## VII.

THEY took their places at table. The girl came in and put coffee-pots and milk-jugs and food before them; went out.

"Listen," said Laurette. "He's coming. That's him, blowing his nose."

The door opened slowly.

"Merry Christmas!" they duetted.

Enter Root, staggering under weight of nineteen assorted packages.

"Sabe to you, by childred!" he cried. "Ad here's sub little preseds I brought for you. Where'll I put theb?" He looked everywhere but at the sofa, for he had a delicate mind.

The Waddys gazed at one another dumbly. Laurette at last found some words. "Wilfred," she cried, "you've not brought all these things for us—you've *not*!"

"That's what I've dud," said Root, grinning. "Exguse by produdciatiod, but I've badaged to pig up a bid of a cold. Cubbig dowd id the traid, I egspeg. I bust dash out presedly ad get a chebist to draw be a pidt or two of abbodiaded quidide. There"—he allowed his burden to cascade gently on the end of the huge table—"they're all barked with your nabes, so just pick theb out for yourselbs while I set about by breakfast."

"Look here," said Anstruther in a strained voice—neither he nor Laurette cared a curse for Root's cold—"what's in all these blooming parcels?"

"Oh," said Root, "you'll see whed you oped theb. Just a few little trifles I thought you bight like. A few bits of crockery and silver and such. Nothing to bake a sog about. Had to put up rather a special effort for your first Christbas as a barried couple, you see. Here, Laurette," he went on, "this has your nabe on it. Let's see whad's idside."

He cut the string, tore away the paper and disclosed the goddess in ancient creamy porcelain. "There you are," he said. "Rather a dice one, izzud she? Now, then, get busy, the two of you, while I eat. They say you ought to stuff a cold, what? Gib us a cup of coffee, Laurette, like a darlig." He rather wondered why they didn't draw his attention to his own presents. He wanted his own presents.

Laurette had given a rather hysterical scream of delight as the Chinese goddess had emerged from her wrappings, and had exclaimed that she was perfectly elegant, and that Root was a real darling; but already she had fallen silent. Her eyes slid in the direction of the sofa, shot back to the goddess, met the eyes of Anstruther on their return journey from the sofa.

"Look here, Wilfred——" Anstruther began desperately and stopped.

"Good," said Root, with his mouth full of porridge. "Help yoursebbes, lads and lasses. Dote be shy. Wade id. See what Father Christbas has sedt you." He was beginning to grow a little anxious. His eyes, in spite of him, moved to the right. That was where the sofa was.

"See here, Wilfred," Anstruther began again. His face was red as fire. "You see all those——"

"Silence," said Laurette. "Let *me* do it."

"All right," said Anstruther sulkily. "If you can, do."

"I move," said Laurette loudly, as she stretched out a leg and brought a foot down hard on one of Anstruther's, "I move that we don't open any more of our presents till the Christmas tree." And again she massacred the toes of her husband. "*I* think," she went on, daring him with her eye to speak till she gave him permission, "that it'll be far more fun if we wait for the *Christmas tree.* Don't you, honey?"

"Oh—ah," said Anstruther, wincing and drawing his foot under his chair, "why, yes, I suppose so. Yes, certainly. By all means."

"So there's to be a Christbas tree, is there?" said Root. "Spleddid."

"Yes," said Laurette. "This evening. What is Christmas without a Christmas tree? We didn't mean to tell you, did we, Anstruther?"

"No," said Anstruther quickly. "We didn't, did we?"

"But," the glorious woman went on, "it's just occurred to me that it'll be far more fun if we combine the Christmas tree with the opening of the presents. Yours, Wilfred, as well as ours."

"Oh," said Root, quite happy now, "I'b to have some presedts too, ab I?"

"Well, I should say so," she cried. "You don't think we'd let you come and spend Christmas with us and not have some presents for you. As a matter of fact, they're on the sofa there." She nodded casually in their direction. "But you're not to touch them now. None of us is to see a thing till to-night. So get on with your breakfasts, boys."

"Oh, I say," cried Root, "you've never god ad got all those things for be. Oh, I say, you are spleddid creatures! But I sibly cad't wait till to-dight. I sibly bust see what's id all those lubbly parcels." He half rose from his chair.

"Sit down!" shouted Laurette. "The ukase has gone forth. Nothing till to-night."

"Not just wud?" Root pleaded. "You've opeded wud of yours. Bayd't I see what's id just that liddle wud id blue paper?"

"No!" screamed Laurette, who happened to be aware that the little one in blue paper contained a ginger-beer cork. "Sit down, this minute. Anstruther, take all those things upstairs and lock them in the wardrobe. And you, Wilfred, help yourself to a kipper."

"All right," Root grumbled, obeying. "Have it your ode way. I'll be good. You're the boss of this show, Laurette. Here," he shouted to Anstruther, who was being a little clumsy, "bide how you carry all those fide thigs of bide, you clowd!"

Anstruther's eyes, as he escaped from the room, were almost completely lacking in expression. His lips dumbly framed the words "Christmas tree."

"Now," said Laurette, when breakfast was at an end, "I'm going to throw you two boys out for this morning. On a real lovely day like this you ought to take a good long tramp on the downs. It'll be the best thing possible for that cold, Wilfred, and I'm going to be pretty busy in here, getting my tree ready for the company's inspection. Drag him out, Anstruther, and give him his lunch at Worthing, and then bring him back to tea here. By then I'll have my tree all fixed up and screened off, with our presents heaped all around it."

"Will you really?" said Anstruther.

"Yes," she said, "I will. Go and get on your boots, the two of you. It's a sin to be indoors on such a Christmas morning."

"All right," said Root obediently. "*I'll* be good. We've got our orders, old bad. Cub od." He got up and left the room.

## VIII.

"Look here," whispered Anstruther fiercely, "what's the game? What's all this tosh about a Christmas tree? We haven't got a Christmas tree."

"If there's a Christmas tree in Broadhaven," said Laurette savagely, "I'm going to have it. I guess there's a florist's shop somewhere around; and if there isn't one here, there's one in Brighton. And I can hire a car, I suppose. And, anyway, there's got to be a Christmas tree in this house before two o'clock, and there's going to *be* one."

"But, darling girl," hissed Anstruther, "it's Christmas Day. The florist shops are all shut."

"Yes, darling boy," snarled Laurette, "and, if need be, they're all going to be opened. Am I an American or not?"

"Oh, well," said Anstruther, "I expect you'll manage it somehow if you go at it in that spirit. But how about all these presents you've promised Wilfred? You may be able to get a Christmas tree at a nurseryman's, but you can't possibly lay in a whole lot of decent presents for the old thing. Besides, we haven't too much cash here with us."

"Yours," said Laurette.

"Eh?" cried Anstruther. "What's that?"

"Yours," said Laurette. "The things I gave you just now."

"Mine!" said Anstruther. His chin fell to the floor with a crash.

"Go and put on your boots, honey," said Laurette. "I want you and Wilfred out of Broadhaven inside of half an hour. Then I can get busy."

"Well," said Anstruther, who had a fine sense of justice, "it *was* my idea, but"—he brightened up—"he can't have the hair-brushes. Thank Heaven, they've got my initials on them!" He went slowly to the door. "And," he said, "*I'll* have those three handkerchiefs we got for *him*." He opened the door. "And," he said, "we'll make him share the victuals and drink." He passed through the door. "And," he said, putting his head round it, "I'm hanged if he shall have those bedsocks!" He closed the door after him.

It only remains to say that the Christmas tree was a colossal success.

Also his walk cured Root's cold.

Finally, though she had to go up to her ears into debt to do it, Laurette managed a very noble arrangement of New Year gifts for her dejected Anstruther. (I always like to close on the happy note.)

But this, I think, is a catalogue with which we can altogether dispense.

"'Clare!' said the Knight, and the vanilla ice tilted perilously."

# THE KNIGHT TO HIS LADY

## By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

THE Knight brought the Lady a vanilla ice with all the chivalry and homage of bearing that could be infused into an action performed in a crush of people to the syncopated agonies of a jazz band.

He was a young Knight, and the Lady of course was beautiful—beautiful with a charm that defied those captious critics who found classic fault with thinness, and a mouth a trifle wide; beautiful, too, with a rose-and-cream colouring and great serious black-lashed grey eyes.

But when the Knight, bearing the vanilla ice, came to the balcony where the Lady awaited him, he found her standing erect, still as a carving in ivory and ebony, save for the gleam of her hair and the bright cherry-coloured ostrich-feather fan which she was clutching with both hands.

"Clare!" said the Knight, and the vanilla ice tilted perilously.

She looked at him with dark and tragic eyes, and said in a quiet cold voice:

"Hugh—the expedition has come back . . . without Captain Palliser."

He gave a quick exclamation of shocked dismay—half conscious even then, that it was provoked as much by the tragedy and tenseness of her white face as by the news. For the expedition in question had meant no more to him than to any other of those who during the past year had followed its progress from the brief reports that appeared at irregular intervals in the daily Press, and whose interest was perhaps quickened by acquaintance with "one of the fellows who'd gone out on that mountain-measurin' stunt in Farther Asia."

Captain Randolph Palliser had been the "fellow" whose membership of the expedition had caused the Knight to read those brief reports with a bare measure of interest. Captain Randolph Palliser, the gallant careless person—*who had not returned.*

And all that that meant to Clare stood revealed to the Knight.

He said quickly:

"How did you hear? Perhaps it's not true——"

"Sir Robert's brother is here. Sir Robert was leader of the expedition. He—Captain Palliser—volunteered to make a special journey—across a mountain pass to some village where the people were known to be hostile—because he could speak their particular dialect better than any of the others. . . . A good deal of the success of the expedition depended on his mission. . . . So he went alone. And then he disappeared. They tried to trace him—and failed. So they came back. They'd a good deal of sickness and the people were unfriendly . . . and snow began. . . . Sir Robert had already given up hope—because there were so many chances against their finding him—alive." She ended as she had begun, in a quiet and steady voice. . . . But the ivory sticks of her fan snapped sharply between her fingers. . . .

It was at that moment that the Knight enrolled himself in the lists of those who have gone forth to serve their ladies—none the less because he carried a vanilla ice instead of a lance, wore a 1924 dress suit instead of armour and plume, and did not speak the language of Malory. . . . For he said:

"Clare—I say, buck up. It's rotten luck—but there *is* a chance, you know. . . . And anyway I've got a good idea—— You know Calthorp—the plant-huntin' johnny—is going out there after primulas and what not—he's sailin' next month. Well—I'm going with him—and if Palliser's—to be found, I'll find him and bring him—home."

Over the broken fan she looked at him with something added to the sombre tragedy of her glance; something, it seemed, beyond the astonishment and the gratitude inspired by his gallant confidence. And then she said, in a slow uncertain voice:

"Hugh—if you could! But I'm afraid. . . . It's a big thing. . . . It would be wonderful."

He gave her the homage of a look and smile which the devoutest knight might have bestowed, for they held the vow of a single-hearted service. But Clare had lowered her gaze to the drooping rosy feathers in her hand. Suddenly she shivered.

"Hugh—Hugh—it's awful."

He said gently:

"Yes. I know. But there is a chance. . . . And I'm jolly well going to follow it up."

"Hugh. . . . If you go . . . I can't thank you for—for thinking of it——"

Already, metaphorically, he wore her glove in his helmet—vowed to her service—to find Palliser, because she cared. . . . But he only said, looking down at the forgotten vanilla ice:

"I say, the bally thing's melted. . . . I'll get you another."

* * * * *

Twelve hours later the Knight had got the "plant-huntin' johnny" on the telephone, had succeeded in wrenching his mind from the subject of primulas, and found him vaguely hopeful. He did not see why Captain Palliser should not be alive; there was no reason why Hugh should not try and find out. Of course there were big risks and difficulties, but they were not altogether insurmountable. He himself would help all he could—at all events his knowledge of the dialects might be useful. . . . He very much hoped that Captain Palliser *was* alive. . . . He wasn't married, was he?

"No," said the Knight.

The "plant-huntin' johnny" replied that he seemed to have heard something about it; that there was a girl in England—he couldn't remember her name. . . . Would Hugh meet him in town to-morrow?—there wasn't much time to make arrangements. It was imperative that they should leave at once—otherwise the special primula would not be found in bloom. . . . To-morrow, then, at two. Good-bye. . . ."

So the Knight hung up the receiver and collecting the dogs walked across the hills to the country town. He was half-way home when it occurred to him that he might as well look up the Lesters and tell them of his departure. There wasn't much time —and Colonel Lester had spoken of taking Betty away. Betty had been at the dance last night, but she had left early—some time before that fateful moment when the Knight had found the Lady on the balcony. He wondered if she also had heard the rumours of Palliser's fate; he reflected irrelevantly that she must have met Palliser several times when the latter had stayed in the neighbourhood. . . . At which point the dogs suddenly rushed ahead in transports of vociferous recognition, and Hugh, rounding a bend in the hill-side track, saw Betty Lester just ahead.

He overtook her with a celerity that made him vaguely conscious of surprise. The Betty Lester he knew was an out-of-doors sprite, lithe and long-limbed and possessed of a swift grace and an irresistible, merry, elfin charm; but this girl was walking with a listless slowness, and when he called "Betty" and she turned, he saw a little round face that was pale and framed a pair of hazel eyes that looked unnaturally large and scared. And then she said:

"Hugh—have you heard?" and instinctively he realised, with something of a shock, what it was that had swept the laughter out of her eyes. . . .

"You mean"—somehow the situation demanded that he should take his intuition quite for granted—"you mean about old Palliser?"

She looked at him as if there were no need to confirm his words, and said in a queer little breathless voice: "Do you think it is true, Hugh? That there is no hope of his being alive?"

"No. There is a chance. I am sure there is."

She caught her breath and said "Thank you, Hugh," and the significance of the words struck him dumbfounded. Before he could think of anything to say she went on:

"You see—it makes me feel rather—dreadful. Because it is my fault. . . . I sent Randolph away. . . ."

In the silence that followed her words came only the trilling and fluttering of the finches in the brushwood on the hill-side. Long afterwards, that sound of bird-song, and the sweet resinous tang of the budding birch trees that filled the sunny afternoon with fragrance, recalled to the Knight his sensations of that moment; the moment wherein he realised that his venture was going to serve not one lady, but two.

For there was Clare with her beautiful tragic eyes and her hands gripping a broken fan; and Betty, with her merry childish face swept of laughter, and her fresh clear voice changed to that odd little ghost of itself. . . .

And to both the fate of Randolph Palliser was the thing that mattered, and if he, the Knight, should be instrumental in finding him and bringing him home as with sublime simplicity he had promised Clare, was it Clare or Betty who would have the chief right to thank him?

The finches sang on in serene indifference to the problem, and, after what must have been a long pause, Hugh said abruptly that he was going out to find Palliser next week. Anyway, he reflected, he'd meant to tell her that—he'd no need to add that it was because of Clare; Betty quite simply accepted it as high adventure in the cause of friendship.

She gave a little cry and caught his arm.

"Oh, Hugh!" and then, swiftly—"when do you go?"

"We sail on the 4th of May—a week from to-day. But of course I'll have to be in town most of the time fixing things up with Calthorp—it's his show, you see. He's being awf'ly decent about it—and things are turning up very luckily. I was coming to tell you about it when I met you. . . ."

He was conscious of talking to gain time while he sought to readjust the situation. But Betty hung on his words with a desperate eagerness that was distracting. . . . He was rather relieved to learn that the Colonel had gone away for a few days; for that spared him a recital of his plans over the Lesters' tea-table. He parted from Betty some twenty minutes later at the end of the lane leading to the white house in the valley, and she gripped his hand with boyish force and looked him straight in the eyes with gallant confidence.

"I think you're a brick. And—Hugh—if you find him—*when* you find him—tell him *at once* that it was all a mistake—directly he'd gone I knew it—and—and—I'll marry him the day he comes back—if he likes. . . . You *will* tell him? Good-bye, Hugh. . . ."

And she left the unfortunate Knight to

reflect on the increasing irony of the situation into which he had so gallantly plunged. In honour bound, he must give Palliser Betty's message.

Yet all the time there was Clare.

It was not until some time later that it occurred to him that Clare had sent no message to Randolph at all.

By that time, indeed, he was already in town—as perplexed a Knight as ever buckled on a sword in his lady's service.

He had not seen Clare since that night of the dance; he remembered vaguely that she had spoken of a visit to friends in Kent, and wondered if, after all, she had gone . . . holding a gallant face to the world while all the time the thought of Randolph Palliser's fate among the grey Asian mountains haunted and tortured.

With a savage exclamation the Knight wrenched his own thoughts away. For with inevitable irony, upon the memory of Clare's tragic face had followed that of Betty's. But that bright May day in London forced the truth; despite the message which in honour bound he must give, it was Clare's happiness that counted

"Palliser was looking at him curiously."

so much so that he wished he had not seen Betty at all.

*   *   *

Twenty-four hours before his boat was due to sail the Knight came face to face with Randolph Palliser.

Staring dully at the worn and gaunt edition of that gay and gallant person across a hastily secured lunch-table, Hugh listened to what was obviously an epic of hardship and peril endured and surmounted—reduced to the curt, bald simplicity of narrative of the Englishman concerned. . . . And all the time he was desperately alert for any sign that might reveal Palliser's attitude towards those two—Clare and Betty. . . .

Their meeting had been the purest chance, and only the fact that Palliser had just heard from a mutual acquaintance of Hugh's intended venture had brought about their present position of host and guest, for as has been already stated, their acquaintance was of the slightest, based on a casual introduction in the hunting field two seasons

"His eyes . . . showed a sudden faint hostility."

ago, shortly before Palliser had left on the fateful expedition. But the news of the Knight's purpose amply balanced any deficiency, and thus the occasion that Hugh had so often imagined arrived, and was all the more complex because Fate had been perverse enough to stage it in a crowded restaurant instead of upon the strenuous summit of a grey mountain. . . . Hugh was vaguely conscious that in the latter surroundings it would have been so much easier to gauge the truth; primeval simplicity might somehow encourage a primeval directness that here would merely appear insufferably clumsy and crude. . . . So he listened to Palliser's curt and casual explanation of how "luck" had favoured him, with the result that at the very time when his party had given up hope he was nearing the coast by another route, and was indeed enabled to catch the next boat home. And it was there that, for the first time, Palliser's manner suddenly changed from that laconic brevity with which he had recounted his adventures. For he gave a short and bitter laugh.

"That's where my luck gave out. . . . If only I had managed to get there before the others sailed I needn't have come to England at all. . . . As it was—well, of course, I was bound to report myself. . . ." He frowned. "And now—well, I shall clear out again as soon as possible."

The Knight set down his glass with a jerk, and stared at his companion so blankly that the latter's grim absorption was pricked into involuntary defence. . . .

"Why not? There is no reason why I should stay in England. . . ."

For the second time the Knight was conscious of that subtle handicap of environment. In that mountain setting where his imagination had staged their meeting, he would have spoken decisively . . . bluntly . . . fired by the memory of tragic eyes and slim fingers crushing a rosy fan . . . the lady to whose service he was vowed. . . . Well—he would speak so now—for after all, it was the same—and Clare was waiting.

And then with a cold shock he remembered Betty Lester's message.

Palliser was looking at him curiously; his eyes, narrowed amid lines that were new and deep, showed a sudden faint hostility. He reiterated his declaration.

"Matter of fact, I've already taken my passage—on the *Oranmore.* She sails on Tuesday."

"No!"

Quite suddenly the thing had happened—the conventional surroundings lost their influence—and Betty's message was thrust aside in the fierce insistent thought of Clare. . . . The Knight leant forward, his hands gripping the table edge, his blue eyes blazing in a face from which all the boyish good-humour had gone.

"Palliser—you can't go. You can't—like that. There's Clare. . . ."

"Clare?"

The man repeated it in slow incredulity. Then he lowered his glance to an odd sober contemplation of the tablecloth. "I don't understand how you come to know—anything of Clare . . ." he said quietly.

"She spoke to me—on the night when the news came that you were missing." Hugh's voice was low and steady, but his hands were clenched. Deliberately he thrust aside the memory of Betty's little white face. . . . It was Clare—Clare who must come first.

And Palliser continued to sit there, grave and silent.

After a long pause he looked up, straightly and squarely, into the boyish face confronting him.

"I suppose I'm a selfish brute," he said, "but—well—there was only one thing in England that mattered to me—and when I lost that I—forgot everything else. . . ."

"*Forgot—Clare?*" Incredulity, furious indignation, and a third emotion defying analysis struggled together in the Knight's voice. And once again he cursed the place of their conversation. For he wanted to bring home to this quiet-voiced, steady-eyed man the sheer outrageousness of his words. . . . As it was, he half got to his feet, hands clenched and jaw set, then, conscious of attracting curious glances, sat down again. . . . Palliser, with an odd, faint smile, still looked at him.

"I told you I was a selfish brute, didn't I? I forgot that I owed it to Clare to tell her that I'd managed to do the thing for her—that it ought to be all right now. I forgot how much it meant to her—more than I'd realised, I think. . . . Well, it's back now—safe back in its shrine. . . ."

Utter bewilderment drove the fury from the Knight's countenance. He said lamely:

"But—I don't know what you're talking about——"

"The idol. I thought Clare must have told you. No?"

"Oh!" . . . Palliser looked at him thoughtfully. Then: "Her brother Derek

brought it home—just before the war—looted from a temple out there. One of those little squat Buddhas—but—well, it may have been only coincidence of course—one can't tell—anyhow, it brought bad luck with it. Derek was killed three days after he was sent across to France—and, as you know, Bill went down at Jutland. And Sylvia married that blackguard, and, Clare says, there were always other things—small happenings of sheer ill-luck. She was quite certain that it was the stolen idol—they all felt it, I think. Of course, they're Irish. . . . But . . . well, the upshot of it was that when Clare heard two years ago, where I was going, she asked me to take the idol back—if possible to restore it to the temple from which it had been looted—Derek had told them which—or at least to one of the same persuasion. Of course I agreed—after she'd asked me Clare was rather bothered about it—thought the bad luck might be transferred to me while I was taking it back. But——" His face twisted grimly. "Well, luck, good or bad, didn't matter much to me just then—after—after Betty——"

"Betty!" As understanding came in a lightning flash, the reproach of Betty Lester's undelivered message stung the Knight to quick shame. A moment ago he had been ready to hurt Palliser for forgetting Clare—yet he himself had deliberately forgotten Betty. . . . The rather whimsically bitter irony of it made him laugh involuntarily, then, as he saw Palliser's face darken and his hands clench, the Knight thrust out his own hand across the table.

"No—wait! There's a message—Betty Lester gave it me—for you. But I think—perhaps she'd rather give it to you herself——"

Long afterwards, he recalled the look that changed Randolph Palliser's countenance then. . . .

* * * * *

The Knight went back to the hotel where his half-packed cabin trunks awaited him.

And in the lounge he found—Clare. . . .

For a moment they stared at one another. Then Clare said, in a small breathless voice utterly unlike her own:

"Hugh—I had to come. Colonel Lester told me you were putting up here. . . . I didn't go to Kent . . . when I heard you were sailing to-morrow, I knew—I knew that you mustn't go—like that——"

"Clare!" He looked at her. "Clare! Palliser's back. I've just seen him. He's all right—and so's the idol." He paused. "But you didn't know that! You knew I meant to go for—you. You wanted me to—that night—I thought it was because you cared for Palliser——"

"Oh!" she said. She gave an odd little laugh. "Then that was why—— Listen, Hugh! When I heard that Randolph Palliser was lost I thought it was my fault—that it was because of the idol he'd taken back . . . the bad luck. It seemed so awful. And then you said you'd go. . . . At first I was only glad—and proud. And then I thought of the bad fortune—if it should come to you too—if you as well as Randolph Palliser—should not—come back——" She broke off, white faced.

"It would have been for you," he said simply.

And then, the lounge being deserted, he put his hands on her slim shoulders and looked down into her wide grey eyes.

"Randolph Palliser has gone to Betty," he said. "And you and I—you and I . . . you and I . . ."

She smiled.

"Are you going to say that again?"

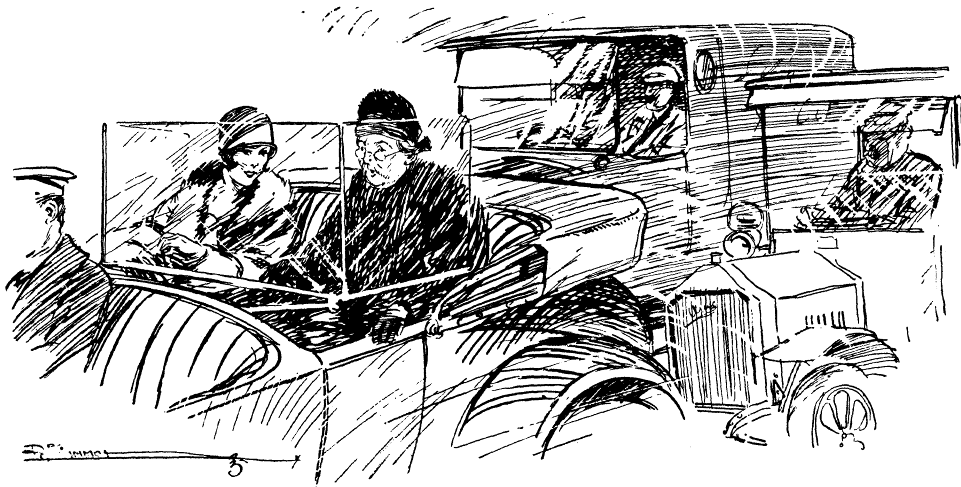
"A great many times," said the Knight.

# PAGEANT.

**THOUGH I go by with banners,**
**Oh, never envy me**
**These scarlet standards flying,**
**This purple that you see . . .**

**This air of marching triumph**
**Was all that I could save**
**Of loves that had an ending**
**And hopes that had a grave.**

**MARGARET WIDDEMER.**



ON THE SAFE SIDE.

"We feel quite safe with our new chauffeur, Auntie; he previously drove an ambulance and knows where every hospital is."

# THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### THE WRONG TARGET.

***By Richard W. Bond.***

THE train sidled into the little wayside station and drew up at the platform with a harsh grinding of brakes. Rising to her feet the short-haired, boyishly-dressed and extremely bored-looking damsel moved languidly to the door and disembarked, leaving the compartment in the sole occupation of two men, one a shabbily dressed young man of lean and hungry aspect, and the other a large gentleman with a vast area of waistcoat and an air of general prosperity.

As the train urged itself once more into motion the shabby young man leaned forward and, in that graceful manner peculiar to a talkative person addressing a complete stranger in a railway carriage in this type of story, essayed to engage the big man in conversation.

"Doubtless," said the young man pleasantly, waving a hand towards the door through which the bored damsel had just made her exit, "that is an example of what is known as the modern girl."

The prosperous-looking gentleman made no reply, but stared somewhat pointedly through the carriage window at a landscape remarkable for its lack of interest.

No whit perturbed, the young man gazed dreamily at the big man's expanse of waistcoat and continued:

"I frequently wonder," said he conversationally, "what are the thoughts of the modern girl as she reads the numerous articles in the Press criticising and castigating her. Do they peeve her, or does she merely chuckle and proceed impishly to further outrageousness?" He paused, and regarded the big man humorously. "What do you think about it, sir?"

The big man detached his gaze from the receding country-side and focused it upon the young man in much the same manner that a taxi-driver regards the exact legal fare reposing in his upturned palm.

"I prefer," said he shortly, "not to think about it."

The young man nodded approvingly.

"All right, sir," said he warmly. He nodded again, and a sudden earnestness came to his manner. "Most emphatically I share your opinion. We should not think about them. Nor should we write about them. We should instead ignore them completely. I am convinced that the cocktail-drinking, ultra-modern type of girl is kept alive largely by the hysterical articles written about her." He paused, elevating his eyebrows. "That, I presume, is your opinion, sir?"

The big man snorted.

"Young man," said he explosively, "I have no desire to exchange views with you either on the modern girl or on any other subject. I have, in fact, no wish to speak to you at all." He paused weightily, and glowered at the young man. "Your face, when it first obtruded on my line of vision, did not attract me," he concluded, with simple directness of speech, "and your idle chit-chat appeals to me still less."

Somewhat taken aback the shabby young

TO MAKE AMENDS.

MUSIC MISTRESS (to unpunctual pupil): Rosa, you're a quarter of an hour late.
PRECOCIOUS PUPIL: Never mind, I'll play twice as fast to make up!

A SPORTING OFFER.

VENDOR: 'Ere, 'ave 'em for fourpence?
CUSTOMER: No, too much.
VENDOR: Frippence, then?
CUSTOMER: No, thanks.
VENDOR: 'Ere, I'll look the other way while yer steals 'em!

man preserved a numbed silence for a space. Then he spoke again.

"Sir," he said, with chastened mien, "I feel I owe you an apology. I will be quite frank. When I sought to draw you into conversation I did not do it idly, but with a purpose. I am, I regret to say, a journalist. I earn occasional bread by writing pungent articles about the modern girl, and also snappy humorous sketches dealing with encounters on railway journeys and the like. It was, I fear, unpardonable of me, but I spoke to you simply in the hope of obtaining from you some material which I might write up for possible publication." He shrugged his shoulders apologetically. "I repeat, sir, I am sorry."

As the young man finished speaking the train rumbled into a station and pulled up. The big man stamped to the door, stepped out on to the platform, and then thrust his head in at the window. Upon his face was a look of such demoniacal ferocity that the young man shuddered involuntarily and closed his eyes.

"My name," snarled the big man, "may possibly be known to you. I am Simon Power, editor of *Current Topics*."

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

SCHOOLMASTER: What is your name, my boy?
NEW BOY: 'Erbert 'Iggins.
SCHOOLMASTER: Can't you say "sir"?
NEW BOY: Sir 'Erbert 'Iggins!

### A KNOWING WATCH.

***By D. Maclaren.***

MAXWELL is one of those fellows who knows almost everything. He can tell you the exact number of minutes which should elapse between your last meal of the day and your time of going to bed. If it is a cold on the chest, he knows why your doctor prescribed mustard instead of linseed; and he will tell you why mustard should have been prescribed. And so on. Maxwell, I know, takes in all the papers and magazines, but I think he confines his reading to the little paragraphs in odd corners of the household pages.

Once a year I meet Maxwell at our conference. It is a two-day affair, and on the one evening we are thrown together I am generally the victim of one of Maxwell's homilies. This year he chose the subject of watches—or watch-winding, rather. He began about midnight, just as I was getting ready for bed. All the evening, wonderingly, I had nursed a hope that I was getting off. But it was not to be; and it was my own fault, really. I should have been satisfied with hotel time. Instead, I looked at my watch, at a moment when Maxwell was obviously gasping for a subject. I looked at my watch and put it back in my pocket. Maxwell drew out his watch, and began to wind it, leisurely.

"When do you wind yours?" he demanded.

"In the morning."

"Why in the morning?"

"Dunno—habit, I suppose."

"It's wrong, quite wrong."

There was no escape, and I sat down again. Surely the man couldn't have a great deal to say about the winding of a watch.

"Most people," began Maxwell, rhetorically, "hold the opinion that a watch should be wound in the morning."

"But they wind them at night," I muttered.

LOOK-OUT FACILITIES.

SMITH (returning home with the office umbrella): Now, my dear madam, why don't you look where you're going!

"Exactly. They do the right thing, through laziness or carelessness, and in spite of their beliefs."

He finished winding his watch, and put it back in his pocket with a gesture of satisfaction.

"These people," he continued, "have what they consider good grounds for winding in the morning. They say, in effect, that during the night the springs contract and are liable to break if tightly wound."

"The theory seems O.K.," I remarked.

"It is wrong, quite wrong. Mind you, they are right about contraction due to the cooler night air. They are right up to a point. They visualise contraction as reducing the length

of the fine wire of the spring, thus causing it to snap suddenly. They fail to appreciate the compensatory contraction in the diameter of the wire. Thus . . ."

At this point the porter came to say I was wanted on the telephone. I didn't believe for a moment that the porter had it correct, but it was a most welcome call, and I said good night hurriedly to Maxwell. The call wasn't mine, of course.

Unfortunately for Maxwell's self-esteem, I had need of a match in the morning. I must have my early cigarette, and I said so to Maxwell in response to his gruff invitation to enter. He was still abed.

"Hullo," I said suspiciously, "your watch has stopped."

"Eh!"

I picked the thing up from the table and shook it. Something fluttered and expired with a sigh.

"Your spring's gone," said I.

THERE is a threatened shortage of the world's quinine supply. We hope this news will be kept from the influenza microbe.

REPORTS from the Arctic regions state that they have had an English summer there this year. So that's where it went to.

**THE DANCING BREAKFAST.**

Breakfast Dansants at restaurants are now announced.

**We knew the dinner dansant, the waltzing afternoon,**
**The Terpsichorean tea-time, the dancing honeymoon;**
**Fox-trotting during supper prevents us feeling flat,**
**And, up till now, at breakfast is the only time we've sat.**

**But now there's news exciting for every dancing crank.**
**For soon they'll make arrangements for filling in this blank;**
**The nearly non-stop whirling will reach another stage,**
**And dizzy dancing breakfasts will shortly be the rage.**

**So with the morning rasher we'll exercise our legs,**
**And step it round the table while scrambling scrambled eggs.**
**That feeling bored will vanish when the saxophone is played,**
**And we'll mix our gay gyrations with the toast and marmalade.**

**Though this meets a long-felt yearning, there's occasion for regret**
**That a golden opportunity remains neglected yet:**
**For our tireless super-dancers when they go to bed will weep**
**Because they can't invent a plan for dancing in their sleep.**

*R. H. Roberts.*

SOME PEOPLE ARE NEVER SATISFIED.

"'Ere, this shilling don't ring very well."
"Wot do yer expect for a bob, a peal of bells?"

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*CAUTION.—Beware of unprincipled attempts to substitute worthless preparations.*

**TO BE SOLD.**

***By Lambert Jeffries.***

"AND so," said the house agent, "you wish to buy a house."

"You see," I explained, "my landlord is trying to sell the so-called house I am renting at present.

"And," I added, "I am leaving a wreath behind for whoever buys it."

"You find it unsatisfactory?" asked the agent.

I assented. "The rooms," I informed him, "would be fairly habitable if you could stand up without knocking your head, and turn round without grazing your shoulders. The bathroom is serviceable if you perform your ablutions with your head out of the window and your legs out of the door, while the top portion of the building, which I presume was originally intended as a roof, now acts as a filter.

"As for the garden, apart from five blades of grass sticking from the mud, there is nothing of interest but two gnarled and ancient tree-trunks. These interesting old specimens date back to a very early period in history, and were at one time known as apple trees."

The agent smiled. "You will be glad to hear we have nothing of that sort on our books. This," he went on, picking up a sheet of paper, "is the kind of place which we negotiate. I think it would just suit you."

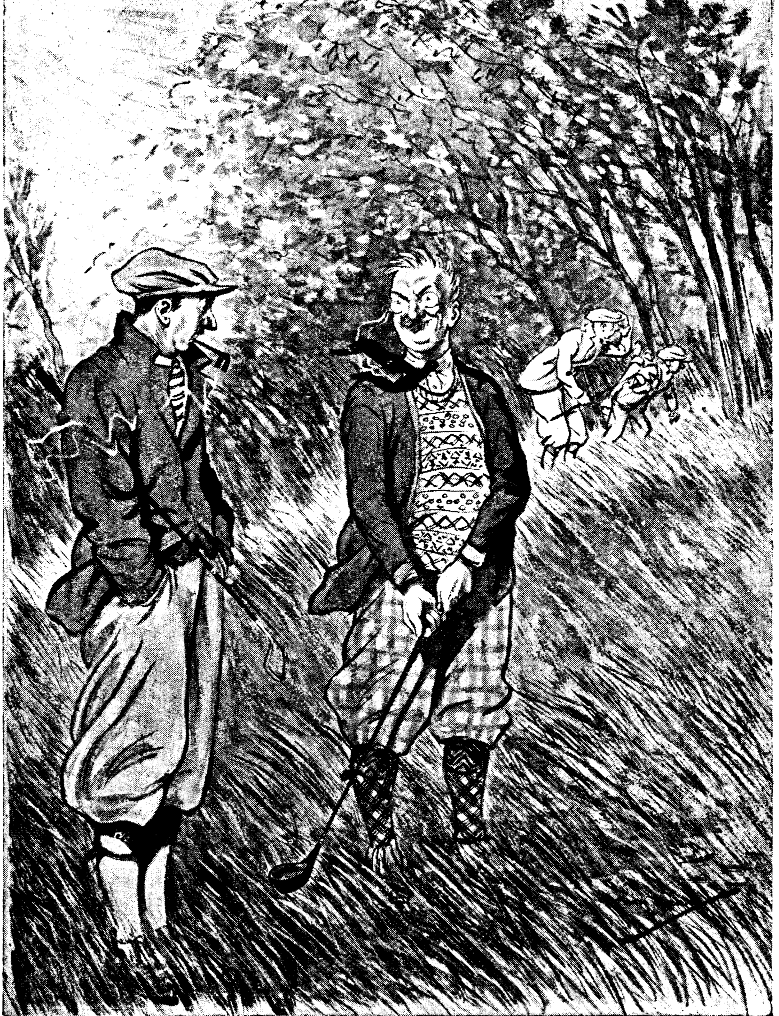
He adjusted his spectacles.

"This highly desirable residence is built on what was once a large private garden, thus it carries with it some delightful ground at the back, with lawn, orchard, etc., and magnificent outlook."

"Delightful!" I murmured.

"There are four bedrooms and two receptions, a cosy bathroom, and every possible convenience. The keynote of the rooms is comfort—none of those large draughty affairs which are too often found. Small but cosy. That is the word which best describes them—cosy."

"Just what I want," I said excitedly.



TO GET A MOVE ON.

CHATTY VISITOR (on very rough day, after seventeenth swipe): I like this part of the country, y'know. In fact, I'm thinking of settling down here.

IMPATIENT OPPONENT: But there's far more shelter at the next hole!

"I don't mind admitting frankly," said the agent, peering over his spectacles, "that the present tenants are most unwilling to leave, they are so charmed with the place. But"—he smiled confidently—"I will undertake to get them out whenever you require."

I grasped his hand warmly. "A thousand thanks!" I cried. "And what is the address?"

# BEFORE THE MIRROR.

Every woman should take pride in her personal appearance. If it is not possible to be beautiful in the fullest sense of the word, at least you can have the attractiveness of a pleasant expression, glossy, well-kept hair, eyes shaded by long lashes, well-marked eyebrows and a clear, natural complexion. My first advice is to avoid most manufactured "beauty preparations." Use simple, pure, natural ingredients. Use these regularly and do not make constant changes and experiments. The various things I use and advise can be bought in original packages from any reliable chemist. If they are not in stock he can at once procure them from his wholesaler if you insist.

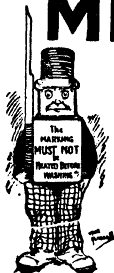
**Wrinkles, and How to Remove Them.**—Worry, late hours, or the passing of old Father Time, may cause those ugly little lines which so detract from the freshness and charm of a woman's face; but the cure is always the same. Feed the tissues beneath the skin, and massage them with a reliable skin food, which, while nourishing the fatty tissues, will not coarsen the skin, nor grow hairs upon the face, as so many inferior creams do. To remove the wrinkles, bathe the face with hot water, wipe it dry, then, while it is still warm, smear a little mercolized wax over the whole face, carrying it well down on the neck, and, with the tips of the fingers, rub it gently into the pores, working in an upward and outward direction. Wipe off any superflous wax, leaving a little on the skin all night. In the morning, wash off with warm water and Pilenta soap. The use of the wax not only feeds the skin, but removes the dead, outer cuticle, giving the fresh, young skin beneath an opportunity to breathe and show itself.

**Beautiful Hair—How to Shampoo.**—Whether the hair is luxuriant and glossy, or thin and lanky, depends very largely upon the care bestowed upon it. To keep the hair in good condition, it should be shampooed once in every two or three weeks. Before shampooing, massage a little pure olive or almond oil into the scalp, then mix one teaspoonful of stallax granules in a cup of hot water, fill a basin with warm water, into which the ends of the hair can fall, and shampoo the stallax mixture into the scalp in the usual way. Rinse, and dry by fanning with a palm fan, or in the open air, if the weather permits. Should the hair be naturally very greasy, the oil massage should be omitted. Stallax can be bought at any chemist's in quarter-pound sealed packages; it keeps indefinitely, and one package contains sufficient for twenty-five or thirty shampoos.

**A Greasy Skin and Blackheads.**—Blackheads are absolutely fatal to beauty, for they give a coarse, dirty look to the face which no cosmetics can ever hide. The way to remove blackheads quickly and effectively has only recently been discovered. For many years, those who suffered in this way were restricted in their diet, denied sweets, and had to suffer other privations. Modern science has, however, provided a simple, effective, and quick remedy. Dissolve one stymol tablet in a glass of hot water, and when the effervescence has subsided, dip a small, soft, sponge into the liquid, and bathe the face. Leave for a few minutes, then dry with a towel, and the blackheads will come off. For a greasy skin, bathe the face three times a week with stymol, and spray with cold water every morning, using a vulcanite throat spray.

**The Hair—To Increase the Growth.**—To arrest an undue falling of the hair and increase the growth, scalp massage and the application of a good tonic is absolutely necessary. Part the hair in the centre, and starting at the forehead, massage for at least ten minutes. Then apply a tonic. A simple and inexpensive one can be made up at home by mixing one ounce of boranium (which can be bought at the chemist's) with a quarter of a pint of bay rum. Add the boranium to the bay rum, allow to stand for half-an-hour, then strain, and add sufficient water to make half a pint. Dab amongst the roots of the hair with a soft sponge.


# MELANYL

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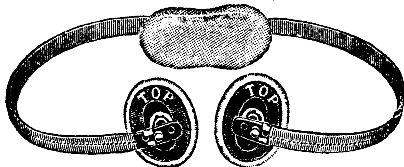


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"The address," said the agent, "is The Nest, 20, Briar Gardens."

I reached for my hat. "Thank you," I said, "but—er—I don't think I'll trouble you. You see, 20, Briar Gardens, happens to be where I am living now."

### INTENSITY.

***By Paul Feakes.***

THE night was raw. Dark, cold, ominous. As they turned the corner the sleet, needle-sharp, slanted at the silent couple like a volley of arrows.

Undaunted, they struggled on, the little wisp of a woman clutching her coat more tightly about the throat and snuggling a fraction nearer to the great big giant of a man, her man, by her side.

This street meant home, and a longing to see the old familiar house, the old familiar rooms, the old familiar things welled up from their hearts. Their eyes were tired of a million sights. Egypt, India, the States, from China to Peru. Breathless adventure hand in hand with love and laughter, life and . . . death. They had had their fill of it all. And now they hungered for home. . . .

He flung open the door and stepped back with the rough courtesy of the open spaces to allow her to enter first.

They passed into the kitchen and he lit the gas—the match a puny thing in the cup of his huge hands. Without a word they took off their coats and hats and he shook them.

Everything was just as they had left it. She picked up the cocoa tin, a query twinkling in her eyes. He nodded a brusque assent.

As she prepared the beverage he stood—legs astride on the rug before the empty fireplace, watching her, his hands outstretched fully six inches from each side of his colossal frame. She seemed to him more frail, more lovable, tinier than ever. . . .

He took the cup of steaming cocoa which she handed to him and drank it in one gulp. She picked up her cup and did likewise.

He took down a candlestick, lit the candle and turned out the gas.

They went upstairs to the bedroom, undressed, got into bed, and went to sleep, neither having spoken a single word to the other.

Still, it's always like that every week when they come home from the pictures.

OLD LADY (who has forgotten the tip): Shall I have to change, porter?

PORTER: Not if you've got any loose silver about you, mum.

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY.

MOTHER: Are there any eggs there, Peter?

PETER: No, Mummy, only the ones the hens use as a pattern!

HUSBAND: My dear, how tough this pastry is!

WIFE (who has been studying economy): Never mind; it will last twice as long.

A CENTENARIAN says: "It is the roast beef has made England what it is." Cynics regard this statement as an argument for vegetarianism.

# THE MARCH WINDSOR

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*Lagos, Nigeria.*

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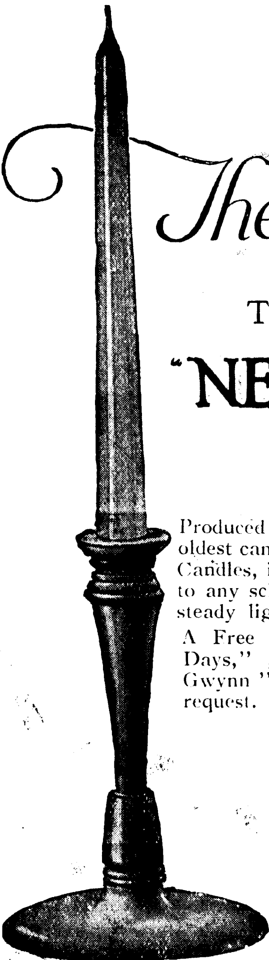
(Signed) E. B. H.



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*All Chemists and Stores.*

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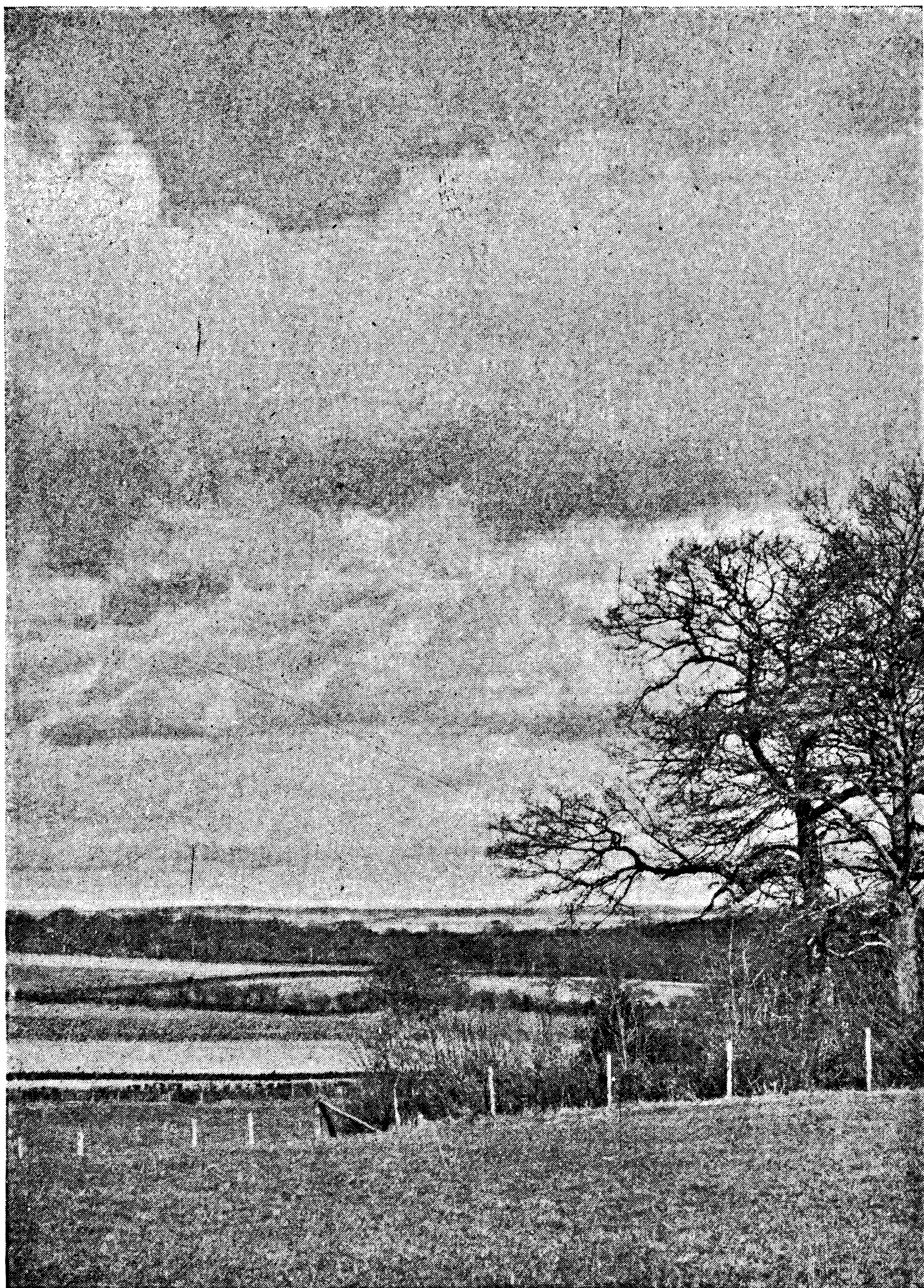
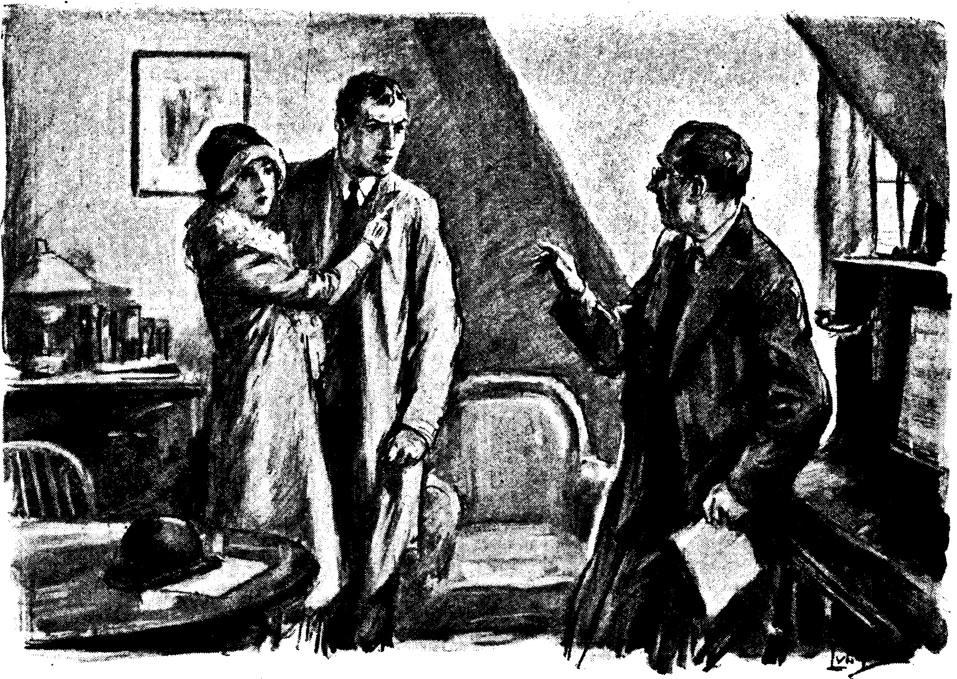


WHEN MARCH WINDS BLOW.

A Photographic Study by Cecil B. Waterlow.



No good pitchin' into me, sir,' said the bailiff."

# COMPOSED BY THE CONDUCTOR

## By E. TEMPLE THURSTON

ILLUSTRATED BY WILMOT LUNT

THEY were getting sick of it. There were a lot of people who got sick of hunting for flats just at about that time. There was no telling what had happened. The population had been denuded of nearly a million lives. Yet when those young men who returned came back, war-sick, holding one thought, the determination to make a home with the girl they had left behind them, there were no homes to be had. Where had they gone to? There had seemed room enough for everybody before. Had they tumbled down? London did not look any different. It was not all debris of bricks and mortar.

These two—I knew them—were getting sick of it. If they found a flat to let—some upper story a landlord had cleared of lumber—it was filled with cheap furniture for which an exorbitant price in addition to a premium was being asked. He had no money for that sort of trash. What he had saved and his blood money was a round sum, wholly incapable of meeting those avaricious demands. Moreover, they wanted to spend it themselves; go to the shops in Tottenham Court Road, feel like millionaires for the whole of one glorious day, spend a hundred pounds in a few hours. They wanted to take a new thing out of the shop and make it theirs. The wholesome fever of possession was in their blood.

"I'm not going to buy their second-hand muck," said he. I could quite understand. So could she. He resented it. When he said, "It's like sleeping in an hotel bed when

you know they haven't changed the sheets after the last occupant," I knew what he meant. So did she. Her cheeks went red too. She was a mouse of a thing that had crept into the pocket of his heart those black years of the war. They were going to be as happy as a couple of children. But where were they going to get a home they could furnish with their own belongings and make it a place you could call a home ?

One day I saw a "To Let" board sticking out of a window of an upper story in Old Compton Street. I sent them there. It was within a week of their being married. They were not going to postpone that. They were in fact making arrangements to go into furnished rooms when I sent them along to Old Compton Street.

The next day I received a scribbled note with the stamp awry and upside down on the envelope. It might have been written in shorthand. I deciphered it with difficulty.

"Got it at last. Come and lunch with us to-morrow."

He mentioned the name of one of those Italian restaurants. I went there. They were sitting over innumerable dishes of *hors d'œuvres*, waiting for my arrival and talking nineteen to the dozen like a couple of sparrows under the eaves on a first warm spring day.

"If you have those curtains in the front room, you can't have that chair in there as well."

That kind of talk it was. Despite all his injunctions that they must wait till I came, he had eaten nearly all the olives. There were half a dozen stones on his plate. She had not touched a thing. She was not even making any direct suggestions about the furnishing. He was doing all that. But I gathered before lunch was over that she was getting everything just as she wanted it.

They took me up to the four empty rooms on the top floor after lunch was over. It looked rather forbidding to me, but of course I didn't say so. The ceilings in three of the rooms were sloping with the line of the roof. They had that damp, cheerless look which all empty habitations present to the casual eye. Their eyes were not casual. That was the difference. On the bare deal floors they saw those carpets they had bought in the Tottenham Court Road that morning. On the walls they saw pictures they knew. The grates were not empty to them. They saw fires burning there and themselves sitting beside them in the comfortable chairs they had just purchased.

I thought the approach of the uncarpeted stairs was a bit dingy. I did make a remark about that. It was not, I felt, a criticism of anything that actually would belong to them. They were shared by other tenants in the house.

He swept the criticism away with a laugh and a wave of the hand. He adopted the attitude I thought he might.

"They're not our stairs," he said. "What's it matter that there's no carpet to me when I come back after the theatre! I just come up here and open that door and she's sitting over there in an arm-chair by the fire, and there's a little bit of supper on the table, and if there'd been velvet pile on the stairs, I should have forgotten all about it. Approach!" There was an enthusiasm of scorn in his voice. "What's it matter how you get to a place so long as it's worth getting to when you're there!"

I accepted all this enthusiasm as right and proper, having regard to his youth, his circumstances and his temperament. He was a musician—a violinist. I had known him as a boy. He had been full of promise. Then the war came. It seemed to have bludgeoned all the promise out of him, as it did out of thousands. What he suffered in those trenches out on the Western Front was only to be guessed at. He had come back, still with his temperament, but most of his promise gone. She, I felt, with her quiet ways and her tender understanding of his moods and fancies, was going to nurse his soul back to life again.

Being married like this was the best thing that could have happened to him. When I came to think of it, after I had left them, making for Tottenham Court Road again, I realised what those four little rooms under the roof must have meant to him; how little the uncarpeted stairs mattered after the mud-submerged boards in the trenches between one dug-out and another.

The whole of his mind was an open wound. It twitched. It quivered to the slightest friction of circumstance. Life with her there, in that attic, furnished with their own possessions, was going to close that wound for him. It was going to heal him again into promise.

He had a job as first violinist in one of the theatre orchestras. It was nothing much, but it paid his way. Best of all, it gave him leisure for composition, which was where his promise had been. He had done nothing since he left the army. I asked her about this. I was a little apprehensive of asking

him. The men who came back were inclined to be touchy about what they were doing with their lives. So many of them had nothing to do. She told me he had not written a note.

"But he'll begin again," she said with confidence. "I shall leave him up there when I go out to do the shopping. We've hired a piano. He likes to feel he's in an attic. The 'Marseillaise' was written in an attic, wasn't it? When I've done the shopping I shan't come back at once. He'll expect me to—but I shan't. One day he'll forget I've gone. Then he'll begin."

I could see her, creeping in and out of the pocket of his life—just like a mouse. There when he wanted her—gone away into the wainscoting of the world outside when he needed none but himself, his own courage, his own will to heal his wound.

I was just able to see them married before I went abroad for a long trip. It took place in what I once called "The Mouse Trap"—a suitable name for her. The Mouse Trap is the Registry Office in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. I was a witness, supported by their charlady. Their wedding breakfast was at the Hôtel d'Italie in Old Compton Street. He ate a prodigious number of olives that day.

After the meal, I saw them off on their honeymoon. They went in a taxi all the way to Kew Gardens. I think they returned by train. Anyhow, he was due in the theatre that evening sharp at eight o'clock.

They showed me their little home on the top floor before they went. She had certainly done wonders with those four bare rooms. He took the credit for a great deal of it, not ungraciously, not without affectionate concessions to her handiwork, but in that way that all men take credit by reason of the fact that they have said, "I want a home." And there it is.

I went away filled with hope. When I returned I was certain I should find him at his creative work again. It was heartbreaking to see him slogging at his violin, playing the music that gives people the sense of being amused as they scramble into their seats and provides them with an incentive to raise their voices in conversation when they have reached them. But my hopes were far from realised. The battle was not over for him when they secured that upper story in Old Compton Street. Armistice Day was not the end of the struggle for many beside him. The struggle was just beginning. All that happened, I heard afterwards from her.

They had not been in occupation of their little flat for more than a month when there was a strike of musicians all through the theatres. I don't know what guild or union there is amongst musicians. Neither did she. She could only tell me that he had to belong and that when the strike came he had to go with the rest of them.

"Men are funny," she said. "Once they get together they seem to think quite differently from what they do when they're at home. He used to go to meetings of the union swearing that if they brought it to a strike he'd have nothing to do with it.

"'I've got my home,' he said, 'and I'm jolly well going to keep it. I haven't had one for four years.'

"But when it came to taking a vote, he voted for it. He told me so."

"'You voted for it!' I said.

"'Yes,' he said—'I can't explain. You wouldn't understand.'"

She had a wry smile as she looked up at me.

"When will men leave off playing games of dignity?" she asked, "or don't we really understand anything about it and are they fighting for us all the time?"

"I expect they'll always fight," said I. "I don't know how long they'll want to go on wearing uniforms to die in."

Whatever his reason, he came out of his job. And when the strike was settled, he found it was no longer vacant. The management talked about cutting down expenses. He had to pay the penalty. He dragged his feet up the uncarpeted stairs that day to the top floor in Old Compton Street and told her what had happened. I can guess the courage she lent him. She spoke so generously of the courage he had in himself.

They had nothing saved. What two young married people could have foreseen so early a catastrophe as this? All their money had disappeared by magic in the Tottenham Court Road. They were to begin their savings as soon as they settled down. It had all been cut and dried. They could save ten shillings a week. What could prevent it? He was earning five pounds. Then this beast of the apocalypse, this strike that had leapt upon them out of the darkness.

He entered his name on the books of all the agencies he could think of. He called at their offices every day. A little orchestration work came his way. They lived from

hand to mouth. She discovered how cheaply you can buy food if you know the Italian shops to go to in Old Compton Street. He did some composition—songs. They wrote the words together with the help of a rhyming dictionary that cost three-and-six. Necessity is not wanting in inspiration. They were all accepted by one of the Berners Street publishers, but no money was paid in advance. He had to wait for publication.

"How long?"

"Oh—two or three months. It's not the best time just now."

The first rent-day came round. He had paid one quarter in advance. The next was due. He tried to hide the landlord's letter from her. She saw him take it from the breakfast-table and slip it in his pocket.

She was on her knees by the stove, cooking the breakfast. It was as though the bottom of the frying-pan were a mirror and she had seen him in that, for without looking up or apparently having observed his movement, she said:

"Rent?"

"'Your place is over there with the fiddlers. . . . Get back to your orchestra.'"

There is no escape when the mind has eyes and the thump of a heart interprets their vision.

"That's what it is," said he, and concealment being no longer possible, he took the envelope out of his pocket.

Twenty-five pounds! It was laughable. There was sevenpence-halfpenny on her mirror in the bedroom. He had eight-and-fourpence in his pocket. Two guineas were due to him for orchestration. He hoped to get it before the end of the week. Twenty-five pounds! He did laugh.

"The rent of four rooms like this before the war," he said, "was somewhere about fifty or sixty pounds a year."

He got up and went to the piano and began composing a nursery tune. She thought it was sheer courage. She smiled at the back of his head. Then he sang:

"Hark! hark! the dogs do bark,
The heroes are hunting for flats—
Some in rags and some in jags
And some in nice red hats."

Then a tear scuttled down her cheek and fell into the frying-pan and sizzled.

A fortnight followed, evading the landlord's demands. But he was suspicious of his new tenants and he could get that rent easily from anyone. Rents were going up rather than going down. He was no profiteer. He had asked no premium. He had not even forced them to buy any furniture. They would have to pay or go. A musician wasn't good enough. Likely to get a job any minute? Yes—that was all very well, but music was just an amusement. Amusing people was no certain way of making a living. He'd sooner have a man with a straightforward trade. Been out at the front the best years of his life? What—in one of those regimental bands? Fighting. Well—he'd been fighting too. They were all in the same boat. Some one to look after his business, that was the only difference. Music wasn't a business. You couldn't look after that. More fool him for choosing it for his job. Not meaning he was a fool in the derogatory sense. Much better invest a little bit of money in barrel-organs and let 'em out to those as wanted

"There were people standing up now to get a better view."

to make a bit of music for their living. Now that was a business he could have left some one to look after while he was away. Anyhow—that was all he'd got to say about it. He wasn't going to have no arrears running up. Either they must pay, or they must give value for money, or they must go.

They came back one morning from visiting the agents and found a bailiff taking an inventory of the furniture.

He was prepared to throw the man down those four flights of uncarpeted stairs. She caught hold of his arm and held him close to her.

"No good pitchin' into me, sir," said the bailiff—"first place, I'm not a fightin' man, because of me feet." He lifted one up and showed it—"Flat," he said. "If I treads on a beetle anywheres between me toe and me heel—squash! Anywheres. Second place, I'm just acting according to instructions. Portable valuables first. Find out if pianner is hired—if not hired, pianner last. I'd be much obliged, sir, if you'd tell me whether the pianner is your property."

"Hired."

"Thank you, sir—I don't mind tellin' you that's a relief. Pianners are awkward things."

There was no fighting against this. They sat together watching him make his inventory. Everything he wrote down in his book was as a name called out for the tumbril. He was a Marat condemning the aristocracy of their possessions. One by one they would be taken away to the guillotine of the auctioneer's hammer. The reign of terror—the terror of poverty—had begun on that fourth floor of the house in Old Compton Street.

Five things had gone when the terror was broken. He came back from the agent's one morning, calling to her all the way up the four flights of stairs. They had made an appointment for him that afternoon to see a restaurant proprietor who had opened new premises in the West End. He wanted a conductor for his orchestra who could play the violin effectively. The agents had recommended him.

She went with him to the agent's offices. She waited down in the street while he went upstairs. An instinct for the part had made him put on a loose black tie. He wore a black trilby hat. He looked an artist.

The restaurant proprietor was distinctly impressed.

"My idea," he said, "is to get something a bit Bohemian. I want a man who can play, but first and foremost I want a man who looks as if he could play, if you follow me what I mean."

He followed the proprietor closely in all that he meant.

"I should have liked your hair a bit longer," the proprietor continued—"artistic touch, you know—means a good deal with women."

He ventured the information that his hair grew.

"Yes—yes—I know that, but we open next week and I want to start well. Now if you looked without your hat what you do with it, if you follow me what I mean, that 'ud be something like."

"Why shouldn't I wear my hat," he suggested. "Bohemian. Men don't trouble to take their hats off in the presence of women in Bohemia."

"That's an idea," said the proprietor. "Put your hat on." When it was on, he repeated, "That's an idea"—and stood back visualising the effect of music on his clients. "You see, it's like this," he went on. "I've studied the business. I was head waiter in one of the largest restaurants in the West End for six years. I know what I'm talking about. It's the women that make a place popular. 'Where would you like to go?' 'Oh, So-and-so's.' That's what it is ten times out of a dozen. The woman decides. And it's not the food she wants so much as the excitement. Sometimes it's the excitement of seeing well-known people—actors and actresses, if you follow me what I mean. Women always get excited when they see an artiste. Well—I want a conductor who's going to make a splash, make a reputation for himself, be a success with the women, if you——"

"I do," said he. "You don't really want a musician at all. You want an actor who can play the violin."

He thought he had been sarcastic and found the proprietor was delighted with the suggestion.

"Mind you, I want to hear you play a bit of something," he said.

They sent for the accompanist whom the agent kept for these occasions in his office. He put on his hat again and played "La Cygne" by Saint-Saëns, walking up and down the room as he played, swaggering with ease as though effort were the last thing about it. It was what he had said, an actor's performance.

The proprietor was delighted.

"Don't play stuff that's too high class,"

he said. " But you've got the hang of it. The hat's a great idea, and that tie—that tie's good. The women'll fall for that all right. At least, that's my opinion. We can't tell, you know. I can't give you a definite engagement till we see how you go. A month—that's all. Six quid a week. End of a month I'll let you know what I think about it. If I keep you on then, I'll give you a year's engagement. A job like this is bound to be somewhat of a spec, if you follow me what I mean."

She was waiting for him out in the street when he came down. From the pavement below she had stood listening to his audition, thinking, " How artificially he's playing—what's the matter with him. He'll never get it if he plays like that. He's nervous," she told herself. Her heart ached for him. She knew he would never get the appointment—conductor of an orchestra—playing like that. It was second rate. He was not second rate. When he played alone up in their attic, he was wonderful. She was preparing in her mind the gentle and consoling things she would say to him, when she heard quick confident steps on the pavement behind her and felt his hand grip fast and strong on her arm.

" Don't you ever talk to me about the futility of the war," said he. " The world's been made a fit place for actors to dwell in, all right—all right."

Six pounds a week for a month at least. They decided to a penny how much they could save towards the next rent out of that twenty-four pounds. It would be surprising to learn how much it was. But the best aspect of it was not good enough. How could he make it a success so that the engagement was prolonged for a year ?

" If you went to dine at a restaurant," he said, " and the conductor of the orchestra took your fancy, how would you show that you'd appreciated his efforts ? "

" Tap my spoon on my coffee-cup."

" Supposing you hadn't got as far as coffee ? "

" Clap my hands, I expect—oh !—and I know—send the head waiter to ask him to play a special piece."

" Yes—but that all suggests he's a decent musician and you like his music. Supposing you liked him better than his fiddle ? "

" Have you got an idea ? " she asked sharply.

" Yes."

" Wonder if it's the same as mine."

By an instinct he knew it was. With the urgent sympathy that is warmed into life by need, they had seen the same possibility at the same moment.

She was to be his success. In the one swell evening dress she had she was to go and dine at the restaurant and succumb to his attractions as a conductor. He was to respond. She was to send over the waiter asking for a special piece by the orchestra. With a bow to her, he was to put up the " By Request " card. Perhaps while they were playing it, he might walk away from the band in the direction of her table. It should be obvious to every one dining there that this Bohemian creature in the black trilby hat had made a *succès du cœur*.

But who could take her to dine ? Some one who knew nothing about it. They could take no risks. No one could be trusted.

" If you have a secret," said he, " tell it to your wife and for ever hold your peace."

She hunted through her memory of men she had known before they met ; men who had come and gone out of her life in that transient way that happens with ships and people. At last she thought of one, a young man who sold motor-cars in Piccadilly. He was an extremely genteel young man. He had the air of mixing with the best people, as indeed he did. He dressed like a man who owned a Rolls-Royce but was too tired to use it. On two or three occasions he had taken her out to *thé dansants*. Once he had given her dinner. With tact and guile he might be persuaded to do that again.

She walked up and down past the sumptuous premises in Piccadilly. It seemed as if that was no good. She only saw him in plate-glass distances, explaining to expensive ladies and gentlemen why they should have expensive cars. At last she went in, at a moment when the show-rooms were empty. She had a friend who was thinking of buying a car. He was delighted to see her.

Married, was she ? Well, fancy that ! Did she like it ? Good fun being married—while it lasted. Ha ! Ha ! Didn't always last, did it ? Well, how about this car ?

Loathsome young man !

However, he invited her to dinner. Where would she like to go ? Just what the proprietor had said, and quite promptly she replied, " So-and-so's."

" I hear there's an excellent orchestra there," she told him. It was as well he should be prepared.

She put on her one swell dress and met

him in the vestibule. Where would she like to sit ? Table for two. Attention was showered upon them. Head waiters nearly always know the class of customer they are dealing with—nearly always.

She chose a table conveniently near the orchestra.

" If there is good music," she explained, " I don't want to hear it through a lot of knives and forks."

" Music hath charms," said he, " to soothe the married breast."

Loathsome young man!

She applauded the first item, timidly, tentatively—a young woman evidently fond of music and not wanting to draw too much attention to herself. He supported her with loud applause of his own—a young man evidently fond of himself and having no reason that he could see for concealing it.

It all went smoothly as they had rehearsed it on the fourth floor in Old Compton Street. As her appreciation became more definite and both he and she saw the attention she was attracting to herself, the young man became less generous in his applause. After a few items he became sulky and would not applaud at all. A young man evidently jealous of that engaging conductor with the black trilby hat and having no sense of dignity to conceal it.

After her special request by the waiter and the prompt response on the part of the orchestra, the young man fell into gloom. He listened to the performance as though this music while one was eating was a bore. Whenever she spoke to him, which she did frequently and very charmingly, he scarcely paid any attention. It was plain to the whole room that the young man in the faultless evening dress was ruffled. Accustomed to studying the faces of his clients when he informed them of the price of an expensive car, he was not blind to the fact that the expression of some of the faces about him was that of amusement. He was becoming a laughing-stock. His dignity was at stake.

" The conductors of some of these orchestras nowadays have confounded cheek," said he—and said it loud enough to be heard at the next table. " Did you see that fellow smile at you while he was playing ? "

Had he really smiled ? She hadn't noticed that. He was very obliging and a beautiful violinist.

" It's you women who encourage these chaps," said he. " They get swollen heads and then they think they can smile at any woman they take a fancy to."

" You don't think he's taken a fancy to me, do you ? " she asked.

" Rot ! " said the young man. " Look at him ! "

With his eyes playing about her and his cheek laid close to his instrument, as though it were her cheek he caressed, he was moving away from the orchestra, drawing nearer to their table.

" If he comes over to this table or says anything to you," said the young man, " I shall tell him off. I don't bring a lady out to dinner to be made eyes at by the orchestra conductor. Infernal cheek ! "

His dignity was at stake. He was taking it in that way. She had not calculated this. Glancing across the tables, she could see that other people were aware of it. The impression that the general feeling was by no means with the young man did not help matters. He was spoiling for a row. Without giving the show away, she did her utmost with disinterested looks to keep the conductor from coming to their table. Not a bit of good. He was spurred with the success of it now. He felt the room was with him. If a girl was fond of music, why shouldn't she show it and wasn't he there to please the customers ? The young man had lost his sense of humour. He was making a fool of himself. There was no insult in playing what was asked of him and playing for the person who had asked it.

He saw she would not look at him now, but read no meaning from that. Over towards their table he came, and on the last notes of the piece he stood bowing to her beside it. The whole company was delighted. There was applause on every side, not a little of which was intended to aggravate the young man. It succeeded. His lips were pressed hard.

When the conductor had acknowledged the applause, he turned to her.

" I have made a little composition," he said, " on one of the nursery rhymes— 'Hark ! hark ! the dogs do bark.' Would madame like me to play it ? "

Before she could answer, the young man was up on his feet with his serviette in his hand.

" You've got infernal impudence ! " he exclaimed, " to talk to a lady who is no acquaintance of yours. Your place is over there with the fiddlers. You've no place to come fiddlin' here ! "

His taste for a witticism was unfortunate.

Some one laughed. He felt he was not sufficiently being recognised as the man he believed himself to be.

"Get back to your orchestra," he shouted.

There were people standing up now to get a better view. Waiters were running through swing doors for the management.

To the delight of every one the conductor preserved a calm exterior and a sense of humour which any day is better than wit.

He inclined his head to the young man, and he said:

"I'm sorry if I've offended you. Madame made a request for this piece of music. I regret it should have annoyed you for me to comply with it."

That was an apology. If the young man had been annoyed, he had been amply propitiated. That was what the public felt. Unfortunately the young man knew they felt it that way, and it did not harmonise with his own opinion about himself. He had yet to show them he was not one to be trifled with. Some men feel like that on these occasions.

"Well, having complied with it," he said, "you needn't stand there. You can get back on to your organ."

Which was a very foolish remark and not witty at all, because it appeared years ago in the pantomimes, and it is a generally recognised fact that jokes wear thin garments.

However, this was not all. As the conductor stood there in his black trilby hat—and he was a nice-looking conductor with a sense of humour in his eye—the young man flicked him across the face with his serviette.

The next moment the young man was lying down on the floor in the debris of plates and dishes, with the remains of a *pêche Melba* uncommonly near his face.

The following morning there was a heading in one of the daily papers, who always seem to be present on an occasion like this. It ran:

ROMANTIC EPISODE IN A RESTAURANT.

Then there was a sub-heading:

The *Chef d'orchestre* in the Black Trilby.

That same night the restaurant was full. Mostly women. For the benefit of one who sat by herself in a cheap little morning costume at the farther end of the room, the orchestra played:

"Hark! hark! the dogs do bark."

Composed by the conductor.

# HEART'S PAPYRUS.

**A PLACE of reeds and rushes, with dark water,**
**Rippled by every wind, yet havening none:**
**There the papyrus of my heart was fashioned,**
**With margins jewelled by the stars and sun.**

**A place of reeds and rushes, with clear water;**
**Its only shadow by your passing flung;**
**Like a rare necklace, rudely rent asunder,**
**The dreams lie scattered that for you I strung.**

**So long laid up in chests of Memory's sealing,**
**Crumbled to ashes that were once a flame,**
**My heart's papyrus dwells with kings' in glory,**
**For still it keeps the impress of your name.**

**ETHEL M. HEWITT.**

# FOR THE GOOD OF THE HOUSE

## By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

WHEN Margaret Goodall was two-and-twenty her father failed in property and in health. She was no more accustomed to toil than the lilies of the field, to which some admirers had resembled her. But, being a good girl, as well as a good-looking girl, she decided to go into an office and become a wage-earner to help her family.

She did not find her expensive education in great demand—one merchant hastily rang the bell when she said that she knew a little Greek !—but ultimately Johnson, of Johnson & Price, who knew her father, said that he'd try if she would do as a bookkeeper. He told Bertie Dillon, a pushful young clerk, to see what he could make of her.

Being down in the world, Margaret stood upon her dignity and sat upon Bertie. Three things prejudiced her against him : his comparatively humble origin, his friendliness, and a remark of Miss Smith, the angular senior typist.

"He's all right in business," Miss Smith said. "You can rely upon what he tells you about the work, but don't trust him in anything else. He's mad upon girls of the per-oxided, lip-salved type. A young man of that kind has to be kept at a distance."

Margaret made the necessary distance upon the third day. Bertie laid his hands upon hers to guide her in ruling a red line in the big ledger. She withdrew her hands rapidly and closed the big ledger with a bang —before his left hand was quite out !

"I shouldn't wonder if I lost the thumbnail," he told a colleague. "Almost hope I do for an admonitory memento. Whenever I thought of getting a ring for a finger I'd look at my thumb !"

"You're a philosopher, Bert," his colleague observed.

"Well, more of one than I was before the slam ! She said she knew where to draw the line. So do I. There's nothing about the girl except her saucer eyes."

The term became "saucy eyes" before it reached Margaret (via Miss Smith). So the relations between her and Bertie became very formal. It wasn't his fault, for he had a forgiving disposition, especially toward young ladies with big eyes. Once he offered her some chocolates, and once some violets, and once a banana. She declined all three offerings.

"I have accustomed myself to going without what I can no longer afford," she said, upon the third occasion, after a rather wistful glance at the banana.

When Bertie reported the remark to his colleague, he sighed and added "Poor little beggar !" His sympathetic observation reached Margaret (by the usual channel) distorted into "proud little bounder." From that moment she became an ice-brick to him for a fortnight. She deemed it necessary to make him understand that she did not consider him in her set ; and she succeeded.

She softened a trifle, however, upon the morning when Mr. Johnson released her from Bertie's tuition and supervision. The old man observed that the way she'd picked up the work was very creditable to both pupil and teacher, and raised her salary five shillings a week. She felt that ordinary justice and common politeness required her to thank Bertie, for she knew that she was greatly indebted to his training.

"I can carry it off lightly, without belittling it," she reflected, "and at the same time give him a hint that there is no need to offer me things. To do him justice, I think he's very kind-hearted ; quite a worthy young fellow of his class, and one that a girl of his own set might like. The

way he's educated himself is most praiseworthy."

So when he came in, she gave him a distantly gracious smile.

"Mr. Johnson will have told you that I have profited sufficiently from your very kind and efficient teaching to work 'on my own' in future," she said. "Thank you for all the trouble you have taken to show me things. Thank you very much! . . . He has raised my salary. Now I shall be able to afford a few chocolates and things!"

She laughed.

"Ah!" said Bertie. "I'm glad of that. You were very easy to teach. That's where it was. Don't forget that it isn't enough to tick off the credits when you get them. Look up those that *aren't* ticked off! So you're going in for the little luxuries, eh?"

"So far as five shillings a week will go," she said. She sighed.

"Ah!" He sat upon the edge of the table, and fiddled with his tie. "I wonder if you would consider a proposal——"

"*What!*" she almost screamed.

"A purely commercial proposal. Speaking as a business man to a business woman, I am in a position to dispose of some high-class chocolates, from time to time, at half price or rather less—for anything that I can get for them in fact. I wonder whether you'd take a few off my hands?"

"Half price!" Margaret cried, with the saucer eyes very saucerish. "Why, that must be less than cost."

"It is; but I have to get rid of them somehow."

"A bankrupt stock?" she suggested.

"Er—no. I am endeavouring to avoid my own bankruptcy. Those that I have by me mayn't be your particular line; but I dare say I could get any particular brand that you go in for."

"At half price?"

"Or rather less."

"But why are you going to buy more to lose upon them?" she inquired. "It sounds rather foolish."

"Er—yes. I suppose it is. . . . I'll tell you how I get landed with them; but, of course, you won't give me away. There's a young lady that I'm—er—interested in. She's in a sweet-stuff shop."

"She has no business to sell her employer's goods to you at half price," Margaret said sternly. "I won't be a party to——"

"Wait, wait!" he implored. "She doesn't do anything of the sort. She charges me the usual rate. The fact is, I don't know her out of business at present. She isn't the sort who makes herself too easy to know. I have to go carefully. I'm gradually making acquaintance over the counter; through going in to buy chocolates. It comes rather expensive. I can't well buy less than a quarter at a shilling when I go in, can I? Say twice per evening at one shilling a time makes twelve bob a week. That's my limit. If I could realise, say, five shillings out of the things, I might go in a third time occasionally."

"Till you persuade her to meet you out!" Margaret cried. "I see! I hope it won't be long before you do. . . . It's so funny that really I think I *will* have a few; but I consider that I ought to pay three-quarter price."

"Half price," he said. "You see, they're no use to me. A chap who smokes doesn't care for sweets."

"I've often seen you eating them," she observed.

"That," he stated, "is only to get rid of the things; spoils my eye for cricket and tennis and billiards. Oughtn't to touch 'em. I don't buy them to eat only because —well, if you go in a shop and lean on the counter for half an hour, you must spend something for the good of the house. Suppose you went into a draper's and made them turn out the shop to show you, you'd feel that you'd got to buy something before you came out, wouldn't you?"

"Not a bit," Margaret declared. "I should certainly come out without buying anything, if I didn't see what I wanted."

"Ah!" he said. "But I do! I know what I want all right."

He sighed.

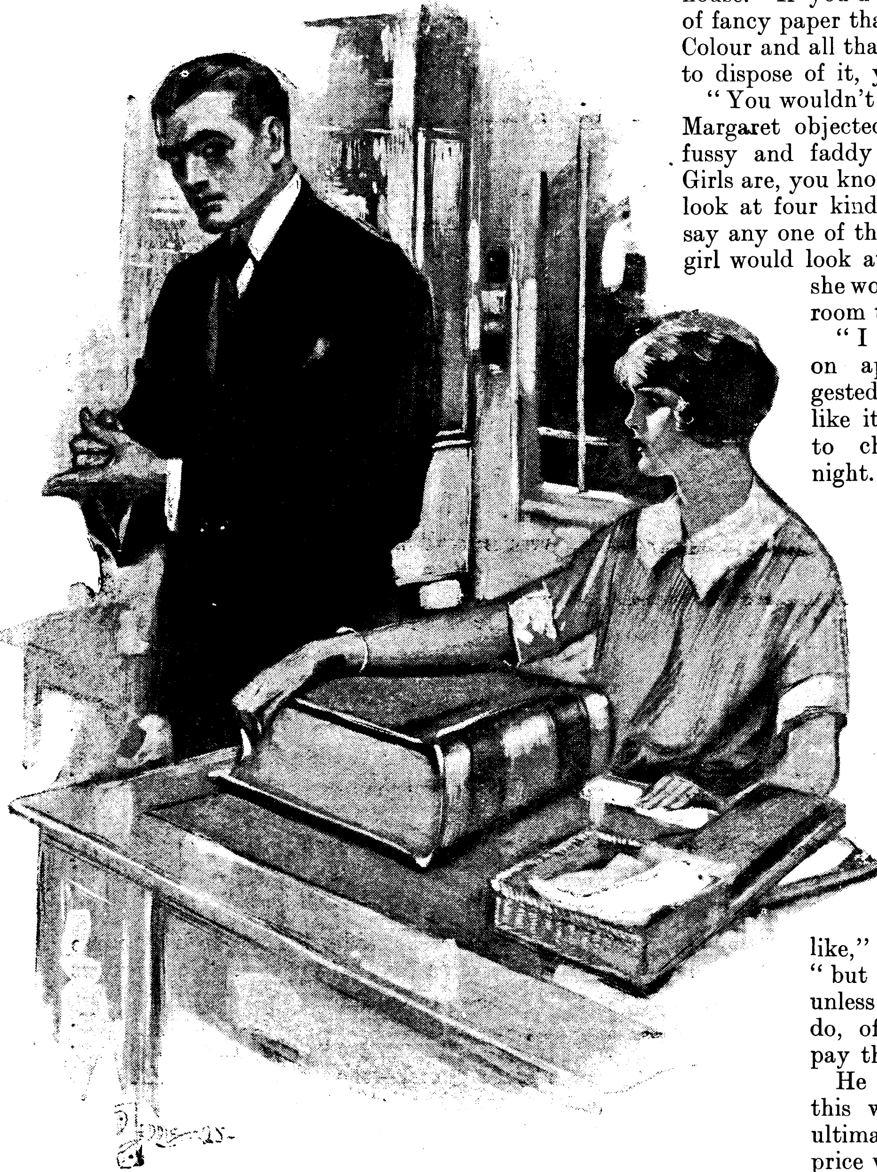
"Well," she said. "You can bring some to-morrow; say half a pound. Hard centres are what I like best."

For the next week, Margaret bought half-price "hard centres" every day; and they were McBon's—the make which she had informed Bertie that she liked best. Then it turned very hot, and she observed that she felt rather "off" chocolates; besides, she wanted this week's "rise" for some fancy stationery, and a blotting-pad.

"I'm glad you've mentioned it," he said, "because, last night, I went right off sweet-shops. I found out that Daisy was already engaged. I think she might have mentioned it beforehand."

"Didn't you notice her engagement ring?" Margaret asked.

"It wasn't a formal engagement," he explained. "He only gave her the ring last early-closing day. I noticed it last night. I shan't go there any more. I don't think she was quite straightforward over it. She must have known that a fellow wouldn't go in so often unless he had some object. She *said* she thought I must have a girl who was a pig for sweets. . . . An obvious excuse of course. However, she introduced me to her sister, Betty. Betty's rather nice too. Serves in a stationer's. . . . I'd rather an idea of looking in there to-night. Of course I'll have to buy something for the good of the house. If you'd tell me the kind of fancy paper that you want——? Colour and all that? I shall want to dispose of it, you see."



"She withdrew her hands rapidly and closed the big ledger with a bang—before his left hand was quite out."

"You wouldn't know my taste," Margaret objected. "I'm ever so fussy and faddy over my things. Girls are, you know. A man would look at four kinds of paper, and say any one of them would do. A girl would look at forty, and say she wouldn't give houseroom to any but one."

"I could bring one on appro," he suggested. "If you didn't like it, I'd take it back to change the next night. That would give me an excuse to drop in without spending more money. I should get *two* chats for one purchase. That's an awfully bright idea! I might even have to change it two or three times!"

"You can try, if you like," Margaret agreed; "but I shan't have it unless I like it. If I do, of course, I must pay the full price."

He protested that this wasn't fair; and ultimately two-thirds price was agreed upon. He carefully noted the colour that she wanted; and ultimately she bought a large box of "Mignonette Missives" at two-thirds of 5*s.* 3*d.*, viz. 3*s.* 6*d.* After two more of his visits she purchased a "Betty's Blotter" (violet scented) for 1*s.* 4*d.*

She said that she almost wished that she

hadn't bought the blotter. The perfume made her want real flowers.

"I don't often grumble about going without things," she observed, "but the one thing I do miss is flowers. . . . Oh, flowers!"

She walked away to the window to wipe her eyes. Bertie stared at her and shook his head; pulled his moustache thoughtfully; "Poor little Lady Margaret"; suddenly snapped his fingers and walked out of the room.

The next morning he brought some wonderful roses to the office, and took them in to "Lady Margaret."

"I say," he said, "they're no use to me. It doesn't seem fair to let you pay half price. I suppose you wouldn't take them for nix? From teacher to ex-pupil, eh?"

"No, no!" she cried. "You know I wouldn't . . . Oh! They're lovely! . . . Lovely!" She buried her face in them. "They make me feel spiteful to people who can afford flowers. Whatever made you buy them?"

"Well. . . . A fellow must do something in the evenings. It rained a bit last night; and I stood up under the awning at Pink's the florist. I don't know if you've noticed the young lady in there? No? I hadn't either before; but I must have been blind. She has such big eyes. I always fall to them. . . . She was taking some of the stuff out of the windows for the night. I thought she looked at me once or twice; and so I strolled in. Of course, I had to buy something for the good of the house. . . ."

"But why buy expensive roses like these?" Margaret asked.

"I wasn't going to at first; but they were what she wanted to push off on me. I meant to have a ninepenny buttonhole; but that wouldn't take a minute to buy; and we bargained for three-quarters of an hour over these things."

"Things! Oh, you've no soul! Calling these beautiful, beautiful flowers *things*!"

"Well, 'flowers' then. In the end I bought them for four shillings."

"Four shillings! Why, they're worth seven-and-six, if they're worth a penny!"

"That's what I thought. I figured it out that you'd take them for two bob. So I should only spend one-and-three more, and get forty minutes more acquaintance; about three minutes a penny! See?"

"I'll give you three-and-three," Margaret offered. "Four shillings with ninepence off."

But he refused to take more than half a crown. The flowers were a day older than when he bought them, he explained, and business was business.

For the next fortnight Margaret had a good many half-price flowers. They brightened her a deal, and she became quite friendly with Bertie; so friendly that angular Miss Smith warned her.

"If you forget that he's not of your class," she observed, "he will forget it; and presume upon it. You see, he speaks and dresses as well as anybody else, and he doesn't understand that birth and social standing make a difference between you."

"Oh!" Margaret said. "He quite understands that now. Besides, he's gone on a girl at Pink's flower-shop. So I feel quite safe in talking to him. After all, you're only the class of your surroundings, while you're in them; and when people are nice and friendly you can't keep them quite at arm's length. I can look after my class, thank you!"

She told herself that she'd like to keep "that old cat" at the distance of a clothes prop!

The next Monday, however, she came to business looking very serious.

"Mr. Dillon," she said, "I shan't be able to afford any more flowers. I've been very selfish to spend all my rise upon myself. I only realised last night how much poor old father misses things that he's been used to. When you're old you miss little comforts so. That was what mother explained when I caught her crying. She didn't mean herself but dad. That was what made her cry. . . . You see, he always had a good cigar on Wednesday evenings, and Saturday and Sunday nights. They're so expensive since the war, mother says. She thinks perhaps they're eighteenpence apiece, but she and I don't understand cigars, and it's no use our trying to choose them. She found one of the old boxes, and I got the picture off the lid. . . . Look here. El Dorado Corona. Claro . . . I was wondering whether you could get me three for this week? It will be such a surprise to him!"

"And you'll have no flowers about the place," Bertie said, digging his heels into the carpet.

"I like the smell of cigars," she declared. "I—I—It will smell quite like old times."

"Look here," Bertie said. "If you'd let me send the old man a few cigars? I've a decent screw, you know, and . . . Now don't get on your hind-legs and wipe the floor with me. You're right to be

proud of yourself, of course. By Jove, yes! A little lady like you! Don't think I don't know your class. . . . But you needn't tell him or anyone that they were a present from me."

"They wouldn't be," she said. "You know I'd buy flowers with the money that I didn't spend on the cigars. *That* would be a present from you; my flowers. I wouldn't look at it any other way, Mr. Dillon."

He sighed.

"Well . . . all right. I'll get the cigars," he said. "Glad to do you a small service, if you won't let me do anything else."

On Tuesday morning he brought the cigars.

"One-and-three apiece, I paid," he said cheerfully, "but they'll have to be half price to you. I was obliged to buy something for the good of the house. You see, I stayed jawing to the girl for half an hour. Very nice girl too; more intelligent than the one at the florist's. Half price is one-and-tenpence halfpenny."

"You hadn't to buy three expensive cigars for the good of the house," Margaret pointed out. "You could have bought a sixpenny packet of 'fags.' Oh, dear! I wish I didn't pick up slang. It's your fault."

"Shilling packet," he said; "couldn't do less. What would a girl think of a chap who bought sixpen'orth? Well, say I might have done that. We'll knock a bob off three-and-nine. You pay two-and-nine."

"You'd have had the cigarettes to smoke," she said. "There's nothing to knock off. I'm very much obliged to you. Here's the three-and-nine, and—and—I think you think that I think . . . I'm getting mixed . . . I shall tell you what I *do* think some time . . . Thank you very much indeed!"

"There's only one thanks that will really do me any good," he said; "and that's to let me give you a few flowers—for the good of the house—next Sunday. I—Dash it all!—Don't you think I presume to think you're on my level, because you're out of your sphere—in my bally old office—for the moment. As you *are* there, I can offer an esteemed colleague a flower or two. Why, the Queen accepts a bouquet from her subjects, you know! So—you will, won't you, Lady Margaret?"

"Just a few very cheap ones," she consented after a short consideration. "I do not think I shall ever forget your kindness . . . I *don't* think you quite understand how I feel . . ."

"Yes, yes," he said hastily. "That's all right, quite all right. You won't have to shut me up in the ledger again. Hope the old man will like those cigars."

He told himself that it was a pity that the thumb-nail hadn't come off.

"That would have kept me from thinking anything of her," he assured himself. (He was probably wrong.)

He went away for a fortnight upon business, soon after that. On the morning of his return, Margaret came in late. He noticed that she looked depressed, and went to her little room at once.

"Anything the matter?" he asked.

"Father's ill," she told him. "The doctor says he must be fed on chicken and jellies and things; and he's to have some dreadful French medicines. The doctor says they're horribly expensive, but nothing else will do. Which is the best chemist's? I always ask you things, don't I? I don't suppose chemists are in your line."

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed. "Ha ha ha! You're pulling my leg: Who's told you that I'm trying to get off with old Parr's shop duck? I was wondering what I'd buy for the good of the house when I went in to talk to her. Give me the prescriptions. That will be my excuse."

"Your excuse to do something for *me*!" Margaret almost screamed. "It's no use your trying to say anything. If you do you'll make me cry. . . . No, no! Don't go away. You've got to listen to me first. You have been deceiving me all along. You didn't want to know the girl in the sweet-stuff shop; or the stationer's; or the florist's. Those roses were seven-and-six. I noticed them marked up . . . Reduced? You look me in the eye and say that again! . . . I knew you couldn't! . . . The cigars were two shillings apiece. I've inquired at the tobacconist's shop; and there's no girl in it? You didn't buy any of the things for the good of the house, but for mine. I don't see any excuse for it."

"My excuse," he said, "is that I—well, you wouldn't wish me to say it."

"Yes, I should," she murmured faintly, "because it's mine too!"

"My Lady Margaret!"

"Yes, yours! . . . That's why I let you do it. I guessed all the time . . . Now there'll be no need for you to go buying things for the good of the house."

"By Jove!" he laughed. "There will! The old man's making me buyer, and giving me a big rise. There's a girl that I want to see in a furniture shop; for the good of a house that's going to be!"

"'What's the meaning of this?'"

# HIS AMERICAN COUSIN

## By ARCHIBALD MARSHALL

### ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

ONE of the things that Lord Lyng most enjoyed was his morning ride in the Row. His horse was brought round to his chambers in Jermyn Street punctually at seven o'clock, and within a few minutes he had entered the Park and was cantering up the tan.

At that time there were few people about. Even the Liver Brigade usually put in a later appearance, and of those who were not riding there were only the heroic all-the-year-round bathers in the Serpentine and the dry-bobs taking sharp walks for the benefit of their health. All the little green chairs were empty, and the free benches were but sparsely occupied by the open-air characters who had nowhere else to go.

One morning, when Lord Lyng was cantering past the Knightsbridge barracks, his eye was drawn to a little group which had not been there when he had last passed. A young man and a young girl were sitting together, and three chairs off sat another girl, who had the appearance of a discreet maid. Taken together they told a story, which to one of Lord Lyng's keen interest in his fellow-creatures read as plainly as if it had been in print. The girl had come out for an early walk with her maid, from one of those big houses somewhere near from

which girls don't come out unaccompanied at seven o'clock in the morning, or if they do there is apt to be trouble about it. This girl had found it easier to square the maid, and was enjoying her little talk with the young man with whom no doubt she had arranged the meeting.

Both of them had their heads down, but there was something curiously familiar to Lord Lyng about the young man, which caused him to pass them at a walk the next time he came down, so that he could get a better look at them. The girl was pretty, which might have been expected; young men do not arrange meetings at seven o'clock in the morning with girls who are not. The young man was dressed in a light suit, very well cut, and a straw hat of a slightly exotic shape. He was probably an American. But the girl was almost certainly English.

As Lord Lyng passed, the young man raised his head. The sense of something familiar about him was explained in the most remarkable fashion. The face that looked up at Lord Lyng was the same face as had looked at him out of his shaving mirror an hour before. In fact, this young man might have been his twin brother. But he had no brothers, twin or otherwise.

There was no doubt about the resemblance. The young man and the girl saw it at the same time as he did, and stared at him until he withdrew his eyes and passed on.

The third time he passed them all three satisfied themselves that they had made no mistake. There was conscious communication between them, and Lord Lyng might have stopped and addressed them with the certainty of finding them responsive. As he rode on he regretted that he hadn't done so, for the likeness was so remarkable that it wanted some explanation.

He turned before he came to the end of the Row and trotted down. The young man was standing by the rails waiting for him. The girl and the maid had gone.

The young man spoke first, and his speech left no doubt of his being an American. "I guess there's something to say about this," he said with an agreeable smile. "My name is Burlingham. Henry Dwight Burlingham, of New York City. I suppose yours doesn't happen to be the same."

"No," said Lord Lyng, and told him who he was.

"Well, if you're a lord," said the young man, "it seems all the crazier. And I guess it prevents me asking you what I had half a mind to ask you. I'd be scared to put it up to a lord."

"You needn't be afraid of putting anything up to me," said Lord Lyng. "Come and have breakfast with me in half an hour, and we'll have a talk."

## II

The first thing Lord Lyng did when he got back to his rooms was to send down to borrow a "Peerage" from a retired Colonel who lived below him. He turned up his own genealogy, which occupied two pages of names and alliances. Ah, there it was, near the beginning! Now wasn't that extraordinary? The first Lord Lyng had had six sisters, and one of them had married Trevor Burlingham, Esq., of Cautley Grange, Cheshire. There could be no reasonable doubt that the young American was descended from this marriage. Out of all the innumerable ancestors that these young men did not share, Nature, playing her curious game of heredity, had chosen to mix in the same proportions the blood of those that they did share, though their families had split off nearly two hundred years before.

Henry Burlingham had no further light to throw on the matter when he arrived a little later. He knew he was of English descent, but knew little more than that. His grandfather had settled out West. He had an idea that the family had been in a good position but had come down in the world. But his grandfather had made money, and they had gone up again. His father had made still more money, and Henry Burlingham was now making a considerable amount himself. "That's why I can't get over that old back number turning me down," he said. "No amount of money would buy Celia, but you Britishers seem to think a lot of it when it comes to a question of marriage, and he has nothing against me anyway, except that I'm an American, and proud of it."

This had to be explained. Celia was the very charming young woman whom Lord Lyng had seen in the Park. She was the only child of Alexander McPherson, whose name was blazoned abroad on the labels of whisky bottles. But besides being a distiller, Alexander McPherson was a Highland laird—McPherson of Duncoll—and inordinately proud of his lineage, perhaps all the prouder because there was some doubt of whether it was really his.

"He has bought an ancient castle," said Burlingham, "where he says his ancestors lived way back, and talks about Bonnie Prince Charlie as if they'd been schoolmates together. And he calls the Americans 'rebels.' He has heard of the Declaration of Independence, because I asked him, but he don't recognise it. That's what I'm up against."

"Perhaps it would make a difference if he knew that you were descended from a respectable English family," said Lord Lyng.

"Perhaps it would, but I doubt it. The old mutt is almost as much up against the English as he is against the Americans. I can't be expected to keep track of your home politics, but there used to be quite a little disturbance between you and the Scots, didn't there? The old man hasn't forgotten it. No, I'm about through with him. I'm going to marry Celia, and it's up to him to make the best of it."

"She consents, does she?"

"Oh, she consents all right! But she won't be twenty-one till next week, and he made her promise she wouldn't run off with me before she was twenty-one. If she hadn't promised he wouldn't have let her come here to stay with her aunt. I say it was a promise forced out of her, but she says a promise is a promise, and I guess she's right. I wouldn't have her any different."

"But you only have to wait till she's twenty-one and then he can't stop her marrying you, or anyone else she likes."

"No, but he can shut her up in that old castle of his. That's where I first saw her, and I tell you it's some castle. Walls six feet thick and all that sort of thing. It was a ruin when he bought it. He did it over, but I guess he didn't make it any easier to get into or out of. He got another promise out of her. She's to go back there and spend her twenty-first birthday whooping it up with the tenantry and all that. When she gets there she'll stay there, if I know that old sham antique, and how I'm to get her out of it I don't know."

"If you want me to help you get her out it's just what I should like," said Lord Lyng, brightening.

His double looked at him admiringly. "Maybe it's self-flattery," he said, "but when I first saw you I thought you were a sport. If he got her up there I might ask you to lend me a hand to get her out again. But she and I thought of a better plan when we first tumbled to it that there was another Henry Dwight Burlingham loose in the world. Would you mind going up there for a week? There's a good inn and a trout stream. It belongs to the old man, but I got his leave to fish it before he knew I was a 'rebel.'"

"I don't mind going up there at all," said Lord Lyng, "but what is the game?"

"If you don't see what the game is," said Burlingham, with the open smile that had already attracted Lord Lyng to him, "I guess my brains came from the other side of the family."

## III

The inn was as comfortable as anyone could wish for, and the welcome given to Lord Lyng when he reached it left nothing to be desired. If the Laird of Duncoll had an insuperable objection to Americans, it was not shared by his tenantry. Henry Burlingham had made himself popular among them, and they were glad, though a little surprised, to see him back among them.

On the morning after his arrival Lord Lyng went out with his rod and his creel and enjoyed himself. The delicious air, the shifting lights and shadows on the hills, the happy music of the stream, were wholly delightful to him, and his only regret was that, never having thrown a fly before, he had small success with the fish that were jumping all about him. But he became keen after a time, and decided that fishing was a sport that must be followed up.

Not far away Duncoll Castle reared its dark mass on a rocky elevation. It was a formidable-looking pile and seemed just in its place in this wild but beautiful country. Lord Lyng kept his eye on a corner of the road that led down from it, and by and by he saw a kilted figure emerge from a postern gate. It was of a large elderly man who walked with determination, carrying a stout stick.

"Now I wonder if he means to use that on me," said Lord Lyng to himself.

But Duncoll, as Burlingham told him that Mr. McPherson expected to be called, showed no hostile intentions as he approached. There was even something resembling a smile on his face. "Oh, you've come back, have you?" he called out when he came within speaking distance. "Very pleased to see you. Sorry my daughter isn't at home at present, but you won't mind that."

He spoke in the accent of Glasgow, but Lord Lyng did not recognise it. His speech

seemed to be merely very Scotch. His own speech, when he replied to the greeting, was that of the American as seen and heard on

"The sense of something familiar about him was explained in the most remarkable fashion."

the English stage. There was a drawl in it which seemed to have been distilled through all the noses to be found between Portland, Maine, and Portland, Oregon.

He made a cast before he spoke. The stage American is cooler and more deliberate in his actions than the native variety. "Waal, I guess it's you I've come back to talk to again," he said. "Say, what's the matter with our fixing it up about that little gurl after all? I guess I'm going to get her, with you or without you, and it would make it more comfortable all round to have you give her to me."

Duncoll's face darkened. "Give my daughter to a man who talks like a sick parrot and throws a fly like a Cockney barber!" he said with contempt. "You'll never get her from me, and if that's what you've come for you'd better take yourself off again before you frighten all the fish out of my water."

Lord Lyng was wounded. He had become rather proud of his improvement in throwing a fly, and he was quite proud of his speech, which he had been practising diligently

during his journey. He handed the laird his rod. " Show us how to do it," he said, with a less reverberating twang.

Duncoll made a gesture of refusal. But the mayfly were dancing on the water and the fish were rising greedily. It was amazing that the veriest novice should have missed catching one. His fingers itched towards the rod. " Here, give it me," he said gruffly.

Lord Lyng handed over the rod. Duncoll looked at the fly, grunted again, and took it off. Then he looked at the collection on Lord Lyng's cap, grunted once more and unhooked one of them without apology. Then he moved a few paces down the river and made a superb cast.

He landed a three-pounder. Lord Lyng helped him with the net, unskilfully enough. But when he handed back the rod the corrugations on Duncoll's face had smoothed themselves out. " Come up to lunch," he said, and strode away.

It seemed to Lord Lyng that it was going to be altogether too easy. If Celia's father

"The face that looked up at Lord Lyng was the same face as had looked at him out of his shaving mirror an hour before."

had taken a fancy to him, believing him to be Henry Burlingham, the next step would be that he would withdraw his opposition to the marriage, and however satisfactory that might be to Henry Burlingham, there wouldn't be much fun in it for Lord Lyng.

He need not have been afraid. McPherson of Duncoll was made of sterner stuff than that.

Luncheon was served in a stone-vaulted hall, suitably decorated with stags' heads, armour, and sconces containing pine torches, though there was also electric light for those who preferred that method of illumination. The luncheon included a haggis, which was eaten to the skirl of the pipes. Lord Lyng had no taste for this kind of music, but Duncoll listened to it entranced, and when the piper was leaving the hall he drew attention to his magnificent stature. "I've a dozen more about the place as fine and big as he is," he said, "and there's nothing they wouldn't do for their chieftain."

This was said with meaning. Lord Lyng understood that he was being warned.

He was shown the castle. Its owner seemed equally proud of its mediæval character and of the modern improvements with which its inconveniences had been tempered. The laird fought in him with the whisky distiller, and sometimes one got the better and sometimes the other.

The tower was reserved until the last. Mediæval and modern were here remarkably mixed. On the topmost story was a large room, richly and comfortably furnished, but lit by mere slits of windows.

"What do you use this for?" asked Lord Lyng.

"You'll soon find out," replied his host, as he went out and locked the door behind him.

## IV

After the first surprise, Lord Lyng threw himself into a very easy chair and laughed. Except for the boast about his servitors, Duncoll had given no hint of what must have been in his mind all along. He had led his unsuspecting guest all over the place, and then just locked the door on him when he had brought him to what was apparently to be his prison. If the door hadn't been so thick he would no doubt have been heard chuckling as he went down the winding stone stairs.

Well, Lord Lyng had expected some effort to keep him where he was, though he had not been prepared for so prompt and thorough a stroke. He had to consider how it might be made to advance his cause, which was that of Henry Burlingham, and came to the conclusion that the laugh would be on the other side before long.

By and by his gear was brought to him from the inn by a huge retainer, who behaved with true Highland politeness but made no reply to overtures of conversation. Either he was dumb or had been ordered not to speak to the prisoner, and the latter seemed the more likely of the two.

An hour or two later still, when Lord Lyng had got over the effects of his lunch by a little nap, and was beginning to feel annoyed at his incarceration, Duncoll made his appearance.

He seemed still as pleased with himself as ever, and made no apologies for his treatment of a guest. "Now you have had time to think it over," he said, "we can agree on what is to be done next. You will be as comfortable as you can be made here, and if you want a little fresh air Duncan will take you to the top of the tower, where there are magnificent views. But here you'll stay till you have signed this paper."

Lord Lyng read the paper handed to him, which was embellished with an elaborate coat of arms, and bound him to refrain from all attempts at marriage with the daughter of Alexander McPherson of Duncoll. "I don't trust a rebel farther than I can see him," said Duncoll, "but I'll get this witnessed and stamped, and I'll look after the rest myself."

Lord Lyng threw him back the paper. "Do you really think you can keep a free-born American citizen shut up here without trouble coming of it?" he asked. "Trouble for you, I mean."

"I know I'm going to," said the laird of Duncoll.

"I won't sign the paper," said Lord Lyng, "but I'll bet you that Henry Dwight Burlingham, of New York City, marries your daughter within a week."

"What'll you bet?" asked Alexander McPherson.

Lord Lyng bethought himself. He had not embarked on this enterprise with the idea of making money, but if money was to be made so much the better. But would it be quite fair?"

"Will you allow me to go fishing on parole?" he asked, temporising.

"I will not," said Duncoll. "I've told you that I don't trust an American rebel."

That settled it. "I'll see that you pay

through the nose for this," said Lord Lyng. "In the meantime I'll bet you—I'll bet you five thousand dollars that your daughter becomes Mrs. Henry Dwight Burlingham within—well, let's say within a fortnight."

"That's a thousand pounds," said Alexander McPherson. "I'll take the bet.'

## V

Three days went by. Lord Lyng found the time hang heavily on his hands, but consoled himself with the thought of what was to come. He was able to treat Duncoll, who visited him every day, with the nonchalance demanded by his supposed nationality as well as by the necessity of standing up against him. It had its effect upon the laird, who seemed to be not altogether easy in his mind. He pressed Lord Lyng to reduce the period of the bet by a week. "I don't want to keep you here for a fortnight," he said, "but I shall keep you here until I pocket your money. I've got plenty of my own, but I've been in business for so long that I can't let a chance like that go by."

Lord Lyng refused. He was cut off from communication with the outside world, and couldn't be quite sure that the marriage would take place within the week, though the way would be clear for it the next day, when Celia would be twenty-one, and her own mistress.

"Doesn't your daughter come of age to-morrow?" he asked. "I thought she was coming up here for it."

"I know you did," said Duncoll with a chuckle. "That's why you came up yourself, isn't it? You made a mistake there, you see. Celia stays with her aunt, who is pleased to have her, until you leave Duncoll. We can celebrate her birthday at any time."

"What happens when I do leave Duncoll?" asked Lord Lyng.

"Well, she comes back to it. Duncan goes to England to fetch her. When she does come, *she* signs a paper."

"And if she won't?"

"If she won't—well, you asked me what this room was for, didn't you? And now you know."

"You're an old savage," said Lord Lyng.

"I'm a man of my word," said Duncoll. "Sign that paper and I'll let you off your bet."

"Will you double it?" asked Lord Lyng.

"I will," said Duncoll.

## VI

The fourth day, which was Celia's birthday, passed with no more to mark it than the discharge of an ancient mortar on the terrace in front of the castle, and a more than usual expenditure of breath among the pipers. Lord Lyng expected something to happen on the fifth day, and awoke early, with anticipations of release. But by this time his imprisonment had become very wearisome to him, and he went to sleep again, glad to be able to fill some of his hours in that way.

He was a good sleeper, and the sun was already high in the sky when he was awakened by his door being opened with violence, and the appearance of the laird of Duncoll, who brandished a telegram in his face and said intemperately: "What's the meaning of this, you Colonial viper?"

Lord Lyng's hour had come. He lay in bed and stretched out his hand. "Better let me read it," he said, "and perhaps I shall be able to tell you."

He had dropped his American accent, which had begun to irk him. Duncoll stared, sensing a change in him, and handed over the telegram. It was dated the afternoon before, and ran: "Celia and I happily married. Coming north to-morrow. Prepare fireworks. Henry Dwight Burlingham."

Lord Lyng handed it back. "Have you prepared the fireworks?" he asked.

Duncoll sat down heavily. "I don't understand it," he said, weakly for a man who had hitherto shown such determination.

"I think I can explain," said Lord Lyng, "if you'll give me leave to light a cigarette first."

He lit his cigarette deliberately, while his adversary stared at him. "I suppose you're not Burlingham at all," he said.

"You've exactly hit it," said Lord Lyng, lying back on his pillow and enjoying his cigarette. "And that's all the explanation that's necessary, isn't it?"

Duncoll rose to his feet, red and angry. "Then I've been made the victim of a disgraceful conspiracy," he said. "I'll make you pay for this, sir. I've been trapped."

"So have I, you know," said Lord Lyng, and left time for this to sink in.

"Who are you?" Duncoll snapped at him. "Are you that scoundrel's brother?"

"Brothers and sisters have I none," said Lord Lyng. "I happen to bear a resemblance to him. The resemblance has proved

useful to him, and it has proved useful to me too. You owe me two thousand pounds, Duncoll."

Duncoll became apoplectic. "You may whistle for that," he said.

Lord Lyng whistled, which annoyed him still further. "It was a dirty trick," he said. "Besides, I betted that she wouldn't marry *you*. It's you who owe me two thousand pounds."

"I betted she would marry Henry Dwight Burlingham within a fortnight, and she's married him within a week. You refused my parole, Duncoll, and that's partly what you're paying for. Are you an honest man or not? If you are you'll pay up, as I should have done if anything had occurred to stop the marriage. If not, I'll sue you for false imprisonment, and I'll get more than two thousand pounds out of you, and make you look like a fool into the bargain."

"My word is my bond," said Alexander McPherson, rising. "But I must have time to think this over."

He went out. "Please leave the door open," Lord Lyng called after him. "I'm going fishing."

VII

When the newly-married couple arrived late that night, Duncoll had already decided to make the best of it. There seemed to be nothing else to do, and he took his defeat better than might have been expected.

He handed Lord Lyng his cheque for two thousand pounds. "It's true you tricked me," he said, "but I tricked you too. I knew I should have to pay some time or other for locking you up, and I'm not grumbling at the price. Here's a receipt. Sign it in your own name. I don't know it yet."

Lord Lyng explained himself. "I don't think much of English lords," said Alexander McPherson, who thought highly of any kind of lord. "They're mushrooms beside a Highland chieftain. But why wasn't it you who came here after my girl? I shall never be able to stomach that fellow whose ancestors fought against their king."

"His didn't, as a matter of fact," said Lord Lyng. "He's a sort of cousin of mine, and a very good fellow. You'll get on all right with him."

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dwight Burlingham arrived at the castle at nightfall. All the retainers who were not playing the pipes were holding torches, and afterwards fireworks were let off and there was much consumption of McPherson's Celebrated Highland Dew.

Lord Lyng kissed the bride, when everything had been satisfactorily arranged. "I have suffered for your sake," he said, "but it has been worth it."

# SONNET.

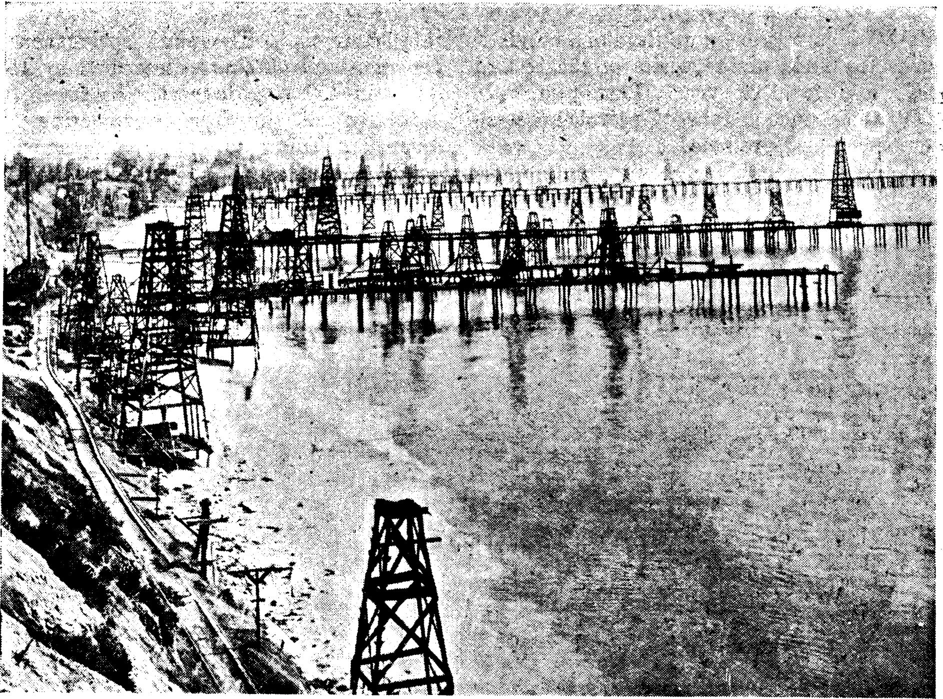
**The sunwashed wood of June owes fragrant debt**
**To the tempestuous winds of March, that flung**
**Sharp rain against the trees, and drenched with wet**
**The earth from whose miraculous clods have sprung**

**Ethereal windflowers and a fairy sheen**
**Of mosses. Each cold dawn and moaning night**
**Was prelude to the murmurous world of green**
**Where sunlight glimmers. So if my delight**

**In you is touched by some remembering thought**
**Of a dead love that came on stormy wings**
**And passed in tears, think how those tempests wrought**
**Our present peace and this full joy that springs**

**Between us. All my heart is yours—and yet**
**You would not—would you?—have me quite forget.**

**ELEANOR RENARD.**



OIL WELLS ON THE COAST AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.

# THE ROMANCE OF PETROLEUM

## ADVANCE OF A HUGE INDUSTRY BRITAIN'S POSITION

By JOHN ERNEST HODGSON, F.R.G.S.

*Photographs by Underwood Press Service.*

THE two men were discussing things in general at the club.

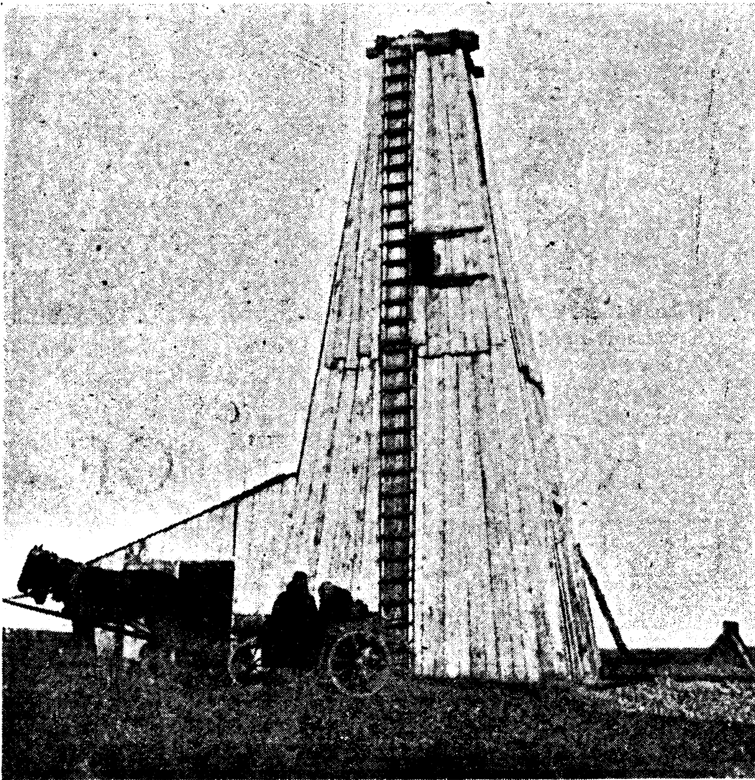
"If," said one, "the advent of the motor-car and the invention of the internal-combustion engine is responsible for such a huge consumption of petrol, what on earth happened to all the oil produced thirty or forty years ago?"

The answer to this perfectly natural question is wrapped up in one of the most striking romances of modern world progress. In 1859 the world's total production of petroleum was only a few thousand barrels, barely enough to supply kerosene for lamps and other minor purposes. Thousands of little pools, the surfaces of which were covered with a peacock film of oil, gave only a hint of the immense wealth which the earth would shortly be called upon to disgorge.

The large-scale discovery of petroleum in the U.S.A. in 1859, when a man named Drake "struck oil" at Titusville, and a growing knowledge of its usefulness, caused the figures to bound in a startling manner. In 1861 the U.S.A. alone was yielding

2,000,000 barrels, or more than one hundred times the yield of the whole of the rest of the world for that year. Last year over 100,000,000 metric tons of petroleum were demanded and produced.

We are approaching the hundredth anniversary of Faraday's vital experiments with what was practically synthetic petrol. Did that famous scientist realise the important part destined to be played by petroleum, both in peace and war, within the few short years which lay between him and ourselves?



A WELL AT THE BAKU OIL CENTRE IN SOUTH RUSSIA.

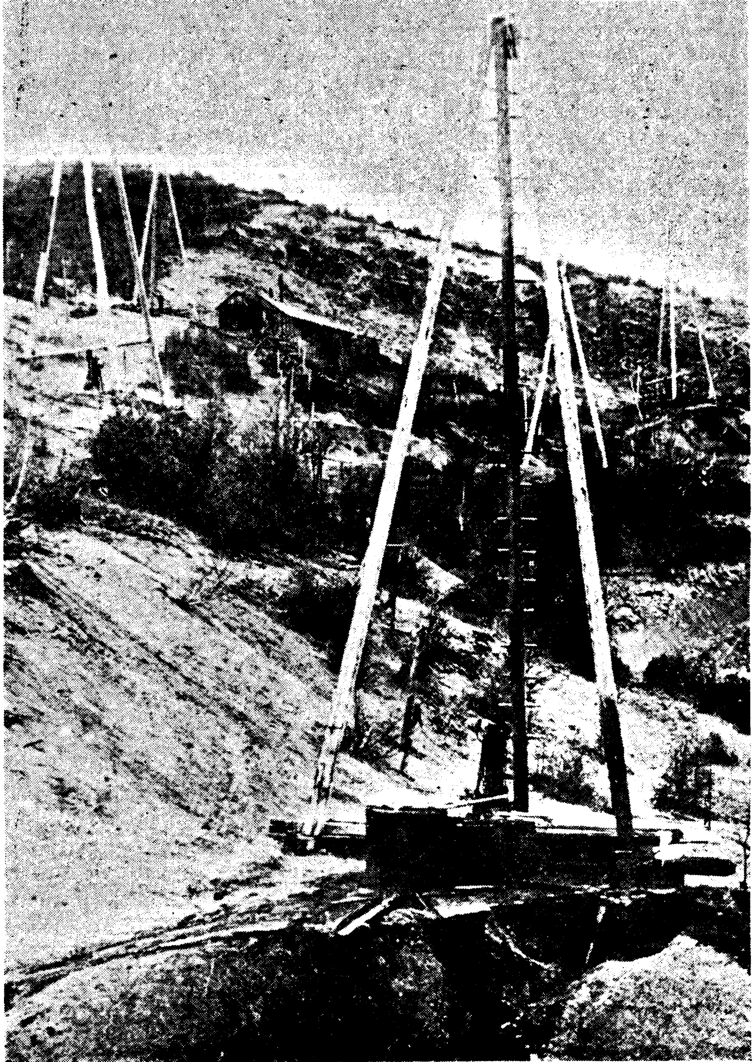
The existence and uses of petroleum have been known throughout history. The Old Testament Scriptures, for example, contain many allusions to mineral oil. In the account of the building of the Tower of Babel, we are told that "slime had they for mortar," the word "slime" in our version being given as "bitumen" in the Vulgate. Again, in Genesis xiv. 10, the Vale of Siddim is described as being "full of slime pits," and it is on account of this, it is considered, that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah may have occurred through the sudden outburst of petroleum in that region. The pitch springs on the Ionian island of Zante, described by Herodotus in 450 B.C., may still be seen.

Nearly all modern engineering and scientific phenomena have their vague and nebulous origin written in the records of past ages. Centuries have intervened during which man has either toyed with theories and possibilities, or has used in a simple way materials which contained within themselves illimitable potentialities of power. Research has told us of former civilisations comparatively as advanced as our own. It is quite possible that a future age will be astonished and puzzled by the revelation of what the people of to-day are able to achieve by harnessing the crude oil which springs naturally from beneath the surface of the earth.

There are several reasons why the production of petroleum is looming up as one of the most vital and interesting problems of to-day. The invention of the Diesel engine, the conversion of the world's navies from the use of coal to oil fuel, and the vast expansion of motor transport, have caused such a huge demand for petroleum that alarm has been felt as to whether the world will always be able to yield enough of it to meet our requirements. On the surface, this uneasiness would appear to be justified. Barely thirty years ago the motor-car was little more than an interesting and cumbersome toy. To-day there are 15,000,000 motor vehicles in the United States alone, and Great Britain maintains over 1,000,000. About 24 per cent. of the world's merchant vessels use oil for boilers, and nearly 3 per cent. are purely motorships, while the British Navy, the most

powerful single power entity in the world, has become 90 per cent. oil fired as compared with 45 per cent. before the War.

Before going on to examine the prospects offered in the way of supplies in the future, we will borrow the method sometimes used to illustrate the significance of big figures. A tank capable of holding the world's output of petroleum during 1923 would have to be 30 feet in height and over 2 miles in diameter. Such a tank would cover an area approximately three times that of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens combined, and the oil contents would fill 15 million 10-ton railway trucks, which would make a train 28,000 miles in length, considerably more than sufficient to encircle the earth at the Equator. Such a train, running at 25 miles an hour, would take over 46 days to pass a given point. The world's production of crude oil is equivalent to 17 gallons *per capita* of the estimated population of the globe.



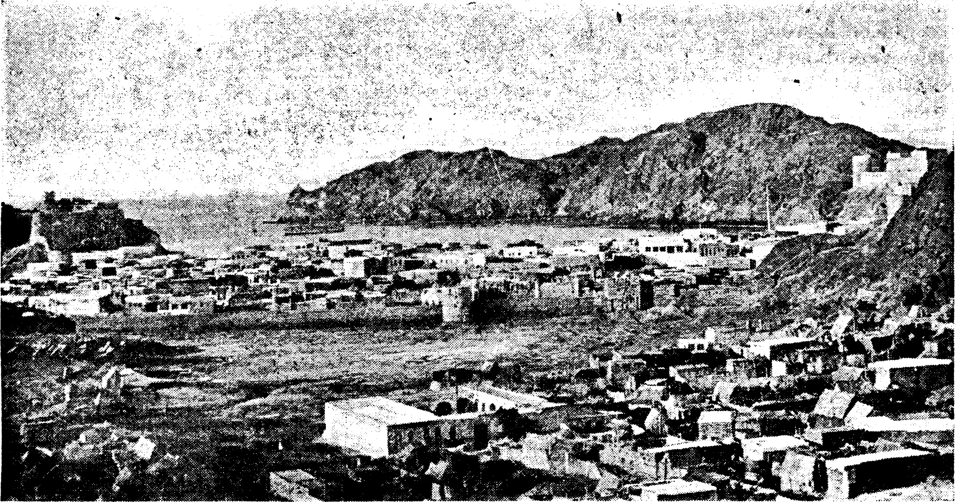
OIL WELLS IN THE PRIDEAL VALLEY, ROUMANIA.

The present crescendo of enthusiasm with regard to oil owes its origin, to a very large extent, to a sinister anxiety lest the world's resources will be unable to keep pace with the world's industrial advance. This anxiety has certainly not been allayed by the attempts made in America to arouse interest in the development of oil properties. The American public has been told that although the country produces such a huge proportion of the world's supply, the home consumption is so enormous that it is nearly all used inside the States, little being available for export. That certain scientists, as well as business men, are nervous on this score is indicated by the remarks made by Lesley, the late American geologist "I am no geologist," he said, "if it be true that the manufacture of oil in the laboratory of Nature is still going on at the rate of a hundredth or a thousandth part of the rate of its exhaustion. The science of geology may as well be abandoned as a guide if events prove that such a production of oil in Western Pennsylvania as our statistics exhibit can continue for successive genera-

tions. It cannot be. There is only a limited amount. Our children will only, and with difficulty, drain the dregs."

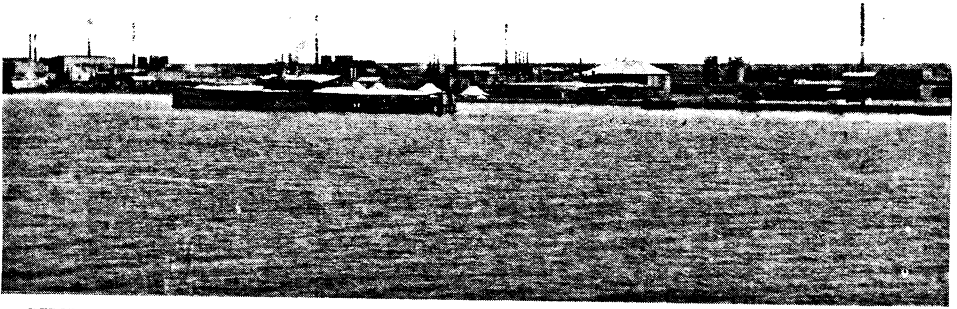
Up to the present about 5,000,000,000 barrels of crude oil have been extracted from the earth in North America, while recent estimates from the other side of the oil remaining underground in the known fields is about 6,700,000,000 barrels. If these figures were conclusive the situation would indeed be a disturbing one, even apart from America's standpoint, for the proportion of oil contributed by her to the world's supply is still, and is likely to be for some time, a preponderant factor. As is mentioned elsewhere in these notes, however, up-to-date scientific opinion holds to the view that the surface of the earth has, up till now, merely been scratched, and that vast reservoirs of petroleum have yet to be located.

It may not be out of place to mention here a circumstance which has forced itself upon the attention of many intelligent observers in America. There is undoubtedly a great amount of wastage going on. The States have been accused of "getting drunk on their own natural riches," but in utilising their God-given treasures they have never been so prodigal as they are with petroleum oil. It may become necessary at some time or other to place oil consumption in America under some sort of national control. A remarkable illustration of what can be accomplished by a wise control was furnished there during the War, when it became evident to the Government that the demands for motor spirit for war purposes could not be met if Sunday joy-riding were continued. The public were informed that it was essential that such joy-riding should cease, and such was the response on the part of car-owners that this source of wastage stopped almost universally. If ever in the future America decides to restrict the export of oil that moment will, of course, see a great leap in the oil production from fields controlled by Britain and other countries, both in the matter of earlier development of new fields and by the introduction of improved methods of extracting motor spirit from crude oil. After all, Civilisation usually has a spare shot or two in her locker.



MOSHAT, ON THE PERSIAN GULF, WHICH HAS IN RECENT YEARS COME INTO IMPORTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH THE OIL INDUSTRY OF PERSIA.

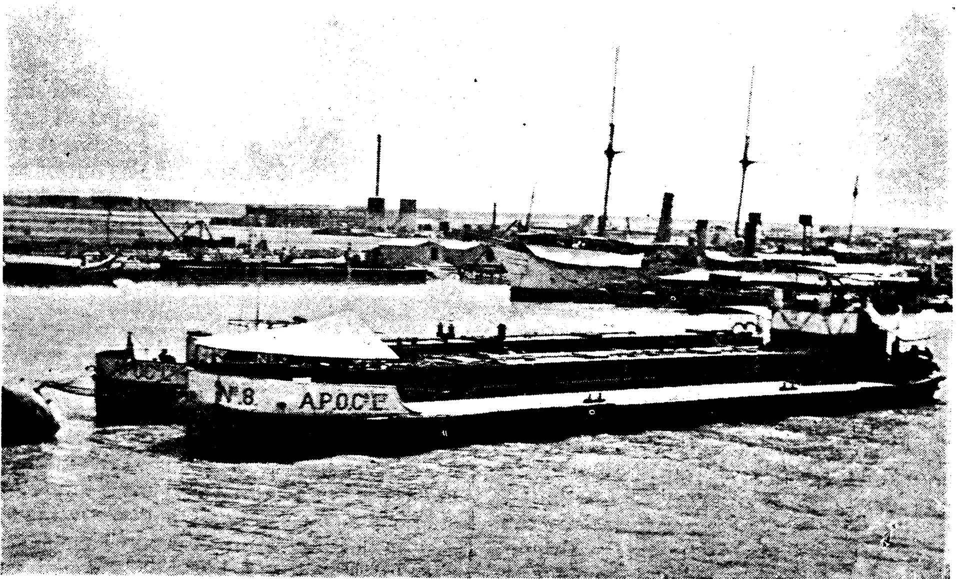
Any article purporting to deal with the oil industry would be incomplete if it failed to outline the wonderful progress made in connection with ocean transport. In no other branch of commercial development during the last century has there been such a radical change as that which resulted from the introduction of the modern bulk oil-carrier. Previous to the designing of the oil "tanker" almost the whole of the transport had been carried out by the employment of wooden barrels and of tins contained in wooden cases, the contents of the latter being generally described as "case oil." The advent of the bulk oil-carrier practically abolished this antediluvian method of transport, enabled cargoes to be



DEPOT AND END OF PIPE LINE OF THE ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL COMPANY AT ABADAN, ON THE PERSIAN GULF.

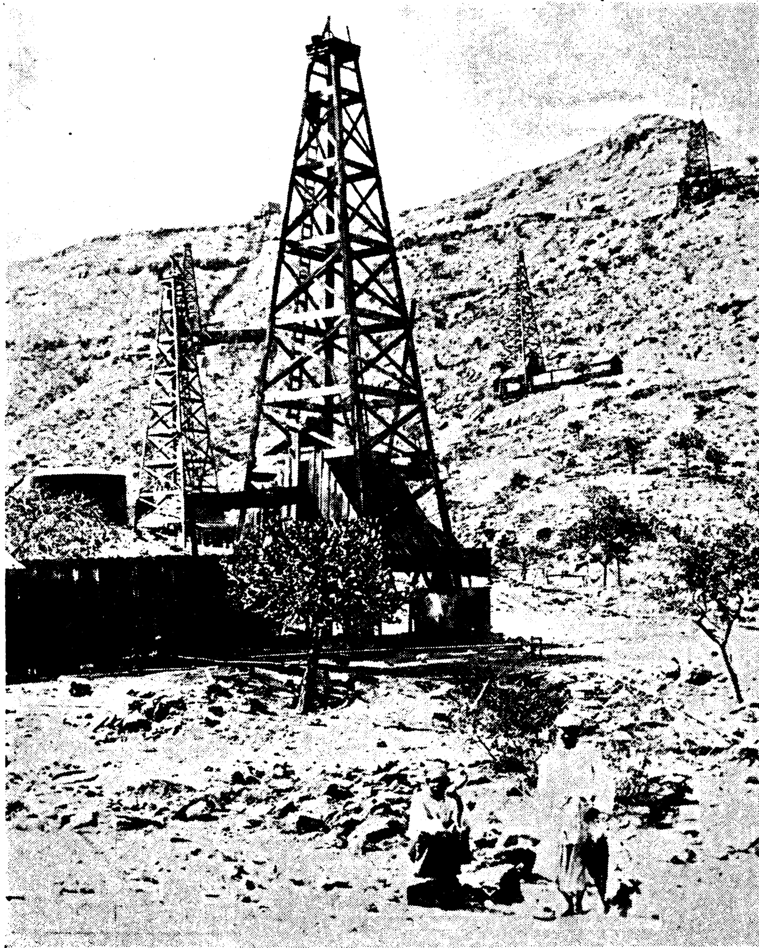
loaded and discharged more expeditiously, and saved the expense of the package. Moreover, in a barrel cargo about a sixth of the total weight was represented by the barrels alone. There is no well-defined record of the earliest bulk oil-carrier, but the Chinese Newchwang junk, built for the carriage of water in bulk, and afterwards used for oil, must be about the earliest example of this kind of vessel.

It is on record that the old wooden vessels which carried oil up and down the Volga, and which probably served what we know as the Baku wells, were so leaky that the great river was often covered with oil for leagues. An interesting method was used to minimise this loss by leakage. The barges when full of oil were loaded on the decks with stone. This gave the barge a greater draught and thereby caused the pressure of water outside to be greater than the pressure of oil inside, the balance of pressure being, if anything, rather in favour of water entering the vessel than of oil leaving it. Lloyd's List now gives a list of more than one thousand tankers in commission, with a gross tonnage of about 5,000,000, and about 150 sailing vessels with 145,000 tons, and there are at the moment about 35 steam and motor-ships of over 1,000 tons each under construction throughout the world for the carriage of oil in bulk. It is interesting to recall the fact that the Germans during the War were




OIL TANKERS IN THE PERSIAN GULF.

so certain of the vital effect on the campaign of a continuous supply of oil that a very intensive effort was made by their submarine service to wipe out the vessels bringing oil to England. Many were sunk, but the number which reached England safely was surprisingly large. The Germans were a long time finding out that huge quantities of oil were brought here by ordinary cargo vessels in their double bottoms.

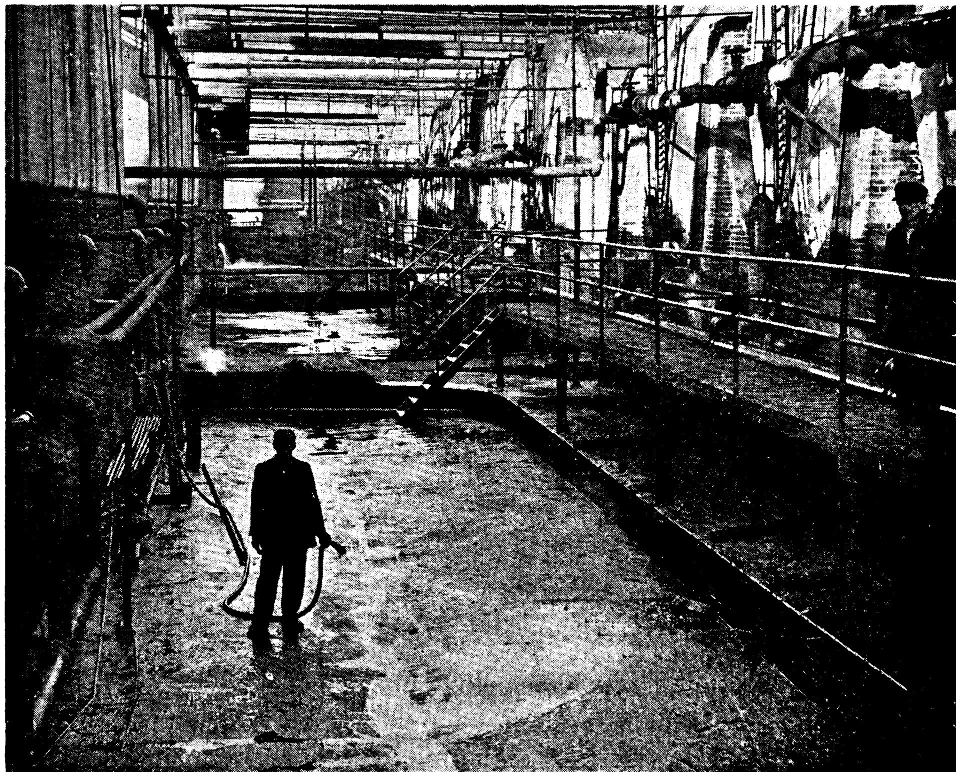


OIL WELLS AT YOUANGZET, BURMA.

Although petroleum may now almost be classed as one of the essential needs of mankind, following close after the prime necessities of food and clothing, and although during the past sixty years the production of oil has grown from practically nothing to such huge figures, oil is not for a long time likely to supplant coal. The yearly production of crude petroleum throughout the world is about one-third the annual coal output of Great Britain alone. In proportion to her needs Britain has, therefore, a great deal less to be anxious about than America has. The world's oil production in 1923, say 138,000,000 tons, is only about 11 per cent. of the world's annual coal output, say 1,200,000,000 tons. Making full allowance for the various uses and efficiencies of coal and oil respectively, or, in other words, taking one ton of oil as being equal all round to two tons of coal, the annual percentage of oil to coal production does not yet exceed some 22 per cent. The underground resources of coal in Britain are also estimated by the best British authorities as exceeding many times the world's potential supplies of natural petroleum. Taking their respective fields of usefulness as a whole, therefore, coal and oil will continue to be complementary and supplementary to each other.

The only oil-producing portions of the Empire of any importance are India (Burma and Assam) and the West Indies (Trinidad), and these countries furnish in the aggregate only a little over 2 per cent. of the world's supply. The paramount importance to the Empire of a big oil supply, in war as in peace, is admitted, and the Government have not neglected to safeguard the interests of the Flag. The first and most important step taken to ensure national safety was the securing of control by Britain of the exceptionally rich oil-fields in Persia. The history of this epoch-making deal, which is entitled

to rank with the purchase of the Suez Canal shares, is worth recounting. Twenty years ago, Mr. W. Knox Darcy, a New Zealand solicitor who had made a fortune out of Australian gold-mines, obtained from the Persian Government a concession for the exploitation of petroleum throughout the whole of Persia—with the exception of a portion bordering on the Caspian Sea. The results obtained from the first drillings were remarkable and exceeded the most sanguine expectations; but the cost of prospecting co-operation of the Burmah Oil Company and the late Lord Strathcona, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was formed with a working capital of £1,200,000. The following four years was a period of hard and unremitting toil. Extensive exploratory and prospecting work was carried out, refineries and storage accommodation were erected, and a long pipe-line to the Persian Gulf was laid down, with the result that the Company's exchequer again became depleted and again the risk of letting the



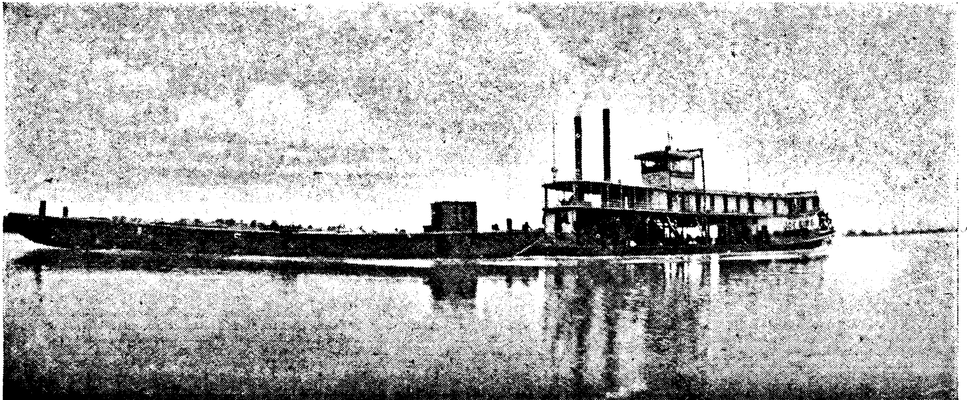
ONE OF THE REFINING PROCESSES: A BATTERY OF STILLS AT OKLAHOMA, U.S.A.

in so remote and difficult a country was very great. Had Mr. Darcy placed his own interests before his love of country the concessions would have been irretrievably lost to us, for he received many tempting offers from European financiers who were eager to obtain a footing in the district. Strongly supported by the late Lord Fisher and a few other enthusiasts, Mr. Darcy declined to lend an ear to the seductive proposals made to him, being determined that no matter what might be the cost to himself, the Persian oil-fields should remain under British control. In 1909, with the powerful

enterprise pass to foreign control began to loom up. At this juncture, Mr. Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, turned his attention to the position and prospects of the Company, with the result that the Government purchased what amounted to a controlling interest for the sum of £2,200,000, and nominated two directors, Lord Inchcape and Admiral Slade, to serve on the Board. This action was taken in the teeth of considerable opposition both in the House of Commons and outside, and statements were freely made that the Government had made a

disastrous bargain. How far the detractors of the deal were mistaken, and how inimical to the true interests of the Empire may be the narrow vision of the uninformed is proved by the fact that two years ago, at a general meeting of the Company, it was announced that the profits had become so large that if the Government wished to dispose of its holding, purchasers could at once be found for it at from £6,000,000 to £8,000,000. In view of the fact that only a small portion of the presumably oil-bearing territory owned by the Company has been tapped up to now, it is safe to say that from a financial point of view alone, the investment is well entitled to rank with that carried through by Disraeli.

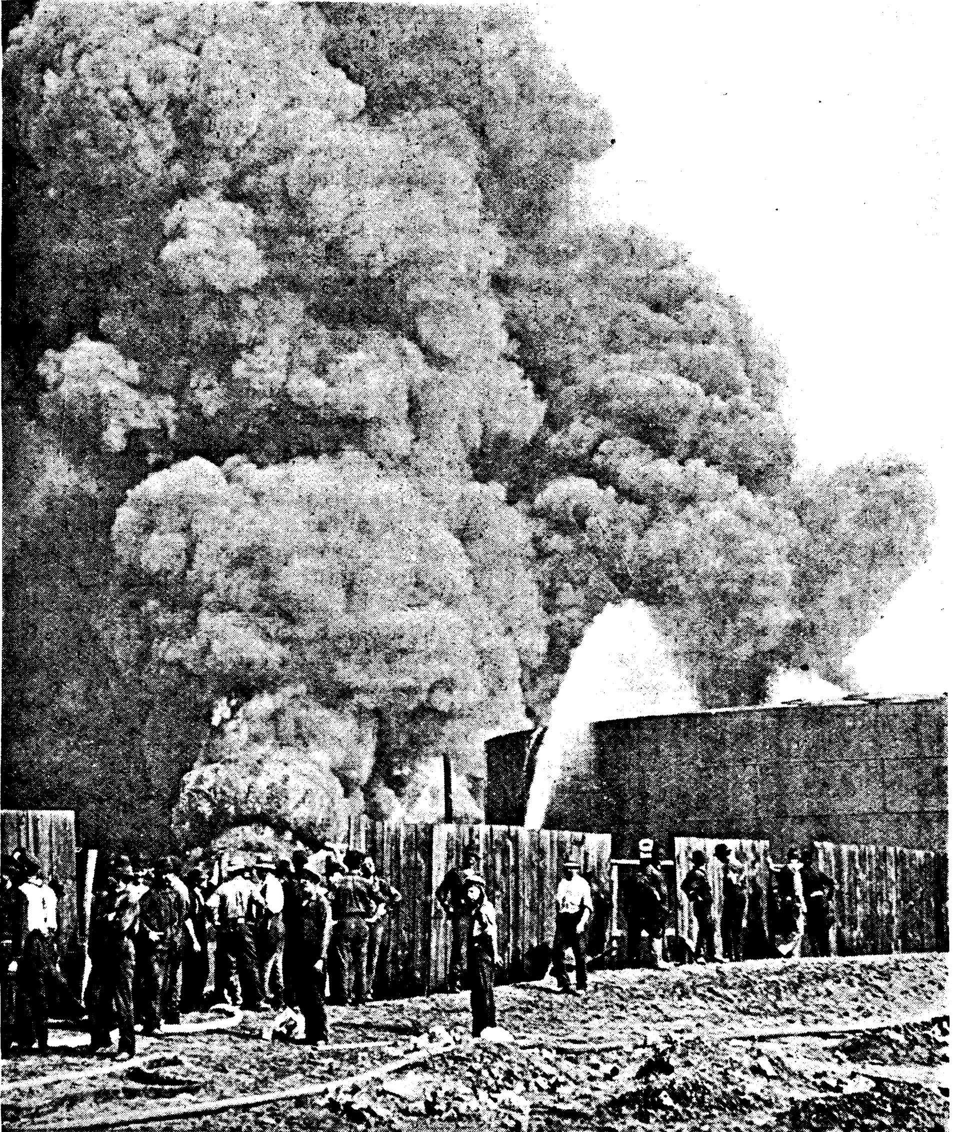
Darcy, however, was not the only Britisher with an eye on the oil question. Parallel with his offensive, an Englishman, Lord Cowdray, was at work. Oil had been known to exist in England since the seventeenth century. Nearly fifty years ago an attempt was made to distil paraffin from the surfaces of crude oil which the development of the coal-mines had disclosed. The urgency of tapping every known source within the Empire impressed itself upon Lord Cowdray long ago, but it was not until the outbreak of war, when D.O.R.A. placed it within the power of the Government to go to any extreme in the exploitation of property, that he found it possible to prospect on any scale at home. Derbyshire, Staffordshire, and a portion of Scotland are now known to possess respectable oil-bearing tracts, and, although Britain's own contribution to the world's supply is, as yet, very tiny, it is satisfactory to know that within these isles there exists what may easily turn out to be the nucleus of a great national asset. In the meantime, the existence of oil along the route of the Tehuantepec Railway in Mexico, which Lord Cowdray's firm were rebuilding, had been brought to the notice of the English pioneer. President Diaz, always in the van of progress, gave Messrs. Pearson all facilities for exploitation, for a consideration, and the result to date has been the building up of a great Anglo-American oil interest in Mexico. Space will not permit of a detailed survey of all the facts that have led up to Britain's incipient rivalry of America, and of the forward British movement which has resulted in flotations and fusions in the Near East and elsewhere, nor can we do more than mention the valuable exploratory work that is being done throughout many of the British Crown Colonies. It is enough to know that small as are our holdings of oil lands within the Empire, the men of our race have had enough grasp, prescience and boldness to acquire for us interests so world-wide and so rich in possibilities as to be a real menace to America's hitherto unquestioned supremacy.



A STEAMER AND BARGE ON THE PANUCO RIVER, MEXICO, CONVEYING FIVE THOUSAND BARRELS OF OIL FROM PANUCO TO TAMPICO.

Many things have contributed towards the British awakening. The hard facts that accompany war and the absolute necessity of taking bold and instant measures in a nation's own interests are often the cause of a national rejuvenescence. One incident of the Great War, for instance, had a great effect on the attitude of thinking Englishmen towards oil as a factor in national greatness. In the autumn of 1916, the

German General Mackensen, fresh from his triumphs in Poland and Siberia, took over the command of the enemy force which was intended to overwhelm and obliterate Roumania. The Allies at once realised that a successful German campaign would mean that an enormous store of oil, one of the most essential of our war supplies, would fall into the enemy's hands. The steps taken to prevent this catastrophe represent the only premeditated instance of large-scale deliberate destruction ever carried out by the Allies. The Roumanian oil-fields were devastated and put out of action. Sir John Norton-Griffiths was sent to Roumania with full powers. When he had finished his task the wells had all been plugged up with scrap-iron, the great oil tanks had been dismantled and the machinery in the refineries had been destroyed. What was once a prosperous industrial community assumed overnight the appearance of a town in Northern France after a continuous intensive bombardment.



FIREMEN EXTINGUISHING A FIRE IN A GREAT OIL RESERVOIR AT BAYONNE, NEW JERSEY, U.S.A.

In one notable respect at least Britain is rapidly making up leeway in the race for international oil supremacy. Up to recently something like 95 per cent. of the technical personnel in the world's fields have been Americans. The technical and research side of oil-winning has marched forward in an astounding and reassuring way. Evidence of our enterprise in production, manufacture and distribution may be deduced from the growth in membership of the Institution of Petroleum Technologists. The Institution was founded in 1913 by 29 persons. By September, 1915, membership had grown to about 190; at the present moment, it numbers 800. Parallel with this great spread of interest in oil prospecting and production we see the establishment of splendidly-equipped oil engineering departments in some of the leading English universities. Birmingham University, for instance, can now boast of an educational organisation capable of turning out the finest oil technologists in the world, and, following the go-ahead traditions of Sir John Cadman, is now, under Professor Alfred Nash, fast replacing the Americans with highly efficient British prospectors and engineers.

The tactics adopted by the authorities in the United States of America, in order to arouse the practical interest of the American people in the oil position, and, incidentally, to bring home to them the danger in which they stood as the result of this British advance, have been, though partially effective, much criticised. Writers in the American Press, and American statesmen in their speeches, have stated that the policy of excluding Americans from foreign oil-fields and of legislating against the acquisition of oil-bearing territory by American syndicates, is an unfair one. Some American publicists have even gone to the length of hinting that this policy might even create a position which would result in war with America. In view of the facts that the Monroe doctrine is the direct negation of the "open-door" policy, and that America is essentially the home of the high, exclusive tariff wall, this anxiety for an "open door" in other lands is rather amusing. The real fact is that the authorities in America awoke some time ago to a realisation that unless considerable impetus could be given to prospecting and investment in oil properties within their own borders, American oil supremacy would be in grave peril. That the policy of arousing national concern has been successful is proved by the fact that production in the U.S.A. has increased by over 30 per cent. during the past few years. If America will only maintain her possible or even normal development she need not worry unduly. She has hitherto done nothing more than scratch the surface of her soil. Geologically, her limits in production are beyond estimate; and, after all, as the same can be said of foreign fields, there would appear to be room in the world for all. The tendency is for all big finance to become more and more international in character, and in no industry is this tendency more pronounced or more likely to evince itself than in the development of oil-fields. It is, therefore, fairly safe to assume that friction of the kind that has disfigured our relations with America over the oil question during the last few years will gradually eliminate itself as time goes on.

## WHILE CUPID SLEPT.

**WHILE Cupid slept, his bow**
**I stole away,**
**Thinking for one mad hour**
**His part to play.**

**I aimed a feathered shaft,**
**But suddenly**
**The bow slipped, and the dart**
**Flew, piercing me.**

**And Cupid woke and laughed**
**The fool to see**
**Who thought to play the god**
**So easily.**

BRIAN HILL.

"'I prize the bag for the sake of the friend who gave it,' she was saying. 'Some things have value out of proportion to their merit.'"

# LEGACY

## By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY ALFRED SINDALL

THE roar of traffic had gone like wine to Downing's head. Moving in the midst of it was like battling with sea waves—a moment's unwariness and he might be engulfed. And not traffic only, but the prodigality of shop windows called for his amazement. It was like passing through the fabled splendours of Arabian Nights. The people too, these self-absorbed fellow beings — Downing watched them as a man watches movements on a stage. The crowds were something remote and aloof behind footlights.

The plate-glass door of a shop was a mirror for Downing. It offered him a lightning sketch of his own figure, which he gave careful scrutiny. He avoided singularity—he told himself this with a sharp sense of relief. Normal—he clung tenaciously to that summing up. There was nothing about him that whispered of captivity . . . or of grotesque arrow marks. . . . He was holding himself with an assured air of freedom. He must watch over-exuberance though, and drink cautiously this heady intoxicating wine of freedom.

Luxury was the most blatant note in this orchestra of revelation, Downing decided. Poverty might be hidden in by-ways, but

in the avenue he traversed wealth was assertive. He found himself appraising the dress of a woman who walked close beside him on the thronged pavement. He noted sable coat and hat, the rustle of silk, chance gleam of pearls where the coat opened at her throat. Downing's eyes travelled to her hands. She was carrying a jewelled bag, and Downing found himself mentally visualising its contents. A woman of wealth would spend as much on luxuries as he himself would strive to gain for a bare living. The inequalities of life set revolt loose in his thoughts—until sudden revulsion turned them to new channels. He possessed freedom. He could come and go now at his own bidding. He was master of his every movement. The knowledge thrilled him. Even this woman had no more of freedom than he. He glanced casually at her face. She was not young, not beautiful; but a good-humoured expression had attraction. He judged her to be a thoroughly good sort. And then as he was looking at her she paused suddenly and stooped to the ground.

"The blot on the scutcheon," Colon appended. "He went completely off the track and ended in prison—a long sentence."

Downing, quicker than she, had seen what she looked for. A link in the handle of her bag had broken. Downing saw the silver gleam of the bag in the dust that caked on the pavement. It was the work of a moment to stoop for it and return it to her.

"Thank you so much. I should have been vexed to lose it."

"I should imagine so," Downing found himself saying.

Something in the inflexion of his voice caught her attention. He felt that his ill-cut clothes became suddenly vocal. He wondered if his voice held the notes that had once stamped him a man of education. The secret years had robbed him of many things. In these days of freedom he found himself calling them like truant sheep to fold.

"I prize the bag for the sake of the friend who gave

it," she was saying. "Some things have value out of proportion to their merit."

"Still, in itself it's worth a poor man's board for a week or two," Downing suggested. The timbre of his own voice angered him. Petulant; a child envying another child its toy—he found phrases to whip himself with. But the sheer luxury of free unfettered speech had gone like wine to his head.

He felt her eyes keenly on him.

"Excuse me . . . something about your voice . . . I judge you to be recovering from a long and serious illness."

"Yes," Downing nodded. "Long—and serious. But I've made a good recovery."

"Ah, I congratulate you. The human voice *is* a barometer. I've had enough to do with invalids to know the inflexions of weakness that follow illness."

They had reached the end of the avenue and Downing's companion paused at cross-roads. She would have left him then with a final sentence of thanks, but for Downing's next sentence.

"Am I going in the right direction for Borrom Street?"

"Borrom Street?" She searched her memory fruitlessly. "I'm afraid I can't tell you. But I live just here and I have a directory. If you'll come in for a moment ——"

"That's troubling you too much," Downing demurred.

"A slight return for rescuing my bag. I should have lost it but for your quickness. Though I'm not sure if there's money enough to make it worth thieving."

"You're not sure?"

His stress on the "sure" caught her attention.

"Why that inflexion?"

"Simply a poor man's interest in the lucky ones of the earth. To have superfluity that doesn't need counting——"

"I see. I suppose I sounded casual. Money as money doesn't mean much to me. Well, if you'll come in for a minute I'll get my directory and a map."

She led the way to a room on the right of the hall, and left Downing there whilst she went for the map. He stared about him appraisingly. There was something dimly familiar here, a ghost of his former taste and predilection—beauty rising like foam on a sea of memory. There had been a time when rooms of this kind had been his habitual setting. Some music open on a stand caught his eye. Chopin's Nocturne in E Minor. He recalled it . . . plaintive . . . dignified. . . . There had been a time when he had been no mean judge of music. The pictures? A MacWhirter engraving . . . a Rossetti . .. a Burne-Jones. . . . The books? He turned quickly to a bookstand. Essays; poetry; a few novels—he drew a sudden sharp breath. This was familiar ground. He felt like a man touching land again after slough.

His hand pressed against something cold lying on the table near which he stood. The silver bag—he stared down at it. His lips twisted wryly. She had not known how much money the bag contained. Careless, probably generous—he knew the type of woman. She had so ample a banking account that she never troubled to appraise her worth. His hand went to his own pocket. Just enough for the merest necessities until he could find a job. And a job would probably be as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp. He carried no credentials. The silent years had robbed him of his place in the world.

Revolt was hot in Downing at the moment. Say that here lay a key that would unlock stiff doors. To him one of the bank-notes in this bag would be in the nature of a lever. By its strength he could raise himself to possible security. It would enable him to wait . . . to go cautiously . . . to feel firm ground under his feet. And it was a safe step. He knew her type. She was entirely casual, this woman. Probably she would never know.

*And if she did she was the kind to remain mute.*

That realisation had imagery of wings. Downing saw himself lifted securely above chance of retribution. He would not have to pay a second time. He was sure of the type. She would realise that he had been hard pressed and driven to bay by hounds of distress. Even if discovery came pity would lock her lips.

It was the work of a moment to extract one of the notes from the bag and slip it into his waistcoat pocket. He was almost laughing as he did so. This woman was not of the faddy sort who would take the number of bank-notes. She was not keen on the scent. She and suspicion were not intimates. *And even if discovery came she was the kind to remain understandingly mute.* That last was like a refrain running through the nocturne of Downing's thought.

He felt no self-consciousness when she came back into the room with the map and directory. An irresistible sense of security made him proof against nervousness. He could be as intent on the map as she was.

"Borrom Street?" Her finger rested on the name. It was far down east, near the docks. Downing felt that her thoughts were busy with some incongruity between himself and the locality. That pleased him. Shreds and patches of past culture clung to him evidently.

"Can I get tea for you?" she said quickly. "It's a long way to the docks. And you said you had been recently ill."

"But I'm better. No, I must be getting on. Already I've trespassed enough on your kindness."

Out in the street Downing walked thoughtfully. Possibly now he could afford something better than the Borrom Street lodging-house. In any case he would get a meal before deciding. He turned into the first restaurant he came to. It would not be necessary to change the note yet. For the present his small stock of cash could be drawn on.

Exhilaration had him enslaved. He was a free man. Already the silent years were slipping into the mists of yesterday. His pocket held enough to give him a short breathing-space. . . . He must lay plans and get his feet on the ladder of normal living.

It had commenced to rain when Downing came out of the restaurant—a slight check to his exhilaration. He quickened his pace presently as the rain came down more heavily. It would be necessary to find some quiet lodging, some place where he might stay for a day and a night whilst his plans matured.

The street Downing traversed now was a quiet one off the highway. He had it to himself for a time; but presently a solitary motor passed him, going slowly. There was something a little out of the common about the man who drove it. He was sitting bent over the steering-wheel, setting the car to crawling speed. As he passed Downing he stopped, and turned in his seat, beckoning.

Downing knew a moment's indecision. The next he had stepped to the edge of the pavement.

"Can you drive a car?"

"I'm out of practice, but——" Downing snapped his sentence in two. "Yes, I can drive," he amended.

"Then I wonder if you'll help me. Could you get me along to a garage where I can hire a man to drive me home? I've a sudden attack of neuritis in my arm—the kind of fiend that leaps on one unexpectedly. Anyhow, I wouldn't risk driving twenty miles into the country with my right arm out of action."

"I'll help with pleasure." Downing stepped into the car and put his hand on the wheel. "Tell me where you want to go."

"There's a garage in Ponting Street. First to the right, third to the left."

"But——" Downing paused, glancing sideways at his companion. "Will you let me drive you all the way? As a matter of fact I'm on holiday and this would be in the nature of an outing. A free ride into the country," he laughed.

"You're a stranger in these parts?"

"Yes. And at the moment aimless. If you're willing to take me on as stop-gap——"

The other's eyes were twinkling. A faint flavour of the unusual in the incident evidently pleased him. Downing, watching him, summed him up as another of the amiable ones of the earth—a male edition of the woman whose house he had recently left.

"It's extremely good of you." The other hesitated. "It's accepting a good deal from a stranger. Still——"

Downing slipped into the pause with a quick, "I'd enjoy it. An unexpected outing."

"Well then—thanks."

Downing had set the car moving. There was something exhilarating about the throb of the engine. He made a quick calculation of the interval of time since he had last driven a car.

"I live down at Hollings. It's a good twenty-mile spin. Do you know it? But of course not if you're new to these parts."

Downing was busy with steering-gear. These new cars had points that were unfamiliar. . . . *Hollings. Did he know it?* . . .

"I was there once as a lad," Downing found himself saying aloud. "Years ago. Probably the place has grown out of recognition."

"It has. The eye of the City man has fallen on it. Villas abound. My wife and I have been lucky though. We chanced on an old-fashioned country house. We didn't even change the name of it . . . 'The Anchorage.'—What's that? Never driven this make of car before? I'll show you its points."

Downing's clumsiness with minor details carried the talk to safe channels. Mechanics were non-committal food for talk. He was soon sending the car at a good rate along an open stretch of road. The car's owner gave instruction as to direction. From time to time he chatted about Hollings.

"I suppose there'll be a train back to-night?" Downing asked.

"Yes. There's one at seven. You'll have ample time for a meal with us first."

"I needn't trouble you," Downing said. "I can be back in town by eight."

Downing was conscious now of the other's scrutiny. He divined the direction of his thought. Downing would seem to him a personality not easy to place. A man of some education but down on his luck—probably that would be the summary. He could imagine the other wondering if money payment would be an insult or a boon.

"Hollings looks its best on a spring evening—one end of it at least. We're away from the new-fangled part of it. The real country for us."

Life was a queer business, Downing decided. Hollings of all places! And

"The Anchorage"! No one in Hollings would remember him though. He had been a lad when he visited it with his mother. Time was a good india-rubber to erase the past. These strangers, for instance, held possession of "The Anchorage" now.

"My name's Colon," the owner of the car said abruptly. "It strikes me we ought to have some kind of label to hang on to one another."

"Mine's Downing."

"I insist on your having supper before you leave," the other was reiterating. "You're doing me a great service."

The car was like a live thing now under Downing's hand. He thrilled to the sheer ecstasy of movement. It was freedom set to a new key. He was able in thought to flout the last years. Even detail became blurred and softened. . . . Cell walls . . . yard exercise . . . skilly in a tin can. . . . These were the dim mists of yesterday.

Here was Hollings at last. Changed? Yes, but not beyond recognition. There was Duncan's farm, for instance, and the village street; presently "The Anchorage." Downing brought the car to a standstill before the door.

"You must come in," Colon insisted. "Here's my wife. She'll add her request to mine."

Mrs. Colon was a dark slip of a woman, with understanding eyes. With a glance she seemed to place Downing. A gentleman—the cut of his clothes was an accident. Evidently life moved in a difficult rut for him—Downing felt he could follow her thoughts as if she spoke aloud.

The house was unchanged. Details were like familiar friends greeting him. The whole place was wrapped in a kind of delicate charm. Some impalpable spirit of beauty held control. Seated presently in the dining-room, Downing slipped back through the years. Just here he had sat as a boy with great uncle and aunt Hadston at the head and foot of the table.

"We've been here for twelve years," Mrs. Colon was saying. "It was a stroke of luck for us to get it. Houses have individuality, don't you think so?"

"Yes," Downing nodded.

"*This* one has. Living here is like coming into a legacy."

"A legacy of what?" Downing ventured.

"Honour and Valour."

Downing's eyes went to the low window at the far end of the dining-room. It opened to the garden; beyond the garden the valley was background to the silver track of the river.

"The place has all kinds of subtle suggestions," Mrs. Colon chatted. "The name, for instance—'Anchorage.' It suggests security. Everything about the place is like the Hadston family. It was theirs for generations. Delightful people, one feels sure. Legends of them are rife in Hollings. In some rather wonderful fashion they seem to have reached high-water mark from one generation to another. A family that had remarkably little alloy in its make-up."

"This house is my wife's hobby," Colon smiled. "She's right, though. Legacy—that's the word. One soaks it in. I feel almost as if in time I'd learn to be a Hadston myself."

Memory was like a flail about Downing's shoulders. His mother had been the last of the Hadstons—and she had drifted away at the time of her marriage. That visit of hers when he was a boy had been the last before her death.

"There's nobody left now of the family. At least——"

"Yes?" Downing prompted. The pause held implications he wanted to verify.

"There was a daughter who made an unhappy marriage—some one as un-Hadston-like as she could have chosen. She and her husband died young. They left a boy, though." She paused abruptly.

"The blot on the scutcheon," Colon appended. "He went completely off the track and ended in prison—a long sentence. For years now he has slipped into the mists—forgotten. And in any case he was hardly known at Hollings even as a child. Pity, isn't it? Not one of them left to carry on tradition." Colon pointed to an oak beam above his head. "'Honour and Valour.' You see the old carving?"

Downing glanced up. The light was too dim to see clearly. He saw shadows moving in the half light, seeming most oddly to gesticulate. At one moment they assumed the guise of beckoning figures; the next they were retreating, shrinking. They seemed to crumple and disappear with sharp gestures of repulsion.

"There's a storm coming," Colon said suddenly. "I hear thunder."

It was quickly like a battering army about the valley. With the swiftness of a summer storm it encircled the house. Colon shut and fastened the window, and as he did so lightning made illumination in the room. For a vivid moment Downing saw the

carving on the oak beam above his head. . . . "Honour . . . and Valour. . . ."

"This settles one thing," Colon said. "You're not going through this to get your train."

Mrs. Colon was an echo of her husband. It was impossible. There was plenty of room at "The Anchorage." If Downing would allow them to offer hospitality for the night he would give them a chance to repay his kindness in driving the car.

Downing looked from one to the other. They were oddly trustful. They were taking him at face value. And then suddenly it seemed to him that instead of the Colons he saw great uncle and aunt Hadston at the head and foot of the table. They too had been simple, unsuspicious souls. Necessity was the only credential they asked. Downing remembered odd wayfarers brought temporarily to rest at "The Anchorage." Now these people, the Colons . . . Downing had the fancy that even if they *knew* they would offer him sanctuary.

"You'll stay ?" Colon and his wife urged.

"Why, no, I can't," Downing said quickly. "I must get back to town. There's some one I must see to-night."

"But it's impossible," Mrs. Colon urged.

Lightning was making jagged rents in the roof of the world. Thunder was a volley of responding guns. The rain, when it came, was a deluge.

"You can't turn out," Colon shrugged. "You'll get drenched."

"I'll risk the drenching," Downing persisted.

"Then you'll take my mackintosh," Colon insisted. "You'd no coat with you."

These people were the embodiment of foolish security. They were lending coat and umbrella—to Downing! He smiled to himself wryly. It had been a queer adventure. He had never expected to visit Hollings again.

*Legacy*—the word throbbed in unison with the throb of the train engine. Honour and Valour—*legacy*. It was as if suddenly from mists of the past an assembly of Hadstons, men and women, thronged to him with gifts. They plied him with a thousand questions. They were dismayed, aghast. At one and the same moment they condemned and yet gave largesse. Legacy—the word seemed now to materialise, to assume fantastic shapes—ladders, wings. It was a lever set under the heavy weight of Downing's conscience, compelling it at last to move. Honour . . . Valour . . . the Hadston legacy. The dust and débris of his last years moved and stirred beneath the fan of realisation.

The City again—he came back to it with a sense of unfamiliarity. Something in him was astir, a buried thing casting aside a shroud.

Legacy—well then, he should act inheritor. Honour—he would use it with the stiffness of an untried tool. It was not easy to come again to the house of the woman he had robbed earlier in the day. He didn't even know her name. The detail struck him as incongruous since he was about to unveil the depth of his ignominy.

She came into the hall in response to the maid's summons. Downing glanced at the door of the room where he had waited earlier in the day.

"May I see you on a private matter ?"

"Certainly."

Her face showed good-humoured as ever. She was of the sort to avoid ice in dealing with her fellows. She gave Downing credit for some cogent reason for the oddity of his return.

Downing took a bank-note from his pocket and handed it to her.

"This is yours."

"Mine ?"

She looked up startled. The implication was not to be escaped. The purse-bag on the table . . . Downing left alone whilst she went for the directory. . . . Downing could see her building from the bricks he gave her. He saw her startled withdrawal from the finished picture.

"Yes, I took it whilst you were out of the room. I suppose in a way it was a natural thing for me to do—in my own line, so to speak."

She was looking at him, still speechless. The note had slipped from her fingers and lay on the table between them.

"I let you think this morning I was getting better from an illness. It was true in a way. The weary sickness of prison . . . and the mockery of four walls hemming one in, year in, year out."

She glanced from Downing to the note and back again. "Then why——"

"Why have I played the honest man at last ? An easy question. I've come into a legacy."

"Ah, I see. You . . . you don't need this ?"

"No, I don't need it."

"You—for the future you see a clearer path?"

"Clear to the end," Downing said slowly.

She looked up quickly. "I should never have associated you with the loss. You were safe."

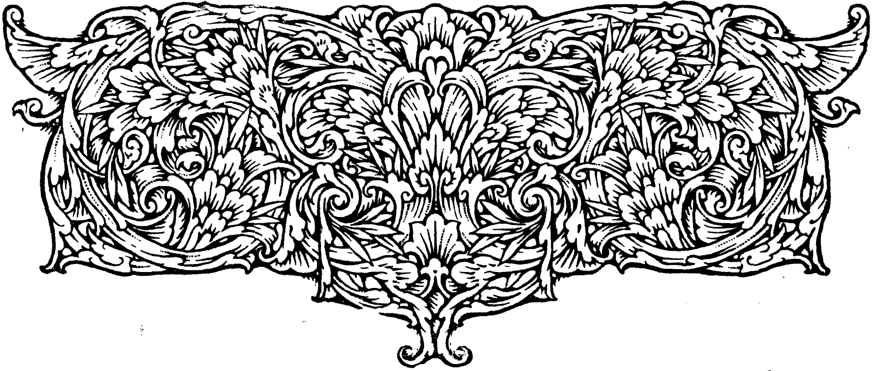
"I knew that. Nevertheless——"

She suddenly held her hand out. "For the sake of that 'nevertheless' . . . and for the honour of your return . . . will you shake hands?"

Downing was out in the street again in a few minutes. He would go down to the cheap lodging-house in Borrom Street. First thing in the morning he would mail the things Colon had lent him.

And afterwards?

Well, he had health still. An honest man should be able to find a niche. To-night he saw his whole future illumined. He moved with the confidence of a man who has inherited unexpected riches.



# DUSK.

**You are the kindest time of day,**
**As kind as soft lights are**
**To lovely women growing old.**
**You charm all ugliness away**
**And touch the hills with sudden gold,**
**And shroud in mist the first faint star.**

**The barges by the riverside,**
**The huddled houses near,**
**The chimney stack and swinging crane**
**Are touched with magic day denied;**
**And beauty walks instead of pain,**
**And even grime and smoke are dear.**

**In town or country grows more deep**
**The sombre blue above,**
**And little lights like mushrooms spring**
**Into the dark. And homeward creep**
**The old who think of tea and sing,**
**While young ones sigh and dream of love . . .**

**IRENE STILES.**

# HANBURY'S GOOD FORTUNE

## By W. PETT RIDGE

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LENDON

IT was our custom to make up a party from the City warehouse for the theatre on the last Friday of the month, and there had been a time when Hanbury was included, but he criticised the plays so bitterly that our enjoyment found itself diminished, and we left him out. On a particular night six of us waited for an hour outside the gallery doors; inside there was another thirty minutes, and just as the orchestra finished its selection and the lights were about to be lowered, into the front row of the stalls below came Hanbury, accompanied by a lady slightly older than himself. He faced the audience, and pressed his opera hat against his shirt front.

"Hush!" said the people behind us, as we made our ejaculations of astonishment. "Hold your row, can't you?"

We hurried down the staircase when the play was over, and at the corner, where an awning was placed, watched the evening-dress people come out. I did not myself care to speak to Hanbury, but I induced one of the others who lived in his direction to do so.

"Hallo!" he said. "How are you going home?"

Hanbury looked at him casually. "Thank you, my man," he replied, "we don't want a taxi. The car is about somewhere!"

In consequence of this, we prepared several biting and caustic remarks to be offered the next morning. We might have saved ourselves the trouble. Hanbury did not sign on at Watling Street, and his office coat was eventually given to the charwoman. I found his photograph side by side with that of a Mrs. Matherston in a weekly journal; by that time the marriage ceremony was over, and belated ideas of sending an ironical telegram of congratulation were useless.

I ran across him one evening in Shaftesbury Avenue. Searching my waistcoat pockets, I had found only one and sixpence; this meant that if I went into the Apollo I should have to walk home to Highgate. As I stood on the edge of the pavement, trying to make up my mind, a taxi splashed me, and stopped.

"My dear chap!" said Hanbury, speaking quietly. "How are you? The very man, above everybody else, I am glad to meet."

"What's wrong?" I asked defensively.

He paid the fare and turned again to me.

"The hump!" he admitted, "and I want to share it with somebody. You were always a good listener. Let us dine together."

I must say this for Hanbury: he had learnt how to order a good meal. In other respects he seemed to have acquired something; he no longer spoke loudly, or attempted to show off by exercising authority. The waiter at the restaurant spilled the soup in placing it on the table; Hanbury, wiping his coat-sleeve, said it was not the waiter's fault. He inquired after the clerks at Watling Street, showing an interest whilst I talked, and apologising when he interrupted. He ordered coffee and cigars, and asked whether I particularly wanted to go to the theatre, or whether I minded staying on to continue the discussion.

"I take this as extremely kind of you," he declared. "There is something I want to talk about. Do you think if I made an application, they would take me back at Watling Street?"

"Wish me to tell you the truth?"

"If it is not too unpalatable."

"We none of us want you back there," I declared. "We're all getting on much more comfortably without you. There's no one now to advance money to us, and consequently we're living within our income."

"Any other reason?"

"Well," I answered hesitatingly, "we

don't quite like the way you dropped all your chums once you were married."

"I lost my balance," admitted Hanbury. "My idea was that I could do without old friends. I assumed I should be able to make plenty of new ones."

"There's always your wife."

"My wife has pensioned me off. Pensioned me off on the understanding that I never come near her or the baby boy again. I was just getting fond of him." Hanbury dropped his napkin, and took rather a long time to recover it. He was so obviously distressed that I could not help feeling sorry for him.

"I'm only a bachelor," I said, "but I can quite understand, from all I've noticed and all I've read, that this is one of those little disputes which occur over some trifling matter, and, after a while, are forgotten by both parties. You must allow time, Hanbury, and it will blow over." He seemed disinclined to take the trouble to contradict me. "Any use my interfering? Shall I go and see her?"

"You could go and see her," he said, "but it wouldn't, in the least, alter the situation. What I want is something to do. I'd much rather you interested yourself on my behalf at Watling Street than in Thurloe Square. See if you can manage it for me, will you? If I don't get work, I shall go off my head."

I spoke of the matter the next morning to the junior partner, and he said it was impossible. The lace business could not afford to behave in a philanthropic way. Competition was too keen to permit of benevolent actions. Later, he came to me and confessed it would be quite a good joke to see Hanbury on hands and knees. I was at liberty to inform Hanbury that he could come back at something less than the old salary.

I am prepared to deny the accusation of being a soft-hearted chap, but, putting myself in Hanbury's position, it seemed to me one would find it a hard task to return to the City after leaving it so magnificently. Anyway, I looked up the address in the Directory, and went along by Underground Railway to South Kensington. The maid took my name upstairs, and came back to inquire some particulars concerning the reason of my visit. I pencilled a sentence on the back of a business card.

"You have called to see me about Mr. Hanbury?"

Hanbury's wife spoke quietly; she looked to me the kind of person unlikely to take any important step in a fit of temper. "Do you mind," she went on, "being very brief? Nurse is just putting my baby in his cot."

I rattled it all out as well as I could; there is no use in pretending I did it well. I remembered to assure her that Hanbury had not asked me to call.

"I am certain," she said, "you mean well, but it is not a matter in which a third party can interfere. For one thing, you are scarcely in possession of all the facts."

"I am prepared to listen to them."

"That may be only curiosity on your part. There are several details which need not be mentioned; the principal point is that Mr. Hanbury told me he married me only because I had money. He can take any action he thinks necessary or advisable."

It proves I am not so utterly devoid of tact as some people, at various times, have managed to hint, when I place upon record the circumstance that, before leaving, I made an inquiry about the little one upstairs, and mentioned I had a niece of about the same age. Mrs. Hanbury, changing her manner, asked whether I would care to see the baby. In the nursery I flatter myself I said just about the right thing. Certainly from that moment I was able to take on the job of messenger boy between Watling Street and Thurloe Square.

Hanbury signed the book, spoke to those of us whom he had known previously, and settled down without delay to his work. There was an inclination on the part of some of the others to chaff him, and one of them suggested "The Prodigal Husband" as a nickname; but it did not catch on, and I advised them to wait and see whether Hanbury's behaviour gave any excuse for chipping.

* * * * *

I am going to tell you how Hanbury made his way, but there is no sense in pretending that it did not take a bit of doing. Of course, he was helped by his allowance. Hanbury, in his holidays, could afford to go over to Plauen and have a look around at the foreign manufactories there. He wrote one or two articles in a trade journal. He spent his week-ends at Nottingham for the sake of talking business with people and ascertaining all that was going on. His influence in the firm became considerable, and this proved lucky for me, for in a certain personal difficulty of mine connected with oversleeping he interposed and saved me from

getting the boot. I suppose he felt he owed something to me, but, as a matter of fact, it was always a pleasure to take a message—say, on birthdays and occasions of the kind—to Thurloe Square, and bring back news of Mrs. Hanbury and the child. Hanbury felt particularly eager for news about the boy. I remember the time when I was able to announce that the services of a governess had been obtained.

"He will be a grown lad," said Hanbury, speaking slowly, "before I see him. And then, likely enough, he won't want to see me."

"I went along in an apprehensive mood, and found Mrs. Hanbury seated in a wicker chair near the entrance.

"It's no business of mine to give advice," I remarked, "but if I were you I should simply write to her, state your present income, and so on and so forth. I expect she's waiting for you to take the first step."

"I can't do that."

"You're obstinate."

"If ever you hear," he said deliberately, "of a case where a young man proposes to marry a well-to-do woman for no other reason than because she is well-to-do, you just warn him that no happiness can possibly come from it. It seemed to me at the time the cleverest thing. Now I am working out my term of punishment. Don't let us discuss the matter any further. It hurts!"

I spent my fortnight's holiday that year at Eastbourne, because I understood a certain young lady was likely to be there with her mother. (In point of fact, they went to Bude in Cornwall, where she became engaged to a solicitor from Taunton.) There was a good deal of time on my hands, and I did not feel sorry to encounter, along near Beachy Head, Mrs. Hanbury, the boy,

and the governess. The governess turned out to be a girl who had been to school with my two sisters. I could recollect that, at a children's party once, she asked if she might give me a kiss, and I declined to allow her to do so. I think Mrs. Hanbury was pleased to see me; Miss Wiltshire mentioned, in confidence, that a man staying at their hotel on the front was giving annoyance by sending flowers to Mrs. Hanbury, intercepting her as she left the dining-room, offering his company of an evening to the Devonshire Park pavilion. Mrs. Hanbury had lost her purse that morning near the Redoubt, and the man was insisting upon making all the necessary inquiries at the police station.

"Unsatisfactory position for her," I said.

"Wish you could think of some way to put an end to it," she remarked. "You would, if you were clever."

I took a long walk alone, out Alfriston way, and if I thought out one plan I thought out a dozen. All of them possessed the element of risk—some more than others —and it made me nervous to imagine Miss Wiltshire's reprimand should failure ensue. In the result I, on my return, went to the station and sent a telegram. A reply came to the boarding-house where I was staying, well within the hour.

"Coming by five-twenty from Victoria. Meet train.—Hanbury."

You must understand that, in telling this story, I don't profess to get you to look upon me as a chap specially good at strategy, or, in fact, anything above the ordinary. And you won't, I know, think the better of me when I tell you that when the time drew near, I jibbed at the prospect of going to the station, and tried to find some way of getting out of it. I managed to get Miss Wiltshire on the telephone, and, explaining what I had done, asked for her advice.

"That's all right," she said briskly, "leave the rest to me."

I made a very good dinner, thanks to the feeling that responsibility was being shared. The maid said I was wanted at the telephone.

"Come here to the hotel at once," ordered the voice of Miss Wiltshire.

"Is everything cleared up?"

"No," she replied curtly, "everything is muddled."

I went along in an apprehensive mood, and found Mrs. Hanbury seated in a wicker chair near the entrance. She was gazing at the advertisement page of an evening newspaper, apparently under the impression that it contained all the latest news.

"Mr. Hanbury is here," she remarked.

"You don't say so!"

"I have refused to see him," she went on.

"Of course!"

"It is quite useless to renew the difficulties of years ago."

"Absolutely," I agreed.

"He must have heard, in some way, of the change in my income, and his sudden visit is the consequence."

"Has there been an alteration?"

"An uncle of mine," she explained, "out at Ceylon, is dead. I had the news by cable only this morning."

"But," I protested, "how on earth would Mr. Hanbury be likely to know of it? And if he did know of it, how could he tell for certain that it would mean money to you?"

"I hope," she said, speaking rather less resolutely, "that I am capable of looking below the surface."

I found Miss Wiltshire, and ascertained she had met the train, identifying Mr. Hanbury by the photograph that always rested on Mrs. Hanbury's dressing-table. She had brought him to the hotel, and it was there the full stop occurred. I asked her to go and inquire of Mr. Hanbury whether he had brought the telegram I sent him. She returned with it, and I went out again to Mrs. Hanbury.

"Read that," I begged. "See what I said to him. 'Your wife sustained money loss.' That's all I wired. And he came at once. Came to help and comfort you."

"But there was only a ten-shilling note in the purse!"

"I didn't mention the exact sum," I explained, "because that would have cost more. Mrs. Hanbury, he's a far better man than he was. Don't you think that——"

I paused.

"Say," she cried, with a burst, "that I very much wish to see him!"

* * * * *

We watched them going up the staircase together, and we heard her say the boy would be asleep, but that she felt eager his father should admire him without delay. It was a bit of luck in my direction, for Miss Wiltshire, being pleased, turned and kissed me—this time without asking my permission.

"She had gone out in the fields beyond, with her family trailing behind."

# THE WAY OF A STOAT

## By H. THOBURN-CLARKE

### ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

BLACK-TIP waked to life in a cosy nest that his mother had built in the heart of a wall that shut in a shady lane. Behind the wall was a small wood, many of the trees so old, that when the winds blew fiercely down the dale, they rocked so much that it was a wonder that the rooks that dwelt in the tree-tops had not fled in a wild panic from the place. But, instead, they still built their nests, avoiding only the very ancient ash trees, whose immense trunks were but hollow shells and might fall at any minute. Not that anyone ever knew that the trunks were only shells, for the ivy that had grown so thickly around them concealed everything; only the bats knew, for they nested in the great crevices, but they said nothing. On the opposite side of the lane was another wall, with a younger ash tree, and fields stretching away into the distance. Many walls bounded the fields, but Black-Tip was not concerned with this. The morning sun shone brightly upon the stone wall, and golden points of light came through the crevices and fell full upon Black-Tip's bead-like eyes. He would wake and watch these golden points of light, wondering in his baby mind what they were and why they were snuffed out when his mother's long, lithe form slipped, sinuously, through the openings between the stones.

One day his mother was away hunting when the golden point of light crept to where he slept. The warm ray, focused upon his little ruddy head, waked him into

instant life and mischief. He looked upon his three brothers and sister sleeping peacefully, and then climbed very softly out of the nest. His limbs had never been called upon to do more than scratch and struggle with his brothers and sister, and now they were very weak and wobbly, but he managed to crawl to the opening between the stones. Pushing his little head out, and sniffing, apprehensively, he gazed up and down the narrow, dirty lane that lay between two stone walls. Overhead a noisy blackbird scolded and told the world at large that a baby stoat was taking its first peep into the glittering sunlight that lay outside the wall.

It was all so interesting, and the blackbird's scolding roused the hunting spirit in his baby mind. He craned forward, turning his head first in one direction, then in another, stepping carefully to the extreme edge of the stone on which he stood. He could not see the blackbird, but a broad, moss-covered stone lay just below him, the sunshine turning the moss into a glory of gold and green. It looked so delightful that Black-Tip stepped very carefully forward, then slid grotesquely over the edge of the stone and landed quite unhurt, and extremely pleased with himself, upon the moss. The warmth of the sun was so inviting that he stretched himself comfortably, and lay basking in it.

The waving of the green boughs above him, the cawing of the rooks as they went about their domestic duties, the angry twitter of the smaller birds, who were extremely annoyed at his presence, were all so delightfully strange and fascinating, that he lay and basked, gazing upwards out of beady eyes. Suddenly the sunlight was blotted out and he looked around. Something so huge that he could only see an immense mass of red that filled the whole horizon. It was only an inquisitive cow returning from drinking at the beck, and perfectly harmless, but it was the first time that Black-Tip had seen anything so huge, so immense, and so awe-inspiring. He cowered back, wedging his small ruddy back against the stone, and chittered wildly as he frantically clawed at the empty air. The cow bent down, twisted her long tongue around a tuft of grass that grew invitingly close at hand. Black-Tip was too scared to move, he could only chitter more despairingly than ever, and his voice rose in a long thin wail. He was sure that he would be completely blotted out by the awful red apparition, but he never thought of retreating to his nest. Everything was forgotten in that dreadful moment. Again he wailed and beat the air.

His mother, busy hunting field-mice in the ruined stable just at the bend of the lane, heard the agonised chittering wail of her offspring. Danger threatened him, and like a streak of ruddy light she flashed out into the open sunlight, and darted down the lane. She seemed hardly to set her feet to the earth, but with long, sinuous bounds cleared the ground, a very incarnation of fury, vivid, lithe, and ready to do battle with the world in defence of her offspring. Nothing can move as fast as a stoat when it likes, and this mother was filled with a great fear. Black-Tip was calling for help. . . . Then she shot around the bend and saw the cow. She had a great contempt for cows . . . great trampling creatures, that only munched grass or slept all the day through. She did not pause in her going, but darted on, bounding past the cow, who, suddenly startled, stepped back with a snort. The mother did not care, she swept up and over the stone, caught Black-Tip in her stride as it were and literally dragged him back to the nest. She was so angry with him for the fright he had given her that she dropped him roughly among the rest, administered a sharp slap, and returned to her hunting.

Black-Tip lay passively among his brothers and sister, whimpering broken-heartedly as he remembered his wrongs and the awful giant of the lane. His fears kept him in check, and for some hours he nursed his woes, and behaved as a stoat should do until his mother takes him out hunting with her. Then the desire to view the lane once more overcame his fears, and he crawled out once more, but this time he lurked in the opening and gazed out, his beady black eyes taking in every detail. The lane seemed suddenly to fill with alarming creatures. The rooks in the tops of the old elms cawed loudly, and whirled upward in screaming flocks, and the dreadful explosions that followed terrified Black-Tip so much that he darted back into the nest, and crouched among his brothers and sister, trying in vain to shut out the hideous sounds of the shooting.

The sun had slipped away behind the wood, and the lane was very dark and gloomy and the little stoats waited anxiously for their mother's return. She was very late, and they were getting very hungry. The sportsmen were no longer rook-shooting and things were very quiet; only the wind

surged heavily among the trees, and the old hollow ash trees creaked and groaned with the force of the gale.

The little family whimpered complainingly . . . they were so very hungry . . . but the gale was at its height, and great sheeted masses of mist were being driven up the dale, when the mother stoat, very wet and bedraggled, wild-eyed and furious, darted into her home, and curled up among her ravenous babies. Something had disturbed her, and she was obviously very much alarmed, for every now and then she shook off her babies, and darting to the entrance of her nest, peered out. The rain had ceased, but the wind blew more strongly than ever. The moon was full and rode high in a clear sky, across which wind-driven wisps of cloud hurried wildly. The rending and creaking in the ash trees grew louder and louder. The mother stoat ran up the face of the rough wall, and gazed into the depths of the wood, listening intently, while her sharp black eyes took in every detail.

She slipped down suddenly and darted into the nest, and catching up the smallest of the little stoats, she came out again and melted into the darkness of the shadow under the wall. She hurried around the bend, caring nothing for the buffeting of the wind that swept fiercely down the lane. Under the ruins of the stable, in a sheltered corner, she laid the little one, and went back for the others. Four trips she made, and just as she carried out Black-Tip the creaking ash growing behind the wall, swayed violently, creaking ominously from top to bottom, leant far over, giving to the force of the gale, and then crashed, falling straight across the place where the nest had been. The wall was nothing but a heap of stones, and the mighty trunk, now only a shell of bark and creeping ivy, blocked the lane. Black-Tip and his mother had escaped only just in time. The swishing blow of some ivy leaves still pained Black-Tip. A second sooner and it would have killed him.

The refuge under the ruin was a very miserable substitute for the comfortable nest they had left, but the little stoats remained there for two days, then the mother moved again in a violent hurry to a mass of stones that shut in a "blind beck." Nor was this move the last. They were moved three times in the course of as many days. A very demon of unrest seemed to have entered the mother stoat's breast, for she was very uneasy even in the last stopping-place, although there seemed nothing to create any alarm. Everything seemed very secure . . . and Black-Tip, looking out from the opening in the wall, gazing out upon the tangle of wild raspberries that screened their hiding-place, away over the high grass, under which the field-mice had made their runs, to the gnarled old fruit trees that gave both light and shade, felt that his lot had fallen in a pleasant place. He was quite satisfied with it.

He soon learned to scrabble down from the home in the wall and out through the runs in the long grass, and was soon as active as any stoat of his age. He watched with eager eyes his mother leaping high in circles around and around, herding a family of fat, little field-mice into a centre where the unfortunate creatures crowded, too scared to run away, while an all-devouring fury killed them quickly one after the other, and then watched her family drink deeply of the life-blood. All this filled him with wild joy, and he longed to be up and away hunting on his own.

Many creatures lived in the seclusion of that old orchard. Rabbits had burrowed deeply under the ruins of an ancient fowl-house, and although Black-Tip's mother had never hunted the rabbits in the immediate surroundings of her home, still she had gone out in the fields beyond, with her family trailing behind, hunting and killing rabbits. Black-Tip was certain he could run down a rabbit, and make a lightning spring upon its shoulders, biting deeply behind the neck until the rabbit, quite paralysed, would yield itself to his mercy. He wanted to hunt these rabbits, but his mother sternly forbade it and he had perforce to obey.

Then came a day when the man scent filled the air. Black-Tip sniffed at it, wondering, for mingled with the man scent was another that had a vaguely familiar smell. Sneaking cautiously through the long grass, he advanced as near as he dared to the old hen-house, following the scent, sniffingly, moving with nose in air. There was a man, and he was handling a beautiful white creature that was very much like his own mother, when she should assume her winter dress—not that Black-Tip had ever seen it. A white and black spotted terrier danced eagerly around. Black-Tip watched the proceedings, and saw the ferret slipped into the burrow. He was so excited that he could hardly keep under cover, but pushed eagerly forward to the edge of a grassy runway.

There was nothing to tell Black-Tip that

both men and dogs were dangerous. So far they had never entered into his scheme of life at all, but his mother was close upon his trail. Like a sudden whirlwind she swept down upon him, and dragged him hurriedly away, and drove him back to the home in the wall. Perhaps it was the escape of a rabbit from the net . . . perhaps it might have been that she was careless. A minute later, the terrier, missing the rabbit, who had dashed headlong into a burrow concealed in the grass, turned and pounced upon the mother stoat. In vain she writhed, and twisted ; the cruel teeth crushed through her backbone, and a moment later she was dead and tossed aside. Black-Tip was cowering in the deepest recesses of his home.

"The farmer seemed to spring from nowhere in particular with his gun."

It meant the splitting up of the little family. The youngest sister seeking the mother she so dearly loved found her dead body hanging in the fork of a plum tree. She sprang up to sniff her mother, and slipped back upon the trap that lay concealed beneath the tree. The iron jaws clicked sharply and the frantic wail of a tortured creature echoed drearily through the orchard. Black-Tip was only a few feet away. His sister's wild squeal filled him with terror, and he fled affrighted up through the deserted orchard, past the tall laurels, under the dropping white roses, and under the great gate. He was once more out in the lane, but terror lent him strength. A weasel trotting along in pursuit of adventure snapped crossly at him as he rushed by. The peewits, hearing the sound, flew wailingly off into the night, but Black-Tip paid no heed. He bounded on and on, over the fields, until he gained a highroad winding across the hills. Then he paused, his sudden wild panic suddenly stilled. Around him lay a strange country. The wide road glimmering whitely in the starlight, held weird mysteries, although there was nothing to be seen. An old owl

oo-o-o-o-ed mournfully from some larch trees, while nightjars uttered their strange note as they hawked insects under the cover of the walls. He stopped and looked about him, suddenly anxious. Something shot

" Other dogs came in full cry."

up over the wall, flying overhead, upon silent wings . . . some bird dropped softly and seemed to smother him for an instant, then he felt the clutch of cruel claws as he was caught up. For one agonising moment he hung limply, then with furious energy he twisted upon the claw that held him and, clinging tightly, fought to release himself.

The fight was grim while it lasted. With the furious savagery of his kind he fought, dragging himself by main force higher and higher up the leg. The great owl was extraordinarily annoyed by this manœuvre, and jerked and swayed herself, angrily endeavouring to rid herself of this biting, fighting creature. It was as if she had grasped a live piece of wire, armed with teeth and claws. For a second, her claws relaxed their hold, seeking to get rid of her prey, but like a shot, Black-Tip had clawed his way upwards, and was burying his teeth deeply in the neck of his captor. The owl flapped her wings

spasmodically for a few seconds, and sank lower. She was now flying over the top of some larch trees, making her way to her nest in a great hollow tree that topped the hill. Deeper and deeper sunk Black-Tip's teeth, and the owl, with a sudden wild cry of agony, flapped her wings vainly, and slowly hurtled downwards. She still endeavoured, with frantic, dying energy, to recover her balance, but in vain. She dropped down on to the top of a larch tree, and slid suddenly and violently to the bottom. Black-Tip saved himself from the last part of the fall by loosening his hold upon the owl, and springing upon the deserted nest of a pigeon. It was not much to cling to, but it saved a nasty jar. Then he slid grotesquely backwards from branch to branch, until he reached the ground. Then pouncing upon the dead owl he drank his fill, and crawling in among a quantity of leaves that the wind had blown into a crevice, he slept the sleep of the well-fed.

The days that passed were full of tribulation. He had had no experience of hunting on his own. His mother had always caught the field-mice for him, and now they proved so elusive that he felt all the pangs of the hungry. He would have returned to the corpse of the owl, but unfortunately the night creatures of the wild had devoured that. There was nothing left but a cleanly picked skeleton and a few handfuls of feathers. The time passed wearily. Game was scarce on the hill-side, and he had not sufficient knowledge to make him change his quarters. The rabbits lived farther afield. One evening, just in the twilight, he was bounding along, eagerly looking for something to eat, when on crossing a field he saw some hen-coops. The sight of coops roused no enthusiasm in his heart, but curiosity made him peep inside. The harsh squawk of an angry hen made him back out suddenly, but the peeping of chicks who thrust out their heads to see what was the matter made him change his mind. He was afraid of the hen. Indeed, her ruffled feathers and angry red eyes made her a fearsome object to the young stoat. His sides still ached from the battle with the owl, and he had no wish to risk another encounter with a feathered creature. But the chicks were soft and fluffy, too small to be dangerous.

He withdrew to a safe distance and crouched behind a stone. He was very hungry, but he had learnt caution. He was so still that the old hen forgot her rage, and slipping her head under her wing went to sleep. Then, inch by inch, Black-Tip dragged himself, belly to earth, until he was close to the bars of the coop. He had wormed his way so quietly that the hen never moved, and the old farmer's wife, chatting to a crony over the gate, never heard a sound to hurry her into shutting up the hen before she gossiped. All the same, Black-Tip had made his way through the bars and already he was sucking the blood of one chick. The hen never guessed, though perhaps she wondered that the chicks seemed rather restless. She only crooned softly, yet the second chick had now been killed and its blood was being drained. The farmer's wife came slowly over the dew-laden grass, treading heavily in the darkness, and Black-Tip, hearing her, slipped suddenly out of the coop and bounded lightly away. Quite unconscious of what had happened the farmer's wife fastened up the coop and went off, while Black-Tip came softly back, to find himself locked out.

The next night the coops were locked up early, but the sight of a trap carefully concealed under some loose straw and leaves taught him caution. A week later he contrived to get into a coop full of young ducks and drank so deeply of their blood that he forgot the necessity for caution, and curled up to sleep amid the slaughtered remains of his blood lust. When he awoke, the night was nearly spent and he found that he was securely imprisoned. During his sleep the coop had been shut up and he could not get out. In vain he tried every crevice. The whole coop was strongly made of wood, and wire netting coated every part. Although careless about the time of shutting up the coops, and equally careless about examining the " foster mother " at the back, the farmer's wife always made her coops rat-proof. So it happened, when the coop was opened and no eager, hungry little ducklings came crowding out of the " foster mother," the old woman put in her hand to encounter a lithe, little creature that flashed out and over her arm, like a streak of ruddy lightning, away and over the fields, towards the wood, Bob, the terrier, in hot pursuit behind him.

Never would Black-Tip forget that chase. In spite of his longest bounds, in spite of his doubling and twisting, it seemed as if he would never cross the green field that lay in front, never gain the wood of larches that lay beyond. Never reach a hiding-place. Other dogs came in full cry, the farmer

seemed to spring from nowhere in particular with his gun, and the shots rattled upon the bramble leaves, as Black-Tip flashed in and under the bush. He would have paused, and rested, for after the gluttony of the night before he was not in the best running trim, but he knew that the bramble bush would be soon surrounded, so he shot out, over a cart track, and, with only a foot to spare, gained the shelter of a mass of limestone just under the larches.

The crevice under the limestone was not very deep, but it was too narrow for the dogs to enter, and Bob and the rest of them barked furiously as they pushed their noses into the crevice and tried frantically to enlarge the entrance.

"He's gone," muttered the farmer's wife as she hurried up. "The varmint, and all my ducklings killed. . . . I'd like to get hold of him."

"I'll soon finish him," observed the farmer, and pushing the dogs aside he fired into the crevice. The shot echoed harshly among the trees, and the dogs barked savagely. Black-Tip thought the end had come. His sensitive ears were deafened by the noise, and he spun around and around in a frantic endeavour to get away from the stings that seemed to be biting him in every direction. Fortunately he had not received the full force of the shot, only the ricochetting pellets had wounded him rather badly. Bleeding from several wounds, he crouched, a wildly trapped creature. He ought to have been terrified out of his life, but he was not. All the uttermost feelings of savagery were in active revolt. He wanted to spring straight out of the crevice, and fasten his teeth into the necks of the beings that had him at bay. But the caution of the wild kept him in check. He crouched, expectant and furious, every nerve tingling with the rage that held him in its power. He knew that there was no escape, but was utterly unafraid, and would sell his life dearly.

"That's killed him," muttered the farmer.

"Ought to," murmured his wife, kneeling in front of the crevice, pushing the barking dogs on one side. "But I'm going to make certain." She pushed a stick into the crevice. "It's but arm's length. No, I'm not frightened he'll bite." She drew her loose, full skirt and apron around her, and putting down a sack she carried, she leant on one hand while she plunged her arm into the crevice and felt around. She could find nothing but masses of leaves that the wind had drifted into the crevice. The old woman withdrew her hand, and rested for a minute leaning against the limestone rock, her apron caught upon a projection of limestone that stood out from the mouth of the crevice. "Just you hold the dogs," she added, as once more she thrust her arm deeply into the crevice. "I'll have the beast dead or alive."

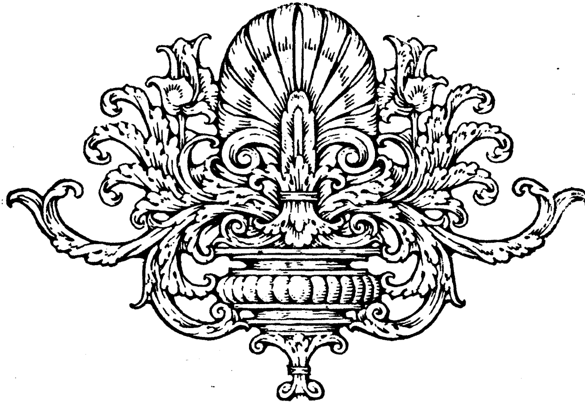
The farmer held the dogs and watched her, but although the dogs saw the manœuvre and barked harshly, neither the farmer nor his wife saw Black-Tip creep out from the crevice, slip under the apron, dive under a wild raspberry bush and crawl away up a narrow runway until he reached a fallen larch tree that covered the ground with masses of dead wood. The dogs whimpered and whined and tried to get away after Black-Tip, but the farmer cuffed them soundly, and they lost interest in the chase, and by the time the farmer's wife had satisfied herself that the stoat could not be anywhere in the crevice they had forgotten all about the fugitive.

Black-Tip was sorely hurt. Although no vital spot had been touched, the pellets had inflicted several very painful flesh wounds. His ears still rang with the echoes of the shot, and he felt very unhappy and dejected as he crept feebly up the hill. It was only his indomitable courage that made him struggle onwards. He crawled up and over the many limestone ridges, away from the larches and out on the roughness of the Scar. Peewits wailed and warned their young ones that a wounded stoat was in the hill, while stately curlews flew up and called loudly as they flew off down the dale. All was movement and life, only Black-Tip felt that nothing mattered. Even the sight of rabbits feeding on the short sweet grass did not arouse him. . . . All he wanted was to find a secure retreat, far from creatures that rent and wounded. Midday had passed and gone when he crawled, utterly spent and wayworn, under a limestone ridge, close by a tiny pool, and creeping away into the farthest corner he curled himself up to die.

But even sorely wounded stoats do not die. Black-Tip slept fitfully, with many dreams and wakings in between, until night had fallen and again night had come. Then he dreamt that his mother was nestling beside him, licking his wounds with tender care, and in his dreams he turned so that she might reach the ones on the under side. Then he waked to find himself gazing up

into the black eyes of a stranger stoat. Every nerve on the defensive, he would have raised himself into a fighting attitude. But he was too bruised and battered. Every muscle ached, his limbs were swollen and the wounds stiff and sore. He sank back, but the glittering eyes never flinched; with the indomitable courage of his kind he was ready to take the death stroke without flinching. He was conquered by Fate, nothing else.

Then his whole demeanour changed, for he suddenly recognised that the stoat that stood over him was hardly bigger than himself. That it was a young female, who with the mother feeling so deeply ingrained in most females' hearts was tending the stranger that had invaded her home. And there he remained, tended and fed, by the little lady stoat until his health and strength were quite restored. Then both together they scoured the bleak Scar, hunting for hunting's sake when the mood seized them, and when their blood lust was satisfied, denning up in the first secure retreat and sleeping off their debauch. Thus the winter passed. From afar Black-Tip could see the lane of his babyhood, but never again did he venture into it. The Scar was wild, and the limestone ridges made good hiding-places and that was sufficient for him. Food was plentiful, and the next summer the two were happy with their family ties, and Black-Tip was content.



# THE VISION.

**I SAW but late a burning star**
**That lit my eye with inward fire,**
**And since that vision I have walked**
**Athirst and hungry with desire.**

**The splendour and the flame of life**
**Are fitful visitants to man;**
**I have not drunk the balm of sleep**
**Since through my veins that poison ran.**

**The light of knowledge in the brain,**
**The sympathy that shines from far,**
**These for a moment woke my soul,**
**It sleeps—I seek that fallen star!**

**RICHARD CHURCH.**

# THE PECK OF PEPPER

## By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of " As Other Men Are," " And Five Were Foolish," " Berry and Co.," " Jonah and Co.," " The Brother of Daphne," " Anthony Lyveden," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

"YES," said Gog. " That little round, grey stone has wrought more trouble than I could tell you of in a month of Saturday nights. The life of the man who had it (and it's passed through many hands) wasn't worth living—while it lasted, of course : for he never had to live it very long. The possessor elect saw to that. But we're going to do much better." He rubbed his hands. " Nobody's going to know that we possess it. That's why I sank Simon's shoe in three fathoms of the best. The only thing that worries me is that in two or three days' time we shall reach The Verge."

" What's The Verge ? " said Eulalie.

" The Verge of The High Court. You're going to be presented, you know. Well, we shall have to pass The Customs when we get to The Verge, and we don't want that bauble found."

" Shall we be searched ? " said Patricia.

" Certainly not," said the courier. " But the barge will be. When we come to The Verge, we shall all get off and a squad of The Winebibbers will get on. While we're passing The Customs they'll go over the barge and all on board."

" Then the obvious thing to do is to keep the bauble with us."

Gog shook his head.

" I said we shouldn't be searched," he said. " And nor we shall, unless we stay aboard. But they've a very keen sense of smell at The Custom House—remarkably keen. They're chosen for that, you know, and specially trained. If you went through in the dark they could smell how you were dressed and even whether your stockings were clocked or plain. But that's nothing. They can smell the dates on the coins in a miser's purse."

" If you're going to talk like this," said Pomfret, " you must get out and walk. It's very unlucky for anyone to be struck dead on board ship."

The courier put up a foot to brush a fly from his ear.

" The trouble with you," he said, " is that you're not acclimatised. You haven't yet learned to swallow—figuratively, I mean. Etchechuria's a law unto itself, brother. Never mind. You'll see in a day or two. Being smelt is believing."

" Yes, I suppose that's one way of putting it," said Pomfret. " ' A law unto itself.' If you added that it was a pantomime to every one else, you'd be still warmer : and if you said that it was a country like a Nursery Rhyme, peopled by a lot of benevolent imbeciles, with a constitution like that of a defunct goose-club and a conjurer in every bush, you'd be practically there : I don't wonder it doesn't appear on the maps. Its geography is not of this world—any more than its hospitality, while its general outlook is unprintable."

" But what's the idea ? " said Simon. " D'you have to pay some duty on certain things ? "

Gog shook his head.

" No. But when you go to The High Court, instead of your observing the customs —which would be inconvenient because you don't know them—The Customs observe you. It's a very old custom. And if there's anything about you which they think you won't need at Court, such as a stiletto or a bag of poison, they report it to the authorities. Well, I don't say they'll report The

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Sovereign Touchstone, but they'll certainly smell it, and—well, it doesn't do anyone any good to get excited, does it ?"

There was a silence.

"If," said Pomfret, "the observation of The Customs is half as close as you say, I don't see how we can hope to smuggle his highness, unless someone swallows it. And then they'd be very self-conscious, wouldn't they ? Fancy being lined with gold."

"The only possible way," said Gog, "is to avoid The Custom House. And the only way to avoid The Custom House is to stay on the barge—unseen. And there's only one way to do that."

Her chin cupped in a palm, Eulalie regarded the courier with steady eyes.

"I have always wanted," she said, "to wear an invisible cloak."

Gog spun into the air.

"Great brains have the same wave," he cried. "And so you shall, my lady, this very night." He leapt to the taffrail and pointed to an upstanding hill which looked like nothing so much as a gigantic hogshead, the bung of which had been withdrawn, for, while its conformation was perfect, a head of water was spurting out of a hole in its side to disappear into the forest which lay about it.

"At the foot of that hill is an inn called 'The Peck of Pepper.' It's just about six miles off, and it's kept by a fellow called Zigzag. Now, Zigzag used to be Goosegog's body servant and as such he had the reversion of Goosegog's clothes. Now, I happen to know that Goosegog's rather extravagant—never wears his things out, you know. So while Zigzag was with him, he must have done very well. In fact, it's The Pail to a pigsty that he's got two or three invisible cloaks, and all in good condition."

"But will he part with one ?" said Patricia.

"Not to me," said Gog. "Zigzag and I are not upon speaking terms. We quarrelled years ago. He asked me if I knew a word of eleven letters which meant 'beautiful,' and I suggested 'colmondeley.' Well, I never thought he'd send it in, but he did and got fined a hundred nobles for *lèse-majesté* or bringing The King's English into contempt. Still, if you go and ask him nicely he'll give one to you."

"I don't quite see why he should," said Simon.

"Neither do I," said Pomfret. "But what's much more to the point, to get to 'The Peck of Pepper' we should have to withdraw from the barge; and in view of the enchanting adventures we had in The Short Lane I feel that again to leave harbour would be to apply for trouble of an unpleasant kind."

"Possibly," said Gog. "But it couldn't be half so unpleasant as that which The Sovereign Touchstone can induce. Of course, we can throw the latter away—but a billion a week might be rather useful one day. You never can tell."

"I'm all for lunching at 'The Peck of Pepper,'" said Eulalie. "I'm not so mad about The Touchstone, but I'd love an invisible cloak."

"That's right," said Gog excitedly. "I'll come with you until we can see the inn. Then I'll get up in a tree and go to sleep. So long as she's moored, the barge'll be all right," and, with that, he darted forward to give instructions.

In another moment the oarsmen were shipping their oars, and the lordly vessel was edging towards the bank.

"Here, what are you doing ?" cried Pomfret. "Stop the tram. I—I've not given my consent. I'm against the manœuvre. I——"

"My dear," said Patricia, laughing, "we can't throw away a fortune."

Pomfret rose to his feet.

"It cannot be too widely known," he announced, "that I decline to be rushed. I've a wer-wolf—I mean, a child-wife, and I'm sure the Prudential would say that an ogre was an 'act of God.' And if you want another reason, I'm not at all sure that a twelve-mile walk would be good for me. I have to be very careful on Fridays. And now let's think this over. . . . To suggest discarding a fortune which is not only inexhaustible but can be carried in the vest or waistcoat-pocket without inconvenience is to be profane. At the same time I'm more than ready to believe that to declare our possession would be to court an interest—not altogether wholesome and possibly even sordid—in our general health and well-being."

"Full stop," said Gog, who had returned to the poop.

"If, therefore," continued Pomfret, turning a glassy eye upon the speaker, "it is essential that we should go to Court—and, as there can be no reason why we should, I've no doubt you'll maintain that it is—and if The Customs are as hot as you represent, it's fairly obvious that The

Sovereign Touchstone has got to be smuggled through or across or under or whatever the adverb may be. Very good. Are you going to tell me that without an invisible cloak that can't be done ? Why can't you stay aboard and suck it ? "

" Because whoever stays aboard is going to be searched. If I had a mouth like—well, like one we all know, possibly they wouldn't notice——"

" Thank you," said Pomfret. " Then why not sink The Touchstone in a good six inches of beer and keep the pot in your hand ? "

" Because," said the courier, " satisfactorily to account to the sergeant-footman first for the sudden acquisition of a pot of solid gold and then for the sudden loss of a pot of solid silver is beyond my powers," and, with that, he leaned backwards and, placing his palms upon his insteps, proceeded to roll to and fro after the manner of a hoop.

" You see," said Simon to Pomfret, " it's not as easy as it looks."

" I don't think it even looks easy," said Pomfret, following the revolutions of the hoop with the uncomfortable gaze of one who watches against his will. " The bare idea of emulation makes the pores of my palms function."

" I was referring," said Simon, " to the practice of the art of bluff."

" Of course you were," said Pomfret, averting his eyes. " Stupid of me, but excusable. I hate acrobats. They make me go all gooseflesh. Go on."

" Listen," said Simon. " I'm entirely with you about leaving the barge, and I shan't have an easy moment until we're back. But if we're to keep The Touchstone, I don't see what else we can do. There must be some way, of course, but I can't think of one." He turned to Gog. " What about fastening it to a float and dropping it into the stream ? If we make the line four feet long and sink it in five, no one——"

" I should have explained," said Gog, " that The Custom House is served by two quays a quarter of a mile apart. You'll leave the barge at the first, pass through The Customs and join it again at the second. Of course we could go back, but it would look funny."

Pomfret rubbed his nose.

" Supposing," he said, " supposing we get this cloak. What's your plan of campaign ? "

The courier straightened his back.

" We all get off," he said, " at the first quay. Then whoever's got The Touchstone puts on the cloak, turns back, follows The Winebibbers on board and takes up his or her position on some conspicuously empty, but somewhat inaccessible spot—the figure-head, for instance. At the second quay, they follow The Winebibbers off, join the others, doff the invisible cloak—and there you are."

Simon fingered his chin.

" I must confess," he said, " that the deeper one goes the tougher the job becomes. To conceal a thing which continually broadcasts its presence is never easy, but publicly to push that thing through a hair-sieve without disclosing that you've got it—well, without one of Goosegog's ulsters I don't see how it can be done. Of course, complete with ulster, you can't very well go wrong."

Eulalie rose and, coming behind her husband, put her arms about his neck.

" And now, having tested every bar in every loop-hole and found them all as sturdy as Gog declared, let's walk out by the door and go for a stroll. I know an awfully good way. And you shall have your first experience of choosing your wife a cloak."

" Why is it," said her husband, taking her hands in his, " that a woman always fancies what suits her worst ? Now, many would look their best in an invisible cloak. But it won't become you at all."

* * * * *

Patricia sat upon the turf sideways, propping herself with a pretty brown arm and looking like an enlargement of a beautiful child. Her shining head was bare, and two great plaits of dark hair, each tipped with a little case of cloth of gold, fell down over her breast as far as her lap. Indeed, it was apparent that The Sovereign Touchstone had already been most happily employed, for her white silk frock, which was short as a frock should be, was girt with a broad gold belt with a hanging tongue, her careless pose was betraying a golden garter, to whose efficiency the shape of a slim silk leg bore elegant witness, and little heelless shoes of soft gold added, if that were possible, to the beauty of her feet.

The look in her great brown eyes, however, showed that her thoughts were far away.

" How long," she murmured, " how long is all this going on ? "

Lying flat on the sward by her side, her husband shrugged his shoulders.

"My pretty lady," he said, "how can I tell?"

"You can't, of course," said Patricia, touching his hair. "I was really thinking aloud." She hesitated. "But it's bound to end sometime, Simon. All dreams do."

"But this isn't a dream, darling."

"Are you sure of that? I sometimes think . . ."

"It's a difficult thing to prove a negative, Pat. But if you put a hand in my pocket you'll find my note-case there. I think its contents will help. I don't mind admitting I've glanced at them once or twice—just to be sure."

Patricia drew out the case. . . .

Its contents were real enough.

Two cheque-books—one of the Westminster Bank and the other of *La Banque de France*—whose counterfoils recorded payments to familiar names: a letter from Berry Pleydell written from Brooks's Club: Yves' address: a receipted bill, headed *Hôtel de l'Univers, Esteppemazan*: a sheet of *papier timbré* on which was typewritten an agreement to rent the flat at Chartres: and, finally, two official acknowledgments "*de demande de carte d'identité,*" with Simon's photograph affixed to one and Patricia's to the other, and each of them bearing the stamp of a French *Mairie.*

Patricia put up the papers and slid the case into her husband's pocket.

"I withdraw," she said. "It's a very good imitation, but it isn't a dream. And now let's begin again, dear. How long is all this going on? Don't think I want it to end—because I don't. I'm frightfully happy here, but it can't go on, Simon. Don't you feel that?"

"Yes," said her husband, "I do. If you ask me why it shouldn't, I can't tell you. But . . . Well, I can't see myself growing old within The Pail. I can't see us having children here and generally settling down. There's no reason why we shouldn't—no reason on earth, but . . ."

"Exactly," said Patricia. "'But . . .' To go back to the world seems madness—almost sacrilege, but down in the bottom of my heart I know we shall. But I can't tell when or why. If we were a fashionable crowd who simply lived for all the fun of the fair, it would be because we were homesick. But we're not. None of us cares a hang for 'getting together.' In fact, we dislike it very much. We all want the simple life. . . . Well, here it is—the original 'simple life'—the genuine article, untouched."

"True," said Simon, sitting up. "Yet we can't live it, my lady. And that's why one day we shall withdraw. The simple life is like ale—sweet, home-brewed liquor: and if you really like it you don't care for anything else. Well, that's our case. . . . But life in Etchechuria is audit ale—a concentrated essence of simple life. And as such we can't cope with it indefinitely. It's a liqueur—an event. And you can't turn an event into life any more than you can quench your thirst with audit ale."

The far-away look stole back into Patricia's eyes.

"I wonder," she said. "I——"

A vigorous oath and the sound of a heavy fall cut short the sentence. As the two started to their feet, Eulalie's voice could be heard on the other side of a knoll.

"Oh, my dear," she cried. "Have you hurt yourself?"

"'Bid me discourse,'" said Pomfret shakily, "'I will enchant thine ear, Or, like a fairy, trip upon the green.' Shakespeare knew his world, didn't he? Oh, and do laugh, beloved. Let it come with the breath. That's right." A wail of merriment argued that his wife had succumbed. "You know you're to blame really. If I'd been watching my step instead of considering your mouth——"

"The great thing," said Gog, "when walking, is to lift up the feet. Shuffling's all very well, but——"

"Yes, I thought you'd say something helpful," said Pomfret. "Why don't you walk in front and flag the men-trap?"

The courier, however, was down on his knees, carefully examining the impediment. After a moment he looked up.

"No wonder you fell," he said. "Pride's just ahead of us. He's very heavy, you know, and if the soil's at all soft he creates a considerable impression. Now I wonder what he's doing here."

There was no doubt about the footprint, which, when the bracken had been parted, was seen to be two inches deep and only an hour or two old.

"Perhaps he's making for the inn," said Patricia, who had returned to the scene of the mishap.

"Well, let's go and sting him for a drink," said Pomfret. "If he likes to leave his footfalls lying about, the least he can do is to revive his prey."

" I'm afraid he'll expect to be treated," said Gog, springing to his feet. " He's very pompous. Still, as you won't have to pay, it doesn't matter. And now—*en avant.* We've only another mile."

That this was true was evident, for the thunder of the fall from The Hogshead was plainly audible, and the hill itself seemed but a stone's throw away.

The five proceeded leisurely.

The forest was here consisting of a mighty congress of oaks, magnificently grown, plainly of immense antiquity, and rising from the golden flood of bracken like so many Earls Marshal gathered together to decide the order of Nature for the coming year. The view ahead was therefore considerably obscured, and it was not surprising that, after covering another two furlongs, Simon, who was leading the way, should have found himself abreast of a little smooth-shaven lawn before he was aware of its existence.

After a long look, Simon beckoned to the others to approach as gently as they could. . . .

Upon the plot stood a man in a short orange-coloured cote-hardie and bright green hose. The cape of his hood was jagged, and the head-piece was off his head and lying upon his shoulders, while from his folded arms were hanging two silken tippets, embroidered the one with mice and the other with humble-bees. He was short and stout and extremely red in the face, though whether such suffusion was chronic or had been induced by emotion it was impossible to say.

In front of him upon the lawn lay twelve large squares of wood upon each of which was painted some letter of the alphabet. These had been set out in line and so arranged as to read

ZIGZAG IS A MUG.

With this legend, however, the stranger seemed anything but content, for after staring upon the combination with great malevolence he flung himself upon the last six letters and began to shuffle them furiously, snorting and blowing the while as though in contempt and indignation and plainly seeking to extract some other apophthegm.

He was in the midst of this endeavour when he happened to turn his head and so to perceive that he was no longer alone.

For a moment he stared at the intruders. Then he straightened his back.

" Good for you," he said gravely. " What do you know ? "

Somewhat disconcerted, the four turned instinctively to Gog to carry the situation, but to their horror the latter was not to be seen.

After one long, red moment Patricia stepped into the breach.

" How d'you do ? " she said sweetly. " We were just going to ask you the way to 'The Peck of Pepper.' "

" And a very good way too," said the stranger brusquely. " It's a fruit of an inn. But I shouldn't touch the brandy. The beer won't hurt you—it's watered : but the brandy's sudden death."

" Thanks very much," said Pomfret. " What about the still lemonade ? Is that at all nourishing ? "

" I can't recommend it," snapped the other. " In fact, if you take my advice you'll drink water and pay the corkage."

" I see," said Pomfret. " It is a—'a fruit of an inn,' isn't it ? And the food ? Is that equally appetising ? Or d'you have to be inoculated before you see it ? "

The stranger shrugged his shoulders.

" 'One man's meat,' " he said, " 'is another man's poison.' I've had that printed and hung on the parlour's wall—for my protection. Then if they don't feel well after having a couple of helpings of Beggar's Delight, they've only themselves to thank."

So soon as he could speak—

" I think it's somebody else's turn," said Pomfret weakly. " I'm going to take a short walk to compose my thoughts. They say music's very healing. I suppose nobody's got a concertina."

Simon took up the reins.

" From what you say," he said, " I think you must be Zigzag."

" That's right," said the stranger shortly. " Host of 'The Peck of Pepper.' And now I must do this puzzle." He returned to his occupation. " I'd sell my soul to get the swine right," he added savagely. " It's one of the 'True Sayings' series. I've spent over six weeks trying and this is the last day. That's why I'm out of humour," and, with that, he got to his knees and began to rearrange the letters with unnecessary violence.

There was something rather pathetic about the fellow, for his nerves were plainly ragged, and he gave the impression of a naturally jovial personality which has been devilled into assuming a petulance of the

impropriety of which it is painfully conscious.

"I don't suppose we can help you," said Eulalie.

"Neither do I," said Zigzag over his shoulder. "But you might try. I've got the first half right, but the last six letters won't go. Have you heard of a word called GUSIAM?"

"'I don't suppose we can help you,' said Eulalie."

"I—I don't think so," said Eulalie, staring.

"Neither have I," said Zigzag. "I don't think there is one. And SUGMIA's no earthly. AMUSIG might do, but I haven't got a cold. I warn you, I've tried everything."

"What about GUN-SHY?" said Pomfret. "Oh, no. You haven't got an H, have you? I mean, an N. Still, if you'd had a few drinks——"

"You know, you don't listen," snarled Zigzag. "This is the 'True Sayings' series. *I'm not GUN-SHY.*"

"Of course not," said everyone hurriedly.

The position was painfully clear and highly delicate.

Zigzag was not in the mood to grant a favour—least of all to his present company. For six long weeks he had flogged his unlucky wits to avert ignominy, and had taken the precaution of pursuing his labours in the forest, lest eyes other than his own should behold his shame. Now, not only was his failure plainly but a matter of hours, but four complete strangers had stumbled upon his secret, for the undoubtedly accurate, if offensive, solution of the problem was distressingly obvious to anyone who could spell. Indeed, unless an innocent, not to say flattering anagram of IS A MUG was very shortly forthcoming, it seemed certain that for any one of the four to broach the loan of an invisible cloak would tend to condense, if not ignite, an atmosphere which was already so charged with electricity as to be most uncomfortable.

The four stared upon the letters, desperately racking their brains, while Zigzag squatted like a toad before his bugbear, slamming the blocks to and fro and forming combinations whose futility was quite painful.

Suddenly—

"I've got it," said Simon quietly.

"You *haven't*!" screeched Zigzag.

"Yes, I have. It's Latin. Look here." He stepped to the other's side and began to arrange the letters in a new formation. "And this isn't an I: it's a hyphen. You see, they've hyphened your name. It's rather a compliment."

"B-but what's M-MAGUS mean?" stammered Zigzag.

"A wizard or learned man. It's a slogan, obviously. A good translation would be ZIG-ZAG THE SAGE."

For a moment nobody breathed.

Then with a seraphic smile Zigzag began to dance.

* * * * *

"But I insist," said Zigzag. "I've three invisible cloaks and I never wear one. You shall have whichever you like. One's of fur, another's of silk, and the third is of stuff. I don't know what colour they are because I've never seen them, but they're all in working order and nice condition."

"It's awfully kind of you," said Eulalie.

"'Neither do I,' said Zigzag over his shoulder.
'But you might try. I've got the first half right, but the last six letters won't go.'"

He clapped the I into place and stood back to view his achievement.

ZIG-ZAG MAGUS.

"Tush," said Zigzag. "I'm giving myself a treat. Are you sure you all like hare pie?"

"Certain," said Pomfret, swallowing. "In fact, we're quite bigoted about it."

"Good," said Zigzag. "I always get on with people who like hare pie. We always have it on my birthday."

"Oh, is this your birthday?" said Patricia.

"No," said Zigzag. "That's why we shan't have it."

The untoward announcement took everyone by surprise, and Pomfret walked for some moments like a man in a dream, alternately staring upon Zigzag and putting a hand to his head, until one of the letter-blocks which he was bearing recalled him to a sense of his duties by falling upon his foot.

That he should cry out was natural, for the slab was of oak and must have weighed three or four pounds, but before his howl of anguish had died away, Zigzag was by his side and patting him on the back.

"Now, don't be upset," said the latter. "It isn't broken."

"I'm not so sure," said Pomfret, painfully stroking his instep. "It's only meant for light articles."

"It'd take more than that to break it," said Zigzag, examining the block. "Why, it isn't even scratched. Besides, if it was it wouldn't matter. So why worry, gossip? After all, what is a block of wood?"

Looking as if he could define one at some length, the gossip took out a handkerchief and wiped his face.

"Is—is it far now?" said Eulalie tremulously.

"'The Peck of Pepper?'" said Zigzag. "Oh, about eight hundred links."

"Can't you tell us in bushels?" said Pomfret. "I mean, furlongs. I've forgotten my golf measure."

"Brother," said Zigzag as they rounded a monster oak, "I'll let you judge for yourself. It's just about as far as that."

As he spoke he pointed to a long flash of white between the trees, and a moment later the five stepped into a broad natural close, full in the middle of which stood a low house, whose walls were as white as snow and quite dazzling in the hot sunshine. The dwelling was straightly timbered with coal-black beams and roofed with a pelt of brown thatch out of which old brick chimneys thrust up their jolly stacks. The tiny windows were open, revealing the promise of the cool within, and leaning over the doorway was an aged hatchment, which served as the signboard of the inn. On this was richly painted a black leather measure, piled and overflowing with a puckered, scarlet fruit, so admirably presented that the vessel and its gay burden seemed to be in relief, while the impulse to follow the fall of a berry which was about to tumble was irresistible. All about the tavern was a brilliant company of flowers, and a luxuriant wistaria was streaming across the façade, tiring the black and white with gorgeous rags and fringing the sturdy eaves with purple tatters.

The door of the house was open, but the doorway was filled by the figure of a man of great corpulence, magnificently habited in gold and crimson, who seemed at first sight to be in the act of entering the inn, for his head was inside and one leg was across the threshold; but a moment's consideration showed that he was not so much entering as endeavouring to force an entrance, for in spite of obvious endeavour he made no progress at all and only advanced one leg to retire the other.

"Bless my soul," cried Zigzag. "He's done it at last," and, with that, he dropped his letters and let out a roar of laughter. "That's Pride," he crowed, addressing his guests. "He's so puffed up that at last he's stuck in the door."

That this was a fact was almost immediately confirmed by Pride himself, for so soon as he judged that the five were within earshot he lifted an arrogant voice.

"I desire to enter this beer-house: my presence, however, is so notable that I am unable to do so under my own power: pray induct me and then withdraw, as I wish to be alone."

"Come, come, sir," said Zigzag, grinning. "You're addressing two ladies here."

"I am not concerned," said Pride, "with the sex of my audience. Besides, some women are commendably strong. And now get down to it—in silence. I dislike your voice."

"Is he always like this?" said Pomfret. "I mean, isn't he ever assaulted, or——"

Zigzag shook his head.

"It's just his way," he said. "He can't help it. And now I'll go in by the back and get hold of his belt, and when I say 'Go' you shove."

With that, he disappeared, while Pride announced that he was not in the habit of being kept waiting, and spoke of the indignity of being handled by the lower orders and especially by strangers, whose habits as likely as not were none too clean.

"Can anyone," said Pomfret, whose

temper was beginning to rise, "suggest any earthly or heavenly reason why we should assist a beastly and impudent glutton to prejudice our lunch?"

Before the others could reply—

"I warn you," said Pride, "whoever you may happen to be, that I am happily unable to appreciate a disregard of my known desires, while disapproval of my outlook but argues the vileness of your own."

"Of course, you ought to be removed," said Pomfret.

"I hope to be," said Pride. "Almost at once."

"In a furniture van," said Pomfret. "To the nearest blasted heath, and then wired in. You—you cumber the earth."

"Foul slime," said Pride, screwing round an enormous face in a vain endeavour to view his aweless opponent, "so soon as you have urged me within and washed my feet——"

"What you really need," said Pomfret shakily, "is a good death and burial. What are you doing to-morrow?"

"A what?" said Pride, pricking up his ears.

"A death and burial," said Pomfret.

"I don't know the beverage," said Pride. "Is it, er, comfortable?"

"It's very soothing," said Pomfret. "Cures indigestion once for all."

"Dear me," said Pride. "I had no idea you were so knowledgeable. I trust that after luncheon you will favour me with the receipt."

"There are standing behind you," said Pomfret, "two ladies of high degree. If you'll beg their gracious pardon and that of their squires, first, for obstructing their ingress, and then for behaving like a cesspool in spate, I'll do as you desire."

"Oh, blasphemy!" wailed Pride. "Never mind. I forgive the four of you. And now do effect my entry."

Here Zigzag was heard to arrive, and since the likelihood of obtaining any better reparation or of teaching the monster the error of his ways seemed faint indeed, Simon and Pomfret responded to the host's entreaties and, putting their shoulders to the reverse of Pride, strove to heave his bulk forward, while Zigzag himself laboured like a straining horse to hale his graceless guest into the parlour. While they were so engaged Pride began to order his luncheon, specifying with a loud voice the various dishes which he should require and detailing the manner in which they must be served with as much deliberation and indifference to his surroundings as if he were lying in bed, to the great indignation of Pomfret, who constantly threatened to withdraw his support from what seemed a hopeless cause. Indeed, it was not until Patricia and Eulalie had added what weight they had that the refractory flesh at length abruptly yielded, and the six were precipitated in a heap on to a sanded floor.

The girls and their squires were uppermost, and so no more than shaken, but that Zigzag must have taken some hurt seemed certain, for Pride fell like a landslide directly upon him, making no effort at all to save himself or his host, and merely remarking in the most preoccupied tone that "a capon should be basted with butter and presently powdered with flour." The landlord, however, was up before anyone else, shaking with laughter and praying the others to rise and come to table, as luncheon was about to be served.

"In that case," said Pride, getting up with astonishing agility, "the repast which I have just indicated had better be served to-night. Shall you be here?" he added, turning to Eulalie.

"I'm afraid we shan't," said that lady.

"Good," said Pride. "I don't like sitting down six: it's five too many." With that, he proceeded to his place, which there could be no mistaking, for it was nothing less than a slice of the trunk of a tree, set at the head of the table, which was laid for six.

To sit down with such a glutton seemed to be tempting Providence, but there was no other table, and Zigzag was beginning to fuss, so the four took their seats in some uneasiness. To their relief, however, Pride's manners at table proved to be above reproach, and while he ate heartily he in no sense attacked his food, consuming it rather with a decency not always displayed by those whose stomachs are plainly their first consideration. Moreover, under the influence of the cheer he became quite genial, actually complimenting Pomfret upon his girth and declaring that had he begun younger he might with care have attained proportions which would have compared with his own.

"That's a very beautiful thought," said Pomfret. "Very beautiful. And now let's discuss politics."

"That's right," said Zigzag. "I'll begin. What's the difference between a load of hay at sundown and a brinded cat on hot bricks?"

"I can't imagine," said Patricia after thinking very hard.

"Let me help you," said Zigzag, piling her plate with green-geese pie. "Now can you do it?"

Patricia shook her head.

"Well, one's much bigger, for one thing," said Zigzag, filling Eulalie's cup.

"Exactly," said Pride. "Or you can do it another way. If a swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay, what's the face value of a cat on hot bricks?"

"I shouldn't think that way was very popular," said Simon. "Possibly a veterinary surgeon, with a flair for higher mathematics——"

"Not at all," said Pride. "Any fool can divide a load, and cats multiply like anything."

"Then what's the answer?" said Eulalie.

"There isn't one," said Pride. "It's what's called an oratorical problem. D'you mind passing the claret-cup?"

"I know a better one than that," said Pomfret, accepting a slice of boar's head which would have made a giant think. "Why is a bunch of copper-bottomed bustards like a bucket of goose-grease on a foggy night?"

There was a moment's silence.

Then—

"Chestnut!" cried Zigzag. "Chestnut! That's as old as the hills."

"Yes," said Pride. "I remember asking that before I was born."

"Well, I'd love to know the answer," said Pomfret.

"'To keep his head warm,'" said Pride shortly. "Do you remember the great fog of 1760?"

"Only just," said Pomfret, swallowing. "I'm older than I look."

"Older in sin?" said Pride.

"No, wood," said Pomfret.

"What was it like?" said Eulalie, bubbling.

"I don't know," said Pride. "I've often wondered."

"I don't believe there was one," said Zigzag. "Not in 1670."

"But he remembers it," said Pride, nodding at Pomfret.

"Very indistinctly," said Pomfret. "You see, it was so foggy you couldn't even see the fog, so my memory's naturally hazy."

"Did you say 'fog' or 'frog'?" said Zigzag.

"Fog," said Pomfret. "R mute."

"Then the frogs were visible?" said Pride. "Fancy a fog full of frogs. You know, you must have been drink—dreaming."

"What's the difference," said Zigzag, "between a foggy frog and a froggy fog?"

"When it's ajar," said Pomfret promptly.

"Wrong," said Zigzag. "Never mind. The great thing is to try and not mind making a fool of yourself. And now do have some more wood-cock. You know, you're eating nothing."

Wondering whether outrage, insult, solicitude and inaccuracy had ever been compressed into so short an utterance, Pomfret stared dazedly about him and then, his eyes lighting upon his flagon, took a deep breath and drank several draughts with great deliberation.

Pride addressed himself to Eulalie.

"I cannot tell you," he said cordially, "how very greatly I enjoy a little philosophical intercourse. It brings out the best in me."

"I'm sure that's very easy," said Eulalie politely.

"Naturally," said Pride. "Naturally. Still, directing a high-brow conversation does it quicker than anything else. And what an accomplished liar your husband is. You must be very proud of him."

Eulalie raised her eyebrows.

"He can keep his end up," she said.

"Can he indeed?" said Pride. "What with?"

"*Farceurs*," said Eulalie shortly. And, with that, she returned to the host, who from his earnest demeanour seemed about to deliver himself of a matter of grave importance.

"Supposing," said Zigzag, "you'd stolen an ogre's pig: and supposing the very next day, while you were taking the pig for a walk, you met the ogre—would you cut him? Or would you stop and ask after his wife?"

"It all depends," said Pride, "on whether he's got a wife."

"Assume he's a widower," said Zigzag.

"Then I should cut him," said Pride. "He'd almost certainly work the conversation round to pigs, whatever you started with. Don't you agree, Sir Simon?"

"I should think he'd be more than likely to drag them in," said Simon.

"That," said Zigzag, "would be highly embarrassing. But surely to cut him would arouse his suspicions?"

"If you ask me," said Pomfret, "the question would never arise."

"What did he say?" said Pride. "I missed that."

"He said," said Patricia, "that the question would never arise."

"Because," said Pomfret, who had been waiting to get his own back, "if you knew your Plato, you would appreciate that the asportation of live-stock, which automatically communicates to its master any attempt upon his ownership, must of necessity so neutralise itself as not only to become abortive but to render its author incapable of recognising, or, indeed, of being recognised, until such time as his physiognomy has regained its normal proportions."

There was a long silence.

At length—

"That's just what I was going to say," said Zigzag.

"And I," said Pride. "He took the words out of my mouth."

So soon as he could speak—

"D'you fish at all?" said Pomfret. "I mean, if you don't you ought to. Some of your catches would be simply fabulous."

"D'you really think so?" said Zigzag.

"I'm sure of it," said Pomfret. "You've got the true fisherman's sense."

"I once caught a rainbow trout," said Pride.

"That's right," said Pomfret. "Go on. I suppose it had a crock of gold at each end."

"That," said Pride, "did not appear. But you'll never guess what it died of."

"German measles," said Pomfret.

"No, laughter," said Pride. "You see, I'd been tickling it, and——"

The sudden and something uproarious entrance of two strangers cut short the anecdote, for one was laughing very freely over some jest and clapping his fellow on the back as if in mock reproof of some witticism, while the other was groaning very loudly and wearing an expression of piety so fervent as to be quite repulsive. Upon, however, perceiving the company, they pulled themselves up and uncovered and bowed to the girls before taking their seats upon a settle and calling for wine.

"Good day, gentlemen," said Zigzag, rising. "I've some excellent malmsey."

"I suppose it had better be malmsey," said the taller in a miserable voice. "Vile as it is, the body's got to be sustained."

"Well, I'll have the malmsey," said his fellow, "and you have a pitcher of milk."

"No, no," said the other, shuddering. "I—I must deny myself. It's very hard," he added gloomily. "Milk is my favourite drink."

He was a lean-fleshed man, clad all in pepper and salt, with a Puritan's wide white collar and a broad-brimmed hat. His hair was red, his nose was hooked, and his eyes were continually raised as though in deprecation of sin, while the colour of his face suggested that if milk was in fact his favourite beverage, he had denied himself with great consistency and resolution for many years.

In the eyes of the four, however, the other was still more unprepossessing, for although, except for a shifty pair of eyes and an everlasting grin, he was not unpleasant to look upon and was cheerfully dressed, they had seen his face before. In a word, his was the head which had been protruded with such caution from behind the haycock in the meadow of Boy Blue Farm. . . .

Zigzag had returned from the cellar and was whispering in Eulalie's ear.

"Customers, like Youth, must be served, my lady, even if they're as foul as you are fair. In fact, you must find all fair in love and war and the bar-parlour. And now I'm going to give you some clouted cream. It's straight from the cool-room."

"No, thanks very much," said the girl in a low voice. "In fact, it's time we were going. And so, if you meant what you said, will you take me to choose that wrap?"

"Every time," said the host warmly. He rose to his feet. "You and the Lady Patricia come with me, and within two minutes of time she won't see you."

As the girls rose Simon touched Zigzag upon the arm.

"Who are those gentry?" he said in an undertone.

"The tall one's Snuffle," whispered Zigzag, "and the short one is known as Bulb. I haven't much use for either. They always know your business, but you never know theirs: and I don't like that sort of game—it's too one-sided. They're supposed to hunt together," he added darkly, "but I don't know what they hunt."

* * * * *

"Yes," said Snuffle. "These little restrictions are very trying. But be of good cheer, dear brethren, I shall use my good offices in your behalf."

"But I don't understand," said Pomfret. "What have we done?"

"It is alleged," said Snuffle, casting up his eyes, "—I trust without foundation—that you or one of you spoke slanderously at the end of The Short Lane, declaring in so many words that you were being furtively watched—a very calumnious and hurtful statement—to the great damage, scandal and disgrace of this most blessed land."

"This rather looks," said Simon, "as if that statement was true. Who's the informant? And if he wasn't listening, how did he happen to hear?"

"'The greater the truth, the greater the libel,'" said Snuffle. "But there—I mustn't anticipate the finding of the Court. And above all things trust me, dear brethren. I shall stand by your side, a veritable shield and buckler—whatever it costs."

With that, he groaned very loudly, and after praying into his hat buried his face in his pot with the expression of one who finds the wickedness of man too dolorous for words.

"You must therefore," said Bulb haughtily, "await The Steward of The Walks. He and his men will be here any moment now. He'll hold a Pypowder Court and give you judgment."

"You seem very well informed," said Pomfret. "And who the devil are you to give us orders?"

"For threatening a witness," said Bulb, retreating behind the settle, "you can be pressed to death."

"I see," said Pomfret shortly. He turned to Snuffle. "You're another 'witness,' I suppose. Or are you the informant?"

"Brother," wailed Snuffle, "my heart bleeds for you, but would you have me tell a lie? With these ears I heard you threaten him."

"I should wait for The Steward," said Pride, "and plead guilty. It's a purely technical offence. And all he'll do is to outlaw you for twenty-four hours."

"Yes, that's all," said Snuffle, waving a dirty hand. "And then you'll go on your way as free as air."

"I see," said Simon. "Only—outlaws."

"That's only a form of speech," said Bulb hastily.

"That's right," said Pride. "You've got no enemies."

"What if we had?" cried Simon.

"But you haven't," cried Snuffle. "Not in the wide wicked world. Besides, I'm going to——"

"If you had," said Pride, "the following twenty-four hours would be their chance—obviously."

"I protest," said Bulb excitedly, "against this irrelevance. I forbid the banns. I——"

"SILENCE," said Pomfret.

"Tell me," said Simon to Pride, "is outlawry a common punishment within The Pail?"

"It's practically the only one," said Pride. "It saves the expense of a gaol and it's a great deterrent. To offend the community or to undo a neighbour may be amusing or convenient, but if, as a result, the community (including the neighbour and his friends and any enemy you may happen to have) is to have a day, or a week, in which to offend you, the convenience is apt to wither and the amusement to lose its charm."

"Quite so," said Simon. "Is outlawry ever given for theft?"

"Invariably," said Pride. "Why?"

"Ask these two gentlemen," said Pomfret, turning up the cuffs of his coat. "Not now. They're going to be engaged—for some time. To-morrow evening, perhaps. . . ."

"Read The Riot Act," said Snuffle, rising. "I don't like the look in his eye."

"I read it before we came," said Bulb. "Just in case of accidents."

"Then hit him," said Snuffle, edging as far from Pomfret as the angle made by the junction of the wall and the settle would allow. "Hit him before he hits me."

"Let's—let's wait for The Steward," faltered Bulb. "I—I don't want to shed his blood."

"I'll absolve you," piped Snuffle, regarding Pomfret's preparations with starting eyes. "And when you've stunned him, I'll kick him in the face."

"Get hold of the girls," said Pomfret, "and beat it for where we left Gog. As soon as you're clear, I'll——"

"But you mustn't go," screamed Bulb. "You've got to wait for The Steward. I said so just now."

"—mop up and follow you out."

"But you can't," screamed Snuffle. "It's not according to plan."

"Neither will be your dilapidation," was the grim reply.

"Why the devil don't you hit him?" howled Snuffle. "It'll be too late in a moment."

"We'd b-better let him start," quavered Bulb. "Then he'll put himself in the wrong."

This prudent counsel, however, found no

favour with Snuffle, who, realising that he was not to be saved, instantly let out a perfect screech of dismay, after which he called Heaven to witness that while he was a man of peace and in love and charity with all others, Pomfret was a ranging lion and Bulb a white-livered skunk, adding with incredible rapidity of diction, after the manner of one who is talking against Time, that while he personally was not afraid of death, but would rather welcome such a translation, it was indecent to deprive mankind of such a benefactor, that his labours were not yet finished, that he felt far from well, and that if Pride did not pick up a knife and stab Pomfret in the back without delay he should take it as a personal affront. These sentiments he then proceeded hysterically to paraphrase, while Bulb, who had got to his knees behind the settle, continually commanded the strangers to stay where they were, yelling that unless they did so they would throw everything out, and calling vociferously upon "all present to arrest and detain one another during His Majesty's pleasure upon pain of imprisonment and without benefit of clergy."

The uproar was increased by Zigzag, who could be heard demanding to be told what was afoot, and, finally, by the clear, metallic voice of one accustomed to command in the open air, ordering someone to withdraw and allow him to enter the inn.

"Steward," shrieked Bulb and Snuffle in frantic unison. "Steward, we're being murdered."

This was Snuffle's last utterance, for Pomfret felled him with a blow like the kick of a horse, and was only prevented from extricating Bulb by the seat of his hose by Simon, who caught his arm.

"No good," said the latter. "We're trapped. Pride's stemming the tide in front, but they're trying the back. We must speak The Steward fair and see what happens."

"Meanwhile you'll be for it," said Eulalie. "Oh, my dear, why did you knock him down? Here, get into this, quick."

"Into what?" said Pomfret.

"This," said Eulalie, thrusting him into a garment he could not see. "Put the hood on your head, and——"

"But . . ."

The protest emerged from thin air, for Pomfret had disappeared.

"Splendid," cried Simon. "Splendid. Now make yourself scarce, and think. Between that vest and your wits you ought to be able to pull us all out of the fire."

As he spoke, there was a crash of timber, and a moment later Zigzag backed into the parlour, followed by a press of foresters in Lincoln Green. As they entered, Pride fell back from the doorway with a helpless look, Simon thrust Patricia and Eulalie into an ingle-nook, after a careful reconnaissance Bulb rose to his feet behind the settle, and a powerful voice cried—

"Silence for The Steward of The Walks."

The next moment a fiery little man, extravagantly dressed in green and silver, with a horn in his belt and a plume to his velvet cap, flounced into the room.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

"My lord," cried Bulb excitedly, "the very murderous villain whom, your lordship will remember, I particularly commended to your——"

Here a gigantic pasty rose from the table, turned upon its side, hovered for an instant above the cheese and then sped like a quarrel through the air, to catch the speaker full upon the side of the head and send him sprawling into the corner which he had just vacated.

At the third attempt—

"Noah's Hutch," said The Steward weakly.

"What was that?"

For a moment there was no answer.

Then a deep voice boomed in reply.

"*London calling,*" it said. "*Good evening, everybody. Here is the weather forecast. A deep depression is moving towards The Pail, where local thunderstorms of more than usual intensity may be expected. Further outlook, unfavourable.*"

The Steward's jaw dropped, one of the foresters began to fumble for his beads, Zigzag crossed himself, and Simon put up a hand to cover his mouth.

The voice continued.

"*Here is the first general news bulletin,—copyright by Reuter, Press Association, Exchange Telegraph and Central News.*

*A DARING BURGLARY.*

*This afternoon, during the absence of The Steward of The Walks, who it is believed had been hoaxed by two of the gang into visiting The Peck of Pepper to investigate a fictitious charge, his lordship's house was entered by robbers who, not content with seizing everything of value, plundering the cellar and stables, violently removing the women, arraying themselves from his lordship's extensive wardrobe and wantonly destroying such goods*

*and chattels as they could not actually transport, are now about to set fire to the mansion.*

*WARRANTS ISSUED.*

*On the application of the Mayor of Date, the Petty Sessional Court of Fiddle this afternoon issued warrants for the arrest of two plausible villains, known as Snuffle and Bulb, who are wanted for a number of crimes and misdemeanours, including those of burglary, arson, blackmail and murder. A reward of five thousand nobles is offered for their capture alive or dead—preferably dead.*

*THE PEACE CONFERENCE.*

*It is stated on good authority . . .*"

When The Steward had been assisted into the open air and given a rummer of brandy he was able to issue orders which could be understood.

The definite style of his commands showed that, when sane, he was a man who knew his own mind.

"The sergeant and six men will mount and convey the prisoners to Fiddle with all dispatch: in view of the terms of the reward the prisoners will proceed on foot. The remainder of the posse will come with me, and every man who reaches The Steward's Lodge before I do myself will receive ten nobles. And now, for the love of Heaven, BRING MY HORSE."

* * * * *

Zigzag and Pride strolled with the four as far as the edge of the close.

"It's been a rare pleasure," said the former, "a very rare pleasure to meet you. But I do wish Sir Pomfret had heard that voice. It was most remarkable. 'London calling' it said . . . You know. The town the old songs sing of. London . . . And then 'The Hearsay.' That's what it was, you know. It usually takes three days to get to the inn . . . Oh, and that pasty—that would have done you good. Why, it shook up Bulb as you shake up a fly with a maul. I don't know when I've enjoyed my food so much."

"Farewell, my good friends," said Pride. "It's been a most instructive afternoon. What I enjoyed most was our little colloquy at lunch. You know. 'The feast of reason and the flow of soul.' What followed was of a lighter quality—most entertaining, but lighter. Besides, there were too many present. I dislike a crowd."

"All the same," said Zigzag, clasping Pomfret's hand, "I do wish you'd been there. Where did you get to?"

"He didn't miss much," said Pride.

With one accord, the four glanced at the speaker.

For an instant the ghost of a smile hung on the heavy lips. . . .

Then—

"What is the difference," he said, "between a laughing trout and a daring burglary?"

"I've never thanked you," said Pomfret hurriedly, "for holding the door against The Steward of The Walks. It was very handsome of you."

"I'm glad you think so," said Pride. "For a moment I was afraid it was beneath my dignity." He turned to Zigzag. "We must be returning," he added. "I wish to assure myself that the cooks are basting that capon with yolk of egg."

"You said 'butter,'" said Zigzag.

"Dog," said Pride, "what does it matter what I said? It is for you to divine my needs, so that I may be spared the menial function of taking thought."

"Come, come," said Zigzag, laughing, "if you can't divine your own needs, how can I bring it off?"

"Happily for you," said Pride, "my ears are so constructed as to be unable to receive any saying which does not reflect the splendour of my mentality. At the same time . . ."

When the four saw them last they were still disputing under the shadow of the oaks upon the edge of the sward, the figure in green and orange appearing almost slight beside the mountainous proportions of its fellow in gold and crimson.

* * * * *

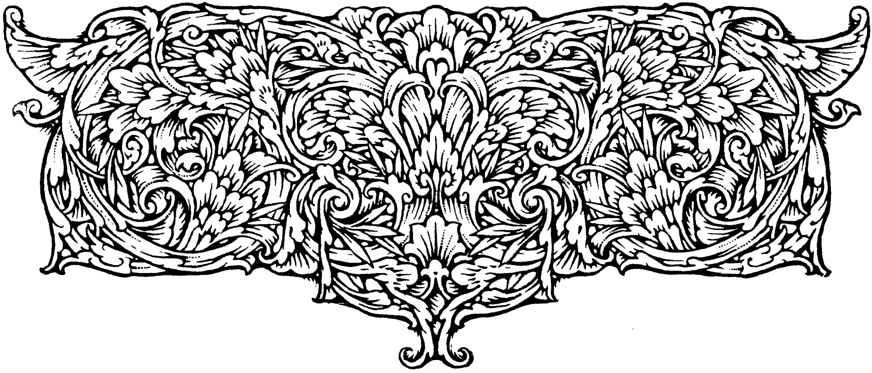
Five hours had gone by, and the barge was drifting downstream, looking like a golden property which Art had lent to Nature for the matchless pageant of the setting sun.

"I feel," said Pomfret, "that I should have enjoyed assembling with The Steward of The Walks. I like a man who gets a move on. And it went against the grain to put it across him. However, needs must when the devil holds four aces. Besides, his relief at finding his home intact will set him up for a month. Incidentally, in the absence of, er, wireless or any other telegraphy, I fear that the release of Snuffle and Co. will not be effected with quite that admirable dispatch

which characterised their arrest. In fact, from what I've seen of Fiddle I should think they'd lie in gaol until the reward is paid. All the same, I hope the next person who suggests vacating the barge will be put in irons. Or perhaps a strait-waistcoat would be more appropriate."

"I'm with you," said everyone.

*A further episode in this series will appear in the next number.*



# REPETITION.

**SOME day, before one thinks of it,**
**The red bud trees will flame**
**With loveliness too delicate,**
**Too brief for any name,**
**But oh, my heart will ache with it,**
**Perhaps my heart will break with it ;**
**For the woods were all alight with it**
**The silver day you came.**

**Some day, before one dreams of it,**
**The slope will blossom blue**
**With wistful, pale anemones,**
**Their frail cups brimmed with dew,**
**Too fleet a thing to bind me so,**
**Too sweet a thing to blind me so ;**
**But all the gentle, wind-swept slope**
**Will be alive with you.**

**Some day, a thousand springs from now,**
**The red bud trees will flame,**
**Along the hills anemones**
**Will blossom just the same,**
**And I will turn that heavenly day,**
**And catch my breath and look away,**
**For woods were lit and slopes were blue,**
**The silver day you came.**

**GRACE NOLL CROWELL.**

# A BIT OF A SUMPH

## By AUGUSTUS MUIR

ILLUSTRATED BY GRAHAM SIMMONS

TWO pictures to begin with:

*First.* Facing east among the trees that densely bordered the lawn, sat an oldish, thinnish, shortish man in a deck-chair. He was clothed in white flannels; a panama hat was tilted over his eyes; he slept. And as he slept, he moved; his mouth began to close; slowly his eyes half opened. From under the brim of his hat he languorously regarded a small segment of the world. It was a beautiful segment: lawn and flower and tree, sunlight and shadow. Then with a jerk his eyes opened wide. He stiffened. It was with an obvious effort of will that he remained seated quite motionless on his deck-chair in the nook. And as he stared through the trees, his eyes were bulging and startled like the popping eyes of a gaffed sea-trout.

*Second.* Facing in the opposite direction, among the trees that densely bordered the lawn, sat a beautiful girl, slim, fair, and (at the moment) slightly flushed. A particularly acute observer might have noticed just the faintest family resemblance between her and the oldish man in Picture One, but it would have required a powerful lens. Beside her was a young man, with hair cut so short one could barely discern it was red, a frame big and muscular, face a trifle ponderous, but pleasant withal. And the young man was busily kissing the girl, as if his life depended on the thoroughness and vigour he put into the task.

These two pictures may be regarded as tableaux vivants or set pieces, in that they held the pose depicted for some considerable space of time.

Meanwhile, in the opulent-looking house, across a lawn or two, and a flower-bed or so, a large woman with aquiline features that once may have had claims to a beauty of the bolder order, nodded over a novel upon the drawing-room couch. The room, like the woman, was luxuriantly furnished; indeed, the woman, like the room, was overdressed.

"I hate Sunday afternoon," she yawned. "I almost wish the Bishop and his wife had never called on us; then we could have had tennis as usual on Sundays."

"Too beastly boring for words," groaned a pale, elongated youth, whose hair shot back in a glistening curve from his forehead to the nape of his neck. "Wish to blazes I was back at Oxford. Besides, the way that dithering Sumph stumps about the place gives me the rollickin' pip."

At this two heads appeared from behind the piano. Two mouths curved in the same satiric smile. The eldest and twin daughters of Lady Rilson looked at each other. "Mater," said Jane, "if I were you I'd get dad to turn him out. He spoils everything. Can't play a game. Can't talk decently. Can't see a joke. Can't take a hint. Why, he doesn't even know what cutlery to use at table. He's a disgrace to the house. That's what I call him." The twins adored each other, always agreed, and sniffed with rapture the icy blast of each other's bitter wit.

"Mater," added Joan, "why can't dad shove him into digs down in the town? He's like a tortoise on the path—you're always tumbling over him. Surely a secretary doesn't need to *hang round* the way he does."

Lady Rilson shrugged her shoulders. The same vexed problem had caused her many a thought, and, in secret conclave, had been the theme of numerous wordy scuffles with her husband. "He may be a Sumph, Angela," was the burden of Sir Jonathan's cry, "but he makes me a blinkin' good *seccetary.*" Sir Jonathan

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"You blithering nincompoop!"

The words were ejected into the Sumph's face with bitter venom.

"You fat-headed chump of a Scotsman! You—you——" Sir Jonathan's voice tailed off into a gurgle of rage.

"But, sir—the meeting! I've followed you—I've come to get you to the meeting——"

"I'm not going to the blinkin' meeting!" Sir Jonathan stamped on the floor. "Curse you, can't you see I don't want to get into Parliament? Can't you see I'm sick of the whole blinkin' business? How would *you* like to stand up and make speeches and be heckled and heckled? Yes, and eggs." Sir Jonathan shuddered. "Because my wife wants me to be an M.P., it's not to say I want to! You blinkin' fool! Hasn't this kidnappin' cost me pounds and pounds to fix up, and here you come buttin' in to spoil it all! Pounds, it cost me. 'Course I'll miss my chance! Let one of the other mugs get in, and good luck to him!"

"Jove," said the Sumph in a low voice.

"And I don't even get time to eat my sangwiches in peace," moaned Sir Jonathan. "You'd better pull that door shut, young man. If them lads sees you they'll clip you over the head soon as look at you. London toughs, they are. Cost me pounds."

The Sumph leapt to the door. His eyes were narrow, as the eyes of one in deep thought.

"Well," said Sir Jonathan, chewing a sandwich, "you'd better be getting along, young man. 'Course you'll keep your mouth shut."

"Whatever gave you that impression?" said the Sumph suddenly in a cool voice.

"Eh, what?" Sir Jonathan started. "You won't go and tell my wife I fixed this up?" The Sumph caught the tremor in his tones.

"Possibly. Possibly I'll go along to the big meeting and tell 'em there as well."

"You young hound!" Sir Jonathan scuttled round him and stood between the Sumph and the door. "I'll shout on one of them lads. They'll know what to do with you," he threatened.

"It wouldn't keep me from telling the newspapers afterwards," said the Sumph. "You'd be the laughing-stock of the country. Then there's Lady Rilson, of course."

Sir Jonathan groaned. There was a pause.

"How much do you want to keep your mouth shut?" he demanded.

"Now we're talking," chuckled the Sumph. "You've given me the sack. That stands. But I believe you want a manager for the new electrical department of the works?"

Sir Jonathan groaned again.

"Now touching the question of Cynthia," continued the Sumph blandly.

Sir Jonathan tottered weakly back to his upturned box.

"Have a sangwich," said Sir Jonathan at length, "and let's talk friendly."

* * * * *

The Sumph got to the hall just in time to tell the flabbergasted chairman, before the meeting started, that Sir Jonathan would not speak to-night; that some fanatical supporters of one of the opponents had kidnapped him to prevent him delivering his speech and so ruin the meeting; that he himself had tried to give chase, but had been shaken off going through the town of Stapleby, heading eastward.

* * * * *

Two pictures to end:

*First.*—In an obscure corner of the House of Commons sits a red-faced little man, who is said to be one of our coming statesmen. Now and then his eyes stray timidly up to the Visitors' Gallery where a large richly caparisoned woman beams down upon him with pride. She is Lady Rilson, and the little man is her husband, the Member for Greatoak, who received such sympathy and enthusiasm, over his being foully kidnapped on the eve of the poll, that he was returned with a thumping majority.

*Second.*—Out of a little house into a little garden comes a girl, and she leads by the hand a child. Together they go down to the gate. The girl lifts up the child so that it can wave up the road to a stalwart young giant who is striding towards them. "Daddee, Daddee!" says the child, blowing kisses. The girl is, of course, Cynthia, and the "daddee" is Andrew Hodge, now general manager of the Rilson Works. Sir Jonathan has practically retired from business, his time being so taken up in London with the important political and public work which —Lady Rilson says—he so much loves.

# TO THE SILVER MORNING.

OH, here's to the silver morning
That patterns the leafless tree;
And here's to the frost's adorning,
The meadow a bride is she;
The hedges are gem-encrusted,
The stream has a silver horn;
Oh, here's to the highways dusted
With the chill of a silver morn!

Oh, here's to the horses that hide them
On moorland and dale and heath,
And here's to the Winds that ride them
With silver swords in their teeth!
The North Wind may travel faster
And whistle across the lea;
But the cold East Wind he is master,
A pitiless foe is he.

Oh, here's to the silver morning,
And here's to the frosted house,
And here's to all softness-scorning,
And the beauty of naked boughs!
Oh, here's to storm and danger,
The great winds fierce and rude;
Lest the heart of man grow stranger
To its high fortitude.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

# THE OTHER HALF

## By JOANNA CANNAN

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

EDWARD RANLEY was not merely a Civil servant; he was all that one expects a Civil servant to be. He was a Londoner, born in the flawless gentility of Kensington, the grandson of a bishop, the nephew of a peer. He was educated at Westminster and at Balliol; and to what Kensington had given him of essential respectability was added the unshakable calm of Westminster and the conscious superiority of the reverently intellectual, all to be merged finally in the grave majesty of Whitehall. His home life—those precise edges of his days' work—was conducted with the same stateliness as his professional career. He considered as gravely as he considered the fate of the teeming millions of the Empire, the choice of a new sponge. His father and mother were both living, and he had two sisters, Alethea and Rosemary, who were so proud of him that discerning people often trembled for his future bride. Edward intended to marry, but he considered marriage a grave responsibility, which meant that he did not intend to marry until he was in a position to keep a wife without incurring any sacrifices of his own. It was therefore not until his thirty-ninth year that, coincidently with a substantial increase of salary, he became aware of his very steadfast respect and affection for the Lady Esther Inglis, an old acquaintance of his sisters and the only daughter of a very wealthy and a very noble earl. He did not hesitate to take the first opportunity of declaring himself. He happened to find himself alone with Esther in the Countess's drawing-room one Sunday after lunch; and later in the day, when the Countess was dressing for dinner, she said to her husband that though the Ranleys were a little obscure, it was really very nice to feel that dear Esther was settled at last. Edward's own family were delighted; his sisters smiled, and said that the connection was a pleasant one; his mother thought of noble grandchildren, his father of what proportion of marriage settlements he could with becomingness suggest. It was decided that the engagement should not be a long one—the Earl disliked long engagements—nor a short one—for Esther ought not to be hurried over her clothes. Finally the wedding was fixed for early October, when people would be back in Town.

The meantime was left to take care of itself. Esther went up to Scotland, as usual, because one cannot stay in London in August; and Edward, with rather a weary smile, postponed the greater part of his holiday till October, when it was to provide for a three-weeks' honeymoon in the Italian Lakes. The first fortnight in September he had arranged to spend yachting rather splendidly with a distinguished friend, and this he did not postpone. But three days before he set off for the Clyde, when it was much too late to make any alterations in his plans, a letter came from the distinguished friend, who, recklessly taking the tiller of his yacht for a few moments himself, had wrecked it on the Little Cumbrae, and was now repenting his essay of seamanship in the hotel at West Kilbride. Edward, who did not exactly resent, but rather deplored rude Nature's impudent interference in his plans, would have been considerably more disgruntled had it not been for an idea which for several weeks had occupied his mind.

In the moment when he had first announced to her parents his desire to take the Lady Esther Inglis to wife, not the Countess's words, but something in the atmosphere—to which normally he was far from sensitive—had indicated to his temporarily quickened perceptions his scarcely remarkable obscurity. He had just been promoted. Further promotion was ahead of him, but to be reached only through the years. He decided one evening, as he thoughtfully took the road from Mayfair to Kensington, that he must do something to call attention to himself.

Various ideas came to him: erudite byways of his own profession beckoned him

towards the approval of his chiefs. But that was not precisely what he desired. He wanted the little halo of celebrity that completes a faultlessly cut dress suit, the low echo of applause that turns the heads towards the door when the names are shouted out. One way or another, he decided at last that he would write a play, not something meant to amuse or to reform, of course, but something that would impress, perhaps at the same time suggesting a method of correction for one of human nature's more genteel mistakes. Over the port and the greengages he confided this idea to his complacent sire, who, nodding drowsily, expressed a facile approval, and quoted that the proper study of mankind is man. Then Edward began to look around him for something in the world that he could criticise.

For weeks he searched in vain. The life he knew went by so smoothly, on wheels oiled by what labour he ignored, towards its accepted goals. People whom he knew fell in love with each other, were married, had children, grew old and distinguished, and died. As far as he could see, there was nothing to grumble at in that. Then one afternoon he went down to pay a call on some friends of his who lived in a great house on Wimbledon Common; and, coming home in the dusk and in a thoughtful mood, he discovered that there were other people in the world. Yes, when you came to look for them, there were young men who bicycled without hats and with their chests showing, and the collars of their shirts outside their coats; and there were young men with cloth caps, and girls in patent-leather shoes obviously too small for them, who walked with their arms round each other's waists under the chestnut trees. When you came to think of it, there was a great deal wrong with these people, as, of course, you had always known. They were overcrowded in their houses, for instance—but that would not make a suitable subject for a play. Also they were too poor because they wouldn't save, and again because they always married too young. He thought of himself, and of how he had saved a quarter of his salary every year for the last ten years, and of how he had never fallen in love till he was thirty-eight. He felt that he had found at least a theme. And, curiously enough, the very next morning at his office the chief clerk told him how one of the juniors, a lad only just out of his teens, had come with a line between his brows to ask for leave, because his wife, who had given birth to a son on the previous evening, was lying dangerously ill.

Fired by these happenings, Edward went home that night, and sat up in his mother's drawing-room to a late hour revolving his idea, finding himself at all points baffled by his own colossal ignorance. Although there was quite a number of clerks in his office—perhaps those same hatless young men with the offending collars—he found that he had no working knowledge of what happened to them when they disappeared through the office door at half-past five. He did not know where they lived, or what they had to eat, or at what hour they ate it, or in what sort of room; worst of all, he did not know how they spoke.

It must have seemed a little hopeless, especially in the small, cold hours that are so quiet and lonely in the town; but there was in Edward Ranley the stuff that had made his grandfather a bishop, his eighteenth-century ancestor a peer. He scorned discouragement; and as he was telling his family of the wreck of the good ship *Nesta,* the inspiration came to him, and he announced his intention of spending his fortnight's holiday at some seaside resort.

"You will find it very unpleasant, Edward," said Mrs. Ranley from her hiding-place behind the silver equipage of the breakfast table. "It will be full of trippers." To the Ranleys "trippers" was a collective term like "people-of-our-class" and "the poor." "Your father and I motored through Longshore last year on our way to the Ormsby-Browns. There were a wheel like the one at Earl's Court in days gone by, and two terribly noisy piers. The shore was black with people—families, you know, and couples—holding each other's hands."

"Well, that's my material, mother," explained Edward heavily. "I want to study them, the families and the—the couples."

"Edward will come home and ask for high tea," said Alethea delicately.

"Edward is quite right, Olive," said Mr. Ranley. "Knowledge is best acquired first-hand. I know it is a very revolutionary suggestion, but I often think that young men like him in the Overseas Office should at some time in their career be sent out to see for themselves the countries they administer."

Wherefore on the first day of September, with much humorous advice from his sisters, Edward Ranley set off for the seaside. He

had taken a room in an hotel much frequented by invalids—"people-of-our-class" under doctors' orders—where he thought that he would be able, when necessary, to find respite from his study of mankind. He travelled down in the evening after work, and dined on the train, so that his window, as he opened it before climbing into bed, gave him only the dark outline of pine trees and the slow splash of the sea. But the next day dawned magnificently cloudless, and when Edward Ranley, having duly breakfasted and perused *The Times,* strolled down the cliff path to the promenade, the world he sought was lying there before him like the pages of an open book.

Blue to the blue horizon stretched the sea. Near the shore the round heads of bathers bobbed. There were bathing tents along the yellow sand, and more children digging there than Edward Ranley had ever seen. There were thousands of middle-aged women knitting thousands of jumpers in thousands of deck-chairs, and middle-aged men—somehow less numerous—were playing a cramped form of cricket in between. Young men and maidens stood waist deep in blue water splashing each other, and some swam after air balloons or grimly out to the far end of the pier. Ponies and donkeys trotted their appointed courses, dignified labourers for their daily bread. An unintelligible pierrot performance drew a crowd to listen, without paying, from the railings of the promenade.

Edward Ranley walked along towards the pier. Young men emerging hurriedly from bathing tents, with wet hair and their collars outside their coats, collided with him; shingled girls surveyed him curiously from screwed-up, sun-dazzled eyes; boatmen beckoned him to cruises round the bay. At the pier the crowd was so dense that he forsook the asphalt for the sand. The sand ran into his shoes, so he walked down across the line of sticks and seaweed and matches and orange peel that the tide had left towards the firm sand and the sea.

The tide was out. It was cool in the shadow of the pier. Edward Ranley stood there for a moment, thinking how, if the crowd had not been there, he would have bathed. And then suddenly, from the pier, something fell into the blue ripples at his feet. He was conscious of a small shriek above him. He perceived that the object in the water was a lady's bag. Instinctively he stepped into the ripples, which washed across his brown shoes almost to the turn-up of his blue flannel trousers, and picked it out.

It was a little thing of damp pink and gold, and it had come open, revealing a lace handkerchief, a powder box, and a slim purse. Edward Ranley felt vaguely sorry that it had got so wet. He shut the clasp firmly on its revelations and looked up. From the pier the silhouette of a lady signalled to him. He walked up the beach and met her at the entrance to the pier.

Her hair was pale gold and her eyes were the sea's blue—this was all that Edward Ranley saw. She said, "Oh, my bag—how kind of you!" And he: "This is yours, I think."

From the pier and to them came another girl, a dark-haired girl, also hatless, followed by a slim young man. "Oh, Lorna, you *are* a caution!" she giggled helplessly. "She's got too much money, Basil, that's what it is."

Golden-hair was explaining to Edward: "I was watching the pierrot show, and I just let it fall. Stupid of me. You've got your feet wet, too."

The young man intervened. "I must thank you very much, sir," he said with dignity.

"It was nothing," Edward said. He took off his hat. The three of them went away, laughing, down to the beach. The incident was closed.

Edward walked slowly back to his hotel to lunch. The afternoon he spent sitting on a bench on the promenade, watching life go by. He did not yet put pen to paper, for he had resolved that he would first of all thoroughly digest what knowledge he acquired. But it seemed to him that there would be two girls in his play, and that "You *are* a caution, Lorna," would be the opening words.

He had tea at a *café* in the town, appalled by the number of young men with magazines under their arms, and Sorbo balls in their pockets, who brought girls with library novels under their arms in there to tea. Afterwards, in the mellow light of westering sunshine, he walked again along the promenade, and, where the ghostly lift glides up the cliff, again he met her, the lady of the pink-and-gold bag and the golden hair.

He was not sure what to do, but a little, recognising smile lifted the corners of her red mouth, and so he took off his hat. She swung the pink-and-gold bag at the end of her fingers. "Quite dry now," she said.

"I am glad it has not suffered." Edward was passing on. Then he thought of his play. . . . "You *are* a caution, Lorna. . . ." And what next? Perhaps he could learn something now. "Be careful not to do it again," he said.

She giggled, more at life in general than at any humour to be found in his remark. She had a particularly infectious giggle, and Edward laughed, too. His laughter grated a little, as if it was not often used.

She said: "My friend has been chipping me about it—Miss Davis, you know, the dark young lady who spoke. She and the gentleman with us are engaged to be married, and a joke goes a long way with them."

"Engaged to be married," said Edward. "But surely they are very young."

"I shouldn't say that. Of course they're not old stagers. Miss Davis is the same age as I am, and Mr. Wynne is twenty-three."

"I call that very young indeed."

"You're in the sere and yellow yourself, aren't you?"

"I suppose so," said Edward, in the face of her golden youth a little wearily.

She sensed his thought. "Oh, Heavens," she said, "I didn't mean it like that! No one is older than he feels."

"It is the feeling that matters," Edward said.

"Pardon?"

"It's the feeling that matters."

"That's right. Well, I must tootle off. Sure it wasn't a *faux pas*?"

"Quite sure."

"Good! Well, good-bye. And thank you again about the bag."

"Good-bye. I was only too glad to be of any assistance. By the way—I mean, are you walking back this way?"

"Not the way you were going, but the way I was going. Why?"

"Nothing. Only I was going that way too."

"Were you? You didn't look like it. But perhaps you were going round?"

"No, not round, but up and down."

"I see."

They walked together, then, the length of the promenade towards the town. They could not talk, because all the people were coming up from the beach with the slow movements and the dazed expressions of those who have sat still in the sun too long. Near the pier the girl said: "Well, here I turn off. I must get back to supper. Our old bird's a tartar. She won't keep things."

A sense of desolation possessed Edward. She was going from him, taking away from him the red mouth that could utter so easily what he desired to know, that and incidentally the sea-blue eyes and the pale gold hair and the infectious giggle and her

"In the moment when he had first announced to her parents his desire to take the Lady Esther Inglis to wife . . .

incredible youth. "Could we not have supper together somewhere?" said Edward nervously.

She hesitated. Her first glance at him from the pier that morning had assured her that he was "all right." His invitation had been couched in terms and tones that reminded her vaguely of the British Museum and of a lecture on minerals that she had once attended in order to shield a new hat from unexpected rain. She could not be too careful. But although she had known him only for a day, somehow she trusted him more than anyone she knew. She confided in him.

not the Countess's words, but something in the atmosphere . . . had indicated to his temporarily quickened perceptions his scarcely remarkable obscurity."

"You see, we haven't been properly introduced," she said.

"It is certainly a drawback," said Edward. "But, you see, there was the bag."

"Yes, *I* don't mind. But I don't want you to think that if it was anyone else——"

"Of course not," said Edward. He felt a little mean now that she had confided her thought to him. He wished that it was possible to tell her straight out about the play. It was all very well to sit and watch people, but it was a dirty trick to make them talk so that you might set down their deficiencies for all the world to see. It was worse than a dirty trick. Edward Ranley told himself indignantly that it was an ungentlemanly act—at least, it seemed so here and now—but ethics were complicated matters, and it would all need a further threshing-out. One must not act impulsively. "Well, let us go and have dinner, anyway," Edward Ranley said.

"I shall do the introducing, then. Let me introduce you to Miss Thompson—Miss Lorna Thompson, known to her friends as Tommy."

"My name is Ranley—Edward Ranley, of the Overseas Office, you know."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Ranley, and I

pass your office every day on the 'bus. I'm at Duck and Alfred's, in the habby. Miss Davis is a cashier there, too. I hope you'll like her. I think she's a lovely girl."

"Yes," said Edward, and "Where shall we dine? I think the Regent is indicated. They told me at the hotel that it was a quiet place with no horrible band."

Lorna Thompson liked bands, but she did not say so. Edward Ranley liked them too, but he did not know that he did.

So they dined in quiet magnificence at the Regent, and Lorna got stuck half-way through the meal, but later on found the room that there is always for an ice. Edward, feeling a little ostentatious, but determined to make amends, ordered a bottle of the most expensive champagne, and Lorna drank a great deal of it, not because she liked it, but because she so seldom got it that it symbolised much that was beautiful and bright and golden and out of reach. Her happiness was obvious and undisguised, and she talked gaily throughout the meal. Edward had no idea why it was so pleasant to watch that lovely gaiety. Only when he was paying his bill he realised how intensely he had enjoyed himself.

After dinner they sat out on the pier, with the lights of the promenade and the town behind them, and the night and the starlight above the sea. From the golden circle of the bandstand there came to them the slow cadence of a waltz. A man and a girl sitting in front of them suddenly and spontaneously kissed. That shocked Edward. He had never kissed Lady Esther in a public place, not even under the approving veil of night, and he had never wanted to.

The evening lengthened. Lorna rose at last and said that she must be getting home, and Edward took her back through the heart of the town to her tall boarding-house that overlooked the inland road where the trams went up and down. There they said "Good night," and there was almost a perceptible pause while Edward wondered what was the wisest thing to do. And at the end of it he did nothing, but said "Good night" again.

It was not to be wondered at that they met next day. Edward's study of mankind brought him to the cliff lift at the same hour again, and patently he was not to blame because he met her there. He need not, of course, have taken her out to dine again, but she was by herself, and she looked small and lonely, and she had enjoyed it so. It appeared that her friend, Peggy Davis, had only just become engaged. "We came down together, but now, you see, I don't want to be *de trop*. Of course, Pegs is a real sport, but still . . ." And so they met again. After all, it did not seem so mean to study for the purposes of art this charming child, if one provided what she wanted—a companion for her holiday. Then, a few days later, he was ceremoniously reintroduced to Peggy Davis and Basil Wynne. Basil Wynne was an assistant in a West End umbrella shop, and he could talk interestingly about what he called his commodity, pointing out the structural defects of Lorna's parasol. Edward used to wonder if there was anything at the Overseas Office that would interest Lady Esther at all; and then one evening Lorna asked him what his work was, and he told her all about it, and what he had been and what he hoped to be, and he told her where he succeeded, and, still more intimately, where he failed. And in the telling of it he forgot to observe her, and realised for the first time her beautiful intelligence that was swift beyond all acquired knowledge, receptive beyond all cultured phrase. After that evening he found his study of her a little confusing; he told himself that he knew her too well to notice her superficial defects, and he focussed his student's eye on Peggy Davis and Basil Wynne.

They were all four much together that last week. Edward was taken for a char-à-banc ride to an historic castle which he explored with Lorna, listening mildly to the extracts which she read to him from a penny guide-book while they sat on the short grass under the battlements, drinking ginger ale. He was even induced to bathe, and was badly beaten in a swimming race by Basil Wynne. With much patience he taught Lorna to dive. He was often alone with her, because, although they would start out together, Basil and Peggy would presently disappear, and Lorna was very certain that one must not be *de trop*. "They won't have all day to play in when they get back to London town."

"No," said Edward Ranley, "and I suppose they won't be married for a long while yet. They are both so young."

"So you said when we first met. You're a quaint old thing. Perhaps you're right, and perhaps not. Perhaps it's wisest to save up for years and years, I *don't* think. Where's the good of wasting all your youth,

waiting and waiting? If I had a fellow ——"

Her voice dropped to silence. Edward Ranley could not help thinking of the man who would share that golden youth of hers—an impossible young man, of course, with the inevitable collar, who would not disdain to eat bananas on the beach and throw the skins into the sea as Basil Wynne had done, and who yet would not be a bad fellow—not a bad fellow, after all.

"'Oh, my bag—how kind of you!'"

The last day came. Basil and Peggy seemed to have disappeared for good, but in the course of time they turned up at the Regent for the farewell dinner that Edward Ranley thought it incumbent on himself to give. After dinner they strolled out along the cliffs, Edward and Lorna together, Basil and Peggy, arm-in-arm, a lengthening twenty yards in front. It was a fine night, with just enough wind to stir the singing pines. Down on the beach beneath them the tide was coming in, and from the cliffs they could hear the long splash of breaking waves. The golden lights of the pier ran out to sea, and were reflected in the water, for each golden circle a long splash of gold. Lorna said: "How far away the headland looks to-night!" And Edward looked and saw the low line of the hills black between the purple floor of ocean and the purple arch of sky.

"It is really very beautiful," said Edward. "I shall miss it all in Town."

Then he thought of what he was going back to—of London and his office, and the sober days and the dull evenings that had contented him. He was going to be married, and after his honeymoon the same life would begin again, life dedicated to its details, unshaken by its great events.

"London is very dull," said Edward Ranley, with a sigh.

"Dull?"

He laughed, a little enviously, at her incredulous voice. "Perhaps it wouldn't be if every one was like you." Somehow he

thought of Lady Esther, as he always thought of her, in her mother's great drawing-room, entertaining so admirably her mother's distinguished guests. She was a wonderful hostess, aud would make him an admirable wife. But he wondered whether, if she sold buttons and elastic all day long, she would possess a merrier heart.

"I have never noticed it till now," he said. "You and Miss Davis and Mr. Wynne are so much more cheerful than the people that I know." He heard his heresy, and his world shook.

"Oh, well, it's a good old life," said Lorna. "We've not got much to grumble at, anyway. We're independent, you see. Enough for the pictures, and sometimes a new hat, and the future can take care of itself."

"I wonder," said Edward, "if it will."

They were out of the town among the pine trees and the heather now, and round a corner of the winding path they came upon Peggy and Basil, who had stopped to kiss each other in the shadow of a pine. Peggy was beautiful. And Basil, though he had not been to Westminster and Balliol, could sell umbrellas, and get his daily bread, and kiss his girl between the sea's song and the song of the pines. Edward turned to Lorna to say something, and, instead of speaking, took her in his arms and kissed her again and again. They were the first kisses that had counted in his life.

"Oh, Mr. Ranley!" said Lorna, at last released.

The sound of his name unloosed the spell. His old self awoke. Slept once again the self that might have been. He, Edward Ranley, had kissed a shop-girl at a seaside resort! Or had he kissed his girl between the sea's song and the song of the pines?

Whatever it was, it was not for him. He said: "I am sorry. I want to explain to you. You see, I am engaged to Esther Inglis."

"Let's sit down," Lorna said.

They sat down in the heather, and Edward told her everything. It seemed to him one of those occasions when truth is a necessity, and he kept nothing back. When he had finished, she said: "I see. And now you've got quite a lot to put in your play."

"I shall never write the beastly thing," said Edward. "All that I've learned from you is what I've missed."

* * * * *

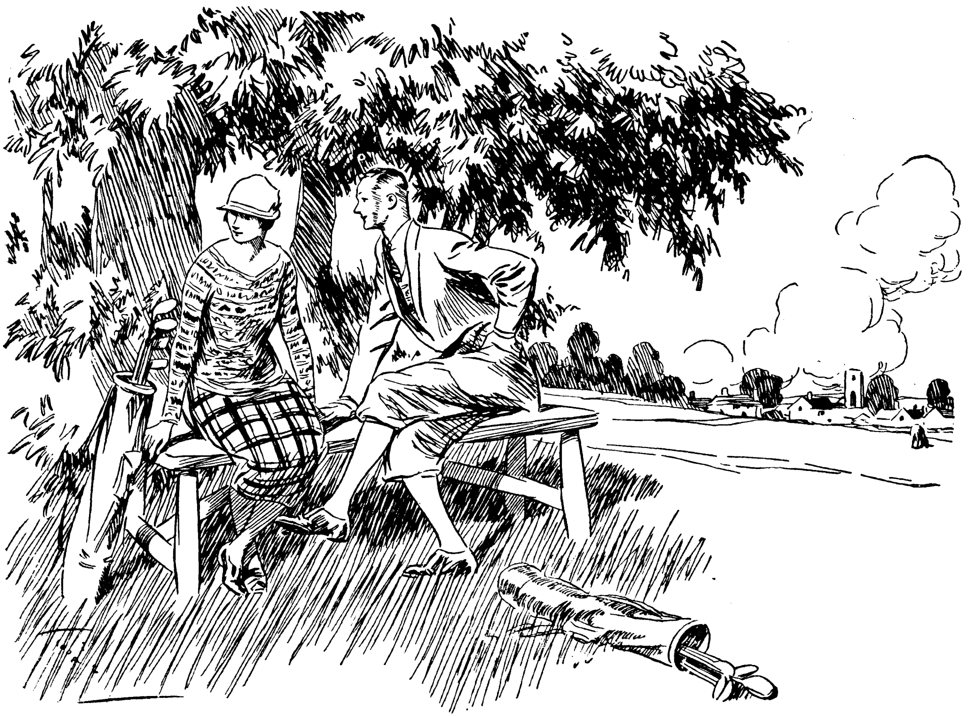
Edward Ranley went back to London, and was married at St. George's, Hanover Square, on a wet October afternoon.

# REFLECTION.

**I LOOK three ways, and see the midnight skies**
**So heavy-laden with the stars. I see**
**The fretted branches of a walnut tree**
**Outlined against the moon. Above the rise**
**Of softly-curving hill a brown owl flies,**
**A shadow moving so deliberately.**
**There, where the long grass rustles, close to me,**
**A small, shy creature in the darkness lies.**

**I look within, and see all sorrow there—**
**Would that I, too, could find a dreamless sleep**
**To still the useless torment of a mind**
**Denied regret! In losing you, my Dear,**
**I lost a love I lacked the wit to keep.**
**Dear Heart! This beauty serves but to remind . . .**

**SELWYN JEPSON.**



"'So I came out here to wait for you, because I was afraid Uncle might do something foolish.'"

# NOT GOOD ENOUGH

## By K. R. G. BROWNE

### ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

THE golf-ball came sailing obliquely over the high box hedge, bounced from the smooth turf of the lawn to the old brick wall, rebounded thence to the lawn again, rolled gently to the feet of Miss Jean Troop, and was at rest.

Jean put down her book and contemplated the intruder with some surprise, for the nearest golf-course was two miles distant, and—save in the bar or the smoking-room—no golfer has yet achieved a two-mile drive. Therefore, after a moment's consideration of this phenomenon, Miss Troop arose, crossed the lawn to the white gate in the hedge, and looked out.

A hundred yards away she perceived a tall figure—a lanky, masculine figure, swinging a golf-bag and advancing towards her along the cliff-top at a rapid trot. Jean started ever so slightly and drew back, a faint smile about her mouth. Her eye falling upon the golf-ball, she started again, and the smile deepened; thereafter she proceeded to act in a manner at once singular and reprehensible.

In a corner of the garden a large square frame of glass served as a shelter and encouragement to certain floral growths of the weaklier sort. Jean, moving swiftly but with grace, picked up the golf-ball, approached this glass frame, and with no pause or any token of remorse hurled the ball into its exact centre. She was surveying the resultant chaos with a reflective eye when there came to her from afar a voice.

"I say," said the voice, "I suppose you haven't seen a golf-ball anywhere about?"

Jean turned. A young man was leaning upon the gate and regarding her very respectfully—a long, lean, lanky young man

with a plain but wholesome face, a bright blue eye and more than his fair allotment of freckles.

"There *is* a golf-ball," answered Jean blandly, "—here." She pointed to the ruin at her feet.

There was a pause.

"Lumme!" remarked the young man in a startled way. "Did I do that?"

"Your golf-ball did," said Jean, for she was a truthful girl.

The young man pushed open the gate and stepped into the garden, concern writ large upon his ingenuous countenance.

"This," he said, "is dreadful. Just as I was going to break the record for the course, too."

"The course?"

"My private course. No entrance fee, and less subscription. Start at the sign-post on the other side of the common, cut across to old Hogbin's cottage—if old Hogbin's in his garden and you hit him, it counts as a lost ball, because he takes it—follow the edge of the cliff past here to the old sea-wall, down to the beach and finish at the jetty. The record's ninety-eight, and I thought I was going to smash it to-day, because this shot was only my seventy-sixth."

"I see," said Jean. "Yes, I think I've seen you playing before."

"I go round every afternoon. It keeps my weight down. I say, I'm awfully sorry about this. I'm not strong on law, but I should think it must be a tort or malfeasance at the very least. Driving to the common danger, and all that."

"It's really our fault for having our garden in the middle of your fairway."

"But it isn't. I sliced my drive shockingly. I must—hullo!"

Before the white gate a large and powerful car of the limousine persuasion glided grandly to a halt. Its silver fittings gleamed in the sun, and the face of its liveried chauffeur wore the lofty expression common to the faces of such chauffeurs. From the expensively upholstered interior of this vehicle emerged two persons—a large stout female and a smaller stouter male. Of these the former was arrayed in a manner more becoming to Act II of a musical comedy than to the bucolic amenities of Little Easting, while the latter wore a plus-four suit of an unnecessarily virulent check, a drooping moustache, a moneyed look and a solid gold watch-chain which might have anchored a battleship. These persons, entering the garden, stopped short at sight of Jean and her companion.

"Oh, hullo, Uncle!" said Jean composedly. "Back already? This is Mr.——"

"Evans," said the young man, suppressing all outward tokens of that astonishment which invariably attacked those who, having first met Jean, subsequently encountered her relatives. "John Evans."

"—Mr. Evans. His golf-ball came in here, and he came after it. Mr. Evans, this is my uncle, Mr. Troop—and my aunt."

"How do you do?" said Mr. Evans, bowing neatly.

"How——" began Mr. Troop, and stopped as he perceived the ruin.

"Most unfortunate thing," said Mr. Evans, with his infectious smile. "I seem to have smashed your cucumber-frame, or whatever it is. I can't tell you how sorry I am."

The small eye of Mr. Troop swept up and down and over Mr. Evans, noting his cheerful smile, his worn but well-constructed clothes, the exclusive-looking colours of his tie, his general air of well-bred unself-consciousness. The small eye of Mrs. Troop did likewise. Hostility faded from the faces of Mr. and Mrs. Troop, giving place to a genial tolerance.

"Well, well," said Mr. Troop. "Accidents will happen."

"Of course," corroborated Mrs. Troop.

"Playing golf, eh?" said Mr. Troop.

"Roughly, yes," responded Mr. Evans.

"Fine game, golf," stated Mr. Troop. "Like to take it up myself, if I'd more of the figure for it. Well, well, sit down. Not in a hurry, eh? Cigar?"

"Thanks," said Mr. Evans courteously, "but I smoke a pipe."

Thus was a charming little group formed upon that ancient lawn. Mr. and Mrs. Troop sat regal and consciously proprietary in expensive wicker-chairs; Jean and Mr. Evans reclined at their feet. Conversation, after a somewhat halting start, flowed easily enough.

Now throughout this conversation it might have been observed that the small eye of Mr. Troop strayed ever and anon to meet the small eye of Mrs. Troop; and in each small eye there might have been remarked a faint gleam, as of hope. Which was not surprising, for Hope now sat at the very feet of Mr. and Mrs. Troop in the shape of Mr. Evans.

It may be said that every man, woman

or child has one paramount ambition, and the ambition of Mr. Troop may be quite simply stated—he wished to enter Society. So, like a dutiful wife, did Mrs. Troop.

There are several recognised methods of entering Society, and Mr. Troop, in the intervals of supplying the public with excellent boot-blacking at a reasonable yet profitable price, had tried them all, but with a lamentable lack of success. These, they tell us, are democratic days, but the line must be drawn somewhere, and the Upper Ten Thousand drew it, very callously, at Mr. Troop. The acquisition of a Mayfair mansion advanced his cause no whit; the purchase of Little Easting Manor brought him only the knowledge that, while it is easy enough to buy a manor, it is less simple to secure the lordship thereof.

Nor did the attitude of Jean make matters easier. In the opinion of Mr. and Mrs. Troop, it was clearly the duty of their orphaned niece to marry well, speedily, and with all possible pomp; Jean, unhappily, held other views. Not only did that singular young lady profess a lack of sympathy with her uncle's social aspirations, but she did not hesitate to make it known that she proposed to marry as, when, and whom she chose.

The appearance from a clear sky of Mr. Evans seemed in the nature of a good omen, for Mr. Evans was very evidently one of the Right Sort. His manner, bearing, and conversation stamped him as one who moved by right in those pleasant circles to which Mr. Troop so ardently craved admission. Mr. Evans was the genuine article; Mr. Troop, in the course of his campaign, had met too many of the other kind not to be quite sure of that. Carefully investigated and tactfully handled, Mr. Evans might prove very useful; the more so since, like all male persons privileged to look upon her, he was patently attracted by Jean.

Said Mr. Troop, with elaborate casualness:

"Live in these parts, Mr. Evans?"

"Off and on," replied the lanky young man.

"Got a good many friends hereabouts, I dare say?"

"Quite a few."

"Know Lady Helsingford?" asked Mr. Troop, more casually than ever.

Young Mr. Evans shot a quick glance at him.

"I think," he answered, smiling, "everybody hereabouts knows her."

An innocent remark, but it stung Mr. Troop, for he did not know Lady Helsingford, though not for lack of trying. Lady Helsingford, who lived in the big Georgian house on the far side of the common, was the uncrowned queen of the county, the acknowledged arbiter of all social matters within a twenty-mile radius, the absolute dictator of that county set which, despite his best efforts, remained sublimely ignorant of Mr. Troop's existence. If everybody knew Lady Helsingford, then everybody had the advantage of Mr. Troop, who had never so much as seen her.

"I haven't had the pleasure of meeting her yet," said Mr. Troop, "but I'm hoping to. We've only been here a month, you know."

"You'll stay to tea, of course, Mr. Evans?" said Mrs. Troop.

Mr. Evans stayed to tea. And before that unnecessarily elaborate feast had run its course, Mr. Troop had contrived to let Mr. Evans know that an introduction to Lady Helsingford was of all things on earth the most desirable, in Mr. Troop's opinion. Mr. Troop further let it be understood—oh, very tactfully—that any person who could in any way assist to that end would earn his imperishable gratitude.

Whether or not young Mr. Evans grasped the purport of these hints, promptings, suggestions and insinuations, he gave no sign. When at last he rose to go, it was to Jean that he addressed himself.

"Do you," he asked, "play golf?"

"A little," said Jean, "and badly."

"Care for a round over my private course to-morrow?"

"I should love it."

"Then," said Mr. Evans, "I'll call for you about three."

Thereafter, taking a courteous farewell of Mr. and Mrs. Troop and expressing his gratitude for a very pleasant afternoon, young Mr. Evans gracefully withdrew. Presently:

"Nice young feller," said Mr. Troop.

"A *very* nice young feller," said Mrs. Troop.

Jean said nothing at all.

Now all this happened on a Wednesday. On the Thursday afternoon Mr. Evans and Miss Troop played a round over the former's private course, Miss Troop, despite a generous handicap, suffering severe defeat. Subsequently Mr. Evans, his polite and obviously insincere excuses withering before

the blast of Mr. Troop's almost fearsome geniality, stayed to tea.

On the Friday there occurred two things which gave Mr. Troop the very keenest delight. As that social climber was strolling in a deliberately aimless way past the great iron gates of the big Georgian house on the far side of the common — much as the penniless small boy haunts the gates of the circus—there issued at high speed from those gates a motor-cycle bestridden by Mr. Evans. Mr. Evans, failing to observe Mr. Troop, vanished down the road in a cloud of dust, but Mr. Troop did not mind. This final and definite proof that his new friend really had the right of entry to the big Georgian house sent Mr. Troop home to lunch in a state of almost delirious contentment.

Further happiness was to come. That afternoon brought Mr. and Mrs. Gaskett — two worthy persons whose aims and circumstances corresponded almost exactly to those of Mr. and Mrs. Troop—from London in their opulent motor-car. Conceive, therefore, the delight of Mr. Troop when the face of Mr. Evans appeared modestly above the white gate at the very moment when tea was being announced. Mr. Evans, it transpired, had merely popped in to say that he had instructed the local glazier to call about the cucumber-frame, or whatever it was; but Mr. Troop cared nothing for that. All that Mr. Troop cared about was the opportunity to introduce Mr. Evans to Mr. and Mrs. Gaskett, and the pleasure of watching the effect produced upon that admirable couple by Mr. Evans's gentlemanly demeanour and infectious smile. Later, Jean and the lanky young man having gone apart to inspect the wallflowers, Mr. Troop took occasion to whisper in Mr. Gaskett's ear:

"The small eye of Mr. Troop swept up and down and over Mr. Evans . . . the small eye of Mrs. Troop did likewise."

"Nice young feller, that. Great pal of ours."

"Ah?" said Mr. Gaskett.

"Great pal of Lady Helsingford's," added Mr. Troop carelessly.

"Ah?" said Mr. Gaskett, obviously impressed.

Altogether a great day. . . .

* * * * *

So much for Friday. Now it happened that on Saturday afternoon some small affair of business took Mr. and Mrs. Troop to Little Easting, five miles distant. Jean, having somehow gathered that Mr. Evans would be busy all that day, went with them, having nothing better to do. As luck would have it, no sooner had the large and powerful automobile decanted its passengers at their destination than it abruptly developed internal trouble of a serious nature; so that when the time came for the return journey, Mr. and Mrs. Troop and niece were met by a heated and begrimed chauffeur and the information that, if they wished to go home in their own car, they must have patience for another hour at least. At this juncture, naturally, it began to rain.

"'Most unfortunate thing,' said Mr. Evans, with his infectious smile. I seem to have smashed your cucumber-frame, or whatever it is. I can't tell you how sorry I am.'"

"Have to hire a car," said Mr. Troop fretfully. "Can't stick another hour in this hole." Which was rather unkind of him. Little Easting (Pop. 2,431. Market: Wed. Early Clos.: Thurs.) is a watering-place of the kind that lives feverishly from June to September and sleeps profoundly from October to May; a dull, respectable, uninspired townlet; but scarcely a hole.

Jean, however, had another suggestion to offer.

"Let's go in there," she said.

She pointed across the road to where a variety of placards and posters, printed in most of the primary colours, announced that the Imperial Picture Palace—Continuous Performance, 6 to 10.30, Saturdays 2 to 10.30. Popular Prices—was now actively functioning.

"Do let's go there," begged Jean. "I haven't been to a cinema for years and years, and I do love them."

Mr. Troop looked at Mrs. Troop. It was, as a matter of fact, years and years since *he* had visited a cinema, that form of entertainment according ill, in his view, with his means, position and social intentions. Nevertheless, as they contemplated the startling posters, he became aware that somewhere deep within him an affection for cinemas persisted. A glance at his wife informed him that the same was true of her.

"Well, and why not?" said Mrs. Troop, as one who yields to a childish whim. "Quite an experience, I'm sure."

So it came about that very shortly Mr. Troop was bargaining with the little grey-haired old lady who sat at the receipt of custom on behalf of the Imperial Picture Palace.

"Three one-and-sixes," said Mr. Troop, his tone implying that a cinema whose most expensive seats cost but one-and-six was not at all the kind of cinema he was wont to patronise.

The little old lady smiled upon him and gave him three metal discs. Clutching these, Mr. Troop and party passed through a swinging door and were instantly engulfed in Stygian blackness. From nowhere a blinding beam of light shone forth; a hand, materialising from the gloom, took Mr. Troop politely by the sleeve; a courteous whisper bade him step this way. Anon, after a period of confused and apologetic progression over the feet and umbrellas of unseen persons, Mr. Troop and party won to a safe harbourage.

It appeared that the star item of the programme was nearing its predestined end. Already the heroine, fearfully and wonderfully arrayed, was getting into position for that last fierce clinch which should finally dispel all misunderstanding and enable two true hearts thenceforth to beat as one. Indeed, before the eyes of Mr. Troop had grown accustomed to the darkness, this happy event came to pass; hero and heroine faded slowly from sight and the lights went up so suddenly that Mr. Troop blinked.

Thus unashamedly disclosed, the Imperial Picture Palace proved to be considerably smaller than its name, its true status being that of an overgrown shed or an undergrown barn. The place was full; from behind a curtain came the sound of a piano earnestly belaboured by an enthusiast in need of further tuition; in and out among the audience prowled a tall young man, dispensing chocolates from a tray.

And as the eye of Mr. Troop fell upon this young man, he uttered a startled gasp and bounded in his seat. Mrs. Troop, seeking the cause of his surprise, discovered it and gasped in her turn. After a moment Jean said "Oh!" For the vendor of chocolates was long, lean and lanky, with a plain but wholesome face, a bright blue eye and more than his fair allotment of freckles. As the trio stared at him, he turned and perceived them. A cheerful smile lit up his freckled countenance; he turned to thread his way towards them and presently was beaming upon them from a vacant seat in the row in front.

"Good afternoon," he said cheerily. "I thought it was you when I steered you in, but I couldn't be sure. Welcome to our city!"

The mouth of Mr. Troop opened and closed several times, but no intelligible sound issued therefrom. Mrs. Troop gazed at the lanky young man as if he were some rare museum oddity. Jean it was who spoke first.

"Do you work here, Mr. Evans?" she asked.

"I should think I do!" said Mr. Evans. "Doorkeeper, chucker-out, chocolate-seller——"

Mr. Troop achieved speech.

"You—you work *here*?"

Mr. Evans nodded blithely.

"Rather. By the way, have some chocolate or something."

It appeared that Mr. Troop desired no chocolate. That social climber was at the moment a prey to powerful and conflicting

emotions, all unpleasant. Astonishment, anger and disappointment seethed and battled within him; nor was his spouse, to judge by her expression, in any better case. Jean alone seemed quite unmoved by this encounter.

"Quite a full house," remarked Mr. Evans complacently. "Saturday's always a—you're not going?"

"You—you—you——" choked Mr. Troop, struggling to his feet.

"But you've not seen the comic one yet. Fearfully funny."

"Come along, Emily!" snarled Mr. Troop. "Jean!" Bestowing upon Mr. Evans a glare which must have withered a less self-possessed young man, he fought his way towards the exit. Mrs. Troop, still dazed, followed dumbly.

"Well, I'm sorry you can't stop," said young Mr. Evans cheerfully. He looked at Jean as that young lady, wearing a becoming flush which might have been attributed to any one of several causes, rose to follow her relatives. "You wouldn't care for a little golf to-morrow, I suppose?" said Mr. Evans.

"Yes," answered Jean distinctly, "I should. Thanks very much, Mr. Evans. The same time, then." She gave him a little smile and was gone.

The little old lady in the box-office peered forth in some surprise as Mr. Troop and party emerged from the door through which they had but a few minutes ago disappeared.

"What's the matter?" said the little old lady. "Don't you like it?"

Mr. Troop simply snarled at her venomously and passed on.

The homeward journey—in a hired and comfortless car—was a dismal affair. Mr. Troop, sunk in a corner, stared blankly ahead; now and then he muttered to himself. *A cinema attendant!* All those high hopes, those fascinating dreams, destroyed at a blow. *A cinema attendant!* If the Gasketts got to hear of this——! Mr. Troop shuddered; this would be meat and drink to the Gasketts. People would be told, with much imaginary detail; there would be laughter. Old Troop fooled by a cinema attendant! "Great pal of ours!"

"Scoundrel!" muttered Mr. Troop.

"I'd never have thought it of him!" said Mrs. Troop. "Never!"

"It seems to me," said Jean placidly, "you're making a lot of fuss about nothing, Uncle. Why on earth shouldn't Mr. Evans work in a cinema? He must work somewhere, I suppose."

"Deceiving me!" muttered Mr. Troop.

"But how? He never pretended to be the Prime Minister or a duke, did he? He didn't tell you he worked in a cinema; but then, you never asked him."

"As for you," snarled Mr. Troop with sudden extraordinary ferocity, "you'll see no more of him, my girl!"

"But I shall. I don't drop my friends because they work for a living. I'm playing golf with Mr. Evans to-morrow."

"We'll see about that!" muttered Mr. Troop.

Altogether a dreadful day. . . .

* * * * *

Three o'clock of the following afternoon found Mr. Troop pacing his lawn in the manner of a caged leopard. His brow was furrowed, his eye sombre; he muttered.

To him, as he paced and gloomed, and gloomed and paced again, there came a voice—a cheerful, friendly voice.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Troop. Miss Troop anywhere about?"

Mr. Troop started convulsively and whirled on his heel, to remark the freckled face of young Mr. Evans beaming at him above the gate. The social aspirant drew a deep breath and controlled himself with an effort.

"No!" he snapped. "She's not!"

"Ah, well," said Mr. Evans, "I'll wait. Glorious day, isn't it?"

Mr. Troop took a pace forward and spoke in a quivering voice.

"My niece," he said, "will not play golf with you to-day!"

Mr. Evans registered polite surprise.

"Or any other day!" added Mr. Troop viciously.

A pause. Then Mr. Evans nodded slowly several times.

"I see," he said, "I see. You think I'm not good enough for Jean."

"Think?" cried Mr. Troop, his self-control dwindling like snow before the sun. "Think? I *know*!"

"Well," said Mr. Evans unexpectedly, "you're perfectly right. I'm not nearly good enough for her."

"Ah!" barked Mr. Troop. "Glad you realise it! Then perhaps you'll see it's no good hanging about here!"

Mr. Evans surveyed him gravely for a moment; then he turned and gazed out over the common. When he turned back to Mr. Troop there was a new briskness in

his manner; he seemed almost eager to be gone.

"Yes," he said, "I quite see that—now. Good day." He nodded affably and walked rapidly away.

Mr. Troop resumed his pacing of the lawn and his hating of Mr. Evans. He was hating him with undiminished intensity when presently a large car rolled grandly down the lane and stopped at the white gate. A gleaming and elegantly appointed car, having a crest emblazoned upon its door. As Mr. Troop, his pacing arrested by this new arrival, gazed vaguely at the car, the chauffeur sprang from his seat, held open the door and assisted a lady to alight. A little grey-haired old lady at whom Mr. Troop stared first blankly, then with a dawning recognition, and finally in utter stupefaction.

Through the white gate came the little old lady and across the lawn to where Mr. Troop stood with his mouth open and his eyes bulging.

"Mr. Troop?" asked the little old lady. "I am Lady Helsingford. I must really apologise for not having called before, but I have been so busy lately. The cottage hospital, you know."

"Er——" said Mr. Troop, rallying sufficiently to push forward a chair.

"Thank you," said Lady Helsingford. "What a charming garden! Yes, my nephew and I have been very busy lately. I think you know my nephew—John Evans. A dear boy, and *so* energetic."

"Er——" said Mr. Troop, beneath whose feet the universe was rocking in a very sickening manner.

"He's a doctor, you know," went on Lady Helsingford, as one making conversation against heavy odds, "and very keen on the cottage hospital here. The funds have been getting rather low, and John had *such* a good idea. He has started a cinema in Little Easting—*so* original of him, I think—and all the profits go to the hospital. John pays for the films and everything himself. We opened it only yesterday, and there was some muddle over the staff, and nobody turned up in time. So John and I did it ourselves. It was the *greatest* fun! I took the money, and John put people in their seats and sold them chocolate and everything. I *did* enjoy myself, Mr. Troop! But, of course—how stupid of me! I saw you there, did I not?"

Mr. Troop made vague noises, for his heart was increasingly heavy within him. This was Lady Helsingford—and he had snarled at her! John Evans was her nephew—and he had reviled and cast him forth! Heavy indeed was the heart of Mr. Troop.

"Yes, of course," Lady Helsingford was saying, "you left rather early, didn't you? I remember wondering if—Ah, this is Mrs. Troop, I expect."

It was Mrs. Troop, issuing from the house with an inquiring expression. Mr. Troop, feeling an urgent need of moral support, welcomed her gladly. . . .

About this time two persons were sitting upon an ancient bench in a remote corner of the common. A golf-bag lay at their feet, but they were not playing golf.

"So," one of these persons was saying, "I came out here to wait for you, because I was afraid Uncle might do something foolish. And you're not a cinema attendant after all! I think it's most disappointing of you, John. I thought you'd be able to let me in for nothing. I—what did you say?"

It was not very relevant, but Mr. Evans said it again, at some length.

Much later:

"John," said Miss Troop, "I've a confession to make. That golf-ball—*you* didn't smash the cucumber-frame. I threw the ball into it because I wanted to get to know you. There! Am I very dreadful?"

Whereupon John Evans threw back his head and laughed aloud.

"About as dreadful as I am," said he, "for I lost four balls before I could get one to pitch in your garden. Dreadful? I'll show you just how dreadful you are, Jean!"

# MR. CREWE

## By RICHMAL CROMPTON

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LENDON

MR. CREWE, very neatly and quietly dressed—bowler hat, dark suit, dark overcoat, gloves and a little attaché-case—trotted down the road to the station. Everything about Mr. Crewe proclaimed the City clerk, and it did not proclaim it falsely. Mr. Crewe had been a City clerk for twenty years. He lived in a garden suburb and caught the eight forty-five to Town every morning. Most of his neighbours caught the eight forty-five too, but Mr. Crewe's trim little figure was always the first to set off down the country road that led to the station. Mr. Crewe was a punctual man and disliked hurrying. At least, the shadow of Mr. Crewe was a punctual man, and disliked hurrying. The real Mr. Crewe possessed no such mild and nondescript qualities. For it was only the shadow of Mr. Crewe that trotted down to the station, holding his attaché-case so precisely and stepping so carefully to avoid the puddles.

The real Mr. Crewe was marooned on a desert island. He had been marooned yesterday after a thrilling voyage during which he had quelled a mutiny, fought and conquered a pirate ship and killed single-handed a shark that had attacked him as he was swimming by his ship for exercise. The real Mr. Crewe was a desperate fellow, a born leader, a dare-devil, a hero. Yesterday, owing to the drunkenness of the first mate, the ship had run against some rocks, and only Mr. Crewe and seven other men had escaped on a raft that Mr. Crewe had hastily, but very cleverly, put together the moment he realised the danger. The first mate had been drowned, and Mr. Crewe, with that relentlessness that characterised him, had not tried to rescue him.

The seven other men were unnerved and unstrung by the shock. They lay moaning on the beach till Mr. Crewe, undaunted as ever, roused them.

"Now, then, look alive, there! Look alive, I tell you!"

And at the bidding of that terrible voice they looked alive.

Mr. Crewe went back to the ship on his raft at the risk of his life and brought from it a few of the bare necessities of life. With great presence of mind he had also brought an axe, and soon had his men cutting down trees.

The ship sank as he was on his way back.

* * * * *

Mr. Crewe entered the railway carriage and said "Good morning!" to the other inmates with his usual formal courtesy.

"Terrible weather," said Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown was a commercial traveller, and lived at The Limes.

"Terrible!" agreed Mr. Crewe.

Mr. Brown opened his paper.

"Utter fools, this Government!" he said.

"Isn't it—I mean, aren't they?" murmured Mr. Crewe, opening his.

"Your firm doing much business?" said Mr. Brown.

"So-so," said Mr. Crewe.

"Excuse me," said Mr. Brown, stretching forward, "there's a spider on your hat."

Mr. Crewe turned pale and shuddered. The shadow of Mr. Crewe had a horror of insects.

"It's all right," Mr. Brown reassured him. "I've got the brute."

He dropped the brute out of the window and returned to his newspaper.

"I say," he said, "you know, there'll be another war if these fools aren't careful."

Again Mr. Crewe turned pale. "I sincerely trust not," he said, brushing a speck of dust from his coat as he spoke. The shadow of Mr. Crewe hated specks of dust on his coat. "I most sincerely trust not," he repeated anxiously.

Mr. Brown relapsed into silence behind his newspaper. Mr. Crewe put up his paper so as to cover completely the top part of his small neat person. Behind it he returned to his desert island. The tree-cutting was going but slowly. His men were losing hope.

He cheered them with his rollicking heartening jests. His clothing was hanging about him in glorious muddy rags. He took his axe and swung it. It seemed to crash almost to the heart of the tree at the first swing. He was an enormous muscular giant of a man.

* * * * *

Mr. Crewe entered the office.

"Good morning, Mr. Crewe!" said Mr. Field, the most junior of the junior clerks. The junior clerks exchanged smiles and winks. The other clerks came in one by one. He exchanged formal greetings with each.

"Wretched weather," said Mr. Snow, who sat next to him.

"Is it not?" said Mr. Crewe. He looked down unhappily at his boots. "And living in the country, as I do, one cannot avoid the muddy lanes. Pardon me, I believe my ruler has been put upon your desk by mistake. Thank you—thank you so much. Mrs. Jones is careless how she replaces things. Yes, pray borrow it, if you like. I have another. Not at all. Not at all!"

"He knocked their leader down unconscious with one blow, surrounded the rest with the help of his band."

"Good morning, Mr. Field," said Mr. Crewe, chipping off his words in his precise way. He went over to his desk. "I wish some one would speak to Mrs. Jones about the way she dusts. Look at the dust here! Ruins one's clothes."

He took out a duster from his desk and dusted carefully all round it. Then he took out his cuff protectors and put them on.

The shadow of Mr. Crewe was very polite. He took down his ledger and began to add

figures. In the course of twenty years he had acquired the art of adding figures mechanically.

* * * * *

They had been on the desert island some weeks now. They lived in wooden houses, all planned and for the most part built by Mr. Crewe. Mr. Crewe, still glorious in stained and dirty rags, was the leader, the king. He issued orders and was instantly

"As it was . . ."

and fearfully obeyed. The other shrank from his devastating anger. The curses Mr. Crewe used when enraged—and he had a terrible temper—were horrible. One shuddered to think of them. His strength, too, was superhuman. He would stride into the tropical forest, his picturesque rags fluttering in the tropical breeze, fell an enormous tropical tree with a few blows, and return with easy strides carrying the tree on his shoulder.

There had been a few ferocious beasts upon the island at first, but these Mr. Crewe had now exterminated. He had heard one sniffing round their houses at night, and had gone out alone armed only with a club and grappled with the beast. In the morning the beast lay dead outside the huts, and Mr. Crewe's great muscular right arm was in a sling. But only for a day. Mr. Crewe possessed wonderful recuperative powers, as befitted a man of his physique.

Gradually in this way the wild animals were destroyed. Mr. Crewe also trapped birds and fished for food.

There were darker episodes, too. The band of seven was reduced to six. One man mutinied and refused to obey orders, defied Mr. Crewe himself, and Mr. Crewe killed him—killed him with his own hands. It was a terrible example to the others. No man who had seen Mr. Crewe roused to fury would ever in all his life forget it. In after years he would wake up in the night in a sweat of fear at the memory.

Yet the men hung with pathetic reliance upon Mr. Crewe's strength and resource. Though a hard master, he was a just one. Though they feared him, they loved him. Their life was not unhappy. And all the time Mr. Crewe's shirt fluttered from the highest tree in the island as an intimation to any passing ship that Mr. Crewe was shipwrecked there.

* * * *

The Senior Partner entered. He had an unpleasant voice and a brusque manner. He threw a pile of letters on to Mr. Crewe's desk.

"See to those," he said curtly.

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Crewe meekly.

When Mr. Crewe had seen to them, he took them back to the Senior Partner's room. He went in reverently and obsequiously on tiptoe and laid them timidly on the desk. The Senior Partner growled and did not look at him. Mr. Crewe crept quietly away. He lived in terror of the Senior Partner's growl.

Then he had lunch at a neighbouring *café*. The shadow of Mr. Crewe lunched on a cup of coffee and a scrambled egg. The real Mr. Crewe was consuming a glorious feast of tropical animal roasted over a fire of tropical logs in the open. The real Mr. Crewe, like all heroes from Odysseus downwards, possessed an amazing appetite.

As Mr. Crewe took his seat at his desk again he sneezed. "Dear, dear!" he murmured anxiously to Mr. Snow. "I trust I am not catching a cold." Then he retrieved his ruler with a courteous "Pardon me!" opened his ledger, and went on with his figures.

* * * * *

A ship had put in at the island, but their troubles were not yet over. For the ship was

full of rascally drunken traders, who began to plunder their possessions and laughed at the idea of rescuing them. But they reckoned without Mr. Crewe. Oh, they reckoned without Mr. Crewe! He knocked their leader down unconscious with one blow, surrounded the rest with the help of his band, bound them, carried them back to their ship, and sailed away with all of them. He kept their leader in chains, but the others he made his servants. And they obeyed him, desperadoes though they were. They shrank from the lightning gleam of his eye and his stalwart arm. Mr. Crewe was sailing home. He was one of the most wonderful navigators the world has ever seen. But of course there were plenty of adventures—plots and mutinies and dangers from storm and rocks. On one occasion they landed on an island for water and were attacked by the natives. Had it not been for Mr. Crewe, they would all have been killed. As it was . . .

* * * * *

Mr. Crewe's neighbour returned from the Senior Partner's room, whither he had been with a message.

" Sniffy brute," he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of the Senior Partner's door. " I sometimes think I'll tell him what I think of him one of these days. Some chaps would, and no mistake."

Some chaps would. . . .

* * * * *

Mr. Crewe walked into the Senior Partner's room without knocking and closed the door behind him.

" Now, you," he said roughly to the Senior Partner, " this has got to stop! We've had enough of this."

The Senior Partner turned pale. " W-w-what do you mean ? "

" You know what I mean well enough, you—bully," thundered Mr. Crewe. " No, you don't ! " The Senior Partner's hand had reached out tremblingly towards the bell, but Mr. Crewe's revolver was quicker. " No, you don't. If you move another finger, I'll blow your brains out. How much longer do you think I'm going to slave away with your rotten putrid figures, eh ? "

The Senior Partner's white lips mumbled something about " rise."

" *Rise !* " repeated Mr. Crewe, with a mocking, brutal laugh. " Rise be dashed ! Who wants your—rises ? " He placed his revolver against the Senior Partner's temple. " What about a partnership, eh ? What about a partnership ? What about a senior partnership ? We've had enough of your insolence. It's time we had a turn ourselves, eh ? You snivelling bully ! "

The Senior Partner was a quivering jelly of fear. Papers were produced, signed. Mr. Crewe was senior partner.

* * * * *

The Senior Partner came out and flung some letters on to Mr. Crewe's desk.

" Some fool's spilt ink on 'em," he growled. " Do 'em again ! "

" Yes, sir, certainly, sir," said Mr. Crewe meekly.

* * * * *

As he was going home that evening, he met Mr. Brown again.

" What exactly do you do in your job ? " said Mr. Brown, when they had discussed the weather, and the state of politics, and the latest kind of influenza.

" Oh, figures," said Mr. Crewe, " figures and letters mostly."

" Don't you find it beastly dull ? " said Mr. Brown.

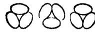
Mr. Crewe considered this question for a moment in silence. " No," he said at last slowly. " No, I don't find it dull. I don't find it at all dull."

# PRELUDE TO BATTLE.

BY BRIAN HILL.

HERE, where the cliffs against the sea
  With rocky barriers make their stand,
The waves make war unceasingly
  Upon the armies of the land.

Gold sea above, green sea below;
  Force strives against unwearied force;
Listen! The heather sentries blow
  Their purple trumpets to the gorse.



The stealthy waves retreat until
  They lurk in ambush on the sand,
And all the golden banners thrill
  Impatient on each steep headland.

The winds from cliff to tall cliff run,
  Each is an army's messenger,
And every hill beneath the Sun
  Like some live thing begins to stir.

# LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG

## By PHILIP BURTON

ILLUSTRATED BY C. FLEMING WILLIAMS

MR. RICHARD CHEYNE, A.R.I.B.A., of Lincoln's Inn, looked at the girl ahead of him and sighed.

He did not ask himself the meaning of that sigh. He did not, in the modern analytical and introspective manner, call up the pack of his objective faculties to hound that fugitive sigh through the dark mazes of the subconscious mind. For one thing, he was hampered by a chronic lack of certainty—and this although he had a catholic taste in novels—about the meaning and the use of those two words "subjective" and "objective." Secondly, there was not, in this undoubtedly significant reaction, the novelty to justify so complicated a manœuvre. He had been following the girl at no great distance for some twenty minutes; had, as was only natural, seen her whenever he looked ahead; and had sighed each time he did so. And thirdly, and in any case, he knew why he was sighing. It was because he vainly wished that he could speak to her.

Let us not hasten to pass judgment on Dick Cheyne's behaviour. True, he was following a girl along a country road. True, that such conduct seemed at variance with the traditions of his birth, his breeding, and the five initial letters—surely themselves the hall-mark of at least respectability—that he appended to his name. True, he appeared, upon the face of things, to be a bounder of a most unpleasant sort. Yet he was not.

To prove that he was not, it will be necessary to review the past. It always is. Not only as a juror will you note Defence's tendency to reminiscence. Any street argument you chance to overhear will furnish an example. "You done it on me," Plaintiff growls. Just that. And "Me?" retorts Defendant. "'Ere, wait a minute, cully. You're too quick by 'alf. It was like this——" To judge is human; to explain—the deuce.

Cheyne had been staying in Colsingford for about three weeks. And as many months before, work had been started on the site of Grayson's future country house, two miles away along the Cromley road. Cheyne had a car, and at first, while things went smoothly with the building, he had run down from Town as often as occasion had demanded. He was young—not thirty yet—and this commission, that older men of some renown might well have envied him, was for him pleasure, work, and anxiety in one. He had secured it partly by luck, partly through the good offices of friends, and meant, at any cost, to vindicate Charles Grayson's choice of him. Grayson, the eldest son of Grayson's Perfect Polish, was the ideal client, wealthy and open-handed, possessing taste, yet tolerant of advice; but he was—as who is not, where building is concerned?—impatient. Latterly there had been delays. Quarrels between the imported builders and their Colsingford auxiliaries had impeded work and bred a multitude of petty troubles. Grayson had chafed; had shown a tendency to make Cheyne's life a burden; and Cheyne, who long ago had made arrangements to spend the month of June away from London, took rooms at the Crown Inn at Colsingford.

Had he been less engrossed in work, Cheyne would have found the time pass slowly in the little market town. He had no friends there, and, excepting those with whom his business brought him into touch, made no acquaintances. Colsingford is, perhaps because of its position in the heart of agricultural country, a settled, unprogressive town, one of those self-contained communities in which the stranger, kindly though he may be treated, inevitably feels that he intrudes.

Within the town itself the tradesmen lived and prospered; around it were the farmers and those other holders of land that Colsingford, reactionary Colsingford, still called the gentry. It was as "gentry" that the tradesmen and the farmers looked on Cheyne. Meeting him in their shops or on the roads, they gave him "Good day," and called him "sir," and presumed no further. The gentry, on the other hand, regarded him askance. They saw in him one who was delivering the neighbourhood into the power of Mammon. They had decided, long before the turf was cut, that the new house would be as hideous as it would certainly be large. Their wives, moreover, were troubled by the potential necessity of putting Grayson both on the kitchen range and on the visiting list.

For several busy days Cheyne had not found his isolation a matter for regret. He had been born in a country town, and to enjoy the familiar atmosphere, without its social obligations, was a change that appealed to him. He was in luck, he told himself—surrounded by stodgy people, on not one of whom he had to call.

He had arrived in Colsingford on Monday, June 3. On Wednesday, June 12, at a quarter-past ten in the morning, he came out of Blake's, the tobacconist's in the market-place, and saw a girl get out of a car on the other side of the cobbled square; and at ten-sixteen the terrible loneliness of a social exile had eaten into his very soul. She was, it must be admitted, a pretty girl.

Since then he had seen her many times, both in the town and out of it. The interest—thus he described it to himself—that he had felt in her upon that first occasion had deepened. For some few tantalizing days he had not even known her name. Then, as he stopped his car one morning to speak to Bassett, Colsingford's master-carpenter, she had passed them and smiled, and nodded a greeting. Bassett turned from touching his cap and saw the interrogation in Cheyne's eyes. "Mr. Bannerman's young lady, over at Shanes," he explained. "Miss Harriet she was christened, but we've always called her Miss Harry since she was so high. She gets prettier every day, to be sure."

"'I'm afraid he's—dead,' he said."

Mr. Bannerman's young lady, thought Cheyne. He felt absurdly stricken. But

perhaps he meant that she was this Bannerman's daughter. He kept anxiety out of his face and his voice.

"Miss Bannerman, was it, you said?"

"Yes, sir. She's the only one now at Shanes. Young Mr. Bannerman, he was killed in the War. A fine young gentleman, sir. I remember—but there, I'm keeping you."

Cheyne, as he followed Miss Harry along the Cromley road, and sighed, and vainly wished that he could speak to her, wondered uncomfortably what he ought to do. He had been walking back to Colsingford after an early inspection of the house, and she had come out of a lane, stepped into the road not twenty-five yards ahead of him, and turned in the same direction.

It was the pace she adopted that made decision difficult. He could catch her up and pass her, it was true, but that would mean walking at a ridiculous speed, tearing past her in a way that would seem so pointed. He knew she had seen him dawdling along in the sun when she first came out of the lane. On the other hand, if he walked, as it was humanly possible to do, more slowly still, and allowed her to draw ahead to a less embarrassing distance, she would wonder if—ridiculous thought!—he was *afraid* to pass her. And, besides, it would seem so pointed.

He also wondered, not for the first time, why she so powerfully attracted him. She did not seem, so far as her appearance went, to belong to the type of girl he most admired. She was small, and exquisitely made: rather a past than a present type of beauty. He liked big, friendly, confident modern girls, with shingled hair, and tennis-hardened hands, and large and practical-looking feet. He liked—he sighed again. He had liked none of them as well as her. Perhaps, he thought, it was her eyes that had attracted him. They were very large—he had studied them covertly when he found himself in a shop with her—and of a most unusual violet colour, and their expression was friendly, humorous, yet, as it seemed to him, not quite devoid of a certain feminine provocation.

He watched the dog that was following her. A moment ago it had jumped to jab its nose in her hand, and she had stopped for a second to return the courtesy with a pat or two. It was a wire-haired terrier of doubtful pedigree and no small age, and he thought judicially that it showed her character in a pleasing light that she should cherish this friendly mongrel no less than the Sealyhams he had often seen with her. At first, indeed, when the dog ran down from the hedge a moment after the girl came out of the lane, he had wondered if it was hers, but her constant attention to it had left no doubt of that.

Cheyne took a step to the side of the road. A horn was blaring from the corner ahead. He took to the grass, knowing from past experience that the Cromley road is one that invites to speed, and when he looked up a big Hispano had cleared the corner, travelling fast, and hugging the left of the road. The dog, no fool where cars were concerned, had trotted across to its own left side as soon as it heard the horn, and now it was going towards the girl, lolling its tongue and looking up for applause.

This time Cheyne's sigh was one of relief. He hated to see a dog in the road when a car was coming. He smiled, stepped on to the road, and then jumped back as the second car appeared.

He checked the impulse to cry a warning. No good confusing a dog like that. He caught his breath, and swore as the small two-seater skidded the corner, steadied, and swung to the right of the road. Now the Hispano was level with the dog, and the other car, putting on speed with every yard, was out to the side and less than a length behind. It became a question of whether the driver was willing to pull to the left, to delay, by ten seconds or so, the triumph of passing another car, for the sake of a dog. He was not. . . .

Cheyne, on his knees in the road, looked up at the girl as she bent over him. "I'm afraid he's—dead," he said, letting the limp, warm body slip down from his hands again; and then, seeing the pain in her eyes, he added: "It was mercifully sudden, you know. He can't have felt anything."

His hand, that was mechanically brushing the dust from the dog's rough coat, shook uncontrollably, and his face was white. He bent his head to avoid her look, and bit his lip. He was so angry that, for the moment, he dared not trust himself to speak again.

They heard the whine of a car in reverse, and turned together to see the Hispano coming back to them. The driver had twisted round in his seat, and his red, congested face, in which the moustache showed vivid white, was turned towards them. "The murdering swine!" he shouted. "The blackguard! Did you get his number?

No, nor did I, worse luck. Dead, I suppose ? By Jove, I'd like——"

Cheyne got to his feet. " Can you spare the time," he said quickly, " to catch him ? Because I'd also like . . ." The driver scrambled over the back of his seat and snatched at the catch of the door behind. " Get in ! " he said. " The two of you—quick ! Shout when you're all aboard. We'll have to move to it."

Cheyne ran back to the dog, picked it up, and handed it in to the girl. " Come on ! " she said. " Oh, quick—come on ! " He slammed the door, ran round the front of the car, and dropped into the seat at the driver's side as the car jumped forward.

Cheyne, in the next few minutes, learnt to appreciate that very great difference, in terms of nervous stress, between fast driving and being driven fast. His own little car could move, and he liked to make it move ; but it had never, under conditions most favourable to speed, induced sensations like these. He set his teeth, gripped the edge of the seat with hands he was glad to hide beneath his thighs, braced himself back against the cushions, and hoped that he looked at ease.

While the car was gathering way down a straight and open stretch, he would watch the moving hand of the speedometer, and wonder if it was not on the optimistic side to show an acceleration like that ; and then he would raise his eyes, flinch from the narrow, encompassing rush of the road towards them, and wonder whether the dial was marked in miles or only in kilometres. And when a corner came leaping at him out of the distance, he would find, in that horrible moment before the brakes went on, that his own right foot was forcing down an imaginary pedal.

The car went rocketing up Stone Hill, slipped sweetly into a lower gear at forty miles an hour, and held that speed to the summit. Cheyne, as the valley beyond rose into sight, leant forward, gazed for a moment ahead, and turned to the man at his side.

" That's the fellow ! " he shouted. The other nodded, changed up, and sent the Hispano down the hill like an aeroplane on the tail of an enemy.

They passed their quarry at sixty with their engine already shut off, and ran in silence another three hundred yards before the brakes went on and checked the momentum of that downhill rush. Then the Hispano slowed, rasping a warning from its horn to the car behind, and came to a standstill, broadside on across the road.

The anger that up till now had kept its grip on Cheyne gave place to a cool and speculative excitement as he walked up to the man in the other car. The scene had begun to assume an atmosphere of tingling unreality, like a convincingly-acted melodrama. Could it, he asked himself, be true that he, Dick Cheyne, and this very ordinary-looking young man in the car were about to batter each other with their fists, in the public highway, on a particularly pleasant morning in June ? He told himself that it could.

" Here ! " said the man in the car, leaning over the side and turning an angry face to Cheyne. " What the dickens is up ? Are you aware your car is just the least little bit in the light ? Or are you practising hold-ups for the films, or what ? I'd be intensely obliged——"

Cheyne cut him short. " You killed a dog," he said curtly, " about five miles back."

" Ah ! " The other man raised his eyebrows, relaxed his position, and seemed relieved. " So *that's* it, is it ? Yes, I remember. Killed it, did I ? H'm ! Sorry, of course. Very unfortunate, and all that. Slap in front of my wheels, you know. Hadn't the faintest chance of avoiding it."

" Unless," Cheyne suggested, " you chose to pull in behind the other car a matter of twenty yards or so."

The heavy, rather too fleshy face was looking sulky again. " Now, look here, I don't want any rot of that sort. I'm not going to take a lecture on driving from every rotten pedestrian who can't look after his dog. Oh, well, I don't want to be unreasonable. If your dog was of any value to you, for Heaven's sake come to the point, and tell me how much you want. I can't stop here all day."

Cheyne took a couple of steps to the side of the car, shot out his hand and caught the speaker's nose between finger and thumb, and because, at the physical contact, his anger suddenly leapt to life again, he twisted that nose with ruthless and astounding violence.

His victim came out of the car with the suddenness of an old buck rabbit who, waiting to see if the ferret is muzzled, has found it is not. " Stop ! " he shouted unnecessarily. " Stop ! Wait—till "—he struggled furiously—" I get my—coat off ! "

Cheyne took off his.

It was clear, as soon as the first exchange of blows had been made, that Cheyne's antagonist could not box. Cheyne, with a sudden retrospective flash of surprise at his own audacity, grinned with honest relief. Neither could he.

"Cheyne . . . whipped up a really classical right to the Killer's jaw."

The Killer, as we may call him, came out of his corner with a rush and forced the pace from the sound of the gong. He adopted a free, two-handed style, dispensing with anything like a guard, and leading with left or right as his stance of the moment might indicate. Cheyne—who ought, by immemorial custom and for the sake of antithesis, to be called the Kid—held his ground, stood toe to toe with the battling Killer, mixing it, swopping miss for miss.

They drew apart, both breathing hard, both stung by the thought of the punishment they had failed to inflict. The Killer assumed a crouching attitude and circled warily, seeking an opening. Presently he jumped in, swung his left to Cheyne's ear, beat the air with his right, and overbalanced.

Carpentier is said to have owed his victories to the lightning speed with which he could notice, snatch, and consummate opportunity. So, too, in his humbler sphere, with Cheyne. As the Killer staggered sideways, and crossed his swinging arms like a man who beats himself to restore his circulation, Cheyne saw his chance. Drawing his left arm back to its full extent, he paused for aim, then whirled it round like a flail, and smote the Killer full on the side of the head. The Killer rocked on his feet, lost his balance again, and Tishied his legs, and Cheyne, with every available ounce of strength, using an action like an athlete

putting the weight, dashed his right fist into the Killer's face.

The Killer was game. He rose—at a count that cannot be specified—from the hard tarmac on which he had measured his length. Deaf to caution, already, like Nelson, blind in one eye to defeat, he carried the fight to Cheyne. But where was his Panther-like swiftness now, where the masterly luck that once had kept him clear of Cheyne's ubiquitous fists? That terrible blow had done its work. He was a beaten man. Cheyne found his face again and again, followed him, jabb and pounded and swung till retaliation came to an end, and he was hitting his man just where and when he happened to.

Already, had this been a fight for a championship, the wireless would have been flashing the news of the Kid's great victory to the ends of the earth. Already the Killer's seconds would have thrown in his towel, his sponge, his Teddy-bear mascot—anything —rather than see his features, one by one, becoming of less and less use to Los Angeles.

And then, perhaps because the sound of a starting car distracted him at a critical moment, Cheyne did what he could never have done if he had tried—whipped up a really classical right to the Killer's jaw.

A little later he helped him into the car.

Cheyne wiped his face with a handkerchief, and looked, with eyes still bright with the lust of battle, for the girl. She was

beckoning to him from a little way up the road, and for a moment he felt at a loss, and had a giddy sense of finding everything reversed. Then he realised that she had passed them during the fight, and that the car that brought them had gone.

He walked towards her slowly, wiping his face—his lip was bleeding slightly—and trying to get his breath; and with every step he left behind him some of his exaltation. Before he reached her, the last of it went. He felt himself go cold with remorse and apprehension. This was the end, he told himself, as well as beginning of the acquaintanceship he had sought. A nice beginning!

You kidnap a girl in a car and drag her into a brutal street-fight. Then you maroon her, umpteen miles from home—a nice sort of end! And—fool that he was!—he had seen from the start that she wasn't the sort of girl to swallow behaviour like that. She wasn't the sort to appreciate the amusing side of it—if there was an amusing side. Well, he had done it now, he supposed.

He looked up into eyes whose expression startled him. "Do say you're not hurt?"

He flushed and stammered: "N-no, not in the least—not a bit. I'm only so miserable to think—dragging you into a show like this—miles from anywhere."

She opened her eyes to their widest extent. "Oh, but what *bilge*!" she said, with a friendliness that warmed his heart. "You mean—the car buzzing off? Oh, but you don't know why! The man who brought us along—and drove like that!—is a magistrate on the Cromley Bench! I *thought* I knew his face. He told me to tell you he was awfully sorry to have to drive on, but he didn't dare to be late at the sessions through helping you to commit assault and battery. Oh"—she paused, and continued with evanescent meekness, "and he told me not to tell you that last bit, or about his being a magistrate. Anyhow, I think he's a bit of a love, don't you? He offered to take me on to Cromley to get a train, but of course I wouldn't do that."

"You wouldn't?" said Cheyne, walking beside her without another thought for the battered remains of his victim. "That was decent of you. By Jove, it *was* decent of you! I thought you'd be disgusted with me. I don't know why I—I think I sort of went mad!"

"I should think you jolly well did!" she said. "Never—oh, never have I been vouchsafed a vision so glorious! Mind you, I saw the Dempsey-Firpo fight on the films when it came to Colsingford. But that was—oh, *tame* compared with yours! That wonderful one you got him—do you remember?—when you knocked him absolutely flat? You were just like Firpo—only he was so clumsy, poor dear. And you aren't hurt at all? Honestly? Not a bit? Well, then, I think that this is really the Perfect Day."

She came to a halt and put an impulsive hand on his arm. "Oh, I shouldn't have said that! It was beastly of me, when—that poor dog . . ."

He looked at her in dismay. "Yes," he said weakly, "the dog. I suppose—it's still in the car?"

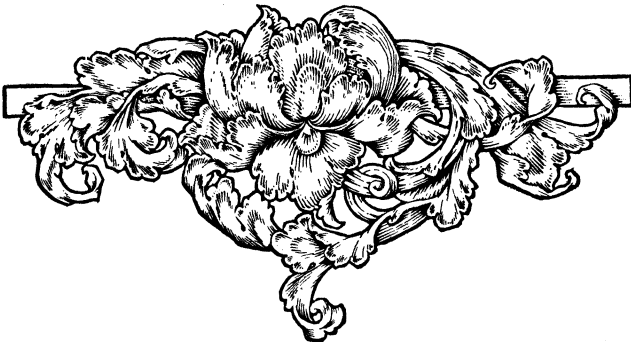
Her hand went up to her cheek, and her eyes were tragic. "How wicked of me to forget! I simply can't ask you to understand how I could. I can't understand myself. Of course you wanted to bury it. I know. It's absurd, I suppose, but somehow one does like to bury them."

He was puzzled. "Why, I *would* have buried it for you, certainly."

He felt her hand slip off his arm as she interrupted. "For *me*? But—I don't think I see—what you mean?"

Cheyne groaned, and gazed at her for a time in silence. "Don't tell me," he said at last, "that it wasn't your dog."

As they walked together to Colsingford, five miles away, and introduced themselves to each other, and plotted encounters more conventional, Cheyne's thoughts reverted constantly to the dog, that unknown, unlucky dog that had followed Miss Harriet Bannerman—whom her friends called Harry—the dog he had watched her call and pat and make a fuss of, because she thought it was his.



EASILY EXPLAINED.

TROUBLESOME LUNCHER: Waiter, waiter, what's this button doing in the salad?
LONG-SUFFERING WAITER: Oh, that'll be part of the dressing, sir!

# THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### ANOTHER STAGE ROMANCE.

***By Theta.***

IT is odd how fame on the stage can come to a man entirely by accident. You all know the story of the prima donna who was found by a wandering impresario warbling to an audience of three pigs and a self-binder in a corner of the old farm, and promptly launched on a career that raked in ten pounds a semiquaver and double pay on gala nights. And now there is my own case.

Of course I have always sung a little. Often in the old days has "*My* Little Grey Home in the West," sent an audience away more than ever contented with their own, but that was in far-away Tooting, and when we recently moved to Daisy Hill I could hardly have expected that my fame would have preceded me. It was indeed gratifying when the dear vicar called to crave my support for a concert he was organising.

"What may I put you down for?" he asked.

"Oh, a couple," I said airily.

"Pounds or guineas?"

"Songs," I answered, and I'll give the man credit for concealing his disappointment under a mask of enthusiasm.

"Excellent," he beamed. "And what is your voice?"

"Baritone," I informed him.

"Excellent," he said again. "Just what we want. We've already got a trombone and seventeen programme sellers. And what will you sing?"

I showed him my current repertoire (both of it), and explained that one could always fall back on old favourites for encores.

Daisy Hill is a straggling suburb. Judging from the thinness of our party wall, I am inclined to think it has outgrown its strength, but, whatever the reason, the fact remains that its Town Hall was too remote from our house to enable me to get home from business and dress in comfort on the night of the concert.

I had, perforce, to take my dress suit up to the office with me in the morning and arrange to dress at the Town Hall itself in the evening.

"And nicely creased the coat will be after stopping in a bag all day," was the wife's comment as she watched me pack; but that was where she was wrong, though, of course, I did not say so. Ours is what is called an idyllic union—straight home every night and no back answers.

As a matter of fact, my coat was going to pass the day on a hanger in the office cupboard, where, by the way, its presence added tone to the whole establishment.

It was a busy day. The Indian mail went out, I remember, and an irate female came in, and, what with one thing and another, by the time I reached the Town Hall my place on the programme had almost been reached too. The artist in front of me was actually finishing his encore before, having got to that stage in my toilet, I remembered that my coat was still on its hanger in the office cupboard.

"Go on in your shirt-sleeves and sing 'The Village Blacksmith' in character," was the first suggestion, when I left the dressing-room and sought for help; but, as I said at once, do I *look* the sort of man, the muscles of whose brawny arms came half-way down his legs?

By this time the audience was waiting, and there was practically no choice about accepting the next suggestion.

"Take my coat," offered a brother-performer. "We're much about the same size." Which only showed how much he underestimated his own chest measurement.

But even if my chest measurement is small, I have always had a big heart, and the titter that greeted my appearance roused the blood of generations of fighting (home service) ancestors. I performed as I had never done before, putting into the song every ounce of expression it could carry, and getting out of it every pennyweight of effect it was capable of producing.

And, though the laughter of the thoughtless at my odd clothes continued, I made my appeal to the thinking part of my audience, as I knew I should. The demand for an encore drowned the laughter as I finished, and so moved me that I was on the point of giving "Home, Sweet Home," until I realised that I was not a popular soprano.

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT.

VICAR (reproachfully): Is it true, Wiggs, that you were offered a life-long situation at the Hall, and refused it?

LOCAL NE'ER-DO-WELL: Ayr, zur—I couldn't bear workin' at a job wi' the thoughts o' me death in view the 'ole time—so I be takin' temp'ry jobs perm'nantly!

I did not appear in the second half of the programme. The emotional strain of the first half had left me fit only for a voice pastille and going straight to bed, and it was thus not until the appearance of our local paper that I learned all that my new neighbours at Daisy Hill thought of me.

The musical critic of *The Daisy Hill Courier* is an imaginative lad with a distinct talent for football reporting, and on the subject of the concert he had let himself go.

"The tit-bit of the evening," he wrote, "was the humorous work of Mr. Bertram Blether. Dressed, so as to convey on his first appearance a subtle hint of what was to follow, he delighted us with his clever parody of the methods and mannerisms of the conventional concert baritone. In these days of electricity and gas, it is indeed pleasant to find 'the sacred lamp of burlesque' still tended so well, and all lovers of a hearty laugh will look forward to hearing Mr. Blether many times this winter."

That was all, but it is enough. Already I have received three more invitations to provide the humour at local concerts, but these will be my last appearances as an amateur. I am leaving the office in order to devote all my time

to my new career as a comedian. I have found my *métier*.

When I die "Boiled Beef and Carrots" (words and music) will be found written on my heart. As I said, I have always had a big one.

**A FATAL OMISSION.**

An American football team was recently fed with sweetmeats at half-time "to counteract the depletion of sugar in the blood during violent exertion."

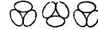
**We had given a fortnight to training**
**With dumb-bell and bar and trapeze,**
**Urged on by the prospect of gaining**
**The day with comparative ease;**

**The betting was quoted at seven**
**To one that when time should be up**
**We'd have kicked the opposing eleven**
**Clean out of the Cup.**

**We had taken the sea baths at Westcliff**
**And sniffed its ozone on the pier**
**(That being, we'd gathered, the best cliff**
**When cup ties began to draw near);**
**We had given tobacco up gaily,**
**Delighted to know how it feels,**
**And a trainer had "massaged" us daily**
**An hour before meals.**

**But though for one half of the distance**
**We didn't do badly at all,**
**In spite of our sober existence**
**Our pride had a pitiful fall;**
**For after half-time we were rotten,**
**And failed to get over the shock**
**Of finding some ass had forgotten**
**The peppermint rock.**

***T. Hodgkinson.***



THE teacher had been telling her pupils about the bear hibernating in the winter. After explaining it to them, she said:

"Can anyone tell me of any other animal that hibernates?"

A little tot's hand went up, and the teacher said: "Well, Tommy, you may tell us of one."

"Santa Claus," said Tommy, "only he does it in the summer-time."

OUTWITTING THE ENEMY.

MIKE (as alarm clock goes off): I fooled ye that time! I was not aslape at all, at all!

A COLORADO cow-puncher, accustomed to vast visions in the regions of the Rockies, visited the "Coast" for the first time. A friend took him to the top of an eminence near San Francisco, where he might view the sea, expecting an outburst of amazement at the sight. Instead his guest queried:

"What's that?"

"The Pacific Ocean," was the reply.

"But is that all you can see of it?" he asked.

EFFORTS are to be made to popularise British music in America. It is not stated whether this is being done in a spirit of revenge, or if the idea is to return good for jazz.

### COMMON AND INTELLECTUAL.

In many ways the Tourist Intellectual has an advantage over the tourist common, or mass. Let us suppose that you and I are "doing" a picture gallery. You take a firm grip of the catalogue, and leave me to flounder. "Blug's celebrated painting 'Imbecile with Young'" you read out. We pause. "The foreshortened perspective," I say, looking over your shoulder, "is remarkably cosmospheric," and we move hurriedly on to the next.

THE ONLY ONE.

Doctor: What's the mixture in the celery glass?
Patient: That's the one whisky and soda you said I might have!

The Intellectual will come into the gallery as though he owned it. He will sit on the attendant's chair and look, not at Blug—for Blug he doesn't care a pin—but at some horrible still life, a stick of celery with mutton-chops rampant, the inside of a dead mole, an oyster supporting a tin of sardines, backed by an empty bottle of rum, the kind of meal in fact the artist must have indulged in to want to paint it.

At the end of half an hour or so your Intellectual will rise and lounge out again into the street. He has no fear like you and me of missing No.167. Nobody will question him about it when he gets home.

Here you have the whole secret of leading an intellectual life. A tourist of this kind can come back from Venice and say that he spent his whole time there feeding the pigeons. If we did this our friends would begin to talk about the St. Mark mosaics. With him it is different. His friends never expect anything of him. In fact they are crushed by his pigeons. They feel as though they'd been eating whelks at South End.

I have been often tempted to buy a hat and go and sit in the Quartier Latin. I was told by an American that this was the first step towards becoming a Tourist Intellectual. But it seems to be too expensive. You have to be American to afford it. You'll hear them whispering to one another in the R——: "Say, Woodstock! That dago wants half a dollar f'r a tooring sec. What'll I do?" It seems that the waiters charge for education.

The Tourist Intellectual has one other privilege which I am not allowed, or you. He can take a pickaxe abroad with him and dig up great chunks of old temple and bring them home. Nobody accuses him of collecting souvenirs. But when we tried to hack a bit out of Notre Dame they made quite a scene about it.

*Onun.*

Miniature hot-water bottles for ladies' handbags are now being sold, but we still await the one that could be carried in a gentleman's boot.

Native (to landscape artist): If you've got any of that green paint left over, mister, I'd like a bit for my shed.

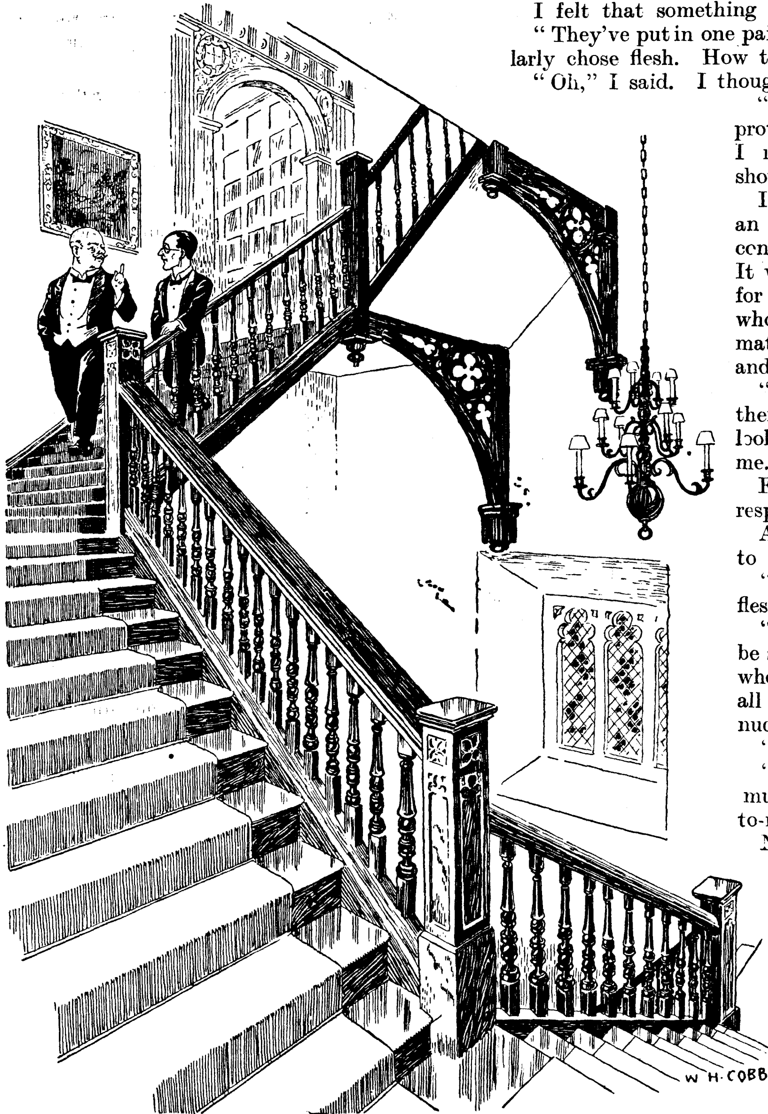
### STELLA'S STOCKINGS.

***By W. Bevan James.***

WOMEN are wonderful.

Stella, needing new silken adorning for her comely southern extremities, sought out, naturally, that emporium whose salespeople were the suavest and merchandise the flimsiest. Only the prices had substance.

There, with luxurious leisureliness, she purchased silken hose, of filmy fabric, wondrous in shininess. And upon me, her uncomplaining parcel-bearer, she laid her purchase. The box was not heavy, but excessively inconvenient.




SUCCESS.

HOST: Yes, sir. When I started in life I'd hardly a shirt to my back and now, by sheer hard work, I've made over a million.

BORED VISITOR: But surely you can't wear them *all*?

"They're sweet," said Stella, as she untied the tape. The wrapping paper made a refined rustling, far superior to the crackling common papers emit.

She spread the stockings caressingly. I could almost hear her gentle purr.

Then, quite suddenly she said, "Oh!"

I felt that something had occurred.

"They've put in one pair of nude. I particularly chose flesh. How tiresome!"

"Oh," I said. I thought it might do.

"But nude!" Stella protested. "Just fancy! I never wear nude. I should feel so ridiculous."

I thought silence and an expression of rather concerned interest fitting. It was the doctor's look for his faddiest patient who has nothing the matter — except wealth and idleness.

"I can't possibly wear them," Stella went on, looking reproachfully at me.

From habit I assumed responsibility.

Apologetically I began to frame evasions.

"But aren't nude and flesh—— ?" I ventured.

"Of course not. Don't be so ridiculous. Anyone who knows anything at all knows how different nude and flesh are."

"But——"

"Quite impossible. You must change them for me to-morrow."

Next day, alone, I carried the box again. I felt silly. From its appearance there could be no doubt about what it contained. A baby in my arms would not have made me feel more foolish going to the office. Of course it was dazzlingly fine, so I couldn't even hide the package with my mack.

"Be sure they are right this time. They must be flesh and the same as these. Pure silk, with fully fashioned lisle feet and tops," said Stella as I bade her good-bye.

The saleswoman was obliging and sympathetic. She really looked sorry for the mistake.

I appeared brightly before Stella, feeling I had done well, and gave her the box.

"Thanks, darling," she said, and kissed me.

There was pain in an outcry she made a moment later.

"What *have* you brought me?" she wailed. "These are *skin*!"

She held them out to me as if I was to wear them. With an acquired cod-like look on my face I just STOOD.

The silence was impressive.

"I told them flesh," I said huskily. It didn't seem to be what Stella expected me to say.

"Couldn't you see they were skin?"

ON THE CONTRARY——

DAUGHTER: Did Guy tell you last night he wanted to marry me?

FATHER: No—I don't think so: as far as I can remember, he talked quite sensibly.

"They looked all right," I murmured feebly.

"How could skin look all right when I wanted you to get flesh?" Stella can be quite angry.

"But isn't skin pretty much the same as——?"

"How on earth could it be? You are too stupid."

"Well, it seems to me——"

"Ridiculous. How any sane person can think flesh and nude and skin the same colour beats me," Stella said, looking at me as if I was not her favourite. "It seems I can get nothing done unless I do it myself. I must buy my stockings in future."

She had done so now. But I only thought of it afterwards.

**SPEEDY SHOPPING.**

It is said that many Englishwomen now go to Paris by air to do a few hours' shopping.

**In London homes, when callers come to-day,**
**It is quite usual for the maid to say:**
**"My lady's out, but please come in and wait;**
**She's flown to Paris, so will not be late!"**

***Leslie M. Oyler.***

"WHAT'S the fare?" inquired the woman of the taxi-driver as the conveyance stopped at her destination.

"Three and six, mum," was the prompt reply.

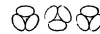
"Well, here's half a crown, my man. I'm not such a fool as I look."

"No," said the driver; "I wish you were, mum!"

THE customer had waited half an hour for the fish he had ordered. He was very quiet, but inwardly angry. At last the waiter appeared to be bustling up. "Your fish will be here in five minutes," he said. Another quarter of an hour passed, and then the customer's patience was exhausted. "Tell me, waiter," he shouted, "what bait you are using?"

HELEN had been brought up in a Presbyterian minister's family and had always attended her father's church. When the family happened to be visiting relatives who were Episcopalians, the subject of going to church came up during the conversation at the dinner table on Saturday night, and the family was invited to attend the Episcopal church. Helen begged her father to accept, but he replied that he thought they would go to their own church.

"Oh, daddy," said the little girl, "if you'll only let me go, I'll promise not to believe one word they say."



BUSINESS MAN (to applicant): I am inclined to give you the position if you understand double-entry book-keeping.

APPLICANT: I do that. Why, at my last place I had to do a triple double entry—a set for the active partner, showing the real profits, a set for the sleeping partner, showing small profits, and a set for the income-tax return, showing no profits.

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### ROBERT BUYS A HAT.

***By Yvonne Sevessand.***

At stated intervals in our matrimonial voyage my lord and master, as you term him, announces, "I must have a new hat!"

Then I know that there have come to his notice certain threats of disruption in his head-gear which have long been apparent to the rest of the world. Sometimes I think that all males have amongst other survivals of their childhood the lust after old coats and old hats, as little girls cling to veteran and play-soiled dolls. Amongst the many schemes I have contemplated for the repair of the family fortunes is one for the establishment of a shop for the provision of spurious antiques in the hat line.

After the pronouncement that a new hat is essential to our peace of mind there is silence for a week or two. Silence, no doubt pregnant with intensive thinking on the shape of hats, their material and their symbolism.

"My dear," says my husband at breakfast, if it be to his liking and the morning fine, "I really must get a new hat."

I begin to contemplate in the near future once more being accompanied by a husband who is a credit to me. But it is not until, "You forgot to remind me about the hat!" comes—no "My dear," you will notice, and the hat spoken of as if it were the only one under consideration—that I know that the day of tribulation is at hand. It usually arrives about a fortnight later.

The unworthy legend about the woman who saw everything that could be pulled out for her in a shop and then purchased a packet of pins is as a matter of course contrasted with the spectacle of a busy male dashing incontinently into the nearest shop and purchasing the first garment which will keep him out of the hands of the police. Both pictures are untrue to life. Beside a man purchasing new headgear a woman in search of a hat is a mere intemperate hustler.

Within certain decent limits a woman seeks a hat unlike that borne by any other woman. A man demands one the like of which is worn by every man of his acquaintance. "Women are slaves to fashion," says the hypercritical male thing—I should like to see one of these stern unbending beings being offered a "model" by an imaginative hatter.

"Just arrived from our designer's studio, sir. Only one of its kind we have manufactured."

"Indeed," would remark Robert, for example, swallowing rapidly as he does when he is about

MISUNDERSTOOD.

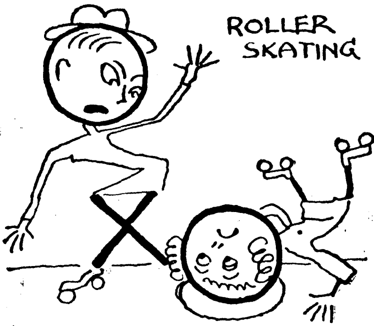
"I'm just taking my boy to the South Kensington Museum."

"Great Scot! I *am* sorry that's necessary! What *is* there peculiar about him?"

to thunder out the law. "No decent fellow would be found dead in it."

In our ordinary round Robert tries on about thirty hats of all shapes, sizes, and colours within the somewhat limited scope allowed by male headwear. As he gazes at himself in a mirror, after submitting resignedly to the operation of fitting each, he asks, "How do I look?"

"OXO" IN EVERYDAY LIFE

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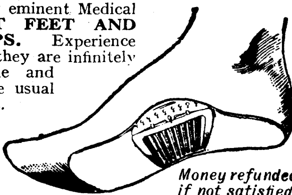

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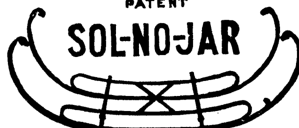


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It is part of our ritual. I succeed in looking critical, and instead of saying "It suits you perfectly, dear," as I should to a woman friend, I purse my lips and suggest, "Why not try another?" Not sarcasm, but the recognised ceremonial like the morning kiss, when one mind is in the office and the other fashioning phrases for the annihilation of the greengrocer who dared to send vegetables at least two days old.

Until my husband took to himself a wife and I was admitted to the dread mysteries surrounding the covering of men's heads, I never fully appreciated the potentialities of a mere hat. Some day when I am quite fit and well, when my dressing and housekeeping accounts would pass the most sceptical auditor, when Josephine has had a good report from school, and cook has stayed with us for three months, I shall tell the undecorated truth.

"Like a man who keeps dogs," I shall reply to the first query. To the second, after a gasp —for Robert is quite a good-looking man, "Like a bookmaker who has had a really bad day." When the third hat is wriggled into position I should recall the appearance of a well-known comedian. But I know how it would end. I should lose my nerve. At the thought of the man revealed to me after a further experiment returning to "The Gables," I should dash out of the shop, jump into a taxi, and hurry home to remove family and self to a place of safety.

Robert has gone to the same hatter for years. I think I know why now. Smithson plays the game. After the pair of them have gone the whole gamut of sartorial suicide, and racked the finer feelings of a wife and mother, prolonged search reveals a further specimen of hattery.

"That's the thing!" exclaims my husband delightedly, preening himself before the glass.

"The very thing," I nod, as Smithson beams in triumph from the background over this spectacle of conjugal accord.

"I'll wear it, Smithson. Send on the old one," says Robert, tucking me under his arm.

So to lunch. Robert making surreptitious side glances in the shop windows at the reflection of the immaculate twin brother of the hat in which he entered Smithson's shop.

THE prospective maid-of-all-work was stating her terms. "I want a pound a week, paid in advance, and I don't wash, nor scrub floors, nor——"

"But——" began the mistress of the house feebly.

"—work after six o'clock," went on the woman steadily, "and I want every evening off, and in case the place doesn't suit me I want you to write a good reference now, and——"

"But surely the reference can wait till you leave us?" broke in the mistress nervously.

"No, I want the letter now," returned the domestic firmly. "I've tried getting them when I leave, and I've never got a good one yet."

MISAPPLIED.

VICTIM: Thanks! But I brushed my teeth this morning.

"No one can touch our modern English poets," says a writer. But did anyone ever try to "touch" a poet for a bit?

Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London.

# THE APRIL WINDSOR

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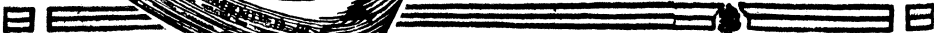
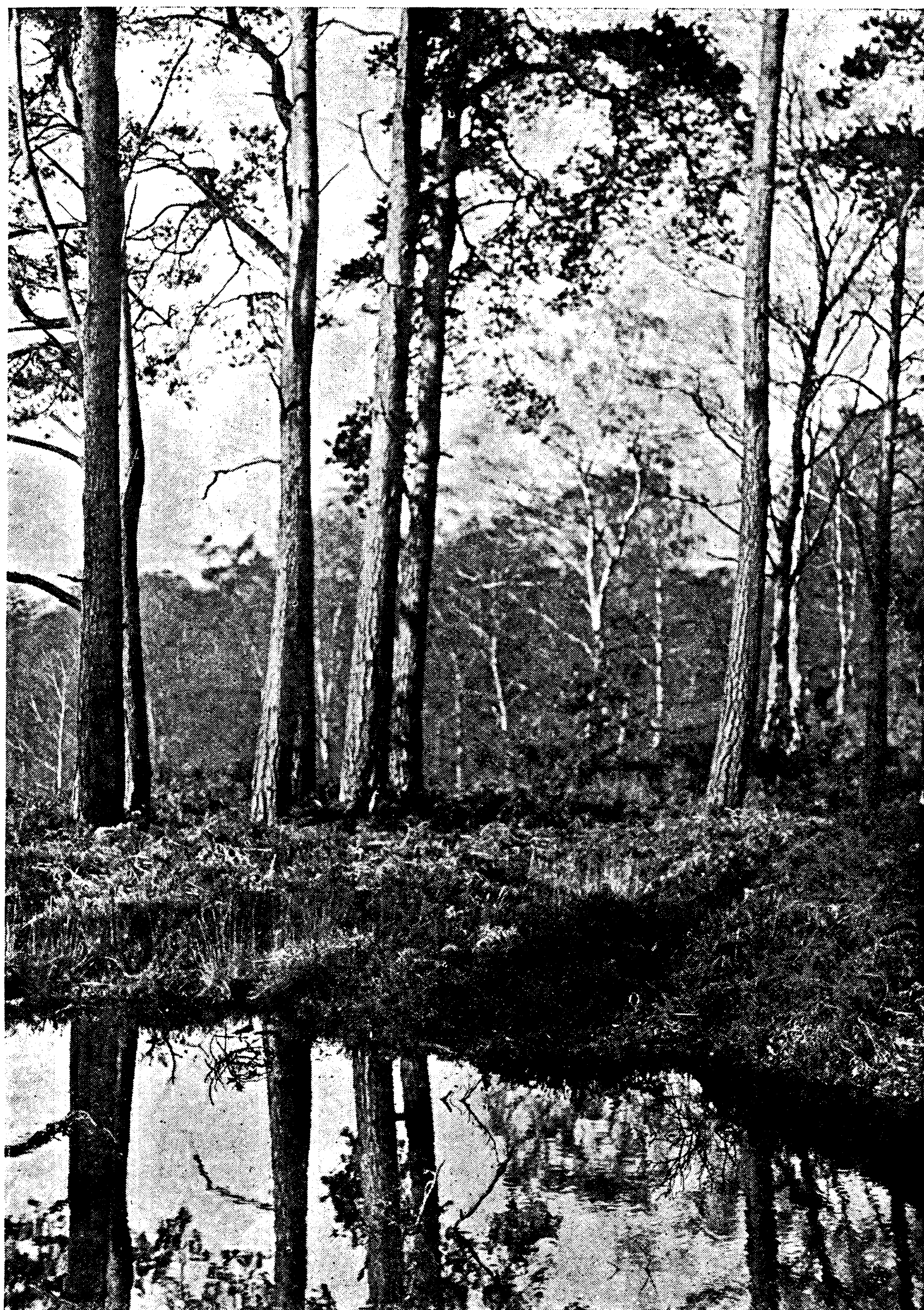




NATURE'S MIRROR.

A Photographic Study by Cecil B. Waterlow.

"Everybody insisted on shaking hands with Chaffyn. He eyed his old friends hungrily. He spoke with emotion: 'You fellows have missed me, eh?'"

# THE SECOND RESURRECTION OF QUIX

## By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

### ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

CHAFFYN walked shyly into his club, the *Buskin*, which, as all the world knows, includes amongst its members men famous in many fields of human endeavour. The somewhat gloomy portals of the club give no indication of the good-fellowship and joy in life that reign gloriously within. Chaffyn had not entered the club for five years. He had been living in the country. The hall porter greeted him pleasantly:

"Glad to see you again, sir. No letters."

Chaffyn ascended the marble steps that lead to the hall. Upon the top step a fellow member slapped him hard on the back.

"My dear old Quix, I thought you were dead."

Chaffyn replied in the same hearty voice:

"What! For the second time, Jim?"

Together they passed from the main hall into the lounge, profaned by no stranger, however distinguished. A chorus of voices rent the air.

"Why—it's Quix—Quix it is, b' Jove!—

*Copyright, 1926, by Horace Annesley Vachell, in the United States of America.*

The old bird looks joyful—Quix, don't break our hearts by telling us that you are not lunching here ?"

Everybody insisted on shaking hands with Chaffyn. He eyed his old friends hungrily. He spoke with emotion :

"You fellows have missed me, eh ?"

"Missed you—— ? What a modest rabbit it is!"

Jim Steele-Murdoch, the K.C., said solemnly :

"This is the second resurrection of Quix. He admits it."

"I do. I say, I want some of you fellows to lunch with me. Is it too hot for Burgundy ?"

"Not in this club."

"Have you drunk up all the '99 Chambertin ?"

"If not, we will—at your expense."

There was no mistake about this boisterous welcome. Chaffyn blushed with pleasure.

"By the way," he observed genially, "my invitation to luncheon is limited to bachelors."

Steele-Murdoch protested.

"Is a blameless widower barred ?"

"No," said Chaffyn. "But I'm not asking married men to-day."

A professional humorist, a much-married man, said scathingly :

"I understand. You selfish single beasts mean to have an orgy."

"We can get two or three small tables and join them together," said the hospitable Chaffyn. "Waiter——!"

Instantly a well-trained servant appeared. Even upon his impassive countenance lurked a welcoming smile.

"Why, it's George," said Chaffyn. "How are you, George ?"

"I am very well, sir, thank you."

"Have you married since I last saw you ?"

"No, sir."

Chaffyn surveyed his guests.

"I won't order cocktails, if we are going to tackle that Chambertin. George, bring a bottle of the oldest dry sherry in the club. One moment. Tell the wine-waiter to come here. And tell the steward in the dining-room that a dozen members will be lunching with me. Let him serve a luncheon worthy of the best Burgundy. We shall begin with plovers' eggs."

"Very good, sir."

George retired, smiling discreetly. An actor-manager, married but divorced (and therefore eligible as a guest) exclaimed dramatically :

"We know now where our Quix has been. During his too-long absence from the club he has inherited wealth beyond the dreams of avarice."

"No," said Chaffyn, "no. But I have enough to entertain my friends handsomely."

A second later the steward appeared. He, too, greeted the long-lost member graciously.

"Did I understand, sir, that you have invited a dozen guests to luncheon ?"

"I have. I mean I shall. Just a round dozen."

"Pardon me, sir; but with you, their host, that makes thirteen."

"What a head you have for lightning calculation! Yes; it makes thirteen; and this is the thirteenth day of April. Also, it is my birthday. I regard thirteen as my lucky number." He glanced at the faces about him. "Any objections ?"

Nobody, apparently, objected to sitting down thirteen at table. To allay possible misgivings, Chaffyn said lightly :

"If there is anything in that obsolete superstition that one of the thirteen dies within the year, well, I, as your host, shall claim the privilege of preceding you to what is, I hope, a less mad world than this."

He spoke gravely, but everybody laughed.

Half an hour later Chaffyn and his twelve guests went in to a gala luncheon.

## II.

It may be recorded here that Chaffyn had the great quality which justifies membership in a club reckoned to be the most "pilling" institution in the world. He was quintessentially clubbable, an excellent *raconteur* (not a purveyor of chestnuts), an alert listener to the talk of others, and a man of many facets. He had a dry but not a bitter wit, and he enjoyed unreservedly the good things of life. In his day, he had been acclaimed as the most popular member of the Buskin. More, he remained as popular after serving faithfully for five years on the Committee—no mean achievement, as Steele-Murdoch remarked at the time.

Whilst Chaffyn was colloguing with the steward, Jim Steele-Murdoch enlightened one of Chaffyn's younger guests. Jim wondered why Chaffyn had asked a comparatively new member to be his guest. But he happened to be a son of Moberley-Fish, long dead, who had waged an exterminating war against whiskers. M.F. had been a great friend of Chaffyn's. Young

Fish asked Steele-Murdoch what Chaffyn had *done*. The most eloquent advocate in England answered portentously, as if he were delivering a funeral oration:

"Charles Chaffyn," he said, "might have done anything. He had the art of doing nothing more gracefully than any man of his generation. He came up from Cambridge with the reputation of writing verses, which are still, I believe, quoted."

"Forgive my interrupting you," said Tom Bagster, the editor of the *Daily Banner*, "but Quix did not come up from Cambridge, he was sent down."

"You are right for once. Yes; Quix was sent down——"

"Why do you call him Quix?" asked young Fish.

"Short for Don Quixote. He was called Quix at Harrow. He tilted at windmills as soon as he was breeched. Yes; Quix was sent down from Cambridge. He impersonated the Sultan of Burrahbugpore. Authority kowtowed to Quix. Quix conferred a decoration upon the Head of his college. He played his part so well that Authority might have remained in ignorance of how it had been spoofed. But Quix, in a thoughtless moment, hung his robes and sham jewels upon a sacrosanct statue, and crowned it with a turban. So down he went. When I first knew him he was taking life as one vast joke. He had no belief in our institutions. I account for that easily—he was the son of a stipendiary magistrate. He drifted into journalism, but he refused, very properly, to affiliate himself to any political party. He came to the conclusion—as we all have—that politicians serve their own interests, not the interests of the public. He never quarrelled with his editors; they quarrelled with him. For a time he was one of our ablest dramatic critics, but in the end the theatre bored him. For many years he lived at this club. He cracked jests and bottles of sound wine."

"Did he crack hearts?" asked young Fish.

"I don't know. You can ask him, when the port comes round. Shush-h-h! Here he is."

Chaffyn rushed in:

"The chef can give us Zabaglione."

"Nothing better," observed Tom Bagster.

"What is Zabaglione?" asked young Fish. Chaffyn answered him compassionately and enviously:

"My dear boy, what rosy hours lie ahead of you! Zabaglione is a *soufflé* flavoured with marsala. It does not vitiate the palate for port. I can't get snails."

"Snails——!"

"They are the food, *par excellence*, to bring out the subtler essences and ethers of Burgundy. We shall have *foie gras* instead."

"For what we are about to receive——" murmured the actor-manager.

Chaffyn rushed away. Tom Bagster said a few more words about his host.

"Quix did good work for me; he brightened our literary column; unfortunately delicate irony is wasted upon the public." He turned to young Fish. "You asked what he had done. From intimate knowledge of the man I can say that he 'did' innumerable kindnesses to many under-dogs. He has come back to us, and what is his first action? He entertains us. *We* ought to be entertaining him."

"We will," said the K.C., emphatically. "We'll give Quix a dinner that will knock spots out of his luncheon."

There was a chorus of "Hear—hear!"

But young Fish, of a too-enquiring turn of mind, was not satisfied.

"From what you tell me, Mr. Chaffyn seems to have been nobody's enemy but his own."

Steele-Murdoch rebuked paternally a very young member.

"*Cliché*, Johnnie, is only used in this club by aged jurists, who can't be broken of a lamentable habit. And a *cliché*, I would point out to you, is generally tosh. Chaffyn has been his own best friend. He has wallowed in his generous instincts; he has warmed himself at his own fires lit to warm others."

Young Fish justified membership of the Buskin by saying sincerely:

"I am proud to be the guest of such a man."

A distinguished novelist, always seeking "copy," led Steele-Murdoch aside.

"Why," he whispered, "did Chaffyn disappear?"

"I cannot explain his disappearance. He dropped out. Somebody said that he was living in the country."

"I smell mystery."

"Perhaps he married against his instincts of self-preservation. Anyway, he has come back much the same as he went away. That is really all that concerns us."

The novelist nodded, not quite satisfied.

"Why did you say this was his second resurrection?"

"Ah! you were in America at the time.

Quix, as I need hardly remind you, was an accomplished writer of obituary notices. Every editor in Fleet Street knew that Quix could be trusted to do his subject justice without slopping over. One day, in the lounge here, Quix observed to Tom Bagster and me that it must be great fun reading one's own obituary notices. In an unguarded moment he admitted that he looked forward to reading what some of us would surely write about him. That inspired Tom. Shortly afterwards, Quix went away to fish in Norway. A " par " appeared—between ourselves, old Tom worded it—to the effect that Quix, wading in some rapid river, had lost his footing, and was drowned. I wrote the obituary notice which Tom published in the *Daily Banner*. A dozen papers followed suit. Quix *did* read a lot of stuff that must have brought the blush to his cheeks, because delightful things were told about him. And, finally, he laughed over it as much as we did. Of course, Tom and I had covered our tracks. Quix never found us out. All responsibility rested ultimately upon the jade, Rumour."

The novelist laughed.

" Twelve law-abiding men gazed in horror-stricken silence at their host. For half a minute nobody spoke."

" And now we are going to celebrate his second return from the dead."

" We are."

## III.

THEY did.

It was agreed afterwards that this was a

memorable luncheon given by an incomparable host. Quix beamed upon his guests and led the talk into the right channels. He extracted the best from each. Indeed, from the plovers' eggs to the Zabaglione

"Then young Fish said in a stage whisper: 'Of course, he's mad.'"

the luncheon satisfied in every sense of the word the bodily and mental expectations of twelve good men and true. Not one failed to do his duty, whether as trencherman or talker. Controversial topics, for instance, were avoided. Two of Chaffyn's guests—eminent journalists—were not on speaking terms when they found themselves next to each other at this hospitable board. Before the baby lamb came hissing from the spit they had become warm friends again. . . .

After the Zabaglione, the port circulated, the noblest wine in the club, a '90, shipped by one of the great benefactors of the human race. All glasses—dock glasses—were filled. By this time the big dining-room held no members other than Chaffyn's guests. Lunch had been served at one-forty-five. It was nearly three when the port circulated.

Chaffyn stood up.

"My dear friends, I give you one toast—FREEDOM."

The toast was drunk in silence. But, as Chaffyn sat down, Steele-Murdoch challenged it.

"We have drunk your toast, Quix, with all the honours due to you, but personally speaking I am of the opinion that there is no such thing as freedom. None of us is free."

"I am free," said Chaffyn.

"My congratulations."

"Yes; I am free," went on Chaffyn, in a grave voice. "It has been well said that liberty must be earned to be enjoyed. I have earned my liberty. And I have risen from the dead. That is why I am trying to entertain you to-day."

"You are doing it superbly."

"Thank you. I affirm that one hour of such liberty is worth a century of peace within the tomb."

"Hear, hear!"

The novelist inclined an attentive ear. The editor of the *Daily Banner* nodded with Olympian majesty. The K.C. sipped his port in silence. It was in the ambient air that Chaffyn had something to say, something *arresting*. But, as a playwright of promise, who had written a brace of one-act plays, which whetted the public palate for more, he well knew the virtue of suspense.

"With our coffee and cigars," he said solemnly, "I propose to tell you *why* I am here to-day, and *why* I reckon this past hour to be the happiest of my life."

Then he laughed heartily; but the others did not laugh so heartily. The K.C., comparing notes next day with the novelist, expressed, perhaps, the sense and *non-sense* of the jury. We must admit that no man was more competent to do so.

"I was sensible that Quix was absolutely sincere, and yet I was insensible, or non-sensible, to the issues involved. That laugh of his rang true; my own laugh was forced. I felt that really Chaffyn's freedom had been attained, earned, as he told us. We, all of us, even young Fish, were thinking that a price, a heavy price, had been exacted."

"My own impression."

This was said after the event, and K.C.s have a clever trick of dovetailing cause and effect, when these inseparable twins take the highroad together.

Coffee was served, old brandy, and the biggest and best cigars. The club servants left the dining-room.

## IV.

Chaffyn waited till the cigars were drawing properly; then he addressed the novelist.

"You're an Old Wykehamist, say grace."

An Old Wykehamist looked astonished.

"Say grace—and don't mumble it."

The Old Wykehamist, greatly to his credit, repeated articulately a Latin benediction.

"Many thanks," said Chaffyn. "Grace before meat is a sentimental absurdity, because the meat may be tough. But grace *after* a satisfying luncheon can be said honestly and piously. I lay emphasis on this, because we may not meet again for some considerable time."

A full-throated chorus of protest greeted this statement.

"You are going to dine with us, Quix.—It's settled.—We accept no excuse.—You must name the ambrosial night here and now."

"I am sorry," said Chaffyn slowly. "In a few minutes you will understand why I must decline, very regretfully, your charming invitation."

He lay back in his chair, half closing his eyes. Nobody spoke. The novelist, taking mental notes, observed that his host glanced round the room before he spoke again.

"I love this room and this club. In it I found for many years rest and—refreshment. I suppose I was born slightly tired. At any rate, I tired easily whenever I attempted to work hard, as all of you fellows work. Having independent means, the virtue of abstention was, perhaps, forced on me. Old Tom here"—he indicated the editor of the *Daily Banner*—"may remember my reasons for leaving his staff."

He paused, smiling. Bagster spoke up briskly:

"I can give the reason which he did *not* give. Another man, without independent means, wanted Chaffyn's billet. He got it."

"Rot!" exclaimed Quix. "I had lost grip of my job. I knew that the other fellow was more prehensile. I'll bet he has it still."

"He has."

"Just so. I'm delighted to hear it. 'Hold Fast' is the motto for all you strivers. I am not a striver. This funny world amused me; it has stimulated me; I have been an onlooker at the game of life; I regarded it—I regard it still—as a game." He paused again, as if speech had tired him; he sipped his old brandy with evident appreciation. Then he sat bolt upright, cocking his chin at a defiant angle. For the first time a tincture of acidity escaped him.

"Killjoys might indict me. They did; they do; they will. Killjoys I regard as puritanical humbugs. To the Tiber with them! Killjoys, however, can say truthfully that I was suitably punished—*I married one of them.*"

The actor-manager gulped down (he was

too agitated to sip it) what was left of his old brandy.

"I married for ignoble reasons," continued Chaffyn, "a woman of the positive type, with maternal instincts. I had spent —squandered, so she said afterwards—most of my small capital. If I had not married, I should have been constrained to resign from this blessed club. To remain a member of this club was, in me, an obsession."

Young Fish, not a seasoned toper, exclaimed loudly:

"I say, sir, that your reasons in favour of marriage were not ignoble. I should do the same under similar circumstances."

Chaffyn bowed courteously.

"A lost cause, my boy, needs no champion. You are the youngest member present. Forget that I have been your host. Look upon me, I beg you, as an Awful Warning."

"And hold your tongue," growled the K.C.

"I married this killjoy, gentlemen, in happy ignorance of her murderous propensities. But on the honeymoon, within three days of marriage, I discovered that I was marooned. I tremble to think how many men have made the same discovery."

"Marooned?" repeated the novelist, with a lift of his dark eyebrows.

"I found myself high and dry—*and* dry —upon a desert island, with a wallower at the pump making grimaces at me. I had noticed, of course, that my fiancée drank water with her dinner, but I supposed that she did it, having the same instincts as the beasts of the field, from choice, not from principle. I thought, too, that she had shown a certain sparkle as my fiancée, because she laughed at my quips. I had no idea that she did so designedly. During the honeymoon I found out that she had no more real sparkle than a horse-trough. I used the word—*marooned.* My wife had inherited from her mother a small property in a remote rural district. On our honeymoon I learned that we were to live there."

"You protested?" asked the K.C., in a distressed voice.

"Ah! You would have protested and successfully. But I am I. And I lost the 'I' in my identity when I made this marriage of disastrous inconvenience. In my Helen's considered opinion clubs are a stronghold of Satan. Also, she made me realise, cooingly—she cooed like a dove—what an astounding and confounding sense she had of property. She set an inordinate value upon her own possessions. At the moment —don't laugh!—she set an inordinate value on me, because she thought that I belonged, body and soul, to her. I had not the heart, nor the pluck, to undeceive her. So I dissembled. It is a mournful pleasure to reflect that as mouse, not man, I played my part passably well. Her father, a rural dean, said that Helen returned from her honeymoon radiant with happiness——

"Well, we settled down. I knew that I was settled, and tried to make the best of it. If we had had children——"

He paused again to sip the sunshine of the Charente slopes, but the novelist noticed that his hand trembled.

"There were no children, and she found her maternal instincts, so strong in positive women, unsatisfied. And so, she set to work to make a child of me."

The K.C. nodded; he understood.

"I was so sorry for her that I submitted. Will oozed out of me because her will was so much stronger. In rainy weather I had to change my socks about three times a day. She insisted on flannel next the skin! She fussed over me, night and day, poor soul! She rationed me. I was allowed beer or cider for luncheon and one whisky-and-soda for dinner. She had inherited with her property a small cellar of sound port. Upon high days and holidays I was allowed one glass. Finding myself alone with the vicar of the parish, also a henpecked man, we shared a decanter between us. Next day, Helen removed the port from the cellar and—and"— his voice quavered—"poured it down the sink!"

Expressions of horror broke from all of Chaffyn's guests.

"I dissembled my indignation. It was her port, not mine. That night she asked me if I loved her, and—Heaven forgive me!—I said I did. That idiotic question was my daily and nightly penance. *Did I love her?* Worse and worse followed. She gave away my old clothes, my beloved hartogs. She refused to meet any of you fellows. And she refused prettily. I want to do her justice, mind you. I had to meet her friends, all of them cut to her pattern. They did not eye me too kindly. Helen wished me to become a J.P. But, I ask you, could I assume the functions of a Justice of the Peace, when peace had abandoned me? And besides, as I pointed out to Helen, these squireens of the bench have always seemed to me injustices, hard-hearted fellows. My sympathies are with sinners, like you. Of course it is fatuous to argue

with a killjoy. I—I thought that I might write. I did put together a synopsis of a novel. But I can't work if I am disturbed. When I began the novel, she would pop in, perch herself on my unresponsive knee, and invite me to kiss her. The vicar and I had something, not much, in common. We could talk together. Helen never listened to our talk. She had the trick of interruption, a terrible weapon in the hands of an unscrupulous female. When the vicar and I were sharpening our wits—and fondly believing that we were sharpening hers—she would butt in with some such tosh as this : " My love, I saw the dear Duchess this afternoon. I have promised to help her with her bazaar. You might write to some of your literary friends and ask for autographed copies of their books." When I refused to pester my literary friends, I had to take, so to speak, my meals at a side-table. I say—meals. We had a cook sent expressly by the devil to mortify my flesh. Helen believed in the mortification of the flesh——"

" There are thousands of such women in merrie England," observed the K.C.

" I come now," said Chaffyn, " to my climax. And I approach it gingerly. Helen's killjoy attitude towards life reacted cruelly upon her. She became unhappy, and she made others unhappy. Our servants refused to stay with us, because she imposed absurd restrictions, abusing her power over them. I came to the conclusion that a lust for power informed all her activities. She took everybody seriously. I said to her one day : ' It is impossible to take me seriously.' She replied sadly : ' But, I have.' Her good works—for so she regarded them—were the capital which she expected to carry to heaven. I can only assure you that some dear old gaffers and gammers in our village bolted like rabbits when they saw her coming. Now comes the awful thing : she told me that she wanted to die. She rubbed it into me that life was not worth living. *And it wasn't.*"

" A common complex," murmured the novelist.

" Unhappily, her doctor assured her that she was likely to live till she was eighty. Being an ordinary G.P. he knew nothing of psycho-analysis."

" Nobody does," asserted the editor of the *Daily Banner*. He spoke trenchantly and angrily, glaring at the novelist. He added viciously : " I don't want to hurt your feelings, Quix, but you ought to have treated this monomania drastically. I am not a married man——"

Chaffyn held up his hand.

" That is why you are my guest. In extenuation of a crime—it is a crime to marry for convenience—I have set myself up as a sign-post. Let none of you travel my road. Now let me finish. I am free."

All present recalled the toast. None spoke. Chaffyn concluded gravely :

" I tried hard to humour a woman born without humour. Possibly I have humour in excess. She wanted to die. Gentlemen —I killed her this morning."

## V.

Twelve law-abiding men gazed in horror-stricken silence at their host. For half a minute nobody spoke. Then young Fish said in a stage whisper :

" Of course, he's mad."

Quix laughed.

" Sane as you are, my boy. Now, which of you will be good enough to 'phone the police ? Meanwhile, I'll light another cigar."

Some present stared intently at Jim Steele-Murdoch, who might be called upon, for all they knew to the contrary, to prosecute for the Crown. The great K.C. looked white and haggard. So did old Tom Bagster, of a ripe and rosy countenance. These two, in particular, had told their friend time and time again that he *was*—mad. Such words, even when spoken in jest, come back to us with confounding violence. Quix remarked quietly :

" These cigars are made of well-matured baccy."

One man jumped up, exclaiming thickly :

" I can't stick this."

" Sit down," roared Quix. Then, with a quick change of tone, he added : " Obviously, I must 'phone for the police myself. Tom, old friend, this is a scoop for you, isn't it ? "

" A scoop——! " repeated Bagster, quaveringly.

Quix glanced at the novelist.

" Good copy for you, too. I have presented you with cause, effect, a climax, and a moral."

The man, who had jumped up, sank back into his chair. Quix stood up :

" Gentlemen : some years ago, two men here took an unwarrantable liberty with my person. They deliberately drowned me. Then they wrote obituary notices. I for-

gave them. Much can be forgiven to him who raises a laugh. And so, please forgive me for killing a lady who never existed, except in my too lively imagination. I have remained single, because I feared that she might exist. I told you just now that I tired too easily. That is lamentably true. Five years ago, I tired of London. And so, I buried myself in the country. Now, I have tired again of the country, and I have come back to town. During my time in the country I had leisure to reflect how I could return a fitting 'Oliver' for the 'Roland' so cleverly introduced to me. Have I succeeded ? "

A roar of applause, cheers, cat-calls, disturbed the peace of members snoozing overhead in the silence-room. The steward, followed by two waiters, rushed in. They beheld Quix borne in triumph on the shoulders of his guests from the dining-room into the lounge. A policeman outside the Buskin lifted his head and stood still. He wondered if he would be hastily summoned by the hall porter.

He wasn't.

# SPRING.

SPRING, Spring—the little wind which fluttered by
And swept the coloured bus tickets along
Whispered to me that she had come, was here,
The blackbird perched upon the highest bough
Of yonder tree, hedged in by chimney-pots,
Sings with new joy his ever lovely song ;
And little yellow flames, the crocus flowers,
Stand open wide to greet their lord the sun
Through all the long unclouded daytime hours.

But standing here, unutterably I long
For lanes and stillness, happy singing birds,
The plaintive rustle of the last year's leaves,
The ghosts that haunt the woodlands of to-day :
For swaying catkins, and the purple mist
Of naked budding boughs far down the glade,
Where every tree will soon be green again :
To lie down on the damp sweet-smelling ground
And feel the throb of life in everything.

KATHLEEN M. M. FORDHAM.

# MR. DUMPHRY AND QUANDARY'S PURE CONFECTIONERY LTD.

## By BARRY PAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LENDON

EARLY in 1914 Mr. Ernest Dumphry acquired a seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years' lease of The Rest House (or, as the Post Office maintained, number 51), Tessel Road. He paid an annual rental of £45. Ten years later the owner of The Cairn (or, as you might say, number 68), which is not really quite as good as The Rest House and has several square yards less of garden, decided to let it, asked £120, and got it immediately. He got it so soon that for weeks afterwards he suffered from depression, thinking he might have asked more; his name was Angus McClachlan, and he does not otherwise concern this story.

It is to Mr. Dumphry's credit that he did not assign his good luck in the housing question to his intelligent anticipation of the Great War and its result. The utmost he ever said was that at the beginning of 1914 he had an instinctive feeling that the spirit of unrest was abroad and that things might possibly develop. The feeling was not sufficiently certain and precise for him to mention it to anybody at the time—not even to Mrs. Dumphry and the girls—but Ernest had no doubt that it had influenced him in his decision to take the lease of The Rest House.

His friend, the architect, Pierce Eveleigh, might possibly have disputed this. Years before 1914 Eveleigh had bought a whole acre of ground in Tessel Road, and had himself designed the house which he built upon it for his own residence. It was the most important house in Tessel Road, and it looked as if it knew it. Nothing humdrum about it. It included several features which could only have occurred to the mind of an architect and—for which perhaps we may be thankful—not to the mind of every architect. Now Mr. Pierce Eveleigh could have produced documentary evidence that not only did he write to Ernest, pointing out that The Rest House was a good opportunity and saying that he would be glad to have him as a neighbour, but also that it took a good deal of correspondence to bring Ernest up to signing-point. Pierce Eveleigh had called his own house "The Shanty"—which was equivalent to saying: "See how proud I am of my modesty."

Mr. Pierce Eveleigh was also generally proud of Tessel Road, and so was Mr. Ernest Dumphry. Had they not reason? House-agents may be prone to enthusiasm, but it must be supposed that they really know, and they described Tessel Road on more than one occasion as "exclusively residential and of the highest class" and every house in it was *ipso facto* "replete with every modern convenience."

The road was certainly modern. Fifty years ago there had been only two houses in Tessel Road, and now with the exception of one large building plot, which still waited, Tessel Road was full. There was not one shop in it, and very few of the houses were semi-detached. Three of the detached houses had been designed by Pierce Eveleigh and showed his gift for the unexpected. His reputation reached its zenith locally.

Really, the most charming thing about Tessel Road was that in nearly every front garden flowering trees and shrubs had been planted—almond, lilac, and laburnum—scarlet thorn and chestnut—guelder rose and rowan—while in the autumn, on the walls the creepers gave their change of

colour. In winter, when the leaves were off, the Pierce-Eveleighness of the road became apparent. But often in other seasons the road had the pleasant effect of a garden.

This appealed especially to the poetical mind of Mr. Ernest Dumphry. Mr. Dumphry might be, and in fact was, by profession, a chartered accountant. He might be, and in fact was, suffering from waistcoat enlargement. But in his leisure time Mr. Dumphry had strong poetical feeling.

"Yes," he would say, as he lingered with the departing guest at his gates on a May evening. "Yes, this is merely a suburban road, but look at it. I ask you, just look at it. Look at the sweeping glory of colour all the way down. No other road is like it. I do not know why. Here, possibly by chance, we seem to have recaptured something of the old Greek ideal."

What Mr. Dumphry really knew about the old Greek ideal could have been written on a threepenny-piece, and it would not have taken a magnifying-glass to read it. When he talked like this he embarrassed his visitors.

"Quite so," the visitor would say. "Very nice. If I'm to catch the 8.20 I want to be hurrying on."

Now it happened on one of these flower-strewn evenings that Mr. Dumphry, about six o'clock, strolled down the Tessel Road and came to that large vacant building plot. He noticed that two men, working late, were taking down the agents' board. He felt a chill creep over him. He went up to them at once.

"What's this?" he said. "This been taken at last?"

"Shouldn't be taking the board down if it wasn't," said one of the men.

Mr. Dumphry concluded that the work would require oiling. He produced a shilling and slipped it into the man's palm as he said:

"'What's this?' he said. 'This been taken at last?' 'Shouldn't be taking the board down if it wasn't,' said one of the men."

"Thank you. I only wanted to know. I wonder if you can tell me who's bought it?"

"Quandary's bought it."

"Ah! Now what Quandary's would that be?"

"Quandary's Pure Confectionery. Putting up a big factory here, so they tell me."

Ernest returned to his own house. He was obviously distraught. Mrs. Dumphry noticed it. So did Queenie, the youngest girl.

"Why, whatever's the matter?" said Mrs. Dumphry cheerily.

"The matter is that that vacant piece of land in this road has been taken for a factory. Not only that. It has been taken for the factory of Quandary's Pure Confectionery Ltd."

"How perfectly ripping!" said Queenie. "Quandary's things are always much the best. And I'll be able to deal direct and save a lot of money."

"Hush, my dear," said Mrs. Dumphry, "your father's speaking."

"Immediately after dinner," said the tragic Ernest, "I shall step across to see Eveleigh. We may be able to do something. We may not. But if that factory goes up, then the value of this property here drops by—well, by hundreds."

"Well, in that case," said Queenie, "why go to Mr. Eveleigh. Why not ask Quandary's to stick their old factory up somewhere else?"

"Hush, dear," said Mrs. Dumphry, "your father's thinking."

After dinner Ernest went across to The Shanty. He found Mr. Eveleigh in his garden looking for slugs. Mrs. Eveleigh, who was much younger and considerably prettier than her husband, had gone off to a dance.

When he heard the sad news Mr. Eveleigh put down his jar of salt and water and said definitely:

"People may think they can do a thing and then find they can't. We shall see, Ernest, we shall see. Just come along into my study and we'll talk the matter over."

Mr. Eveleigh reserved the whole of his preciosity for his profession. His dress was sporting. At the present moment he wore plus fours and a Norfolk jacket with the belt loosely dependent behind him. He showed an interest in sport and had been known to watch cricket. He had never been known to take any active part in any sport whatever.

"Well now," he said when they had lit their pipes and the maid had placed the whisky and soda conveniently, "I'll put my cards on the table, Ernest. This thing has got to be stopped. If it came off it would ruin the character of the whole road. Just think of it! If you opened your window a stench of hot chocolate and treacle would blow in."

"Then again, the wasps," said Ernest seriously.

"Quite so. The wasps. We should have every wasp for miles round making that factory in Tessel Road its meeting-place. During the wasp season I doubt if it would be safe for anybody to walk down the road at all."

"And there's the depreciation of my property," said Ernest.

"Oh, that. Well, you're only leasehold. Still, if you wanted to sell your lease, which you don't, it might take a hundred or so off what you'd get for it. I, being freehold, should be far worse off. You see, a beastly sweet factory destroys the whole social amenities of the place. Think of the position of the Thomsons who live next door to that vacant block. I designed the house and they are proud of it. They say to their friends, so I'm told, 'This is a Pierce Eveleigh house.' How will they feel when they get a great ugly barrack shoved in on the top of them? If the laws were worth anything at all, it would be impossible for one of these limited companies to come bullocking in like this, spoiling the whole character of a road and practically stealing money from everybody who has a penny invested in it."

Then they got back to the wasps again. Then they had some whisky. Then Mr. Dumphry asked what, if anything, could be done.

"There might be some defect in the title to the property," suggested Mr. Dumphry. "Would it be worth while to look into that?"

Mr. Eveleigh shook his gaunt, grey, and artistic head.

"No, no, Ernest. These are business people. They won't be making any childish mistakes. And even if the title had got a hole in it, I don't see how it would help us. No, I'm for looking ahead. Let them stick up their factory and begin to run it. Give them enough rope."

"But how are we to get them to hang themselves?"

"Well, well, you can't expect a cut-and-dried scheme, with all the details complete at a moment's notice. But I can give you the general outline as it has occurred to me. Their machinery is noisy, and starts at six in the morning. Their workpeople shout and sing in the road, and cause further annoyance. The nature of their business attracts swarms of wasps and these become an actual danger—a child is badly stung and dies. It is shown that the smell arising from the manufacture is not only nauseous but positively unhealthy. It is shown further that the value of property in the neighbourhood has fallen in consequence."

"Well?"

"Then we start. The law may be defective! it is. But at least!"—and here Mr. Pierce Eveleigh tapped the table impressively with his forefinger—"it does not permit a limited company to run its business in such a way that it is a dangerous public nuisance. It does not permit torture. It does not permit murder."

"And—er—what do we do next?"

"We form a syndicate of the residents in Tessel Road, each contributing according to his means, and get a solicitor to represent us. He goes to Quandary's and he lays out the case and says, though not in so many words: 'You're going. If you choose to contest it in the Courts, we're ready, and I have no doubt what the result will be. We are sorry, but you should not have put up a factory in so unsuitable a locality. If on the other hand you go voluntarily, without wasting your money and ours in legal proceedings, then we are willing to buy back your site at very little less than you paid for it.'"

Mr. Pierce Eveleigh sat back in his chair and waited for the applause.

"You have a wonderful mind, Pierce," said Mr. Dumphry, a little dazed by the Napoleonic plan. "I wish I could see into the future like that."

"Have you any criticism to offer?"

"I shall have to think it over. I suppose we shall have to wait until the wasp has actually bitten the child."

"Not bitten—stung. Other end. Why do you ask?"

"It was merely a thought that flashed across my mind. I may be wrong. It is a question of identity. How could we show that the wasp which stit—I mean, bung—well, anyway, killed the child, was really one of Quandary's wasps and not a wasp that was just there on—er—its ordinary business? Probability is not proof, Pierce."

"Be reasonable, Ernest, do be reasonable," said the architect. "The wasp and the child are merely ornamental details. No doubt if the wasp did kill the child, that would be all to the good. But we do not depend on it. It is enough for us to show that the plague of wasps has definitely increased, with increased damage to our fruit. And that we shall be able to do."

"I see, I see," said Ernest. "The only other point is that it looks as if it would be a year or two before your scheme came into action."

"No doubt," Mr. Eveleigh admitted, with a shrug of his shoulders. "You can't suppress a nuisance until it is actually there. Still, what I've told you is on the spur of the minute. I might on reflection modify or change the plan. The one thing which I can tell you definitely and finally is that so long as I hold the stake in Tessel Road which I do hold, the character of that road will not be allowed to deteriorate. Any firm, Quandary's or another, will find that they have me to deal with. You can sleep in peace, Ernest."

In order to do this Ernest shortly afterwards returned home. He found his wife extremely anxious to know what Pierce Eveleigh had to say about it.

"Well, my dear, we talked over the whole matter. There are some very difficult and delicate legal problems involved. But, strictly between ourselves, I may tell you this—Quandary's Pure Confectionery may possibly come into Tessel Road, but it will not be permitted to stop there."

"So that's all right," said Mrs. Dumphry.

On the following day shortly before one it chanced that Mr. Dumphry met on the Embankment Mr. Harker. Mr. Harker, as his custom was, was on his way to lunch in the grill-room of the Savoy, and being in a genial mood he took Ernest Dumphry along with him as his guest.

Mr. Harker had been the solicitor and personal friend of Ernest's Uncle James up to the time of his decease, and was now one of his executors and trustees. Uncle James, a childless widower, left an equal life-interest in the residue of his estate to each of his twenty-three nephews and nieces, of whom Ernest was one. On the death of the last survivor of the twenty-three the property went absolutely to his old college at Oxford. Nor could the death of any one of the twenty-three offer to the others the melancholy satisfaction that their own shares would be automatically increased. A lapsed share benefited only the college.

The attempt to please everybody, including yourself, is foredoomed to failure. Not one of the nephews and nieces considered Uncle James's will to be just, though no two of them in all probability would have suggested precisely the same alteration.

"By the way, Ernest, by the way," said Harker, after he had with his customary care commanded the luncheon, "we shall be sending you a cheque in a day or two for what's due to you under your uncle's will, and I think you'll be pleased."

"Well, the amount has not varied by very

much so far. You mean there will be an increase ? "

"I do. As you probably know, your uncle specially empowered his trustees to leave any of his existing investments at the time of his death undisturbed. Well, he had a considerable holding—about half his fortune—in Quandary's ordinary."

Ernest said carelessly—or as carelessly as he could: "Quandary's Pure Confectionery ? "

"That's it. Now my partner, Hesseltine, who was the other trustee, said we should sell, and his arguments were good. We could sell Quandary's at par, and they were only paying four. We could put the money into a sound trust security which would give us a better yield. That was all true so far as it went. But then Quandary's could have paid more than four if they had wished; their expenditure on advertising had been very heavy—it was criticised at the general meeting—and they were building up a big reserve. Then, again, I knew Mr. James Dumphry to be a very shrewd man. He would never have put all that money into Quandary's if there had not been a reason. There was —as I found when I went through his papers. What he didn't know about that business didn't matter. He could have been a director if he'd wished. He'd been at school with old Quandary. He was godfather to his son, Henry Quandary, the present managing director. He knew the general policy of the firm—which I should describe as clever conservative, the best and rarest. We kept that holding. I don't mind admitting that I also bought a hundred ordinary on my own account, and that I wish now I'd bought a thousand. This year the shareholders get their reward for three years of patience."

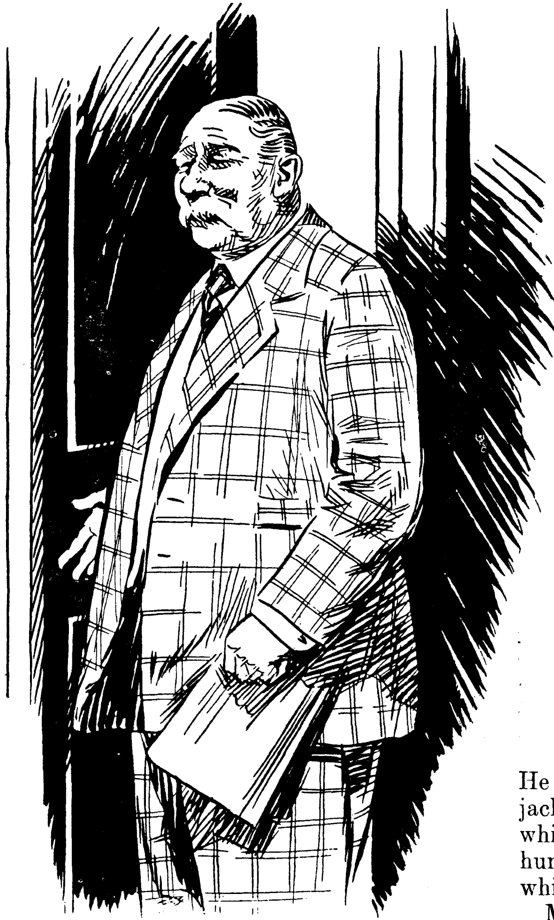
Mr. Harker lowered his voice and whispered figures of a most gratifying character into Ernest's earhole.

"The first thing apparent was that Pierce Eveleigh was in his most genial and expansive mood."

On returning to his office Ernest sat back in his chair and considered. Temporary slackness of business permited him time for this, and he was grateful. He had lunched extremely well, and he was grateful. He

was about to experience a quite unexpected windfall, and he was grateful. But behind it all there lurked a haunting dark shadow.

Obviously now he could not kick Quandary's Pure Confectionery without also kicking himself and his twenty-two cousins and ultimately St. Cecilia's College, Oxford. Now for the cousins and the college Ernest entertained no sentimental affection. But he had the greatest possible objection to kicking himself.



How then was he to face his old friend, Mr. Pierce Eveleigh, with what might at first sight seem to be a treacherous change of mind ? He recalled the grim look of determination in Eveleigh's stern blue eyes. He recalled the way in which he had stretched out his open hand and then slowly closed it as though he were squeezing the blood and entrails out of Quandary's Pure Confectionery. Eveleigh, he was convinced, would take it badly. He would impute selfishness. It might mean the break-up of their long friendship. What, from a purely material point of view, seemed to him worse was that he might be unable to stop Eveleigh in the execution of his plan. He pictured Eveleigh as a fierce determined old hound running its quarry to its death. It was perfectly awful.

When he got back home that evening his brow was overcast with thought. He said frankly that he had been into all this business of Quandary's and he thought it quite possible that Pierce Eveleigh might be making a mistake. After all, Quandary's had done nothing more than they were entitled to. The freehold was for sale : they had bought it. Had anybody a right to take proceedings that would in consequence involve Quandary's in grave financial loss ? It was a matter of conscience. Personally he would not think it right. And even if it shattered a friendship of twenty years' standing he would have to tell Eveleigh as much. As a matter of fact——

And here there came a rippling knock at the door which was recognised and Mr. and Mrs. Pierce Eveleigh were introduced. The first thing apparent was that Pierce Eveleigh was in his most genial and expansive mood. He was also in his purple velvet smoking-jacket. He addressed his wife as " Mouse," which alone was a convincing sign of good humour. As a rule he called her Emma, which happened to be her name.

Mouse also seemed to be pleased. She was beautifully dressed as usual. She had learned a quite new way of telling fortunes by cards and was proposing to instruct Mrs. Dumphry and Queenie in the mysteries of it. She had also brought with her a box of Quandary's Chocolate Pastilles which, she asserted with some confidence, seemed to bring heaven nearer.

" And while Mouse is bothering you, Mrs. Dumphry, with her fortune-telling, I'm going to carry Ernest off to his study. I've got a bone to pick with him."

" Why, whatever's poor Ernest done ? " said Mrs. Dumphry archly.

" Came along and frightened the life out of me last night, jabbering about corrugated-tin sheds and babies biting wasps and a smell of treacle and all manner of nonsense. Come

along, Ernest, you've got to go through it."

And Ernest, not understanding, but still with some sense of relief, carried Pierce Eveleigh off to his study and proffered hospitality. Pierce said it was really earlier in the evening than he generally did, but consented to make an exception.

"Now look here, Ernest," said Pierce, after testing the contents of his glass. "I'm going to give you a warning. Don't you attach too much importance to silly stories that you pick up from labourers. Tessel Road's all right. Tessel Road will be better than ever it was. And, what's more, you and I ought to thank Quandary's for it."

"I was putting in a few enquiries about that firm to-day," said Ernest. "It appears that they are very sound people. Very sound. I should describe their policy," he added, without a blush, "as clever conservative, which, as I need not remind you, is the best policy, though we may find it the rarest."

"Well, well," said Pierce, "I've been to the fountain-head itself. This morning I got a telephone message from Henry Quandary—he's the managing director—saying he was coming down this morning to see the site and asking if he could call on me on business. I gave the usual polite reply and at eleven he arrived. I must say, Ernest, that you gave me an absolute misconception of the whole thing. Of course I don't blame you, for you'd had no time to look into the position. Henry Quandary is a man of education and refinement. He's a gentleman. He might be described as one of our merchant princes. And the very first thing that he impressed upon me was that so far from injuring the amenities of Tessel Road, he was anxious to preserve them in every way possible."

"Very nice," said Mr. Dumphry feebly.

"I think so. As he said to me only this afternoon——"

"I thought he was there this morning."

"Yes, yes. I kept him to lunch. There was really a great deal of business to settle. As he said, Quandary's are out to make friends, not enemies. I'll tell you what's going to be done. Quandary's site runs straight through from Tessel Road to Lemon Street. Beginning from Tessel Road we shall first have a rose-garden. Mr. Quandary is an enthusiast on roses and much appreciates the gardens in this road. Behind that there will be a two-storey building, dignified in character, containing board-room, offices, and caretaker's apartments. Over the entrance to that block, carved on the stone, will be the simple word 'Quandary's.' Pure Confectionery will not even be mentioned. At the back of that, but screened by it from Tessel Road, will lie the factory buildings. The entrance for the workpeople—and Quandary's employ only the very highest class—will be from Lemon Street. They will never come into Tessel Road at all. Every modern device in ventilation will be used, and I doubt if we shall ever know that a factory is there. You made a lot of fuss about the wasps last night. Doesn't it occur to you that the vespæ, with their wonderful instinct, will not waste their time in Tessel Road when the whole of the attraction lies behind it in the direction of Lemon Street?"

"I see it," said Mr. Dumphry eagerly. "I was wrong, and I am prepared to admit it. Of course I did not know then what I know now. What you tell me puts an entirely different complexion on the matter. Who's their architect?"

"Well," said Pierce Eveleigh, "they thought that I was largely responsible for the general character of Tessel Road, and they wanted the whole thing to be in keeping as far as possible. As a matter of fact, I'm their architect. It's the biggest job I've ever had yet. There are restrictions. They don't seem to care for too much originality. I shall have to go carefully, but there it is."

And Mr. Dumphry offered his fervent congratulations.

"'You'd have had nothing to give away but for the rungs of the ladder you climbed up.'"

# LADDERS

## By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

IT had been a bad day for Ellswater. Things had gone awry from the moment of his awakening. It was a wet morning; he cut himself in shaving; the cook's attack of "flue" meant a badly served breakfast. And Sylvia, his daughter, had shown little sympathy.

"Cook can't help being ill," she asserted. "And of course the kitchenmaid makes a poor understudy."

Something in Sylvia's attitude stung. She seemed to drag herself down from mysterious heights to this infinitesimal fact of the burnt bacon. Her father's annoyance was an unconsidered trifle beside some secret immensities of her own. Ellswater was pricked to irritability.

"I expect the house to be run well, Sylvia. You're in charge of it—and I don't tie the purse-strings."

She looked at him for a considering moment. "No, you don't tie the purse-strings."

"Well, then——" Ellswater's gesture ended the sentence.

Argument would have been a relief. To have lost his temper for ten minutes would have cleared the air like a thunderstorm. But you couldn't quarrel with a girl who looked at you as if you were dimly outlined and half blurred to her vision.

"What are you thinking of, Sylvia?" Ellswater asked abruptly.

"Life," she said tersely.

"A mere titbit for breakfast," he shrugged. "I suppose by lunch-time you'll have got down to hard tackle?"

Her laugh was certainly musical. Ellswater, listening to it, decided for the hundredth time that his daughter had charm. She carried herself like an empress. She met every twist of circumstance with self-possession. She could be vivacious; she could be intriguingly silent. And always she had that air of hiding herself in some unknown fortress.

"Have you made any plans for to-day?" Ellswater asked. He added quickly, "At all events we'll meet at dinner-time."

"Yes, probably." Sylvia was vague even about the function of dinner.

"She's my daughter, but I hardly know her," Ellswater thought. "Yet how I've schemed and planned—with Sylvia at the core of all the scheming. Well, she's had everything a girl could wish."

His business day held no set-backs; but it assumed an air of monotony. Success wore grey to-day. He was at the top of the tree, and the sheer joy of climbing was denied him. He had achieved. It was odd how sawdust-like achievement could taste. To-day he wore smoked glasses, he told himself.

His mood of depression lasted, and still dogged his steps when he left the office for the day. It was the last occasion when he would have elected to meet Dick Jordan. But there the fellow was, slouching at the corner of Burke Street. His manner of approaching Ellswater was defiant.

"It's the old errand," he said. "You'd call it begging. I call it asking for some of my own back."

They were at the foot of a flight of steps that led to a Free Library. Ellswater began to mount the steps and Jordan slouched after him. In the reading-room Ellswater found seats in a quiet corner. Jordan dropped into a chair.

"I'm on the rocks. You've got to help me."

Ellswater was watching the man curiously. The assertion of his manner had fascination.

"You know my theory," Jordan was saying. "I'm one of the rungs of the ladder up which you climbed. You've reached the top. You wouldn't be there but for me and dozens like me. Bad times? Business slack? Workshops closed down? I'm sick of the jargon. You've enough to eat still? Motor-cars? You've not had to leave the little palace you call home? If any of your folks fell sick you could afford the best doctoring? Bad times—you don't know what they mean. You've climbed to a snug niche and you're able to stick there. Look at me."

Ellswater was looking. Sunken cheeks; not too clean; clothes long past the stage of respectability. A rung in the ladder . . .

Jordan suddenly beat one hand on the table. His voice swung into a note of passion. At the moment he was a figure of accusation facing Ellswater.

"What chance had I of saving? The children—weaklings most of them—an ailing wife. *Savings?* Well, well—you must have your joke, you others. *Charity?*" He threw the word at Ellswater like a missile. "I've no room for the word. You'd have had nothing to give away but for the rungs of the ladder you climbed up."

Ellswater had taken some notes from his purse, and now he pushed them across the table. The other's manner of touching them amused him. He had the air of a man who receives an overdue account. It was a wonder, Ellswater thought, that the fellow didn't demand interest.

"I don't agree with your views," Ellswater said abruptly. "You were once in my employment and you behaved well. You've struck bad times. On those grounds——" He nodded towards the notes in Jordan's hand. "But your vapourings leave me cold."

"You've got to the top?" Jordan asked quickly.

"According to you," Ellswater smiled.

"Near enough to live like a prince, at all events." Jordan held out seamed and toil-marked hands. "These and a thousand others like them have put you there."

"You've changed your simile," Ellswater shrugged. "An artistic slip. The ladder was more picturesque."

Jordan slouched to his feet. He glanced back at Ellswater as he still sat.

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Jordan. I hope things will brighten up for you."

The incident had jarred, Ellswater told himself. He walked the rest of the way instead of riding. Exercise might shake off this mood of irritation. Unreasoned vapourings about the rungs of a ladder were farcical.

Reaching home, Ellswater found the butler regarding him tentatively as he helped him off with his coat.

"Two visitors waiting, sir."

The man's hesitation was in the nature of

an excuse. He might as well have said aloud, "Blame the people themselves, sir, not me."

"Who are they?"

"They wouldn't give any name. They said something about surprising you. I put them in the library."

Ellswater crossed to the library door and opened it sharply. Some one with a subscription list probably—they buzzed about him like flies.

On the threshold of the room Ellswater came to a halt. An old man and woman were watching him from their seats against the fireplace.

"You two?" He crossed the floor and stooped to the old woman. "Well, Mother, you've certainly given me a surprise."

The old man was rubbing one hand against the other. Satisfaction spoke in every gesture.

"Didn't I say that, Maria? We'll not write, I said, we'll just *go*."

Ellswater pulled a chair opposite his guests. For the moment speech failed him. These old parents of his emerging suddenly from their primitive fastnesses! He found himself studying them impersonally. He wondered why his mother wore her hair in a tight straining nob on the top of her head. Or why she used soap that left her face shiny. Her clothes—well, she never *had* cared much about dress. She had no æsthetic leanings. The old man was evidently in his best suit—it shouted the fact in every crease. There was an air about him of having washed at the kitchen sink and dried his face on the roller-towel. . . .

"You've asked us to come once or twice before," the old man was saying. "Somehow we didn't care to. The time didn't seem *ripe*." He emphasised the adjective with lifted voice. "We're not used to a place of this sort."

"Not but what it's fairly well kept," the old lady interposed. "You mustn't think us faddy, John. We know that what with factory chimneys and soot you're never altogether clean in cities."

"You were always a fad about cleaning," Ellswater said. He bent forward and touched her hand for a moment. She was his mother. She had carried him in her arms.

"We've come to stay," Ellswater's father said quietly. "We're not ashamed to ask a home."

"To stay?" For the life of him Ellswater could not have averted his one pregnant pause. He bridged it quickly. "I'll have one of the maids get things ready for you."

Ellswater detected a faint shadow of derision in his father's eyes. There was a flicker of amusement, of quaint understanding. His mother sat rubbing her handkerchief into a ball with nervous fingers.

"We've lost our savings," old William Ellswater announced. "We're too old to work now. We've never sponged on you, eh?"

"Never." Ellswater was vehement. "You wouldn't even let me do the things I wished to do."

"D'ye know why?"

Ellswater's father was bending forward, his hands hanging limp between his knees. He was a quaint little figure—twisted and gnarled by age, but with shrewd eyes. They met his son's unflinchingly.

"D'ye know why?" he repeated.

Ellswater shook his head.

"Then I'll tell you. You didn't offer it in the right way. It was like"—he hunted for a simile, and found it. "It was as if you'd climbed to the top of a wall on a ladder. You didn't kick the ladder away . . . no . . . no. . . . But you forgot you'd climbed to the top because it was there. It—it wasn't a ladder any longer. Just a bit of old wood."

It was an odd echo—*Ladders*. The second time to-day he had listened to the word. Only now the word held deeper shades of meaning. It was compact of memory. As he looked at the old people opposite they seemed to change before his eyes. They were young, strenuously gaining a living for themselves and their son. School . . . the fees must have seemed like millstones round their necks in those days. A good school—not the usual training of a workman's boy. The lad's future had been to them in the nature of a quest. In a sense they had been crusaders. Ellswater found that detail can be strongly assertive when Memory wills it. His clothes, for instance . . . never shoddy . . . he had gone free of jeering comments from his schoolmates. His parents had fenced him securely. They had built high walls of respectability about him. Ellswater found himself staring at their hands. They were ugly hands—worked out of all semblance of beauty.

"We've lost our bit of savings," old William Ellswater was repeating. "We're too old to work." He suddenly beat one hand against the other and his voice

deepened. "But I've been thinking things over; reading a bit too." He leant forward and tapped Ellswater on the knee. "We put you where you are. But for your mother and me—why, you'd have been cobbling shoes at Munsden like your forbears. We've gone without enough to eat many a time to put you through school and start you well in life." He made a sudden sweeping gesture towards the book-lined walls. "In a way it's ours as much as it's yours. You—you got to it on our backs."

Someone was half opening the door.

"Are you there, Father?"

"Sylvia." Ellswater was on his feet in a moment. "Come in. I want you."

She was like some rare exotic flower to-night. Her dress was flame colour; flame-coloured ribbons showed in the bluish-black bands of her hair.

"Your grandfather and grandmother," Ellswater explained.

Her greeting was completely detached. She might have been shaking hands with some strange materialisation of a dream. Old Ellswater and his wife watched her furtively. The old lady was the first to break the pause.

"You've grown a bonny woman. You were ten when I last saw you. Your father brought you up for a day or two. You'll remember it?"

"Just." She seemed to grope in some mist of yesterday, and lay hold of something wraith-like. "It's a long time ago. I'm twenty-two now."

Ellswater was watching Sylvia narrowly. He wondered how she would take this sudden influx. But he told himself for the hundredth time that he did not know Sylvia. Her mind was a sealed book to

"Old Ellswater and his wife watched her furtively."

him. At least he had nothing to complain of in her way of taking the bombshell he dropped presently.

"Your grandfather and grandmother mean to pay us a long visit."

There were minor interruptions as dinner progressed. Old Ellswater and his wife blundered amidst the maze of dinner implements. Finger-bowls amused them.

"The whole thing's rather like a circus,"

"'Your grandfather and grandmother,' Ellswater explained."

"I'll see Elsom about rooms," Sylvia said. She would have answered in the same tone if she had made some trite remark about the weather. She seemed completely fenced from the impacts of life.

There were only the four of them at dinner. Ellswater at the head of the table, Sylvia at the foot, his father and mother to right and left of him. . . . *Ladders.* He could not escape the word to-day. He had climbed from the shoulders of his parents. And Sylvia? Who had helped her to her present serene level? The imagery was momentarily so vivid that he could have fancied the light touch of her feet on his shoulders.

old Ellswater chuckled. His wife waxed loquacious on the high price of vegetables.

"How will Sylvia take it?" Ellswater was asking himself. He could not get away from an echo of his father's sentences. "We've come to stay. We're not ashamed to ask a home. . . ." Well, well, he must approach Sylvia in the right way. He must break it to her gently. He would get her alone for ten minutes.

The dinner seemed interminable. Old Ellswater and his wife chatted reminiscently.

They re-lived their boy's infantile ailments. They questioned Sylvia on domesticities. Did she see to it, for instance, that her father wore woollen next to his skin ?

Sylvia's manner was irreproachable. It had the perfection of a carved statue. There was nothing forced about her placidity. It was simply that these incidents did not touch her.

Ellswater rushed into explanations when he found Sylvia in the drawing-room. Their guests had elected to stay near the dining-room fire. They didn't care, they said, for so much changing from one room to another.

" Sylvia, for your sake I'm sorry about this. I'd no idea things had gone so badly for them. They've been reticent." He paused to savour the wonder of this. Well, perhaps he hadn't encouraged their confidence. . . .

" It's a good thing they've come," Sylvia said calmly. " I was wondering what you'd do when I go away. Now grandmother can take care of you. She'll love it."

" When you go away ? " Ellswater laughed suddenly. " I see. Some day when the right man comes along."

She was sitting before the wood fire, spreading her hands to the blaze. In her flame-coloured dress and ribbons she looked like some priestess tending altar fires.

" He has come," she said calmly. " I met him last month at the Dawsons'—Ted Galtley. We shall live in Japan. He's in one of the legations."

She might have been talking into a void, not caring if her sentences met listening ears or unheeding silence. Her decision was made. She was sufficient unto herself. This middle-aged man at her side was merely the ladder up which she had climbed to present altitudes.

" *Sylvia !* "

For the life of him Ellswater could not keep the poignant note from his voice. She was his only child. He had had no voice in her plans. *Japan ?*

" Ought I to have told you before ? " she smiled at him. The poor old dear *did* look perturbed. " I'm sorry. But after all, nobody could decide for me. I must paddle my own canoe."

She put out a hand and touched his—reassuringly, as if a petulant child needed soothing. The next moment she was staring again into the fire . . . detached, seeming barely aware that Ellswater still sat near her.

Ellswater was rapidly visualising her future. It would be set in circles far above his own. The distance between himself and Sylvia would be almost as great as that between his parents and himself. If he had climbed, so had Sylvia. What was that his father had said ? " You forgot you'd climbed on the ladder . . . it wasn't a ladder to you any longer . . . simply a piece of old wood. . . ."

" Yes, Father ? " Sylvia half turned her head.

" Did I speak ? "

" You said something about wood——"

" I was feeling rather like a piece of old timber myself," Ellswater smiled. He got to his feet, looking down at her. " Good luck, Sylvia, my dear ! "

" Thanks, Father. After all, Japan isn't off the globe."

Ellswater, closing the drawing-room door softly, stood for a considering moment in the hall. Presently he crossed to the dining-room, opened the door and went in. The old people were placidly dozing, well fed and warmed. Ellswater touched his father on the shoulder.

" You were right, Father. This place is yours as much as it's mine. I shouldn't have been here but for you." He patted his mother's hand. " You'll have to go back to housekeeping, dear. You'll be mistress here."

" But, Sylvia—I see." The old woman chuckled knowingly. " She's got a young man ? Well, it was to be expected. When she's gone I'll see that the meals are cooked well and your woollens aired."

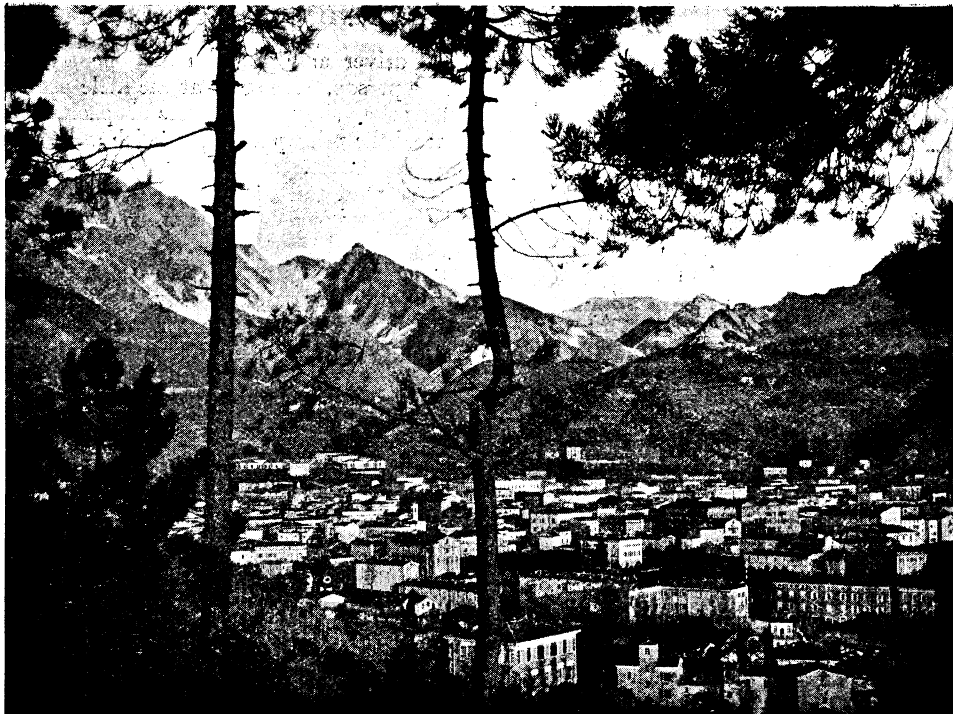
Ellswater went across to a writing-table and took pen and paper.

" Dear Jordan," he wrote, " I'm afraid I was slow in understanding this afternoon. You're right. I've climbed ladders. You've been one of them. If you'll come and see me to-morrow we'll talk things over. I owe you a debt."

" You oughtn't to bother about business this time of night, John," his mother called from her chair.

" It's important," Ellswater told her. " I'm settling an account."

When Ellswater went to his bedroom that night he drew the curtain aside and looked out. The sky was clear. It rose into a vast star-lit dome above his head. He had an odd sensation of climbing to-night. He seemed to have set his feet on the rungs of a ladder that reached altitudes of understanding.



PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE CITY OF CARRARA.

# THE MARBLE MOUNTAINS OF CARRARA

By JAMES MURPHY

*Photographs by Valenti, Carrara.*

A FEW weeks ago I broke my journey from London to Rome for the purpose of making a pilgrimage to the marble quarries of Carrara. The city itself is not on the main line, but the express trains stop at Massa, which is the second largest town in the marble district. When we arrived there evening was already gathering in. There was a red sunset on the Mediterranean. In the foreground, running down almost to the seashore, the lower reaches of the hills showed a variegated assortment of small dwelling-houses roofed with red tiles; and in the distance, flanking the deep valleys, one saw the bare stone peaks, light grey in shadow and of a dull purple glow when touched by the rays of the setting sun.

One could not help reflecting for a moment on first seeing these strange mountains. Here is the storehouse of so much of the world's beauty—its sculptured monuments and statues and altars, its glittering palaces, its gorgeous hotels, its *cafés*, its libraries, its senate chambers, its capitols and its graveyards. There are few great pieces of sculptured art belonging to the old world or the new that have not originally been hewn from the sides of the Carrara hills. The ancient Etruscans, and after them the Romans, brought the material for their temples and the statues of their gods from here. Michael Angelo paid several visits to these mountains and had new caves opened under his own direction, for the purpose of selecting

the marble for his great masterpieces. Canova also came, and Nicholas of Pisa, and Vasari and Lorenzo the Magnificent. You can see the results of their treasure-trove in Rome and Pisa and Venice and Florence. In the Europe or America of our own day there is hardly a town or city that has not taken tribute from Carrara for its monuments and churches. And millions of families all over the globe have commemorated their dead by placing a piece of Carrara above the grave.

The driver and postman are one and the same person. He stops at the little hamlets along the valley and delivers his packages at one of the principal shops, which also serves as Post Office.

Our road ran upwards along the bed of the narrow Versilia valley. This is one of the principal highways for the carting of the marble from the quarries to the seaport or sculptors' studios or railway depots, as the case may be. It is in an atrocious condition, being worn into deep ruts by the

THE RAILWAY STATION AT THE FAMOUS "FANTISCRITTI" QUARRY.

*This quarry was probably opened by the ancient Etruscans. It certainly was used extensively by the Romans. From here it was that the latter brought the marble for the door of the Pantheon. Three small figures, carved in bas-relief, in the time of Augustus, were discovered here. They represent Jupiter, Hercules and Bacchus. The figures are called* Fanti, *which, together with the word* Scritti *(inscriptions), gives the name to the quarry.*

On the morning after my arrival I set out in the company of a pleasant but rather loquacious guide who was persistent in practising his knowledge of English on me, though he had to retranslate it into his native tongue to make himself understood. We took the train to Seravezza and were there accommodated with seats in the Royal Mail Coach. To avoid any misunderstanding, I had better explain that the Royal Mail is a simple four-wheeled *carrozza* such as you will see in Rome or Florence, except that it is somewhat more dusty and time-worn.

wheels of the antediluvian floats used for the transport of the heavier blocks, which may be of any weight from ten to fifty tons. Sometimes you see four teams of oxen, or five or ten or fifteen or eighteen, hitched to the one float. The movement is extremely slow; but the oxen have a great advantage over horses in this respect, that they throw their weight into the yokes with a steady and persistent strain, all working together in perfect unison. The teamsters walk alongside, calling out to their beasts in a sing-song succession of rudimentary sounds that make

THE TELEFERIC RAILWAY.

*In the distance appear the City of Carrara and the shores of the Mediterranean.*

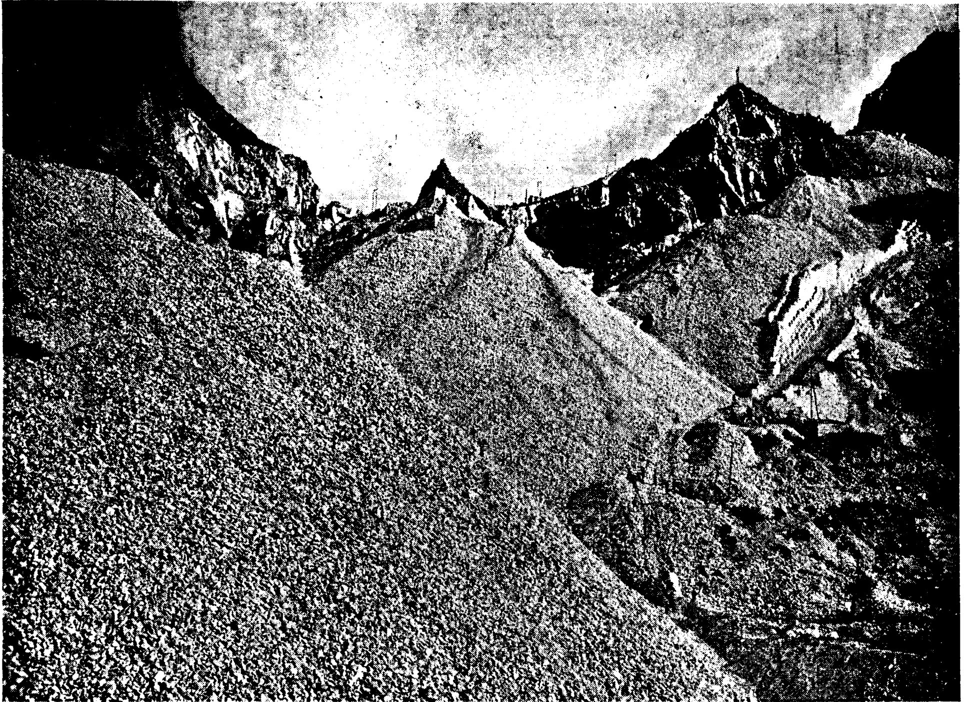
AN ENORMOUS MASS OF MARBLE BEING CARVED BY THE HELICOIDAL PULLEY.

no pretence towards articulate speech. This method of transport seems hopelessly old-fashioned; but as yet it is the only effective one discovered for the transport of the heavier blocks. The exceptionally large pieces that are used for colossal monuments have to be dragged along on greased runners, an operation that is witnessed with intense interest by a crowd of curious natives and sometimes a few strangers.

The traffic is tremendous and imposing. Wedged in between the trains of oxen in the almost endless procession, one sees the modern steam tractor puffing its way slowly along. Behind it comes a little donkey, acting as trace-horse for two lumbering oxen that are trying to drag a huge boulder weighing four or five tons, while a railway train emits a shrill whistle and passes by on the roadside, in a flash as it were, leaving the slowly toiling heterogeneous convoy as if it were an immovable feature of the highway.

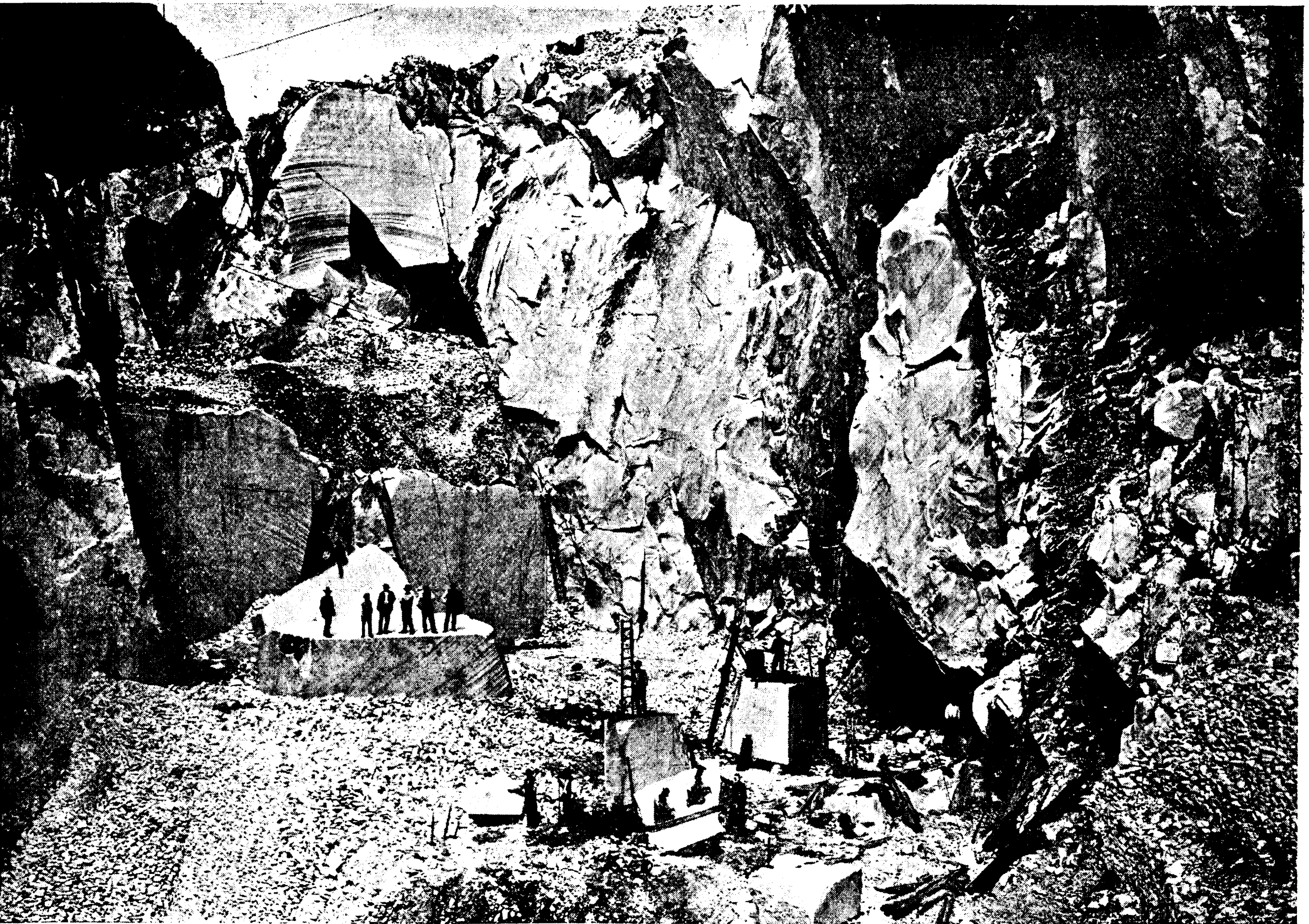
* * * * *

A little beyond Ruosina, the first village on our way, we left the Royal Mail and the main highway for a narrow road that leads off to the left in the direction of Monte Forato, where, I was told, I should see what is probably the strangest freak of nature amid these fantastic hills. We were now consigned to the kindly offices of a pair of mules. Our path led in a zigzag direction, turning back upon itself every now and again in deep loops, so that one traverses several kilometres without making more than one kilometre of direct progress. But the journey is well worth its pains. One passes through one tunnel after another carved out of the solid rock, winding and mounting higher and higher until the plain above Terinca is reached. Here it is that one gets the most typical view of the marble mountains. The hillsides are no longer clothed with verdure or vegetation of any sort. As far as the eye can reach there is nothing but a tumult of jagged rocks that look like snow-capped peaks, which appearance, however, is due to the reflection of the sun's rays on the white marble. The strangest sight of all is that which Monte Forato presents. It has a pair of towering horns, each about three thousand feet high, and through the body of



THE "FIOR DI CHIARA" QUARRY.

*Here is seen how the mass of waste marble seriously hinders the work of excavation and the further development of the quarry. The electric standards on top support the wires conducting electricity to the quarry for mechanical use. To the right of the picture is seen the traditional type of "Lizza," used for the sliding of the great blocks on greased runners. Higher up are the defence works erected to prevent the overflow of the detritus.*



"ADMINISTRATION" QUARRY, IS ONE OF THE FINEST IN THE WHOLE DISTRICT.

the crest that unites these peaks a tunnel of about one hundred feet high and eighty feet wide has been bored by some freak of nature. It looks like a monstrous Polyphemus, with its single eye in the centre of the brow and its cyclopean horns protruding from either side.

The whole view is astounding. These glowing peaks have not that aspect of majestic repose which one finds on the undulating Apennines, nor the sublime grandeur of the Dolomites or the Engadine. Here it does not seem as if one were contemplating a mighty handiwork of nature, but rather the result of a terrible explosion that must have cast up from beneath the crest of the earth the broken columns of some titanic temple whose halls and porticoes and statues and altars were all made of precious stone.

A heavy canopy of leaden clouds began to descend on Monte Altissimo and all around on the forest of sharp peaks. The brow of Polyphemus became enveloped in a dense grey fog. The noise of heavy rain splashing against the rocks and on the pools of water came nearer and nearer. The whole scene wore an air of desolation. It was impossible to think of returning that evening; so we sought refuge for the night in a modest inn, where there was welcome and good cheer and the pleasant company of honest workmen and the deep refreshing sleep which only the silence of the mountain heights can give.

On our return journey I was more interested in the human side of this mountain spectacle, especially as I had gleaned a good deal of information in regard to industrial conditions from the marble workers who were our table companions at the inn. They were a fine swarthy body of men, spare of flesh, with muscles as hard and lithe as whip-thongs, and brown skin somewhat parched by the action of the limestone dust that envelops them during working hours. On seeing them returning to dinner you might have thought that they were bakers or millers, for the marble dust is like white flour clinging to clothes, face and hair. These men are always up and to their work at daybreak, taking nothing to eat or drink when they start out. After a few hours in the quarries they eat a lean breakfast which consists of black coffee and dry bread. Then their labour recommences and continues until midday, when the principal meal is

THE OLD CLASSIC "LIZZA."

*The picture gives a fairly good idea of the difficulties and dangers of the process.*

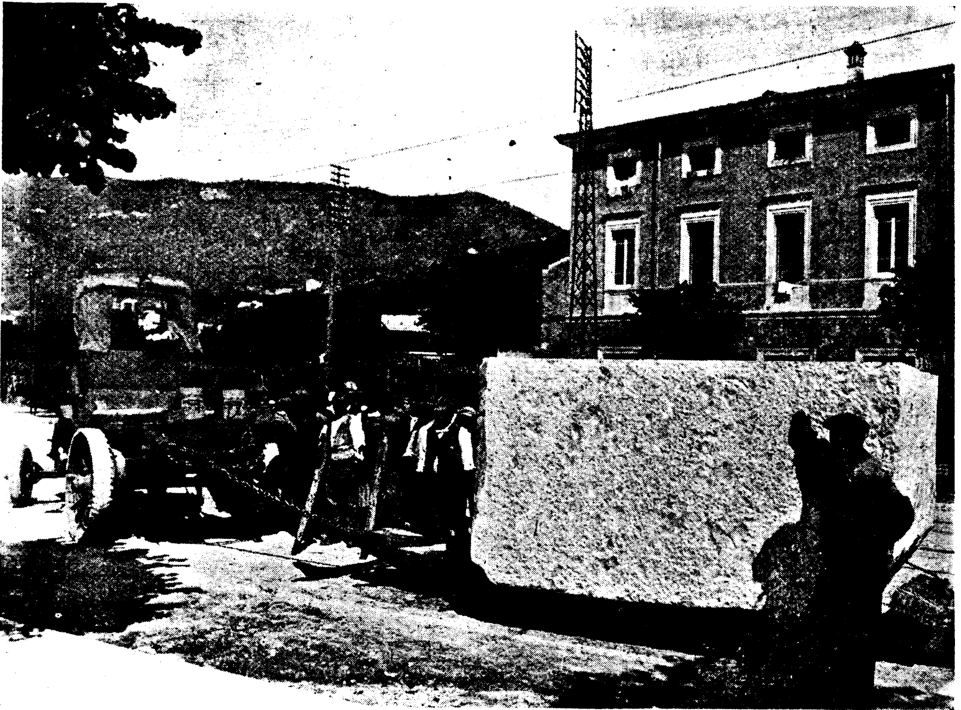
taken. In summer-time they do not work in the afternoon, having already put in their established quota of from six to eight hours, that is to sày, from four or five o'clock in the morning until midday. In the winter-time, however, the hours of work are more evenly spread over the day.

The pay of the marble labourers averaged from three to four *lire* per day before the war, but now it is a little over five times that amount. But this increase in wages does not make their lot any better, because the cost of living has increased proportionately. The workmen's families generally live in small detached cottages, perched on the lower mountain ridges where there is sufficient covering of soil for the purposes of light cultivation. Here they rent small holdings at a very low rate. The women till the soil while their menfolk are away at the quarries. And they are largely relieved of the necessity of preparing meals ; for the workmen are accustomed to take their food *en pension* at some convenient inn. This is the reason why one sees so many of the labouring class, not only here but nearly all throughout Italy, apparently idling in the *cafés* and *trattorie.* The stranger who has little acquaintance with native conditions might be inclined to call them a lazy lot ; but his judgment would be entirely wrong ; for they were already hard at work while he was probably sleeping soundly. If he were to awaken in his hotel, in Carrara or Massa or Seravezza, at about five or six o'clock in the morning and decide to take an early morning stroll, he would be astonished at the babel of sounds that make themselves heard. Re-echoing from the hills comes the hard note of the pneumatic drill that resembles the rattle of the machine-gun, the steady thud of the hand-sledge, the lowing of oxen, the hum of the sawmills and, near at hand, the shrill scream of the trimming machines and planes and lathes. There are no landed proprietors in this strange territory that would appear to the outsider to be so rich in one of the raw materials which has become a world-wide necessity. As a matter of fact, marble as a raw material is not considered to be of any quotable value. It is the toil of human hands that makes it precious. According to the existing law anyone may acquire quarrying rights without any outlay of capital. The whole territory belongs to the commune. You stake out your claim, like a prospector in a mining area, and make your request to the communal authorities to have it confirmed. This confirmation

HAULING A COLOSSAL BLOCK OF MARBLE ALONG THE "VIA CARRIONA." EIGHTEEN PAIRS OF OXEN ARE EMPLOYED.

takes place in due course, after full investigations have been made as to whether the rights of third parties may be affected. The concession is perpetual and transferable to the heirs and assigns of the concessionaire. The commune levies a tax on the production, which in the present year amounts to about seven shillings for each ton of marble sent out from the quarry.

Once the concession has been granted excavations may begin. There is a tremendous lot of uncertainty about the enterprise, as it may easily happen that the patch of mountain selected does not contain marble of the required quality. In a good quarry the marble presents itself in the shape of regular banks of varying thickness, separated from one another by what are called *peli*, that is to say, narrow strata of coarse-grained stone which is much more friable than the pure marble. These fissures are utilised for the purpose of detaching the blocks from the main mass. It is in the detection of their number, their direction and extension, that the almost atavistic instinct of the native quarryman comes into play. He has to decide which series of *peli* he will make use of to detach his block; and if it should happen that one or two of these *peli* must still remain in the quarried piece of marble, he must try to arrange it so that they will lie parallel to the slabs into which the whole block will be sliced at the sawmill. In this way the worthless material can be detached without doing injury to the valuable portions of the block. But it must be remembered that the quarryman has little to guide him when he makes his first decision, nor will any modern technical instruction be of much avail. It is the inborn instinct that tells—the sense of the marble that is bred in the blood and bone of the native race.

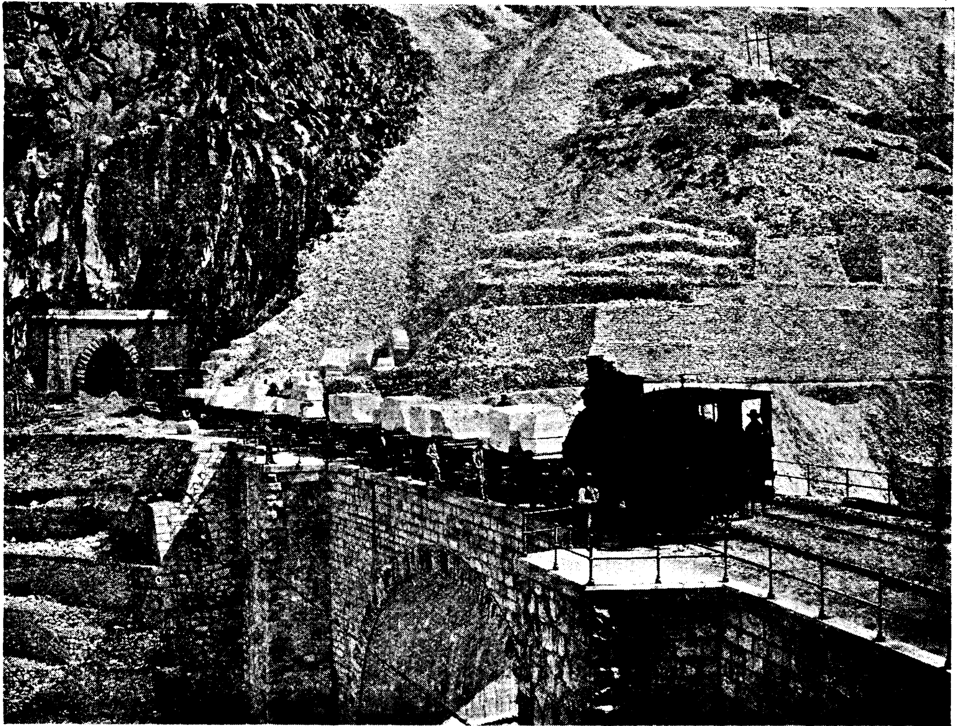


MOTOR TRANSPORT APPLIED TO THE "LIZZA."

In the work of excavation holes are sometimes drilled through the impure strata, of which I have spoken, and blasting powder is used to open the fissures. The more modern method, however, is the penetrating pulley, which carries a wire rope made of three interwoven strands of steel. One pulley is embedded in the rock by means of drilled holes, and the other, which stands in the open, is operated by a small motor. The wire rope acts as a saw and cuts at the rate of about four inches per hour. In this way it is possible to excavate blocks of a specific

shape and size. As an example of the immense advantages which the modern method affords, it is interesting to note that in the old traditional system only five per cent. of the marble actually quarried could be utilised, whereas with the helicoidal pulley it is possible to utilise twenty per cent. When it is remembered that the annual production of finished marble amounts to half a million tons, one can realise the tremendous waste of labour and material that is entailed. The waste material is thrown down into the valleys, a process which has now been going on for over two thousand years. The result is that in many parts it is impossible to work in the lower sections of the mountains, and the approaches to several of the quarries are becoming more difficult as time goes on.

The excavated blocks are roughly squared at the quarry head, and then commences the *lizzatura*, or process of sliding them down the mountain-side. Sometimes the caves are at an altitude of more than three thousand feet, and in the general run of cases the approach has no resemblance to the surface of an evenly inclined plane. It is simply a mass of broken ridges on a steep gradient that sometimes borders closely on the perpendicular. Hence the extreme danger incurred in the *lizzatura*. For the lowering of the smaller blocks, that is to say, those that do not exceed five tons in weight, the more modern quarries have installed a system of teleferic railways.



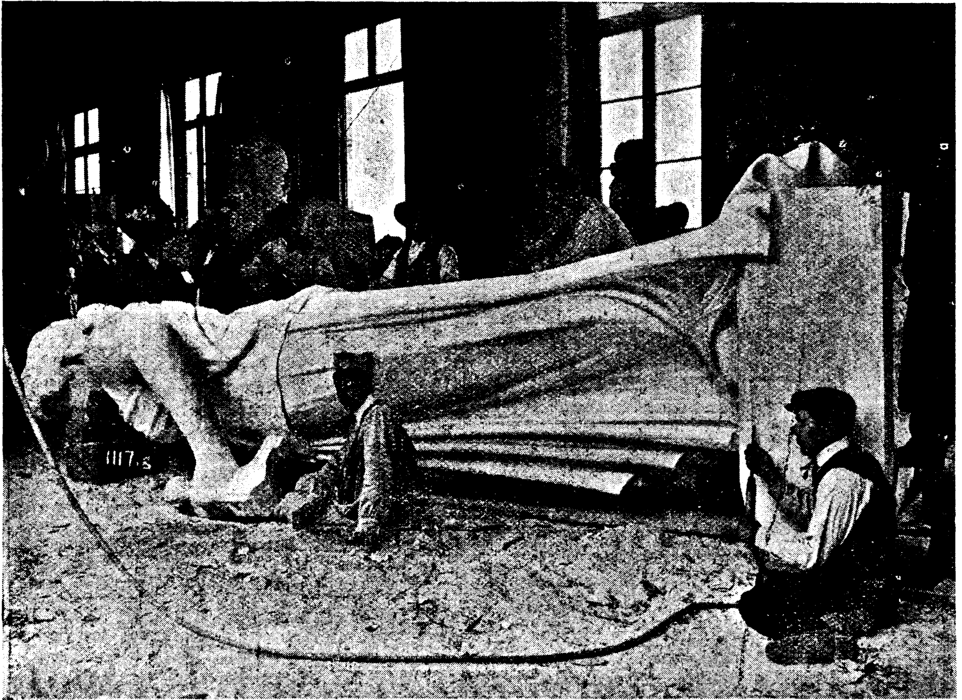
THE MARBLE-TRANSPORT RAILWAY.

The quadrated blocks intended to be carved into slabs are immediately brought to the sawmills, which are generally situated as conveniently as possible to the quarries. The typical sawmill consists of a series of multiple saws, each saw being composed of anything from ten to twenty wire cutters placed at distances of an inch or so from one another, according to the thickness of the slabs required. The wire cutters are simply thin ropes made of three interwoven strands of triangular steel wire. Sand and water is poured on them during the sawing process, and it is these fine grains of sand that in reality form the miniature teeth of the saw. The block is pushed on runners under this series of taut wire ropes, which are given a horizontal reciprocating movement from an overhead shaft that is operated either by water or electric power. The carving is rather slow, not amounting to more than

ten or twelve inches in twenty-four hours; but taking all the sawmills *en bloc*, they are capable of an output of five hundred tons in every twenty-four hours. After the slabs have been cut they are carefully examined and those showing blemishes are discarded or crosscut into smaller pieces of about a foot square, which are used for pavements and floorings.

Probably the most interesting feature of the whole marble industry is the study of the various types and qualities excavated in the different zones. The most famous of these is the statuary marble, which is found only in the neighbourhood of Carrara itself and seldom occurs in banks of more than four feet thick. It is pure white with a fleshlike tint which, when polished, gives it a delicate translucence, so that it almost resembles the human skin. But this marble does not answer the purposes of outdoor statuary or decoration, as it is too susceptible to weather influences.

The ordinary white marble, *bianco chiaro*, is the material that has made the name of Carrara a household word throughout the world. For some unknown reason it is often called White Sicilian Marble, though no marble of the type is found in Sicily. It occurs in abundance all throughout the Carrara district in strata of anything up to forty feet thick. The colour is practically a pure white, with only the slightest tendency towards a greyish-blue tinge. If this tinge be not too deep, and if it be uniformly diffused, the marble is of the very first quality. When the bluish veins show a somewhat deeper colouring, but are distributed with a uniform regularity, the marble is of second quality. When deeply and unevenly marked it is classified as of third or inferior qualities.




WORKING ON A COLOSSAL STATUE IN PROFESSOR LAZZARINI'S STUDIO.

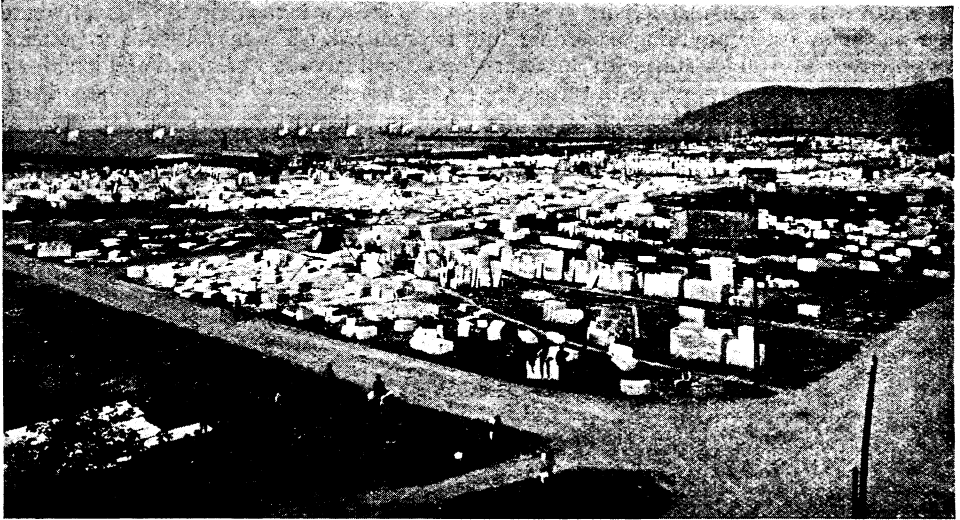
*It will be noticed that of the two workmen sitting one is using hammer and chisel, whereas the other is using the pneumatic drill.*

This marble forms ninety per cent. of the output of the whole industry and it practically holds the monopoly in the markets of the world. The first quality is used for outdoor statuary and architecture. It has not the warmth of colour or translucence of the statuary marble, but it has the great advantage of being immune from atmospheric influences and will remain in the open air for centuries without displaying any of the evil effects of climatic changes. The second quality is used for decorative statuary and

monumental work and, generally speaking, in all buildings that call for higher-class ornamentation. The third and inferior grades are relegated to the mundane requirements of ordinary staircases, shop-fronts, *cafés*, soda fountains, butchers' counters and barbers' saloons.

The other marbles of a simple primary colour are the black, the red and the green. These are so well known that there is no need to describe them here. Among the polychrome variety the place of honour must be given to the *bardiglio*, a marble which is found in close proximity to the ordinary white type. The most valuable quality is the flowered *bardiglio*. It has a clear grey foundation on which is traced a bluish reticulation of veins that give an effect somewhat like that of flowered silk. It is used in high-class furniture; and in hot countries it is very much in favour for internal floorings and linings. Next comes the *pavonazzo*, at present the dearest of all marbles. The foundation is of warm white, interveined with black, violet or green in a manner that gives the appearance of floral decoration. This marble takes a beautiful polish and can be used in the most delicate style of *de luxe* ornamentation. At present it is in great demand in America; and new excavations are being constantly made in the hope of finding fresh strata. A marble that closely resembles it, in the general decorative scheme adopted by the hand of nature, is the *fior di pesco*, or peach-flower type, so called from the fact of its flowering being in extremely delicate gradations from white to violet. Of a similar character is the *cipollino*, which has a white or greenish-white foundation, with veins of a seagreen colour sometimes associated with red or brown streaks, the whole scheme showing no hard lines but rather delicate *nuances* of colour that give it a magnificent appearance, especially as it is capable of taking a deep rich polish.

There is such an endless variety of these polychrome marbles that it would be out of the question to attempt an adequate description of them. Those I have mentioned are the best known and most regular types. On passing through one of the larger saw-mills, where the newly cut slabs are stacked on either side, the unending succession of varied tints and hues fills one with a sense of unreality, as if the mind were contemplating a storehouse of treasures that had been taken from some fairy palace. And then as you look at the dull grey mountains, with their sides gored in a thousand places, the sense of bewilderment becomes deeper; for it is difficult to realise how these forbidding hills, which have no majesty or beauty in their outward appearance, can enshrine such an abundance of precious material that they are capable of satisfying the luxuries of the world for scores of generations yet to come.



THE MARBLE DEPOTS BY THE SEASHORE.

* * * * *

A visit to the sculptors' studios discloses

a world of labour entirely different from the cyclopean toil of the mountain-sides. Here it is the dextrous eye and delicate touch that tells; and here too we have all the modern appliances installed, against which the traditionalism of the quarryman and the egotism of the teamsters have hitherto barred access to the hill-sides. Pneumatic hammers and electric drills, heavy planing and polishing machines, lathes and trimming machines are now installed in all the better-class studios. I noticed that most of the larger machines bore the nameplates of American firms. Undoubtedly this is the branch of the industry that has shown itself most susceptible to modern improvements. And the results are extremely encouraging; for the amount of finished work done in the studios is on the increase every year. One may now order anything according to design, from a gigantic statue to an altar-piece or a modest tombstone, with the assurance that the work will be executed accurately and delivered promptly. As a matter of fact, the growing tendency even in England is to have the work finished in the Carrara studios; for thus one saves the cost of transporting a large amount of material that must necessarily go to waste under the sculptor's chisel. Some of the most famous of modern monuments have been fully executed here, that of Garibaldi at Sarzana, for instance, where the statue itself reaches the colossal height of twenty feet, and that of Maria Theresa at Prague, which was made from a single block of marble weighing two hundred and seventy tons.

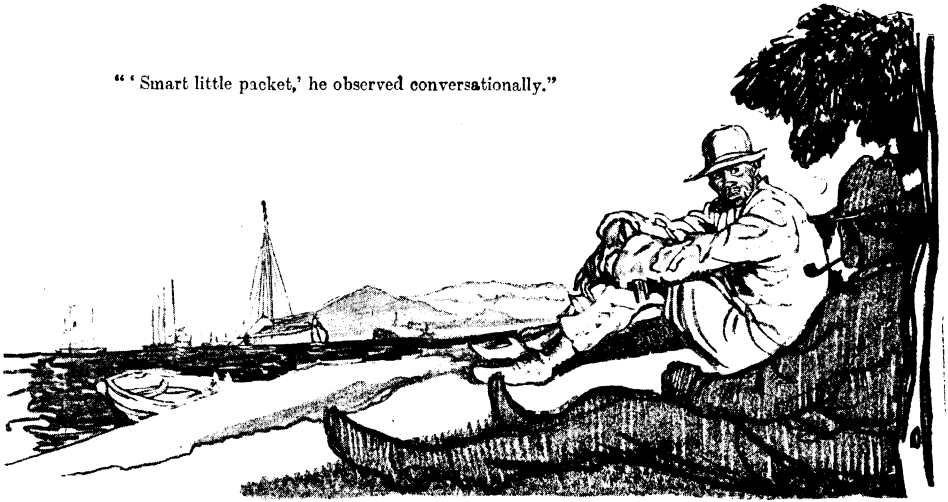
On leaving Carrara it is not without a certain feeling of wistfulness that one watches the sailing vessels starting out for Leghorn and Genoa, to unload their cargoes into steamers bound for England and America and Africa and India. This handiwork is mainly for the luxuries of the world; but there are few luxuries in the district where it is produced. The marble folk are generally poor and have to work hard and long for the bare necessities of life. They see little of the splendour which their hands have helped to produce. And one wonders if they are ever remembered or thought of in the palaces that have taken tribute from their life of unrelieved toil.

# SUNSET.

**A FOREST burns away on the far sky,**
**Dense foliage feeding the gold flames that die**
**With others goldener the hot sun draws**
**Into his furnace like a gust of straws.**
**Now seems he like a dragon as he writhes**
**Above the yellow harvest of our scythes,**
**Red with his anger and that hurt the hours**
**Gave to his pride when they withdrew the flowers,**
**Closing their eyelids from his hot encounter,**
**Saying, "These shalt thou spare us, O sky-mounter!"**
**Now is all heaven a cavern of red cinder**
**Filled by the sun with half a world's live tinder,**
**An arsenal wherefrom this monarch draws**
**New pomp of gold to follow a night's pause;**
**To brim the buttercups anew; to make**
**Glory of sheen on river and on lake;**
**To plump the pear; to polish the dark lustre**
**Of cherries hanging for us in ripe cluster;**
**To fill us with the wonder of his might**
**Throned amid stars and garmented in light.**

**WILFRID THORLEY.**

"'Smart little packet,' he observed conversationally."



# THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

## By RALPH STOCK

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER

THERE'S not much left for a twenty-ton cutter in the Islands these days. Any cargoes that the steamers consider below their dignity go to the auxiliary schooners, and the remnants are snapped up by odd native craft—very odd, some of them.

James Strode, world-wanderer, discovered this within a week of landing at Papeete, and was now reduced to sitting on the beach admiring the lines of his idle vessel as she rode at anchor against the purple haze of Moorea Island. It was a pleasant enough occupation in its way, but hardly remunerative, and if it went on much longer the boat would have to be sold, and her owner would be forced to rely on his legs instead of the four winds of heaven as a means of locomotion.

The mere thought caused Strode to writhe, and in so doing he caught his first glimpse of Henry Pendexter. At the time he had no notion that that was the gentleman's name, and it is doubtful if it really was, but what's in a name, anyway, south of the Line? All Strode saw was a meagre, unhealthy-looking youth in dirty ducks lounging in his direction, and it was enough. Such derelicts strew the tropic beaches of the world. Strode turned his attention to more important matters, including the fact that his cutter sorely needed a lick of paint.

But Henry Pendexter was of the variety that is not to be denied, a "mixer," one to whom it is inconceivable that a fellow creature may wish to be alone. He approached, and continued to approach until it was a physical impossibility for him to come any nearer without walking over his prey, then sat down and surveyed the cutter over a pair of bony knees.

"Smart little packet," he observed conversationally.

"Think so?" said Strode.

"Yes. All complete, like. Handled right, she'd take a man anywhere, *she* would."

A sun-bathed silence ensued.

"Get him out of *this* blasted hole, anyway," added Henry Pendexter, gazing

sombrely at the most beautiful spot on earth.

"What's the matter with getting out by steamer?" suggested Strode.

"Steamer?" The other cast a quick glance to heaven as though in search of inspiration. Apparently he found it. "Stink-boxes; that's what steamers are. Ever worked aboard one?"

"No."

"Well, *I* have. The 'glory hole's' bad enough, but trimmin'—— !" Words failed Henry Pendexter, or any words that are mentionable.

"I meant as a passenger," said Strode.

"Passenger? Do I look like a passenger?" The mere suggestion seemed to alarm Henry Pendexter. "Do I look as if I had the price of a passage to anywhere but where my own feet'll carry me?"

"You can never tell," said Strode. "The richest man in Papeete to-day looks more of a down-and-out than you or I."

"Who's he?"

"A Chinaman," said Strode, and there he paused. Henry Pendexter had averted his face, but not enough to hide the fact that every vestige of colour had left it. "The first really lousy-looking Chink I've seen," Strode went on; "but they say——"

"I've heard all that," said Henry Pendexter in a subdued voice. Suddenly he turned, and for the first time looked Strode squarely in the eyes. "And I don't mind telling you it's much the same with *me*. I've got the price, though I may not look like it."

"There! Didn't I say you can never tell?" Strode sighed enviously, and lay back on the sand. "What must it be," he mused, "to own so much that you have to look as if you hadn't anything?"

"Would you reely like to know?" inquired Henry Pendexter, staring stonily over his knees. "Well, it's like hell! I'm sick of it; plumb fed up with slinkin' around like a sneak-thief when I ought to be in Sydney lighting up the town. And it isn't as if what I've got ain't fairly come by, neither—— Who's this?" he added irrelevantly.

It was a Chinaman, shambling along the beach road with a bamboo-load of garden stuff on his shoulder. Henry Pendexter craned his lean neck to follow the intruder out of sight.

"No," he went on presently, "if ever a wad was hard-earned, mine is."

"I shouldn't tell me about it if I were you," said Strode.

"Why not?"

"You don't know me, for one thing."

"And for another?"

"Well, it's a pity to weaken at this stage in the game, isn't it? You've gone to considerable trouble to look as if you hadn't anything, why admit to me that you have —much less how you came by it?"

"*That's* why," said Henry Pendexter, and nodded at the cutter. "Owner, ain't you? Sail her yourself."

"Yes."

"Well, how much do you want to sail me out of here?"

"Where to?"

"Sydney."

"That needs thinking over."

"Well, think quick," snapped Henry Pendexter. "We start to-night if this thing goes through. I'm in a hurry."

"I'm not," said Strode. "What about a crew?"

"There's not going to be a crew."

"I'm to take her single-handed, am I?"

"Yes. I'll help."

"And where do I touch?"

"Here, before we start. Half now, and the rest at the other end."

"I didn't mean the passage money," Strode explained. "I meant what places do you want to touch at on the way?"

"Nowhere," said Henry Pendexter.

Strode leant back and pondered the matter. At first sight it looked like lunacy: over three thousand miles, single-handed, in a twenty-ton cutter! This runaway wharf-rat or whatever he was could have no notion of what he was suggesting. . . . Yet the hurricane season was over, the south-east trades had set in steady and strong. . . . and it had been done before. Bligh went farther than that in an open boat, and several sea-fevered idiots had accomplished it since for the mere love of the thing. Why shouldn't it be done again —for something really worth while? Oh, yes, it would have to be very much worth while to satisfy Strode at this juncture.

Henry Pendexter was leaning forward, his thin lips twitching with eagerness. Well, what about it? Anything in reason. Strode didn't have to believe him, but he wasn't on the run—from the law, anyway. It was just a case of ill-feeling, the kind of thing that in its bitterness could only happen in the Islands. A white man doesn't like to be beat at his own game, but a Chink——! He left the rest to the imagination.

Strode put an end to further revelations

by quoting for transportation a figure sufficiently preposterous to raise a laugh from most people. But Henry Pendexter did not laugh.

"Done with you!" he jerked out, producing a handful of notes from his filthy ducks, and counting them out on the sand. *That* was to seal the bargain. And *that* was in advance for stores—plenty of pickled onions, mind. And *that* was for getting a hustle on. What about a receipt?

Strode supplied one on a sheet torn from his note-book, and gathered up the spoils.

A great relief sat on the face of Henry Pendexter.

"Not a word about what you're doing," he enjoined.

"All right," said Strode.

"We meet here at twelve o'clock to-night."

"All right."

"And you get your half of the passage-money before we start."

"So you said before."

"I'm trusting you, mind."

Strode's hand went to the pocket where he had just put the notes.

"Would you rather not?" he suggested mildly.

That was enough. The question threw the other into open panic. He protested that nothing had been further from his mind than to doubt Strode in the smallest degree: that he knew he could trust him the first minute they met: that he (Henry Pendexter) was like that with everybody: it was all or nothing with *him*. He said a great deal more of a salutary nature before taking his departure, up the beach, across the road, and into the bush beyond.

Strode ought to have wondered violently about this new-found passenger of his, but he didn't. For one thing a man would never get anything to do if he wondered too much about it in the Islands, and for another, there wasn't time. Here was some one willing and eager to part with a young fortune for the doubtful privilege of being churned alive in a twenty-ton cutter, and here was the cutter's owner equally willing and eager—though he may not have shown it—to do the churning. Strode was fully engaged until midnight.

At the appointed hour he sat in the sand, a trifle weary, but as satisfied with his preparations for departure as a combined "ship's husband," master and crew could be expected to be.

A figure loomed out of the moon-mottled darkness of the beach road, and Strode was on the point of scrambling to his feet, when he saw that it was not his passenger. Furthermore, it dissolved into the night before he was able to establish much more than its nationality.

"You might like to know that some one's been watching us," he told his passenger when that gentleman put in a belated and overwrought appearance a few minutes later.

"Who? Where?" Henry Pendexter shot glances over either shoulder with a rapidity that threatened to dislocate his neck.

"A Chink—from the beach road," said Strode, and obliged with what was probably the quickest embarkation on record.

Down in the saloon, a cognac seemed to restore what equanimity the passenger possessed. He leant over the table with business-like earnestness.

"P'raps I ought to have told you," he admitted with a hint of apology; "I'm not paying for this in cash."

"Yes, you ought to have told me that," said Strode quietly.

"Well, I didn't," said Henry Pendexter, "because I'm paying in *these*." He took from his pocket a section of bamboo, uncorked one end, and poured on to the table a stream of pearls. "And I guess you won't kick, either, if you know anything about 'em," he added triumphantly.

"I don't," said Strode.

This simple statement of fact seemed to take the other aback.

"But you can tell within a few pounds apiece what they're worth?" he suggested incredulously.

"No, I can't," said Strode.

"You're kiddin', man."

"No, I'm not."

Sudden fear leapt into Henry Pendexter's eyes. It was never very far away.

"But you'll take 'em?" he urged. "Hell, there's enough there to buy a church. I daren't sell them for cash here. You don't know what goes on about pearls in these parts. Mum's the word or you find yourself in the lagoon with your throat cut." In an access of incredulity at Strode's ignorance he picked up the pearls one at a time between finger and thumb. "Look at 'em!" he exhorted. "Handle 'em—seventy-five if it's worth a cent—fifty—thirty—maybe a hundred! Oh, quit your kiddin'. You must *know*——"

This went on for some time, and Strode's

silence became oppressive. Finally it caused Henry Pendexter to relapse into a crumpled heap.

"You don't believe me," he wailed. "You don't believe me. What's a feller to do? A year it took me to get that lot; a year—in the Paumotus. Ever been there? No. Well, don't go unless you want to be baked alive. Worked in a Chink store, I did, all corrugated iron and stinks. But they're the boys for laying hands on the stones. I watched how they did it. Such games! Then I did it myself, and they didn't like that. It was their turn to watch *me*. They're still watching me—and now you won't take me out of it." He moistened his lips, and glanced through a porthole.

There is something hypnotic about the abject, and apart from the practical if not mercenary side of the business in hand, Strode felt its influence. It is a dreadful thing to have any living creature — even a Henry Pendexter—so completely at one's mercy that by word or look you can transport them to heaven or hell. Such a responsibility has broken stronger men than Strode.

"I didn't say I wouldn't take you," he heard himself admitting.

This produced a torrent of gratitude that was only stemmed when Strode made known his terms. He would carry out his side of the bargain provided the pearls remained in his charge throughout the voyage, and sufficient were sold for cash immediately on arrival to pay the agreed passage-money. The rest would be returned.

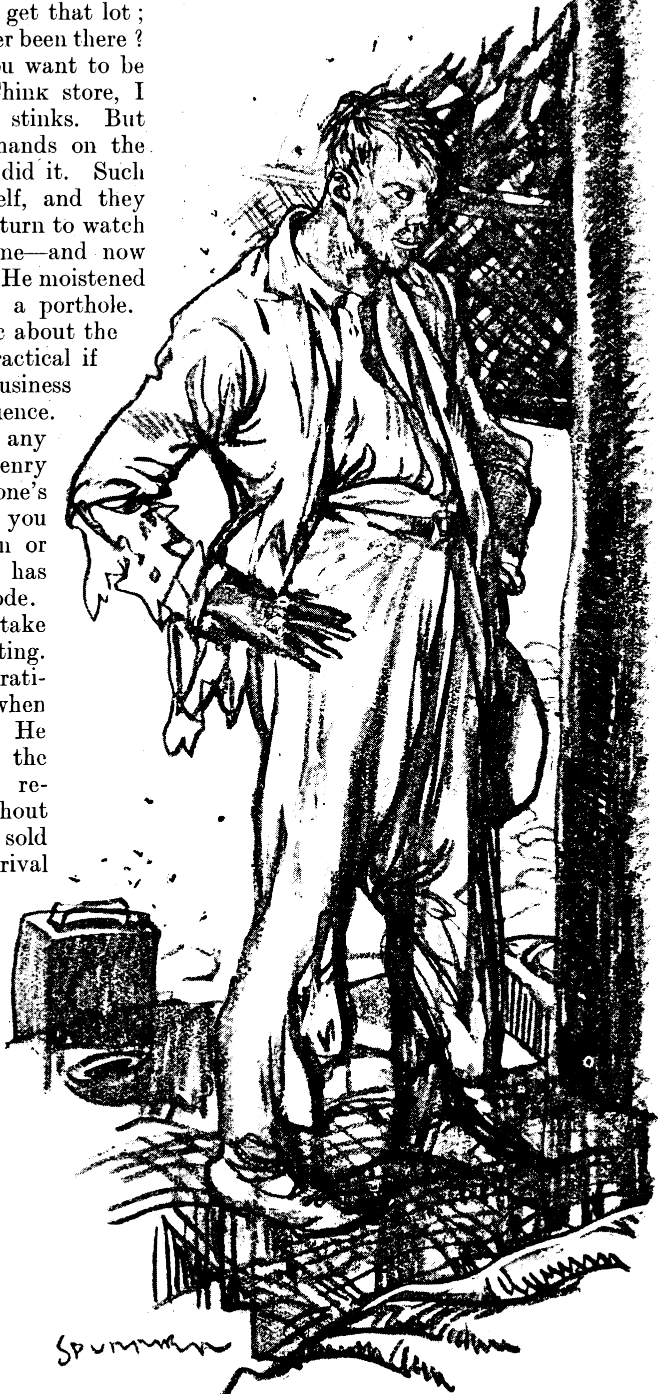
It was evidently on the tip of Henry Pendexter's tongue to point out that although he was obliged by circumstances to agree to such conditions, they constituted considerable trust in Strode. But he refrained, and half an hour later the cutter slipped through the reef pass under power.

## II.

"WHAT'S the latest?"

"Two hundred."

"Cripes! We're half-way there!" Henry Pendexter celebrated the occasion by putting his fingers to his nose, and spreading them to their fullest extent over the cutter's wake. "I'm kind o' sorry for them Chinks," he added with a brightness that



"'What's all this?' demanded Henry Pendexter."

had increased with every day out from Papeete.

Strode said nothing. He had just climbed into the cockpit after working out the noon observation below, and had long since learned the danger of saying much to Henry Pendexter. On the slightest provocation he became a talking machine run by perpetual motion. An audience of one is no manner of use to a "mixer." During day and night watches, alone and defenceless at the tiller, Strode had been compelled to listen to his passenger's alleged history, past, present, and future. Henry Pendexter was a citizen of the world, it appeared, and proud of it. One country was as good as another to him. He had wandered. He had contrived to live—somehow. But all that was over now. He was going to settle down in a tidy bungalow on the shores, of Sydney Harbour. He knew a girl—all figure, and eyes, and voice. She wouldn't listen to him before he left, but now—well, things would be different; and all through a few stones. Queer, wasn't it?

"'I'm taking a spell,' said Strode."

At this juncture Strode might admit that it *was*, exceedingly queer, and Henry Pendexter would be encouraged to further confidences. Had he ever told Strode just how he came by his affluence ? It was like this : in the Paumotus, under French law, only skin-diving is allowed, and "findings are keepings." Consequently a good diver is sought after, spoon-fed, and generally spoiled by the storekeepers in the hope of getting him so deeply into debt that he can only meet his liabilities by paying in pearls. Kanakas are never slow about running into debt, especially when gramophones, silk stockings, and near-gold watches are flung at their heads, and the storekeepers were doing well—until Henry Pendexter arrived. "Then," as they say in the story books, "a change came over the scene." Pearls became scarce. Why ? Because they were finding their way to Henry Pendexter instead of the storekeepers. And again, why ? Because a Kanaka recognises and appreciates a square deal. Treat him right, and he'll treat you right. Such was Henry Pendexter's motto, and it had answered, that's what riled his competitors.

They tried everything to run him out, but he was a match for them. He had a headpiece, and knew how to use it. Even when things developed into a rough-and-tumble he was not found wanting. Faced by a bunch of aggrieved Orientals bent on preventing him leaving with his hard-earned pelf, he accounted for three of them with his bare fists, dived into a shark-infested lagoon where none dared follow, and swam out to a departing schooner. After that . . .

Thus Henry Pendexter in reminiscent mood and fair weather, and so far it had been a miracle of steady trades on the quarter and spurned foam at the bows. Then, without so much as a flicker of the barometer, the cutter ran into something distinctly *un*fair, if the sea can be accused of sharp practices. It was either a full-blown gale or a miniature hurricane, but in either case it did queer things with Strode's hove-to cockleshell before flattening out into a stark and persistent calm.

"First one thing, then another ! " wailed Henry Pendexter after the third day of drifting in circles on a sea of oil.

"Such is life," quoted Strode, putting the final stitches into a torn gib. Under a barrage of futile talk his responses had become purely mechanical.

"*Life*, you call it ! Which is worse, bein' shook to death in a pill-box, or set adrift on a derelic' ? "

"Hard to say."

"And what's to stop this going on for a month ? "

"Nothing."

One of his sudden apprehensions seized on Henry Pendexter.

"How much water is there left ? "

"Enough for a fortnight if we go slow."

"If we go slow, eh ? " Henry Pendexter reared himself into some semblance of authority. "I'll have you know I'm a passenger aboard here."

"I'm not forgetting it." Strode's palm and needle continued its steady course across the sail. "You'd have been keel-hauled before this if you weren't."

"Oh, would I ? Well, let me tell you ——"

"You'd better not tell me any more," warned Strode, folding up the gib with an energy he longed to expend on his passenger. "I've had about enough."

Henry Pendexter kept silence for a space, but was unable to sustain the effort.

"So that's the game, is it ? " he demanded suspiciously. "Pick a quarrel with a feller and then——"

"Yes ? "

"Get 'im out of the way."

"See here," said Strode, "just don't talk. That's all you've got to do, savvy ? "

Something in his manner must have carried weight. Henry Pendexter fell silent and remained so for nearly six hours, while the cutter continued to describe leisurely circles on an unruffled sea, and the marine glue bubbled from her deck seams.

At the end of this phenomenal period, Strode went below to discover the cause of faint sounds that filtered up through the sliding hatch. They came from the passenger, asprawl over the cabin table sobbing like a child. He was literally drowning under a flood of unuttered speech. Strode dropped resignedly on to a locker and came to the rescue.

"All right," he invited. "Get it off your chest."

Oh, it was all right for Strode. He might be as hard as nails. Henry Pendexter was not, and didn't mind who knew it. *Strode* hadn't everything worth while waiting for him in Sydney. *Strode* didn't know what it was to be baulked of life in the last lap, this way. They would never get anywhere now. Henry Pendexter felt it in his bones. They would just go on drifting until the

water ran out, or the sea came in or something. The luck of it! The crimson, lopsided luck! What had he done to be visited like this?

"Looks as if you'd killed a Chinaman, all right," said Strode, who for the life of him could think of nothing else to say.

The chance phrase had an unlooked-for effect. It was as though Henry Pendexter had received a bullet in the chest. From his folded arms he lifted a face wide-eyed and tense with the knowledge of a vital blow.

"What's that?" he whispered.

"Oh, nothing." Strode filled his pipe, and turned towards the companion.

"What's that you said?" Henry Pendexter had followed him, was clutching his sleeve.

"Never heard the old gag that bad luck chases the man who kills a Chinaman?"

"No."

"Then you haven't been down this way long."

"No."

"But you mustn't take any notice of things like that—even if you *have*."

"I haven't. I swear I haven't!"

"Well then, what's biting you?"

"I was wondering——" Henry Pendexter stared unseeingly out of a porthole.

"If any of that bunch you knocked out before diving into the lagoon full of sharks hit their heads on a lump of coral and passed in their cheques," Strode finished for him.

"No, that was lies—all lies."

"You don't say!"

But Henry Pendexter was beyond taking offence at sarcasm, beyond any other emotion than superstitious fear.

"So it's not that," he assured himself. "It just can't be *that*. I was only wondering . . ." And he continued to wonder, while Strode went on deck in search of a breeze.

There was none. From the unctious sheen on the face of the sea, it looked as if there never had been and never would be so much as a breath. Night closed down like a hot, giant hand bent on suffocating the world in its sleep. No sound came from below. Presumably Henry Pendexter was still wondering, and Strode was duly grateful for the peace it entailed. What his passenger was wondering about, interested him not at all. The sum-total of his desires at the moment was a breeze, any sort or size of a breeze that would bring this ghastly voyage to an end. He was used to the ordinary hazards of the sea. They had been fair, open encounters with all the exhilaration of conflict about them, but *this*—— Somehow he could not help associating the cutter's present predicament with the nature of her cargo. It was absurd, but it was so. He laughed the idea from his mind as a despicable fancy, but it returned. During the days and nights of stagnation that followed, it grew. It came to haunt him. There were moments when his fingers itched to take Henry Pendexter by the throat and pitch him overboard—not because it would rid the world of an encumbrance, nor even because the drinking-water was running low, but simply because Strode had come to feel that until it was done a clean, bracing wind would never blow again.

But it did, which was perhaps as well for Henry Pendexter. Out of the south it came like a pistol-shot, bellying the idle sails and driving the cutter before it clean into the Lau Group.

"There you are!" triumphed the passenger, his own chatty self the instant he set foot ashore. "What did I tell you?"

Strode neither knew nor cared. He had landed for water, and by noon the tanks were filled, but the thought of setting sail oppressed him like a nightmare. He longed for rest, and rest meant nothing else at the moment than relief from sight and sound of Henry Pendexter.

This he found at last, in a native hut on the outskirts of the village that straggled along the beach. Already the old enemy, fever, was knocking at his door.

"What's all this?" demanded Henry Pendexter, looking in on him after a liquid and loquacious evening with the local Chief.

"I'm taking a spell," said Strode.

"Huh!" Henry Pendexter stood in the doorway looking down on him with a curious fixity, and Strode jerked the mats closer about his trembling body. He mustn't lose control, he told himself, clenching his teeth against their inane chattering. On no account must he lose control. . . .

But man's will is no match for what had taken hold of Strode. Twice during the night he was aware of his passenger's presence—once in monstrous form framed in the doorway against the stars, and once as a soundless and swiftly moving shadow that hovered over him for a moment and was gone. Of the third visitation he knew nothing.

It was the simplest affair Henry Pendexter had ever carried through. The watering of the cutter had been hot work, and

Strode drank freely. It had only been necessary to supply him with the right refreshment.

So it was that after a three weeks' flight by canoe and steamer Henry Pendexter came to be uncorking a bamboo with trembling hands in a Sydney "dealer's" back parlour.

III.

It took Strode the best part of two months to reach the same city in a twenty-ton cutter, but reach it he did, and nailed a "For Sale" notice to his mast the next morning.

There was no question about it now. The old boat would have to go for what she would fetch, and her owner too. When a man reaches such a pitch that wharf-rats can do with him as they will, something must be done. Strode decided to go up-country as a farm hand, and drive the fever from his bones.

He harboured no particular resentment against Henry Pendexter for the theft of the pearls. As well bear malice against a mosquito for its sting. It was the nature of the beast. The fever was to blame.

Before taking train for the health-giving plateau that lies on the border of Queensland and New South Wales, Strode called at the General Post Office—recognised home, and often grave, of a seaman's correspondence. There was none for him, only a registered packet about the size of a pill-box. It *was* a pill-box containing a pearl and a note. The pearl was of considerable lustre, and the note, composed and typewritten with studied care, was no less illuminating:

MESSRS. WONG LEE AND SON,
MERCHANTS,
PAUMOTU ISLANDS.

*To* James Strode, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—

We, the undersigned, have the honour to regret putting you to so great inconvenience in removing undesirable person, and send herewith under separate cover to name and address supplied by our Papeete agents, small gift in payment for same.

Two week he was employ in our contemptible store as no good help, and when we fire him he poison our esteemed manager, and steal pearls from safe.

We allow thief and attempted murder to escape by every means in our power because esteemed manager recover, and pearls we keep in safe are for such purpose, imitation.

Assuring you of our best attention at all times,

We are, dear sir,
Your obedient servants,
WONG LEE AND SON.

# MARCH ECSTASY.

**AS poesy to words of common mood**
**Sudden gives heavenly sense,**
**So now in this pale wood**
**A difference.**

**I dream the rose, the palm, the tropic beach,**
**All Ispahan aglow.**
**These winds that were harsh speech**
**Are music now.**

**'Tis bacchic song 'twixt cloud and pregnant ground,**
**Rapt notes from bill and wing.**
**Song laps the huge earth round:**
**I too will sing.**

**ERIC CHILMAN.**

# BONPAPA BONFILS

## By OLIVER MADOX HUEFFER

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT

THE big motor-car hooted, Stephanie screamed, Bonpapa stumbled, tried to recover herself, fell, and lay stretched out on the road. Stephanie looked at her for a moment in horrified wonder and burst into tears. "Oh—they have killed her. Poor—poor Bonpapa, they have killed her." And she cast herself on her knees beside her humble friend.

It happened just where the Route Nationale to Orléans crosses the road from Boitencourt to Saint-Charles-en-Laye. Stephanie and Bonpapa had just emerged from the side-road, and after satisfying themselves that it was clear, started to cross the great motor-highway. Before they were halfway to safety the big car came hurtling round the curve at who knows how many kilomètres to the hour and—there lay poor Bonpapa on the ground and Stephanie weeping beside her as though her heart would break.

Stephanie had no time to take the number of the car, even had she thought of it, or to notice that there was a special plate with the letters "G.B." close to the number. Yet those letters had, it may be, an important effect upon her future. Before the car had got fifty yards it slowed down, and a young man, descending hurriedly, came running back towards Stephanie. A woman's head was protruded, looking after him and calling to him in a language which Stephanie did not understand. "We never touched her. I am quite sure we never touched her."

The young man reached Stephanie, took off his cloth cap, and spoke to her in very bad French. She understood, however, enough to know that he was expressing his sorrow for the accident and asking her if there were nothing he could do.

"Oh—Bonpapa—poor Bonpapa is dead," sobbed Stephanie, which was, after all, the best answer she could have given.

The young man was standing awkwardly beside her, expressing his sympathy as best he could, when the big car came backing towards them smoothly, and again the woman's head looked out. The young man explained the tragedy as he saw it.

"Poor kid," said the young woman, who seemed the more practical of the two. "I expect it is all she has to live on. She looks poor enough. What a shame—on our honeymoon, too."

"We—we can't possibly offer her money," said the young man doubtfully.

"I don't know," said the young woman. "After all, it is the only thing we can do."

The young man reached doubtfully for his pocket-book. "I wonder how much," he reflected.

"Oh, give her a thousand francs," said the young woman.

The young man selected a note, took off his hat again, expressed in French more halting even than before his heart felt sympathy, pressed the note into Stephanie's hand, leapt back into the car with a sigh of relief, and in two minutes it was but a dwindling spot on the long, black, tree-lined highway, with Stephanie staring after it open-mouthed. It had just passed out of sight altogether when she heard a scuffling on the asphalt behind her, and there was Bonpapa scrambling awkwardly to her feet.

Now this is not a very moral story, as you shall hear, but you cannot really blame Stephanie. It was Bonpapa offered her the hint in the first place, by something she did while she was still lying stretched out as though dead on the roadway. What that was I shall keep as a surprise for you until the end of the story.

Bonpapa was not very good-looking, especially if you remember that, in spite of her name, she was a lady. She had white whiskers for one thing—such as are unusual even on the faces of young lady donkeys. And for another, she had—and this is very important—only one eye, having lost the other in an accident. On the other hand, she was agreeably plump and well-groomed and her feet were as small and neat as any

that ever wore silk stockings, and altogether she was not the least presentable of the donkeys that foregather on market-days in the Vieux Marché at Vielleville.

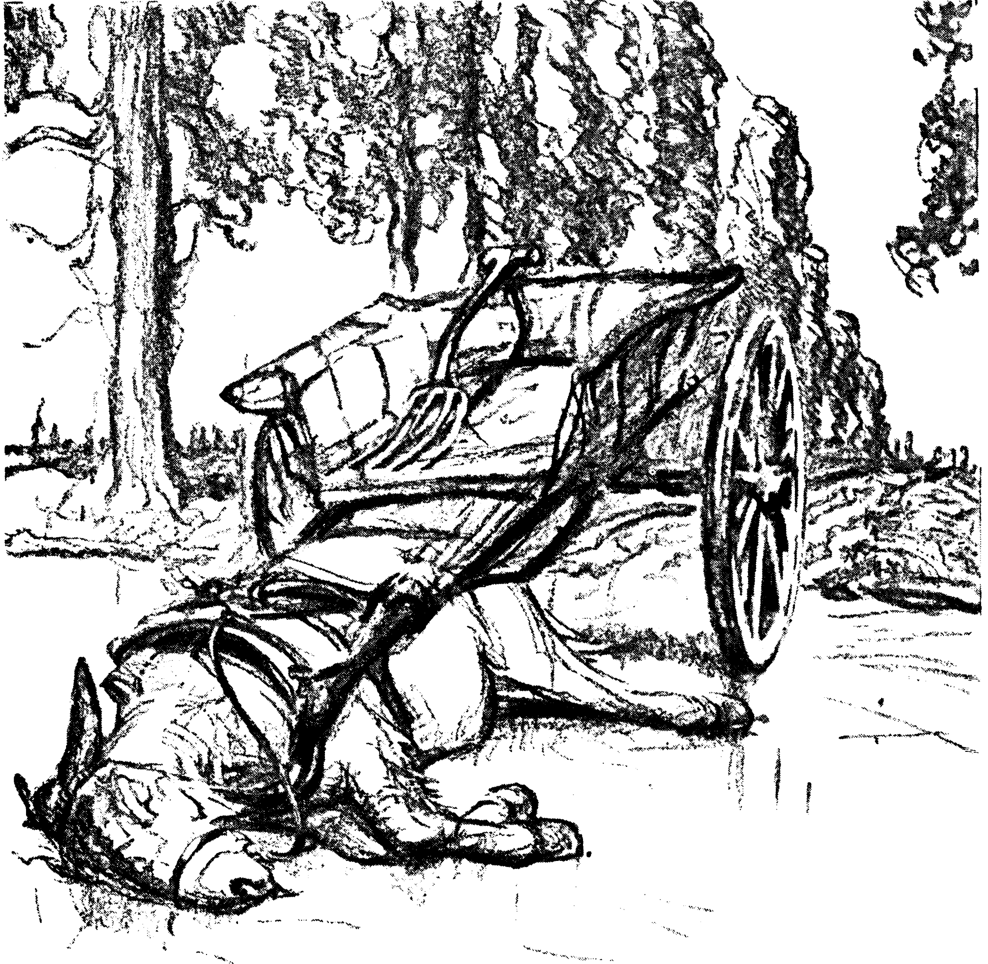
When Bonpapa was very young indeed her name was Fleurette. But when she was bought by old Madame Veuve Bonfils, to be employed in her little market-garden at Boitencourt, little Stephanie, who was the widow's grandchild and lived with her, being a war-orphan, no sooner saw the new member of the family than she clapped her hands in gleeful recognition and cried aloud, "Bonpapa! Bonpapa! Bonpapa!"

"Bonpapa" was the name Stephanie had thitherto reserved for her grandfather, then lately deceased, and grandpapa Bonfils had long been noted for his flowing white whiskers, which gave him rather the look of a retired banker than of the active *maraîcheur* he was. Also, it was hinted, he had his full share of what his friends called determination and his enemies obstinacy—a quality which, by the way, Stephanie inherited to no small degree. So that although the Widow Bonfils at first was very angry at such sacrilege, the name stuck, and there after Fleurette was forgotten and Bonpapa reigned in her stead.

"The young man reached doubtfully for his pocket-book. 'I wonder how much,' he reflected."

The house of the Widow Bonfils was the last but one on the left-hand side of the shabby little village street before you come to the Forest of Good Repose. Her market-garden stretched down behind it to the bank of the little La Noue brook, and beyond the brook was another little market-garden,

and all around were yet others; so that the whole wide, flat space through which the brook meandered was like one great garden with nowhere a hedge or visible boundary, cultivated to the last inch, and so superlatively neat that had one tiny green onion-spike stood one degree out of the rectilinear in its bed it would have spoilt the picture.



"There lay poor Bonpapa on the ground."

All the market-gardens and the glittering glass *cloches* that covered them in places like companies of perfectly drilled soldiers manœuvring, and all the onions and the carrots and the lettuces and the melons and the egg-plants and the parsley and the spinach that covered them in their due seasons, were alike devoted to the needs of the Old Market at Vielleville. At five o'clock of every Tuesday and Friday and Sunday morning Bonpapa and a dozen of her kind and shaggy ponies and hand-barrows, and even two or three of the most venerable motor-cars that ever shed nuts on a French road, started off down the rough road that leads through Boitencourt and up the hill to Le Theunay, which is the outlying suburb of Vielleville, and through the barrier of the Octroi—you should have heard what Madame Veuve Bonfils had to say about the Octroi and all its works—and along the Boulevard Pasteur and under the walls of the Castle, and so to the Old Market just beyond the Paroisse. There they all waited until the morning's chaffering was done, and when midday chimed out from the old tower that dominates the Market Square, what remained unsold was loaded on to the carts and the cars and the barrows and taken back again to the places whence it

came. And if sometimes the "morning gathered" vegetables that you buy in the Vieux Marché at Vielleville are not quite as fresh as they might be, it is entirely your own fault for not buying them three days before.

Amid such quiet surroundings you would not expect that even a donkey of outstanding character such as was Bonpapa would have found much opportunity for distinction. And indeed, save in her choice of name, it did not come to her until she had been for more than ten years the trusted friend and servant of the Bonfils family and until Stephanie herself was beginning to regard young men as more worthy of study than the trousered louts she had thitherto considered them. It came one winter's evening when a *vaurien* from the neighbouring village of Fontenay-aux-Cerises tried to steal her out of the warm stall in the little outhouse built especially for her in the yard behind the Widow Bonfils' dwelling. Bonpapa, knowing when she was well off, kicked out with her sharp little hooves with such judgment as to cut his forehead open and lay him senseless on the cobblestones, where he was found by an early riser on his way to work and handed over to justice. For a time it seemed that he would lose the sight of an eye, but the doctors of the prison infirmary saved it for him, and being considered sufficiently punished he was given the benefit of a *sursis* or suspended sentence, and that is the last we hear of him. But in the course of the proceedings in the Correctional Tribunal at Vielleville, Bonpapa's right to more than local fame was vindicated, for the malefactor proved to be the very fellow—as he himself confirmed—who a year before had flung a pebble, carelessly as he weepingly declared, of set purpose as most believed, in the Grande Rue of Le Theunay, which, striking poor Bonpapa in the left eye, had blinded it for ever. You may suppose that Boitencourt buzzed with her name, for your French peasant respects a good hater as frankly as did Dr. Johnson before him.

"To think," cried the Widow Dunoir, putting her head inside the little wooden *baraque* wherein Père Launay, the cobbler, was at work—"to think that she should have waited so patiently all these months for her revenge."

To which opening Père Launay, shaking his head wisely, replied, through a mouthful of shoe-tacks: "My faith—a Christian could have done no more."

And in so saying, Père Launay voiced the opinion of all Boitencourt. And when what happened of which you shall hear, no one in Boitencourt, nor in Fontenay nor half a dozen other villages round about, was in the least degree surprised.

Time passed as uneventfully as it can only in a French village, and Stephanie, being of marriageable age, selected her future husband. She selected no less a person than Jean-Paul, only son of Monsieur and Madame Boyeau-Turance, who kept and indeed owned, freehold and all, the Moderne Café, opposite the Mairie. As the Moderne Café was quite the most prosperous in Boitencourt, you may suppose that the son of the house was among the most eligible *partis* of the neighbourhood. So much so, that had Stephanie discussed her plans even with her grandmother she might well have been laughed at for her pains. Being a young woman of her century and her grandfather's granddaughter at that, she preferred to take her own measures, to such good effect that Master Jean-Paul very soon discovered that she was the only girl in the world and that he had passionately adored her ever since they were both in short frocks. More remarkable still, and indicative of his strength of character, within a month of his discovering it, his father and mother called upon Madame Veuve Bonfils and made their provisional offer for the hand of her charming granddaughter. That they should have obeyed their darling's pleadings with such apparent readiness may have been due indeed, in some measure, to the fact that although the Widow Bonfils lived in a very little house indeed, and went thrice a week to market, her family was of most respectable antecedents, herself highly respected and of a saving habit notable even in a community where thrift is the universal rule of life. That hidden somewhere in security she had a *bas de laine* very comfortably lined was certain. Only remained to be discovered what exact proportion of her "little economies" she was willing to devote to the settling of her granddaughter in life.

Monsieur and Madame Boyeau-Turance, having debated the matter, estimated the possible limit of the widow's benevolence at 20,000 francs; and accordingly, to allow for inevitable bargaining, suggested that a husband so desirable as their son could command a "dot" of at least thirty thousand. And, in so doing, they paid no small compliment to Madame Bonfils' reputation for wealth, for, however much the exchange problem may diminish the value of the

franc in foreign eyes, to the French it is still neither more nor less than a franc, and twenty thousand francs neither more nor less than a fortune.

Madame Bonfils gasped at the suggestion. Of course she would have gasped in any case, such being the time-honoured *riposte* in France to any preliminary business offer of any kind. But her gasp was not altogether artificial, for the vastness of the sum proposed did actually take her breath away and made it only too evident that there was no chance at all of any agreement being come to. She had, for her part, intended to offer ten thousand and afterwards to rise, if necessary, by a thousand francs at a step, as high as fifteen thousand. And, be it said, she had in this no thought but to do her very best for her granddaughter, for it would mean practically the emptying of the woollen stocking with all too few years left her for its replenishment.

So the widow was forced to explain to Stephanie, as soon as the honoured guests had gone, that her dream was hopeless and that nothing remained but to look about for another young man who might be obtained for less money.

"After all," she said consolingly, "there are as good wheat-fields to be reaped as have ever been put in the oven."

Stephanie took the news calmly enough. "All the same, I shall marry Jean-Paul," she said.

"But, alas—it is impossible. Never will Madame consent—never in her life. She has an eye, that woman, and in it I read determination of the most terrible."

"Nevertheless, I shall marry Jean-Paul," repeated Stephanie.

"Do I not tell you that it is impossible. His parents refuse their consent. How then can you marry him? What then will you do, unfortunate one?"

"I shall go and talk to Bonpapa about it," said Stephanie, and as she always said that when there was a difference of opinion, her grandmother returned to her interrupted task of picking carrots in the patch by the brookside.

The next morning was a Wednesday, and as it happened it was Stephanie's duty to drive Bonpapa and the little cart a matter of three miles to the Farm of the Allouettes, on the Saint-Charles-en-Laye Road, thence to fetch a load of manure for the better nourishment of the market-garden. And it was while on their way thither that the accident happened which left Stephanie the richer by one thousand francs—ten English pounds only to the donors, but a vast sum indeed to the future wife of Jean-Paul Boyeau.

"Bonpapa, knowing when she was well off, kicked out with her sharp little hooves."

Had she been an English girl, Stephanie would very likely have gone straight home to tell her grandmother the glad news. Because she was French—and still more because she was Stephanie Bonfils—she only tucked the note carefully away in the bosom of her dress, assured herself that Bonpapa was without a scratch, continued quietly her journey to the Farm of the Allouettes,

and there drove an even keener bargain over the price of the manure than usual. When she got home without further adventure she said nothing to her grandmother of the events of the day, her only comment on the subject nearest her heart being in reply to her grandmother's tentative praises of that charming young man, Leon, son of Madame Delfosse, their neighbour, who it appeared had long been one of her admirers.

"Have I not told you that I am going to marry Jean-Paul? What need of more words about it?" said Stephanie.

All that night she lay awake considering, and in the morning she carried out certain experiments with Bonpapa as subject. Later in the day she harnessed the little cart, refusing any explanation, and started out once more in the direction of the Farm of the Allouettes. She went no further than the Orléans National route, however, and there, just at the corner where the previous accident had happened, she waited, standing at the right hand of the cart at Bonpapa's head. You will remember that Bonpapa's right eye had not been injured.

She had not been waiting three minutes when there came a distant honk-honking, evidently from some large car travelling at high speed in the direction of Orléans. At once Stephanie signalled to Bonpapa to go on, and the little cart emerged into the highway, right in the path of the onrushing Juggernaut. There was a renewed outburst of honking, the swish of locked tyres on the asphalt, the car passed within, as it seemed, two inches of Stephanie, who screamed aloud, while Bonpapa fell flat down on the roadway and lay there with legs extended, the very image of a dead donkey.

The car stopped, the motorist descended —this time a young Frenchman. Stephanie, for all reply to his offers of assistance, sobbed bitterly, exclaiming in a broken voice: "She is dead, she is dead. Oh, poor Bonpapa, how shall I live without you?"

The young Frenchman, like his English forerunner, could see only one way of solacing her grief: by giving her the wherewithal to buy another donkey. His estimate of Bonpapa's worth was a good deal less than had been the Englishman's; but even so, when the car had disappeared and Bonpapa scrambled inelegantly to her feet, Stephanie held in her hand two bank-notes of a hundred francs each to add to the thousand already nestling in her bosom.

You may think, according to your standard of moral judgment, either that Stephanie was mad and determined upon suicide or that she was a very wicked girl indeed, who should have been punished for obtaining money by false pretences. But, as I have said, you cannot really blame her. She was very much in love, and being so, was only too ready to take the hint offered to her in the first place by Bonpapa Bonfils, on whose narrow shoulders be the blame. Whether or no, the road to Jean-Paul's arms being thus indicated, she followed it without hesitation or delay, thereby learning incidentally a good deal about human nature as shown by those who ride in motor-cars; how a foreigner could be relied to pay more handsomely than a native—less perhaps out of natural generosity than through fear of unknown local laws and authorities; how the more splendid a car the more anxious was its owner to avoid accident, and accordingly that you trust yourself very much more safely in its track than in that of a more plebeian vehicle; how the tears of a pretty girl are more apt at the opening of purse-strings than the sternest of demands, and many other lessons which she found useful in her later life. And certainly Cupid, perhaps aided by Silenus, who as we know had a weakness for donkeys, watched over her throughout her perilous enterprise, for only once was she touched by a passing car, and then without greater injury than bruises —it was then that, for the second time, she received a thousand francs as solace—and only once was Bonpapa unwillingly overthrown, and then only at the cost of her knees and a broken shaft—that, fortunately, was an American car, and Stephanie found herself the richer by a strange and unfamiliar bank-note which later proved to be a hundred-dollar bill.

To cut the story short, in less than two months after her first encounter with the English car Stephanie found herself in possession of the seven thousand francs, which, in the resultant negotiations, proved the irreducible medium necessary to reconcile the ideas of her grandmother and her future *belle-mère*. In less than three she was married, and Jean-Paul proving the most docile of husbands, settled down with him to be happy ever afterwards.

If you wish to know the discovery which emboldened Stephanie to launch her prosperous enterprise, it was this—that were Bonpapa lying down upon her left or blind side, and you covered the right, she would make no attempt to rise until the covering

was removed. As Bonpapa had long since been trained to lie down or get up at the word of command, the rest was easy, once given the original idea. And that, as Stephanie would be the first to admit, came direct from Bonpapa herself, and provides ample reason for the belief widely held in the Commune of Boitencourt and elsewhere throughout the Département of the Seine-et-Garonne—that Bonpapa possessed a brain at least as capable and a great deal more cunning than many Christians.

This then is what happened while Bonpapa was lying in the road after her initial encounter with the English car. M. Jean-Paul Boyeau-Bonfils told it me himself one day when I was chatting with him over the zinc-lined counter of the Moderne Café at Boitencourt, and the *patronne* herself did not deny it. It is true that she blushed a little shamefacedly, so that it may be, the madness of love being assuaged, she has some scruples as to the manner whereby she earned her dowry. At least she told me, through her admiring husband, that at the very moment the young Englishman was trying clumsily to comfort her, and the big car was backing towards them, she distinctly saw with her own eyes Bonpapa raise her head from the ground, look round her, and seeing that the Englishman was still there, lay it down again, looking ten times deader than before. "Figure to yourself," said M. Jean-Paul. "With that cunning, *malin* head of hers, she realised very well that, in such a case, she would be worth very much more to Stephanie dead than alive. And, after that—well, my dear wife is the most wonderful woman in the world. Of a quickness, an understanding, a readiness to take a hint almost unbelievable." And Stephanie, hiding her blush of pride behind the tobacco-counter, did not deny it.

Of course you need not believe this story unless you like. Personally, I have no doubt about it.

## SECRETS.

**TREE leans across to sister tree,**
**Their branches interlace like hands ;**
**They bow their heads and sway, like bands**
**Of dancers, from dim reed-bound lands.**

**Tree whispers there with sister tree**
**With mocking laughter. Words are tossed**
**Between them and as quickly lost**
**Before they reach the furthermost.**

**The pale wind moves from tree to tree ;**
**The pale wind moves from bough to bough ;**
**He knows their circling thoughts and how**
**They learnt the tale they whisper now.**

BRIAN HILL.

# GREY TERROR

## THE STORY OF A WILD CAT

### By H. THOBURN-CLARKE

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

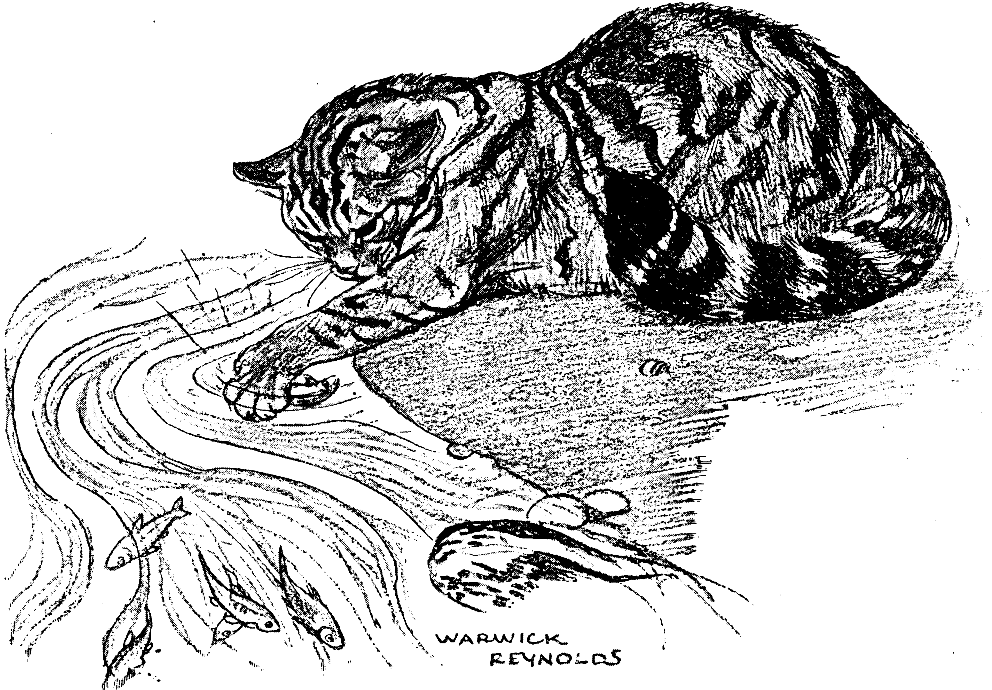
THE wind whistled shrilly around the snow-covered peaks, moaning at times like a lost soul, as it swirled down through the great rift in the mountain-side. There was a harsh touch of snow in its breath, and, as Grey Terror crept out from her nest in the hollow of an ancient tree, the wind ruffled the fur upon her big grey head and made her shake it as if in angry protest at its roughness. Grey Terror hated the wind, yet necessity had made her make her lair in the most wind-swept point of the mountains. She rarely strayed out during a storm, but the gale had raged for several days with more or less intensity. She was very hungry, and only the dire need of food made her venture out in the teeth of the gale that, snow-laden, was whistling louder than ever around the shattered old tree that contained her home.

With a harsh snarl she shook her head still more angrily, and then, climbing out along the branch, she dropped lightly down upon a patch of moss, and retreated under the shelter of a rock while she considered what she should do, or where she should go. No living creature would be out in such weather, and as she gazed out from her retreat over the vast stretch of mountain-peaks she realised this fact only too strongly. All would have fled before the storm. Only she and a golden eagle, wheeling far over-head, possessed the place. The eagle the sky, and she the crags. She snarled savagely as she saw the great bird swing lower, as if rejoicing in the strong blast of the gale, but she knew only too well that it had caught sight of her, the only living, moving creature upon that wind-swept hill-side. The eagle swung lower and lower, but the big cat withdrew her striped head, and switched her bushy tail, as she watched the narrowing circles of the enemy. For Grey Terror had reason to remember the ways of the eagle. Only last year the great bird had pounced suddenly down upon her gambolling family, and snatched up one, and flown off to its eyrie with it. Since then she had viewed the eagle with the deadliest hatred. She had even meditated springing out upon it and killing it, but unfortunately she could not decide upon how she should get within striking distance of her enemy.

Still snarling angrily, she crouched, savagely watchful under the sheltering rock until the eagle, thinking it had made a mistake, circled upwards, and drifted away before the wind to see if any mountain-hares had been venturesome enough to ignore the raging wind and come out of their forms to feed. The coast well clear, Grey Terror came out from her hiding-place and bounded hastily down the crags until she came to a little stream rippling noisily over its stony bed. The rush of the wind could not reach this secluded spot, and Grey Terror had often found it a happy hunting-ground for field-mice. Not that she cared much for field-mice, but she was dreadfully hungry, and anything was better than nothing. A little skilful stalking and she secured a mouse, which was promptly eaten, for Grey Terror was too hungry to torture the small creature. After catching a second mouse, she prowled on, following the edge of the streamlet, until it ended in a small tarn, fringed around with a growth of reeds, now dry and rustling in the wind; although the tarn was so sheltered that the gale that roared around the mountain-tops seemed hardly more than a whispering breeze, and just rippled the water. It was quite shallow, and Grey Terror's eyes gleamed with sudden surprise, not unmixed with eager anticipation. A pair of mallards were playing on the surface of the tarn. They rushed, helter-skelter, after each other, sending up a vast shower of spray that, catching the

light, turned into falling drops of crystal.

Grey Terror sank slowly, and softly, down behind a bent juniper bush, her thick, bushy tail switching sharply from side to side, as she watched the mallards. Tired of playing, they stopped their quacking, helter-skeltering, and, up-ending, pulled up water-weeds and fed from the bottom of the tarn. Then, quite satisfied, they swam to the farther shore, and scrambling in among the reeds settled themselves down for a nap. Grey Terror stretched herself out, her whole lithe length displaying her beautiful tabby sides, and inch by inch she slowly made her way around the tarn, to where the mallards slept, utterly unsuspecting that an enemy was quietly stalking them. Inch by inch, closer came the great wild cat. Her eyes glowed like greenish-yellow balls in the dull light, for already thin flakes of snow were filtering down through the crags that bordered the ravine. She sprang a good five feet, landing fairly upon the nearest mallard, who with a violent struggle tried to escape. The drake flew off with a loud outcry, while the duck, still struggling wildly for her life, endeavoured to escape into the tarn. Perhaps Grey Terror did not understand the peril, perhaps she under-estimated the strength of the terrified water-fowl, for the mallard flopped along, beating the air heavily with her wings, thus preventing the wild cat from getting an effective and crippling hold. Grey Terror loosed her bite for a second, but secured another almost immediately; but although she appeared to have pinned the mallard down with the whole of her weight upon it, the mallard slipped forward upon the soft damp moss, and in spite of all Grey Terror could do, plopped into the water, carrying Grey Terror with it. The wild cat was too astonished to let go her hold upon the duck, and, as they struggled up to the surface, she dealt a death-dealing bite that crunched through the neck and killed the captive instantly. Then Grey Terror, very wet, and extremely unhappy, loosened her hold upon the dead duck and climbed out of the tarn. She was so wet and miserable that the sight of the dead duck did not cheer her. With one snarling bound she sprang up among the crags and, glowering evilly, forced her way into a hollow. Fortunately it was filled with dead leaves, the relics of last year's trees, and cold and miserable as she was the wild cat crouched within the shelter and tried to lick herself dry and warm.




"The wild cat, with a sudden adroit movement, flashed her paw under a tiny fish and jerked it out."

The snowstorm burst and the cold grew more intense. The tarn slowly froze and the snow was piled higher and higher, until a great snowdrift filled the deep cleft in the mountains. Grey Terror slept for some time, and then waked to find a barrier of white snow between her and freedom. Under its cover little mice had formed runways, and these she caught when any of them ventured too close to where she sat expectantly waiting for them. But a day came when these grew scarce. She had really eaten the whole family. Grey Terror became thinner and thinner, her coat harsh and staring, while her ribs stuck out from her gaunt sides. She was almost too weak to move. She lay stretched upon the floor of the hollow, quite unable to do anything. Release was, however, close at hand. The crags that covered her place of refuge began to drip with wetness. She could dimly hear the ripple of water, and down below the sound of a waterfall. The snow in front of her prison became thin and the light filtered through. At last a thin ray of sunshine crept in and Grey Terror, almost too feeble to move, crawled slowly out upon the fast-disappearing snow. The tarn was showing clear and placid and just at the edge she could see a bundle of feather, that brought forcibly back to memory the struggle with the mallard.

The idea of food proved a powerful inducement, and she made her way, with many falls, and many rests, until at last she stood close beside the mallard's body. Something had dragged it out of the water, and it was half eaten, but the frost and snow had kept it fresh and sweet, and Grey Terror, crouching beside it, devoured her fill of the half-frozen flesh. Then she lay quiet and still, waiting for the food to do its work and restore her lost energy, while overhead the golden eagle circled on widespread wings, gazing down upon the tarn. Lower and lower it circled, but the wild cat rose slowly to her feet and retraced her way to the hollow under the crags. Here she slept, only stealing out to eat some more of the duck; but long before she had regained her strength the bones were picked clean, and she had to subsist as best she could upon mice and such small creatures. One day an unsuspecting moorhen arrived at the tarn, and Grey Terror pounced upon it, and dragging it to her lair under the crags, she ate and slept through the best part of two days.

Thoroughly refreshed and feeling able to continue her journey, she made her way down the edge of the streamlet, until it merged into a river that flowed over wide stretches of pebbly shallows, formed deep pools basking in the sunshine, or brawled loudly over rapids. There was a twang of early spring in the air, and the sun shone brightly and Grey Terror would have been sleeping, curled up in some mossy hollow, only food was scarce and she had found nothing worth eating since she had killed and devoured the moorhen. Away on the lake, some black-headed gulls shrieked and screamed, and black-backed gulls added their clamour to the rest, as they fished.

Grey Terror made her way, stepping cautiously to avoid the wet. She had too vivid a memory of the ducking she had endured when killing the mallard to risk anything to do with water. But she was an ardent fisher, and now she stepped delicately along a narrow, sandy spit, and peered into the water that rippled by. Tiny minnows, rejoicing in the sunshine, swam lazily over the stones, and the wild cat, with a sudden, adroit movement, flashed her paw under a tiny fish and jerked it out on to the sand. The minnows were plentiful and unsuspecting, and Grey Terror fished until she was satisfied, and then, walking to a sunny bank, she sprawled upon a pile of dried driftwood, the aftermath of a flood, and lazily stretched herself out in well-fed comfort. Life once more looked rosy again. The only thing that disturbed her was the golden eagle that always seemed to be circling in the blue sky overhead.

Spring came, and the mating call of nature waked the whole country-side into life. The migrating birds came sweeping down on the wings of the night, tired, but happy to have reached the end of their journey, and with the trekking back to the mountain-tops of the mountain dwellers came the call to Grey Terror to return as well. Always had her litter of kittens been born in some nest made in a spot so bleak that no human being ever suspected her presence. But this time she did not return to the old tree, for when she arrived at the place where it had stood, she found that a winter gale had laid it prostrate with the rocks, and nothing remained but the hollow shell of the home she had occupied for several years.

Food was plentiful, and easily procured, but the question of a nest was not so quickly solved. Grey Terror sought long and anxiously. She was too distrustful to venture anywhere near a fox's earth; besides, its smell offended her sense of cleanliness.

At last, a tall crag that towered hundreds of feet above her, a grey sentinel to all the surrounding country, attracted her attention. Masses of ferns, and a mass of holly bushes at the foot, promised an ideal hiding-place. Looking cautiously around to see that her mate was not anywhere to be seen—she distrusted him too much to allow him to know where she was making her nest—she crawled under the holly bushes, and found a deep burrow. Perhaps it belonged to a rabbit, but, if so, the owner never returned to claim possession, and here Grey Terror's four little kittens were born—tiny, helpless, blind little creatures, resembling closely the kittens of a domestic cat. Here they dwelt and slept serenely, although the wough of a passing fox was often heard, and overhead the golden eagle screamed harshly, as it hunted among the crags and rocks, seeking food for a family of young eaglets. By some strange chance Grey Terror had made her nest under the crag on the summit of which the eagle had built its eyrie, but she did not know of this until her kittens were several days old.

It was just sundown, and the setting sun was bathing the mountain-side in a glory of rose and gold. Grey Terror had just come out and was looking from under the holly screen, when far below she saw a shepherd busy with something. Like all her kind, she was curious, and seized the chance to examine the thing that had aroused her curiosity. The twilight was just settling over the land when she found it, a queer-shaped thing of iron—a grinning, gaping mouth, almost concealed in the leaves and sand that covered a little runway between two peaked rocks. She had often hunted rabbits along the same narrow path. She inspected it from all angles, but could not make out its use, but her natural cunning prevented her examining it at closer quarters. Quite satisfied that it was some human foolishness, she bounded off up the hill-side, seeking a place much beloved by rabbits. But stalking bunnies proved a most disappointing game, and when morning dawned she found that she had nothing to take home to her kittens. In vain she waited, in vain she crawled, belly to ground, using all the wiles of her nature; not a rabbit fell a victim to her tooth and claw.

Much disgusted and very hungry, worried with the knowledge that her kittens were waiting, and were also extremely hungry, she watched the sun come up over the eastern mountains. It was a clear bright day, with a gentle westerly breeze blowing freshly from the distant sea. Suddenly two half-grown rabbits, who ought to have been in bed, came stealing out from the burrows under the roots of an ancient hawthorn, and commenced to nibble at the grass hungrily. Grey Terror stalked them anxiously, seeking to get between them and their hole. Very slowly she crept from cover to cover. Concealed by many little clumps of bracken and foxgloves, she had almost succeeded in obtaining her objective, when looking up she saw the golden eagle circling above. Grey Terror was furious. She was certain the eagle intended to rob her of her prey. She bounded, with a sudden rush, right up to the root of the hawthorn, and so startled the rabbits that they darted off down the hill straight for the shepherd's carefully laid trap.

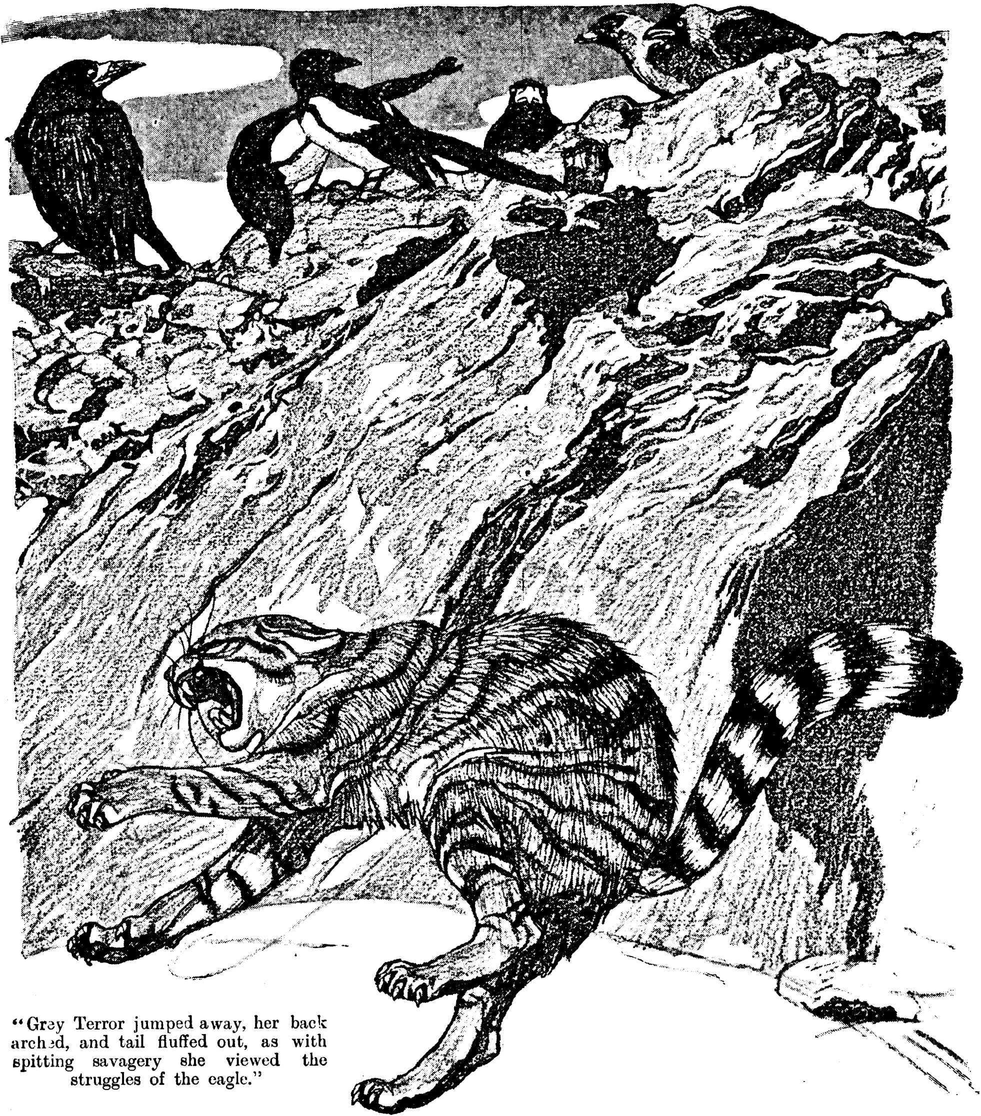
Grey Terror paused. Should she risk the soaring golden eagle or not. So often she had just escaped by a fluke from the eagle's set talons, and she had a great respect for the huge bird. But her little ones were hungry, and, after all, the eagle might be satisfied with a rabbit, and there were two scampering away in a great fright down the hill. Grey Terror followed cautiously, and the rabbits, not finding the wild cat close upon their heels, and never suspecting that she was hiding behind a tall clump of thistles, sat up on their hind legs and surveyed the surrounding country. Quite reassured that nothing dangerous lurked in any direction, they commenced eating some grass. There was a sudden whir of wings, a swishing beat of feathers, and the eagle swooped straight for the rabbits. The two scattered in opposite directions, seeking cover, one making for the little runway between the peaked rocks. The eagle rose for a few feet and struck again, and this happened just when the fleeing rabbit had almost gained the place where the trap was set. In fact, it stopped in a cowering fright within a few inches of the snare. The eagle struck downwards, both talons set for a catch. Then the incredible happened. The rabbit bounded, while quite unaware of its presence, right over the trap, and the striking eagle just a minute too late realised its danger, but could not rise, for the trap had been sprung. The captured bird screamed harshly and flew upwards, but the weight of the trap kept it from soaring more than a short distance.

Meanwhile, Grey Terror had caught the other rabbit, and was carrying it back to her

"This time the eagle rose it made another sudden lurching swoop in the direction of the wild cat and missed her by inches only."

kittens, when the continued harsh screaming of the captured bird attracted her attention. For a time she was too wary to approach the prisoner, and even then she remained at a safe distance and cautiously gazed at the great bird, who pecked furiously at the trap in a vain endeavour to release itself.

Having satisfied her curiosity, Grey Terror picked up the rabbit and trotted off to her kittens. Throughout the day she heard the harsh scream of the tortured eagle from different parts of the slope, but it was quite sunset before Grey Terror once more emerged from her nest. By this time the golden eagle had contrived, by short flights, to reach the other side of the narrow vale. Every now and then it dashed downwards, as if to knock off the encumbrance that dangled from its foot. The sound of the metal clanging against the stones was plainly audible where the wild cat stood. Then it seemed to her that all the wild-folk of the mountains had gathered around to view the struggle. A fox peered out from between some rocks. Magpies, rooks, and jackdaws were collecting on the edges of



"Grey Terror jumped away, her back arched, and tail fluffed out, as with spitting savagery she viewed the struggles of the eagle."

cliffs and crags. It appeared as if they rejoiced at the discomfiture of the King of Birds.

Grey Terror crawled closer and closer, until only about thirty yards separated her from the crag on which the eagle was sitting, tearing furiously with its pointed beak at the iron that bit deeply into its leg. Grey Terror could see the blood that had dried, and yet was still red under the eagle's fierce attacks upon the trap. The fiery, unquenched savagery of the bird showed itself in the gaze of its eyes. The prowling wild cat caught its gaze, and with a defiant scream the eagle rose heavily, only to come down again within a few yards of the wild cat. All sense of danger had left Grey Terror. The enemy, that had filled her with terrified alarm, had been caught by a trap set by a shepherd. She came a little closer. This time the eagle rose it made another sudden lurching swoop in the direction of the wild cat and missed her by inches only, for Grey Terror jumped away, her back arched, and tail fluffed out, as with spitting savagery she viewed the struggles of the eagle.

Grey Terror watched the eagle's movements, with much the same interest as she would have viewed the attempts of a captured mouse to escape from her claws. The rest of the wild folk who looked on at the tortured bird's struggles, kept at a safe distance. Grey Terror alone came close enough to look into the glaring eyes, and see the furious bristling of the feathers of the neck, as the enraged bird rose abruptly, and

endeavoured to make another swoop upon, the wild cat. The twilight was gathering slowly upon the mountain-peaks, but lingeringly with the deliberation of the north it settled down, a faint glow still remaining where the sun had set. The rooks, magpies and jackdaws flew shrieking off to bed, promising themselves a fine spectacle in the morning. Three weasels and a stoat came hurrying out from their lairs, waiting with the fox to see what would happen. All sensed the combat that must eventually take place between the cat and the golden eagle. The latter sat sullenly upon a peak, while the wild cat circled around, her eyes fiery balls of green flame, her tail switching with sharp jerks from side to side. There was the relentlessness of a tiger in her movements. But in spite of her circling, the eagle, hampered although it was by the heavy trap, moved around and around, keeping its eyes upon the cat. Whenever Grey Terror paused in her circling, and raised herself ready for a bound, it was only to see the eagle's glaring eyes and still more formidable beak facing in her direction.

The beak was what Grey Terror dreaded. Some instinct warned her that if the eagle once secured a grip with either its sound talons or its great crooked beak, there would be little chance of her surviving the conflict. The twilight deepened, and this helped the wild cat, although the eagle, as if realising the dangers of the night and determined to end the battle, rose suddenly on unsteady wings and dashed straight for the cat. This time Grey Terror could hardly have escaped, except that she was surprisingly agile, and, twisting hurriedly upon her own axis, just kept clear of the eagle's talons. But it was a close shave, and the unwieldy alighting of the great eagle, hampered by the trap, gave Grey Terror her opportunity. Like a flash she had sprung on to the golden eagle, and buried her fangs deeply in the bristling feathers and flesh at the back of the neck. With a terrible scream the bird rose in the air, Grey Terror clinging grimly to her hold, with claws digging deeply into the eagle. In vain the tortured bird tried to displace the creature that clung to it with such deadly tenacity. It swooped, and rose again and again, but every second the power to use its big wings grew less and less. Then cowering down upon a flat rock it fought to dislodge the cat, fought fiercely to come to grips with her. But it was useless. Grey Terror knew only too well, that once she loosed her hold the eagle would have her in its power, and although she might not be able to carry her off, the two of them would probably die together. So Grey Terror held on and waited. Waited for the starlit darkness of the night, and the weakness that must overtake her victim. So there she clung as inevitable as death.

The light gradually died out of the sky, and Grey Terror's fangs took a deeper hold, and the eagle's struggles grew less and less. Now a few drops of blood dyed the feathers at the side of the neck, and just at midnight the eagle lurched sideways, and although its limbs moved spasmodically for a few minutes, the battle was won. The two lay so still upon the level surface of the rock that the fox came eagerly out from the cover from which he had watched, and, licking his jaws, thought of the easy meal he had gained, while the weasels and stoats chittered crossly, as they followed closely behind him. But no sooner had the fox reached the rock, than the baneful glare of Grey Terror's eyes startled him into sudden flight. He had no wish even to contest the win with a wild cat.

Grey Terror relaxed her hold upon the dead eagle, and, crouching beside it, she stretched her weary limbs one by one; then she ate her fill of the still warm flesh. After cleaning herself delicately, she walked sedately off to where her kittens waited for her return. The shepherd hunted in vain for his trap the next day, when he visited the place where he had set it. He found it later, but the few eagle's feathers that lay scattered around were not sufficient to tell him of the tragedy of the wild that had taken place among the crags. But Grey Terror, nestling down among her kittens, rejoiced exceedingly, for in slaying the eagle she had removed a continual menace, and the slayer of her last year's kitten. No longer need she watch the skies above her for fear the eagle might be circling overhead . . . no longer need she caution her kittens not to venture too far out in the sunlight . . . or to gambol among the crags when the eagle soared above them. So she rested and was content.

"'What was Mr. de Laris doing while you were fighting all those men?' she asked."

# THE MAN WITH THE WASH-LEATHER GLOVES

## By EDMUND SNELL

### ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON

THE new fourth assistant on Gaylor's estate was queer.

He had turned up at Tukabara with a weather-worn green canvas cabin-trunk, a wooden zinc-lined chest and an outfit that was both ample and correct. The advice from London which had preceded him gave Gaylor the impression that he had not been East before, but that, in the opinion of the directors, he was a man eminently suitable for the job. Arundill—the first assistant—had taken the new-comer round, shown him the general lay-out of the plantation, explained at great length the various duties he was expected to perform and lent him a Malay vocabulary. Jim Masters had listened patiently and without comment, pocketed the book and smiled a queer sort of smile that might have meant anything.

"So you want me to stew this up?" he suggested.

Arundill frowned.

"Of course. Malay's the *lingua franca* of this part of the world—and you won't get very far without it."

"No," murmured Masters absently; "I suppose not."

Arundill had escorted him to the bungalow he was to share with the third assistant—then on leave—introduced him to the cook-boy and returned presently to his own quarters to await the stream of idiotic

questions he fully expected Masters to fire at him daily until he found his feet.

In this respect he was disappointed.

The fourth assistant just dropped into the job as if he had been doing nothing else all his life, and a month's careful study of Jim Masters left Arundill where he had started.

A sweltering June morning found the first assistant sitting on the edge of a long cane chair, his *topee* between his knees, waiting for Gaylor and his daughter to finish their breakfast.

Prudence Gaylor was twenty-three. She was short and slight, with an abundance of bobbed brown hair that never seemed to require the least attention, and dark, fearless eyes. In an odd sort of way she was pretty, especially when in an excited moment her cheeks were flushed and parted lips showed the gleaming white of her small, regular teeth.

Keith Arundill liked her immensely. In his clumsy, material way he summed up her points as he would those of a horse or a good gun—and wanted her because of them.

She was the best-looking girl on the island, she could ride like a man, play tennis with the best of them, shoot, swim, and handle a billiard-cue as well as the manager himself. Arundill had been on the point of proposing to her a score of times, but found matrimony a difficult subject to lead up to. He had judged it would not be too easy to persuade Prudence that she wanted a man to look after her when she was so confident of being able to look after herself.

Gaylor deposited his table-napkin on the cloth and swung round in his chair.

"How's Masters shaping ?" he demanded.

The first assistant pursed up his lips.

"Pretty well for a new-comer—very well, in fact."

"That's good. Can he handle the men all right ?"

Arundill nodded.

"To tell you the honest truth, I haven't yet succeeded in fathoming him. He's rather an extraordinary bird. I've a dim sort of suspicion he's been out this way before."

"Why don't you ask him ?"

"I have. I tackled him about a week after he arrived, and he replied, 'Oh, yes, thousands of times, old dear!'—and burst out laughing."

"Which seemed to imply he hadn't."

"Exactly."

Prudence hooked a cigarette out of the tin and lit it.

"Then what makes you think he has ?" she asked.

Arundill shrugged his broad shoulders.

"It's not quite as easy to explain as it looks. Apart from the extraordinary grip he appears to have over his job, there's something about his walk and the general atmosphere that surrounds him when he's in the coolie-lines that you don't find with the average fresh man. I've never managed to come up with him when he's giving orders, but he does give 'em, and, what's more, he gets them carried out. When he rolled up I lent him a book on Malay, but I know for a fact he hasn't bothered to open it."

The manager grunted.

"Some mystery about him—eh ?"

"Oh!" chimed in Prudence, "I like a mystery. What's he like, Mr. Arundill ?"

The first assistant shot a glance in her direction.

"Tall and thin."

"Good-looking ?"

Arundill rubbed his chin.

"Not bad. Fair-haired, clean-shaven and all that sort of thing."

"About how old ?"

"Don't know. Thirty or so, I should guess."

"Twenty-eight," put in the manager. "Would you call him reticent, Arundill ?"

"Masters is one of those chaps," replied the other, "that say a deuce of a lot without telling you anything."

Prudence's eyes sparkled.

"You leave him to me," she cried. "I'll worm the secret of his dreadful past out of him."

"You'll have your work cut out," said Arundill.

"What'll you bet me ?"

Her father winked at his first assistant.

"Don't waste your money, Arundill. When Prudence is in form she'll worm anything from anybody!"

"Which reminds me," laughed the girl, "that I'm in immediate need of two hundred dollars to send to John Little's."

"Oh ?—What for ?"

"Gloves and things."

Gaylor spread out his hands and his forehead wrinkled pathetically.

"There you are! What did I tell you!"

"Talking of gloves," broke in Arundill, "brings me back to our original subject. Masters takes a clean pair of wash-leather gloves—lemon-coloured things, you know—out with him every day."

Prudence dropped her cigarette over the rail into the garden.

"Gloves! What on earth for?"

"Heaven only knows. He carries them in a side-pocket and I've never seen him use them.—Weird, isn't it?"

"Most," agreed the planter.

He rose presently and went into the office. Arundill followed suit. Prudence, left to her own devices, lit another cigarette and curled up in the cushioned depths of her own particular chair.

Oei-Chan crept noiselessly in from the back of the bungalow to clear the things, and the girl watched him through half-closed lids.

Oei-Chan was old and wrinkled and had served Gaylor for more years than the planter cared to remember.

Prudence's first question showed the trend of her thoughts.

"Oei-Chan, you have seen the new *Tuan*?"

The servant blinked.

"Yah, *mem-besar*, I have seen him."

She blew out a wreath of faint blue smoke and the hand that held the cigarette drooped over the side of the chair.

"What do the coolies say of him?"

Oei-Chan paused midway between the verandah and the living-room. His queer, twisted expression suggested that he was reflecting.

"They say that his eye observes the idle coolie—even when he is not there; that his arm is strong and that he is just."

The servant waited a few seconds more, bowed his head and went out with the tray.

Prudence allowed her gaze to travel beyond the verandah rail to the wild, exotic garden, where an elderly coolie toiled in the sunshine. Thirty yards from the house the rubber began—avenues of shady trees planted by the white man over a vast area where once the jungle had run wild. Somewhere close at hand a native carpenter was plying a saw and a Chinese washerman sang mournfully and discordantly as he toiled.

A tall figure in white duck emerged suddenly from the trees and walked briskly towards the house. Prudence watched him with interest.

He was tall—six feet or a little over—his broad-brimmed *topee* was cocked over one eye and a shiny malacca cane was tucked under one arm. He reached the foot of the wooden stairs and a brown, clean-shaven, good-humoured face looked up at her.

"Morning, Miss Gaylor! Is the chief about?"

Prudence bestowed upon the new-comer her pleasantest smile.

"I believe he is. Do you want to see him?"

"I rather fancy he wants to see me."

"In that case, Mr. Masters, you'd better come in and wait. He's busy with Mr. Arundill at the moment."

Masters came up the steps, placed his sun-helmet and cane on the table Oei-Chan had just cleared, and dropped into the nearest chair.

"You can smoke if you want to," said the girl. "How did you know I was Miss Gaylor?"

The fourth assistant was polishing the bowl of his pipe on the palm of his hand. He glanced up as she spoke.

"How did you know I was Mr. Masters?" he retorted pleasantly.

Prudence flushed.

"I didn't; I just guessed."

"Same here!" laughed Masters, and felt for his pouch.

The girl was laughing too. The fourth assistant's air of persistent good humour was positively infectious.

He filled his pipe in silence and, as his hand sought the matches, she earnestly hoped he would pull those wash-leather gloves from his pocket with them. No such eventuality, however, occurring, she was forced to rack her brain for some sentence with which to commence her campaign in search of knowledge.

"You're sharing Mr. Mason's bungalow, aren't you?"

"For the present—yes."

"How d'you like the life?"

"Not too bad. To be perfectly frank with you, I like it tremendously. It's such a complete change from life at home. Within certain limits a fellow can do his job in his own way and without constant interference."

"It isn't everybody," put in Prudence, "who can be trusted to work without supervision. Ignorance of the language must be an awful drawback at first. Don't you find it so?"

Masters gazed ceilingwards, following a smoke-ring on its upward flight.

"It's awfully nice of you to take such an interest in my difficulties, Miss Gaylor, and I should ask nothing better than to sit here jawing to you about myself. Unfortunately I'm only the fourth assistant with a pack of

coolies idling away their time while I'm over on this side of the estate. I wonder if you'd mind ringing for somebody to see if your father can interview me now?"

She bit her lip.

"Mr. Arundill thinks you've been out East before," she declared desperately. "He thinks you know a lot too much for a new hand."

Masters removed his pipe from his lips and screwed up his eyes.

"Does he really, though! Now that's extraordinarily nice of Mr. Arundill!"

At that moment the office door opened and Gaylor came out.

"Hullo, Masters! I've just had a cable from England. Mason won't be coming out again."

"I see," said the fourth assistant.

"I'm given the option of taking an experienced man from one of our other estates—or promoting *you*."

The manager's keen eyes surveyed the younger man shrewdly.

"Experience counts for a lot in a question like this," he continued presently.

Prudence had risen from her chair and was leaning against the verandah-rail, watching Masters. This latest addition to the Tukabara staff stood very erect, his firm chin tilted upwards, his gaze riveted on the farther wall. He was evidently turning something over in his mind and the girl was curious to know what his reply would be. An opportunity of advancement in so short a time rarely presented itself and she could scarcely imagine a man of Masters' calibre turning it down. Without putting it into so many words, Gaylor had said in effect—"Well, Masters, we all know you've seen a rubber plantation before. Put your cards on the table and the job's yours."

"I quite see your point," admitted the assistant at last, "and of course, if you decided to put your money on the other fellow, I should be the last to grumble." His expression changed swiftly and he looked the manager straight in the eyes. "I tell you what, Mr. Gaylor; let me have a cut at it. Give me Mason's billet for a couple of months without pay. I won't let you down."

Arundill and the manager exchanged glances.

"Right you are," said Gaylor. "I'll take you on those terms. You're third now and I'm cabling home to that effect."

"Thanks," replied Masters without emotion. "If you'll excuse me, I'll get back."

He saluted, picked up his stick and went briskly down the garden towards the trees.

Arundill looked at Prudence.

"How did you get on?"

"Rotten," she admitted frankly.

Gaylor raised his brows.

"You don't mean to tell me——!"

"I do," said the girl. "I told him what we all thought—and he thanked me for the compliment!"

A shadow fell across the floor and de Laris—the second assistant—appeared on the threshold. He was short and lithe, dark-skinned like a Southern European, with a hooked nose and an exaggerated sense of his own importance.

"I say," he demanded wrathfully, "who gave our new fourth authority to offer me advice?"

"Third," corrected Gaylor quietly. "Mason's resigned."

"Well, third then. He passed me as I was riding up. I called him back and told him to take a message to one of my *mandors*. He promptly declined; said he wasn't going that way, or something. Then, without turning a hair, he coolly advised me to keep a close eye on Ho-Kwei—or I should have trouble!"

Gaylor was lighting his pipe.

"Offended your sense of dignity, eh, de Laris?"

The other crimsoned.

"Well, sir, it was pretty cool, don't you think? Besides, Ho-Kwei is the best *mandor* I've got."

"You didn't say anything, I suppose," interposed Arundill, "that was calculated to put Masters' back up?"

"If a fellow in my position can't order a junior about, then all I can say is——"

The manager flicked a match into space and prodded the freshly ignited tobacco with a forefinger.

"It so happens that you're not here to order Masters about—and I'm not disposed to take any interest in your private quarrels.—Did he explain his reasons for mistrusting Ho-Kwei?"

De Laris shook his head.

"I didn't stop to inquire. Considering the short time he's been here the whole thing was positively ludicrous."

"Masters was walking," said the manager. "You could catch him up pretty easily on your pony. Just ask him again. If he says Ho-Kwei wants watching, he's probably right."

De Laris looked from Gaylor to Arundill,

turned abruptly on his heel and went out.

He did not bother, however, to overtake Masters, but turned his pony's head deliberately in the direction of his own house.

* * * * *

Jim Masters was over at his bungalow on the far side of the plantation when the trouble with Ho-Kwei came.

It was somewhere about ten at night that something made him throw aside the book he had been reading and walk across to the rail. The night was clear and still and big stars blinked at him from a violet dome. Down in the valley, where long wooden buildings clustered together, his own coolies slumbered peacefully. Away over to the eastward, beyond the first strip of jungle, the desultory, deep-toned throbbing of native gongs marked the concluding hours of a festival.

In spite of the tranquillity of the area for which he was personally responsible, he was aware of a certain sense of uneasiness.

Presently there floated to his ears from the distance a confused mingling of voices, and, reflected in the heavens above the ridge of low hills that separated de Laris's section from his own, he noticed a queer patch of light.

He knocked out his pipe on a doorpost, filled it again, and went into his room for the clothes he had discarded earlier in the evening. When he reached the verandah again the light was brighter and the din of voices still continued.

He stuck a cane under his arm and went out.

Between his house and the coolie-lines he met a Pathan watchman carrying a hurricane-lamp.

He stopped the man and directed his attention to the light in the sky. The watchman nodded.

"The coolies of *Tuan* de Laris," he said.

He was responsible for order in Masters' lines—and the lack of it in other parts of the estate did not immediately concern him.

"There is trouble there," the assistant told him; "we will go over."

He took the shortest route, the watchman at his heels, and arrived at the top of the ridge in something under twenty minutes. Shading his eyes, he saw the shadowy outline of de Laris's bungalow to his right, and immediately below him, deep down in a vast hollow, a collection of blazing buildings amid which scores of half-clad figures—like absurd marionettes—ran and gesticulated and struggled.

There was a lamp still burning on de Laris's verandah when he went up the steps.

He hammered with his stick on the table and shouted at the top of his voice without obtaining an answer. In sheer desperation he began opening doors, exploring rooms by the aid of the watchman's lamp. Presently he blundered into the owner's bedroom and discovered de Laris asleep.

He tore aside the mosquito-curtains and shook the slumberer roughly.

De Laris rolled over on to his back and blinked stupidly at the light.

"Hullo!" he demanded. "What's the matter?"

"Matter!" yelled Masters in his ear. "Your coolies are up and setting fire to everything."

"That's all right!" said de Laris somewhat inarticulately—and turned on to his side again with his back to the third assistant.

Masters stared hard at him for some seconds, cast an eye round the room, and setting down the lamp, emptied the contents of the water-jug over his senior's head and shoulders.

De Laris sat up.

"Hell!—Who did that?"

"I did," retorted the other from the gloom. "You were too confoundedly drunk to rouse decently. There's a row in your coolie-lines, don't you understand—and it's up to you to get into some clothes and stop it. I'm off down there now."

He went out without waiting for the other to reply, and picking up the watchman on his way, went downhill at the double.

A hundred yards brought them to the first sign of serious fighting—a coolie with a battered head lying right across the path. Farther on he encountered a Chinaman carrying another on his back. A breeze had sprung up now and from the inferno which they were fast approaching gusts of smoke kept sweeping over them.

At sight of the white man a cry went up and a proportion of the rioters scuttled for cover.

Masters felt in a pocket and found his gloves. He pulled them on, buttoned them at the wrist, and gripping his malacca, strode towards where the crowd seemed thickest.

A big Oriental in a tattered loin-cloth swayed to meet him. Masters saw that he was half drunk with *samsu*, that an insolent smile played on his lips and that he carried an axe.

The Englishman slackened his pace,

prodded the man in the stomach with his cane and, as the head jerked suddenly into range, dealt it a blow with his gloved fist that sent its owner staggering heavily against the wall of a blazing hut.

Taking immediate advantage of the effect of this first summary action upon the onlookers, he discarded his malacca, and, as if oblivious to the fact that they carried bill-hooks and hoes, fell upon them with such startling violence and accuracy that all further notions concerning rebellion were hammered out of them. Bunches of them fled, gibbering, for the forest or dived for the shelter of buildings that were still intact; a few, who had possibly been led away by others, waited sullenly in the background, anxious only to accept what punishment was in store for them, and consider the matter forgotten.

The third assistant straightened his jacket, picked up his stick and cast a discerning eye over the scene of recent conflict.

"Here!" he called to the watchman. "Collect all the men you can find and put out those fires. If you find Ho-Kwei, bring him to me."

"Prudence . . . wriggled into a sitting position."

He smiled grimly to himself, lit a cigarette and turned to find Gaylor and his daughter riding towards him.

"Hullo, Masters!" shouted the manager. "Where's de Laris?"

The assistant stared all round him.

"Don't know," he responded steadily. "He must be somewhere about; I saw him just now."

He removed his gloves, rolled them into a ball and dropped them into his pocket.

Gaylor swung from the saddle.

"You appear to have the trouble well in hand."

"The bullet that sent it rearing up on its hind legs seared Masters' side."

were fighting all those men?" she asked.

The third assistant grinned.

"As a matter of fact, Miss Gaylor, I was far too busy to notice."

At that moment their eyes met, and in the light of the fires that still burned, Masters saw something that startled him.

Masters nodded.

"I fancy the ringleaders have bolted for the jungle. With your permission, I'll collect all the watchmen and *mandors* available and post them round the lines to catch them as they begin to drift back."

The manager rubbed his chin.

"Stop where you are a bit," he said, "and look after Miss Gaylor. I'll stroll round and see how things are."

He moved off in the direction of the first hut and Prudence walked her mount to where Masters stood.

"What was Mr. de Laris doing while you

He could have sworn that Prudence Gaylor was on the verge of tears.

"They might have killed you," she announced suddenly.

"They didn't get the chance," laughed Masters. "When I was in—where I was last, I mean, people used to say that when Jim Masters put on his gloves the fur was going to fly!"

Prudence found her opportunity.

"Why do you put them on?"

"Oh, I don't know. It's a stupid sort of habit I got into. I found it had a tremendously *moral* effect upon the men I had to

control. They got to know I only did it when I was out to tackle something unclean, and a hit from my gloved hand bit deep—a kind of insult added to injury, I suppose."

"What made you think of it?"

Out of the corner of his eye Masters saw de Laris coming through the trees. He excused himself and went after him.

"De Laris," he said, "slip round the back of those huts, attach yourself to the first bunch of men you see—and look busy. The chief's there already and he thinks you were in that *scrap*."

De Laris, wild-eyed and trembling, hastened to obey, and the third assistant went back to the girl.

"Ho-Kwei started this," she suggested.

"I believe so."

"You were afraid he would?"

Masters looked surprised.

"As a matter of fact—I was."

"Why?"

"One hears and sees things, you know. I might have been mistaken, of course; but, as luck would have it, I was right."

"You're usually right, aren't you?" murmured Prudence. "I wonder if it is only luck!"

"There's no harm in wondering!" retorted Masters pleasantly. "Here's your father coming back to us."

"Masters," called the planter, "Arundill's turned up now and it occurs to me you've done enough for to-night. Take my pony and ride back with Miss Gaylor. And—oh!—don't leave the bungalow until I come."

"Very good, sir. Shall I send over any watchmen I can find?"

"You might as well."

Prudence and Masters took the slope together.

At the top the girl looked back.

"It's a shame to take you away," she said. "Why don't you go back? I shall be all right."

"I've got my marching orders," returned Masters.

"But you'd rather be down there."

"I wouldn't," declared the man.

"Honestly?"

"Honestly!"

She looked up at him and they both laughed.

"You don't look thrilled."

"Perhaps not," he told her; "but I feel highly honoured, all the same."

Masters rode back in the early hours on a borrowed pony. He was dimly aware that the air was chill and that he was head over ears in love with Prudence Gaylor. This latter knowledge had come to him as a shock during the concluding stages of their journey back to Gaylor's house, and he had been trying ever since to persuade himself that he was the victim of a sudden wild infatuation for which the night's events had been mainly responsible.

He awoke at seven to find the conviction still firmly established in his mind and the large form of Arundill framed in his doorway.

"Morning, Masters!—How d'you feel?"

"Fit, thanks."

He slid to the floor and felt for his clothes.

"Jove! I'm late this morning!—Take a pew."

Arundill sat down.

"De Laris is all to pieces," he announced, "and the chief wants you to take over his lines and get them into shape again. Ho-Kwei and a dozen others are still missing. They may drift back—and they may not. Anyhow, Ho-Kwei has shown up suddenly as a pretty desperate character and he may try to cause more trouble."

Masters crossed over to the wash-stand.

"Aren't you putting rather a lot of responsibility on my shoulders?"

Arundill grinned.

"From what I can gather they're quite capable of taking it!—Well, I must be off. I'll expect to see you on the other side in an hour's time."

Masters devoured a hasty breakfast and was in the second assistant's lines in forty minutes from Arundill's departure.

He found de Laris with his shoulders hunched up, walking dejectedly about amid a heap of blackened ruins.

He glanced up malevolently as his junior approached.

"Hullo, Masters! Still climbing!"

The other reined in his pony and sat erect in the saddle, his head inclined to one side.

"I suppose you're trying to insinuate that I'm scheming to get your job?" he retorted without emotion.

De Laris's eyes blazed.

"Scheming!" he echoed bitterly. "I like that! You know you've got it—and why—and how——! Who d'you suppose told Gaylor I was binged last night if it wasn't you? Who sent a runner across to the chief's place so that he and Miss Gaylor should arrive in time to see a

spectacular bit of tomfoolery? Worked it very nicely, didn't you?"

Masters slipped a hand into a pocket and drew out a clean pair of wash-leather gloves.

"Go on, de Laris," he said.

"Miss Gaylor evidently knew all about your promotion. She was down in these lines half an hour back hoping, I imagine, to congratulate you. Finding only myself in charge, she rode on."

A sudden fear assailed Masters.

"She didn't leave the estate?"

"She went off into those trees," declared de Laris, pointing to the forest. "I warned her not to go, but she told me to mind my own business—or words to that effect. She said she could look after herself—and I suppose she knows."

"De Laris," declared Masters sternly, "you're a bigger idiot than I thought. You can believe what you choose, but I went out of my way to defend you last night—and I'm deuced sorry I did. Arundill is due here in about ten minutes; stop and tell him I've followed Miss Gaylor."

He rode at headlong speed for the jungle.

The path through the trees ran parallel to the estate wire for a quarter of a mile, then branched abruptly northward. Masters pressed forward, looking anxiously from side to side. Here and there where the earth was soft he could see that a rider had been that way before him. He came presently to a point where two tracks met—the road she would normally follow to get back to her father's house, and another, less clearly marked, which wound uphill, following the bed of an old water-course.

He halted here to reflect.

He had realised all along that there was just the possibility the girl had passed through the trees unnoticed, in which case she was safely back on the verandah having breakfast, and all his anxiety on her behalf had been wasted. On the other hand, it was quite on the cards that Ho-Kwei, fully aware of the penalty he would pay if he were caught, had waylaid Miss Gaylor, hoping to compel the manager to come to terms.

He had just made up his mind to take the broader track, and before proceeding further make certain that she was still missing, when he thought he detected a movement in the trees to his left.

He dismounted swiftly.

As he left the path a figure slipped from behind a trunk and ran wildly through the undergrowth. Masters followed. He saw the fellow clearly now—a gaunt Chinaman in a patched loin-cloth, who stumbled as he ran. A hundred yards and he had overtaken him.

The creature fell on his face, grovelling abjectly.

Masters prodded him delicately with the toe of his shoe.

"Where is the white lady?" he demanded in the dialect employed by the coolies themselves.

"I know nothing," babbled the man. "I have not seen her."

The assistant pulled on his gloves and drew the cane from under his arm.

"You are lying," he suggested grimly. "You saw her ride through the forest. —Which road did she take?"

The Chinaman's frightened eyes were riveted on Masters' malacca.

"There was a rope across the path," he admitted at length, "and the lady fell——"

Masters swallowed a lump that had risen in his throat.

"I understand," he said coldly. "You will lead me to where the white lady is—and Ho-Kwei."

"He will kill me," moaned the coolie.

"On the other hand," declared Masters reassuringly, "it is I who will probably kill Ho-Kwei!"

He drove the man before him back to where the pony stood and vaulted back into the saddle.

They took the uphill path, the coolie leading, and half an hour later came suddenly upon a group of men in a narrow defile.

Masters dug his heels into the pony's flanks and rode in among them, raining blows with his stick upon every brown back that came within reach.

He slithered to a standstill before two coolies carrying an improvised stretcher—and the ex-*mandor* Ho-Kwei.

The leader of the revolt awaited him placidly, an evil expression on his broad face and the barrel of a revolver resting on the crook of his left arm.

The bearers dropped the stretcher and fled precipitately, and Prudence, her hands tied behind her, wriggled into a sitting position and turned her head. He saw no fear in her eyes—only joy at his coming and unutterable confidence.

There was no question of parley, of anything but immediate and decisive action. He set his mount deliberately at Ho-Kwei—and the bullet that sent it rearing up on its hind-legs seared Masters' side. They

came down in a heap together and the assistant, kicking clear of the stirrups, limped painfully to where his assailant lay motionless.

It took him minutes to realise that Ho-Kwei was dead.

He found himself cutting the girl's bonds with a knife he never remembered drawing from his pocket. He helped her to her feet and glanced sideways at Ho-Kwei.

On the Chinaman's battered face was the clear imprint of a pony's hoof.

He picked up the man's discarded revolver and smiled grimly at Prudence.

"And that's that!" he said. "The men will come back now."

She contrived to smile back at him, but her face was very white and she trembled visibly. He slipped his arm round her to support her.

"Are you ill?" he inquired anxiously.

She shook her head.

"I was frightened—dreadfully frightened—for you."

"I was frightened for you," he assured her. "When de Laris told me you had gone I could have hit him for letting you."

Their eyes met.

"Prudence!"

"Yes, Jim?"

"What on earth made you do it? You knew about Ho-Kwei."

Her fingers played with the collar of his tunic.

"I don't know. Something dawned on me last night and I couldn't sleep. A mad impulse drove me into the forest. Somehow I wanted to see that light in your eyes again; I wanted to see you fight—for me. Something told me you'd come."

Masters surveyed her gravely.

"It seems to me, young woman," he said, "that it's time you had somebody to look after you!"

* * * * *

Gaylor came up on to Masters' verandah and approached the long chair in which his assistant was reclining.

"How's that hit in your side?" he asked.

Masters laughed.

"Almost well," he replied. "If it wasn't for that fool of a doctor I should be up and doing."

"Ah!" said Gaylor, pulling forward a chair. "Fit enough to answer a few questions, eh?—Where did you manage an estate before?"

"Sumatra—five years ago."

"I thought so. Did you resign—or were you fired?"

"Both," said Masters.

"How d'you mean?"

"I went home against orders."

The manager seemed perplexed.

"I've big things in view for you, Masters, but I want to be sure of my ground first. —You say you went to England without authority. You don't make a habit of this sort of thing, I hope?"

The old familiar smile had crept into the assistant's face.

"I was working for a Dutch syndicate," he said, "and there happened to be a war on at the time!"

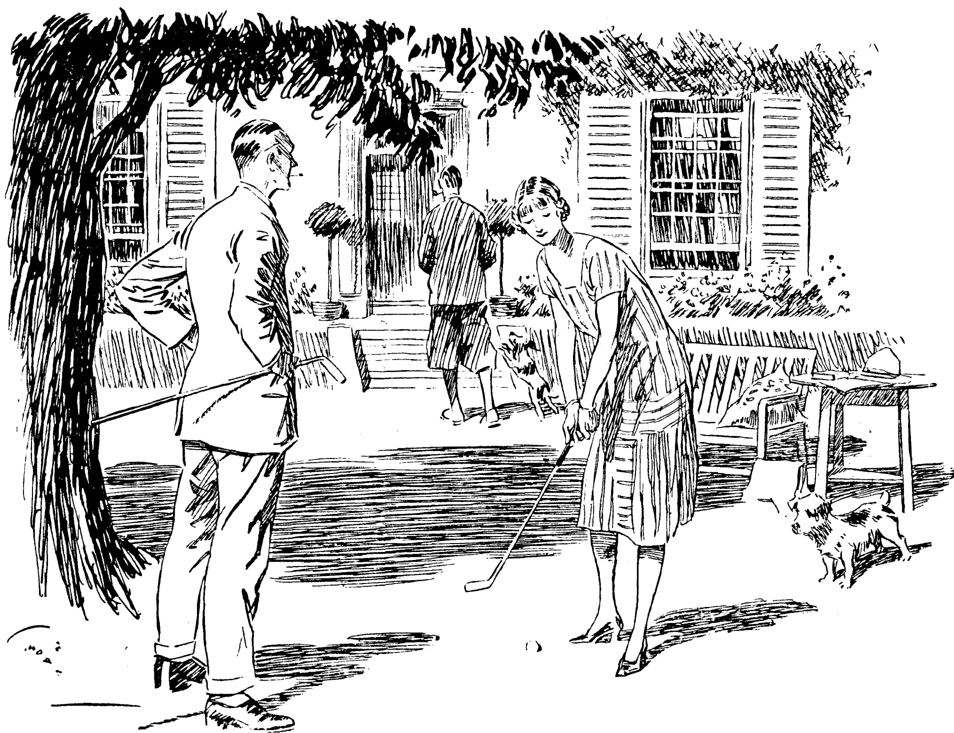
# QUEST.

**In youth I said, "To-morrow, to-morrow I shall find it."**
**And knew not what I sought for, desired not that I found;**
**For Youth is noise and laughter outringing, and behind it**
**The little mind a treadmill, wheeling round and round.**

**And once, it seemed great honour, and praise of men lay in it.**
**And once, it was a woman with beauty in her face.**
**O phantom of fulfilment that will not leave a minute**
**For any man to harvest the fruitage of your grace!**

**But there is a sure Word somewhere that shall be spoken**
**To free me from my service, to throne me like a king;**
**This unrest in my heart, is it not for a token?**
**How long, how long, O Speaker, before this certain thing!**

**A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.**



"Brenda played a perfect shot to the rim of the hole."

# SETTLED OUT OF COURT

## By H. F. FRAMPTON

### ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

"PEOPLE like you are an infernal nuisance on the roads!"

The speaker, whose voice was husky with years of vigorous use, climbed in beside the chauffeur of the touring-car and resumed the wheel. His face was veined and rubicund, and his grey moustache, which was neatly curled *en croc*, seemed still to bristle. He pulled down the peak of his cap over a pair of shaggy eyebrows, cast a final glare at the other motorist and pressed the self-starter.

There had been words on both sides, the villagers having enjoyed the exchange immensely; moreover, both cars had suffered in the collision, and to the necessitous poor other people's expense is no object. But now the contestants were about to part, and for the last time the rural gaze wandered from the dented bonnet of the aluminium racer to the torn rear mudguard of the long green touring-car, and found something soothing in what it saw.

The tourer glided out of the village amid a cloud of silent regrets on the part of everybody except Philip Windermere. On his good-humoured face was a ruffled expression. He had just found out that the racing-car would not proceed under its own power. Twenty yards along the sunny main street, however, a big man, wearing a leather apron, was standing in the doorway of a combined garage and blacksmith's-shop, and in response to Philip's invitation he came forward and made an examination of the damage.

"That'll want a reg'lar overhaul," he said presently. "She'll have to come inside. Will you wait?"

"As a matter of fact," replied Philip,

"I know some people in these parts. I'll come back after tea."

He turned reluctantly away from the racer and began to retrace his steps to the outskirts of the village; and ten minutes later he was treading the gravel of the drive leading to a country house with an Elizabethan front.

The maid who admitted him announced that her master and mistress were out, but Philip told her he would wait. He stripped the leather helmet from his fair head and strolled through the house to the verandah at the back. The lawn, which was marked out for clock-golf, stretched away before him and was terminated by a hedged garden. A pergola framed the opening in the hedge, and in the gap suddenly appeared a girl. She was dressed in a pale-blue afternoon gown, and her brown hair was coiled neatly at each side of her head. Holding a pair of scissors and a few early roses snipped from a bush, she came towards the spot where Philip was swinging a leg on the verandah rail.

He jumped down and gripped the rail with both hands. In all his twenty-two years' experience he had never been mistaken more than once, or, perhaps, twice—or, at any rate, very often—in estimating age at a glance, and he knew that, despite the style in which she had done her hair, she could hardly be more than eighteen—or, perhaps, twenty—years of age, and her eyes, which were gazing in his direction, were grey and the finest he had ever seen.

So breathless did these reflections make him that he could not think what to say.

"Er—what topping flowers! Absolutely!"

The girl seemed a trifle surprised.

"As a matter of fact," went on Philip desperately, "I've just had a spill in a car. I left town after lunch, intending to try out a new racer, but some old boy got in the way. He was wobbling all over the road: gave him heaps of warning, I assure you: hooted at him till the thing started wheezing. But—er—couldn't quite pull up in time."

"Are you hurt?" she asked.

"Er—no; neither of us; it was quite a small smash." The combination of eyes and voice was making it extremely difficult for him to concentrate. "He's going to summons me for furious driving, though."

"Well, you mustn't let the thought of that upset you too much," she returned, pretending to smell the roses, but eyeing him over the tops of the petals. "I know lots of motorists who've been summoned. All you have to do is to tell the magistrate that you weren't doing more than five miles an hour; and then, afterwards, when you tell your friends about it, you can send the speed up to whatever figure you like."

Philip's mouth opened and shut without emitting a sound.

"Mr. Hemmings and Hilda," she continued, "have gone to a conference at the vicarage. I suppose they didn't expect you quite so soon."

"They don't expect me at all," explained Philip. "You see, the car is having an overhaul, and as I was so near I thought that, in the meantime, I'd pop in and see whether Jack—Mr. Hemmings, you know—knew anything about the party I ran into. If they happen to know each other fairly well, we could all talk the matter over in a friendly way, and drop the idea of the summons. The fact is, I rather let myself go when it happened—told him what I thought of his driving, and so on. In fact, I threatened to summons *him*—best form of defence is attack and all that, you know. Result—a little friction."

"So I should imagine; but why you should be nervous of a mere summons——"

"Another endorsement," he told her, wincing at this second reflection on his *sang-froid*, "deprives me of a driving-licence, and if this fierce-faced merchant in the green juggernaut proceeds to extremes——"

"Was the car you hit a green one?"

"Absolutely."

"A touring-car?"

"Quite."

"With a chauffeur as well as an elderly gentleman?"

A look of relief invaded Philip's face. "You know him?" he inquired hopefully.

The girl stepped on to the verandah and walked forward into the house with sinister composure. In the doorway she turned. "I hardly think," she said, "that my uncle will be inclined to stop the summons."

## II.

"We didn't know you were yet back from breaking records in France," Hemmings was saying half an hour later. "When did you arrive?"

"Two days ago. In fact, I've stepped straight into a thriving colony of bad luck."

"From what you tell me, you must have upset Major Harrogate pretty considerably: I don't mean when you crashed into him, but afterwards."

"I admit," said Philip awkwardly, "that

I might have left unsaid one or two things."

"For instance?"

Philip's gaze travelled reflectively along a shelf of books and through the French window of the library to the lawn outside, where Mrs. Hemmings and Brenda Harrogate were playing clock-golf. At sight of the blue gown a bemused expression crept into his sun-burned face.

"Well, I believe I mentioned that the only thing he ought to be permitted to drive was a nail."

Hemmings, who was stretched inelegantly in an arm-chair, suddenly straightened himself and leaned forward to pick up a piece of thread from the carpet. When he raised his face, it was flushed, but grave.

"He'll have you summoned," he pronounced with conviction. "The Major has picked up a lesson or two somewhere and is particularly proud of his ability to drive. I can imagine him getting over the shock of the collision, but not of your frankness afterwards. You'll have to pay all the costs, including damage to the car, and the chances are that your driving-licence will be suspended."

"It's not that I'm worried about just now, nor about the bill for repairing the damage to that green pantechnicon of his. I——"

"As the vehicle which you describe as a pantechnicon," Hemmings interposed slowly, "belongs to me, you must not mind if——"

"Good Heavens!"

"—if I show concern about it, especially as I have only recently acquired it. Still, granting that these trifling matters cause you no pangs, is it permitted to ask what actually does cause you unrest?"

Philip glanced restlessly about him, then rose and faced his sister's husband, whose dapper form was once more stretched at full length in the arm-chair.

"I'm sorry about the car, Jack. Naturally I shall make good the damage. But the fact is—well, I believe I've offended Miss Harrogate as well as her uncle."

"Tea-time," commented Hemmings, "is going to be a very pleasant interlude."

"I shan't be staying for tea," rejoined Philip hastily; "but thanks all the same. As the Major will be back for tea, I thought of dropping in some time afterwards. That will give you an opportunity to pour a little oil on the troubled waters, and the ground will be prepared for a sort of peace-parley. What do you think?"

"You seem to have thought the matter out fairly well, but the proposal is unsound—except for the excellent little touch about leaving before tea. Time alone can do what you require. Nevertheless, as, for some reason which baffles me"—and Hemmings fixed a careful, expressionless gaze on a china Cupid at the top of a bookcase behind Philip—"you desire the establishment of friendly relations with a man who is going to have you summoned, I will do what I can—but not, I think, to-day."

Some one called him and he got up, and Philip followed him through the window on to the lawn. The players had just finished their game and were standing, chatting, inside the ring of numerals embedded in the turf.

"My game, I believe," said Hemmings, and Brenda smiled agreement.

"Come and tell me about the accident, Phil," commanded Hilda.

She led her brother to a garden-seat at the edge of the lawn, and Philip sat down beside her. Briefly he recounted the circumstances responsible for his presence.

"Philip," commented Hilda, as he concluded his recital, "you must leave before tea-time and go home and write the Major a letter of apology."

"As a matter of fact," replied Philip, "I shan't be staying to tea, but thanks all the same. I thought of dropping in afterwards and apologising in person."

"I very much doubt whether Major Harrogate will be inclined to listen to an apology—to-day."

"Unless," Philip pointed out, "the ground is prepared beforehand. Don't you think that, between tea-time and when I return, you could—well, pour a little oil on the troubled waters, so to speak?"

Hilda, who, like her brother, was tall and very fair, regarded his profile with covert thoughtfulness.

"If you are worrying about the summons," she said, "I don't think you need. I can hardly imagine Brenda's uncle proceeding to that extreme when he knows all the circumstances, especially as the car is not his. So the matter is not so urgent as all that, is it?"

Philip reversed the crossing of his legs. "I understand," he said casually, "that the Major leaves to-morrow morning."

"Well, I'll give you his address. He and Brenda will be staying with his sister. He has motored over this afternoon to complete arrangements. If you like, I will tell him that he may expect a letter from you,

but I don't think it would be advisable to raise the subject to-day."

At that moment a maid arrived with a message that necessitated her return to the house. Philip, observing that Brenda and his brother-in-law had now finished their game, moved towards them slowly. A swift mental retrospect recalled to him the fact that Hemmings was expert with the iron.

"May I take on the loser?" he requested.

"You may," replied Hemmings blandly. "But not just now; I have a letter to finish." And he relinquished the putting-iron to Philip.

"Do you mind?" asked Philip.

For answer Brenda rolled her ball to the starting-point and, as Hemmings departed, played a perfect shot to the rim of the hole. Mechanically Philip took his turn, his mind searching for words.

"I'm afraid," he managed to say, "that I've made rather a bad break."

"I've seen worse," Brenda returned cheerfully, watching his ball roll beyond the circumference of the clock.

"I mean to say," he amended doggedly, "that half an hour or so ago I referred to your uncle as a—as though he were a stranger to both of us. I'm sorry for that. I hope—er—hope you won't take any lasting offence, so to speak, and—er—and so on. I'm——"

"Of course I shan't," was the reassuring reply; and, completing the hole, Brenda returned to the second position.

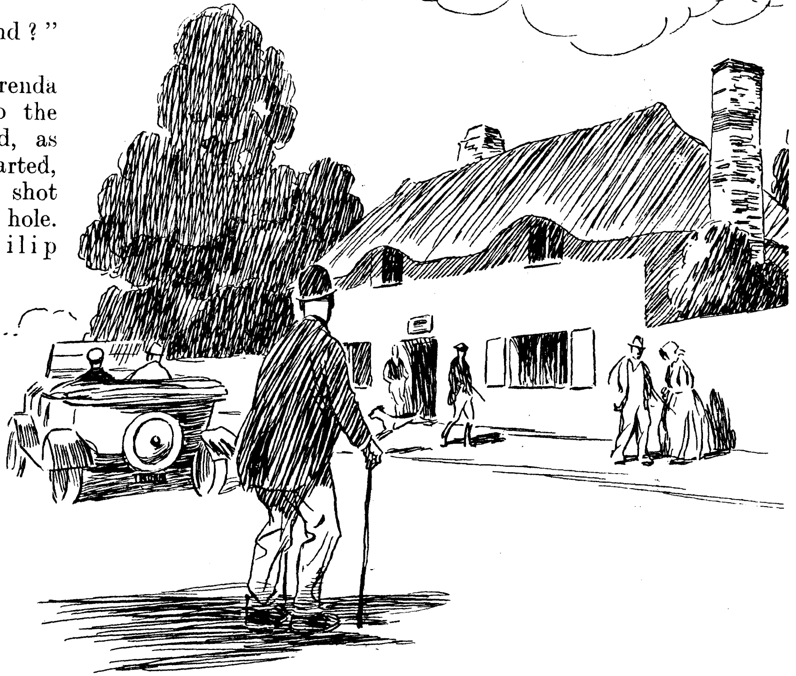
"Thank you," said Philip. His next stroke dispatched the ball outside the clock on the opposite side.

They continued to play for some time without exchanging a remark; but at length:

"Do you play much golf?" asked Brenda, as he missed a particularly easy approach.

"I spend most of my spare time on the track with the car," Philip replied with alacrity. "The fact is, I am down to compete in some trials next week, which is one reason why another summons will be inconvenient."

As the game proceeded, he became more reminiscent. It gradually became the easiest thing in the world to talk to her, and her occasional questions delighted him. He discovered, too, that her eyes were not exactly grey, but a kind of greyey-blue and that her brown hair was shot with gold, and when he recollected the features of her uncle, he had no difficulty in believing that the Major's brother could never have been mistaken for the Major.



"The tourer glided out of the village amid a cloud of silent regrets."

"I thought of dropping in again after tea," he felt emboldened to remark at last, "to apologise to your uncle. I have an idea that he may have taken some slight

offence at—er—at the time. You see, we were rather frank with each other after the cars collided ; in fact, I rather doubt whether he would be inclined to be bothered this evening unless some one, so to speak,

poured a little oil on the troubled waters."

At this point Brenda made the stroke which decided the contest in her favour.

" Are you suggesting," she inquired, colouring faintly, " that—that I should do the pouring ? "

" Well, perhaps—on second thoughts—I'd better do the pouring myself," he hastened to admit. " The worst of it is, I'm no hand at writing letters, and time's so short, isn't it ? "

" I don't suppose," rejoined Brenda reassuringly, " that Uncle Ned has spoken to the police at all. I shouldn't worry over the summons, if I were you."

Philip, who was growing a little weary at the repeated references to the summons, bestowed a pained glance upon her.

" The summons doesn't worry me," he told her, " but it's absolutely essential that your uncle and I should be . . . friendly."

With a sudden breathlessness he waited for the question which his remark invited, but it did not come. Instead :

" If that is absolutely essential," she said meekly, " I suppose you will have to see him to-night. Only," she added thought-

fully, "I should let him have his tea first."

At the friendliness of this utterance Philip experienced a wave of joy. The coming encounter suddenly appeared to him as a matter of trifling moment. As he accompanied Brenda towards the house he became conscious of unsuspected reserves of assurance and resource. That he should have spent a large part of the afternoon in quest of an intermediary now seemed to him to be an incredibly vacuous undertaking.

He slipped away and hurried down to the garage in the village. His car, he was informed, was not yet ready, but under the stimulus of his exuberance he took off his coat and insisted upon helping the mechanic to locate the fault. Half an hour later he regretted the impulse, but recollecting that a Turkish bath could be furnished by an establishment in the neighbouring town, he set off in the racer immediately, garaging the car, upon arrival, at an inn near by.

Evidently it was a slack time in the day at the Turkish bathing establishment, for he had the first chamber to himself. Such was its temperature, however, that ten minutes' occupancy of it caused him to abandon the idea of entering the others, and he was on the point of notifying the fact to one of the attendants when a husky voice, which he had no difficulty in recognising as that of Major Harrogate, became audible from the other side of the curtains in front of the entrance. Precisely what the Major was saying Philip did not wait to hear, but the tones were not amiable ones, and a moment later, feeling less conscious than hitherto of his recently discovered reserves of assurance, Philip retired into the next chamber to decide upon the wisdom, or folly, of risking a premature encounter.

Meanwhile, Major Harrogate, draped in a bath-towel with Oriental decorations, entered the first chamber. Since the early afternoon his moustache had lost a little of its curl, but without diminishing perceptibly the severity of his expression. He was followed by an attendant, who pushed forward a divan and handed him a newspaper that rustled crisply in the heat, and to the dismay of Philip, who, in an endeavour to breathe the cooler air of the first chamber, was now standing just behind the curtains of the doorway leading to the second, he settled down to read.

With the recollection of Brenda's advice against precipitancy alone restraining him from plunging out of the heat of the room in which he was standing, Philip endured the conditions for ten minutes. By the end of that time he found breathing burdensome, and he therefore decided to hurry past the Major, risking recognition, and seek his cubicle. Garbing himself in his towel, as though donning a Roman toga, he pulled the curtains apart, but at that moment the Major rose.

Philip hastily dropped the curtains and looked wildly round. On the opposite side of the apartment a single curtain indicated the entrance to the final chamber. He hesitated; then, perspiration obscuring his vision, he staggered weakly towards it.

When the Major entered the second chamber, he was the only occupant. Presently he became aware that the curtain screening the final chamber was behaving irrationally. It seemed to him that something on the other side was swaying against it. He moved forward to investigate the phenomenon, but as he reached the curtain, it suddenly billowed out to meet him. At the same instant an impact hurled him backwards to the floor. Philip, entangled in his towel and completely exhausted, fell across his prone form and rolled to the feet of an attendant, who, a ludicrous expression of astonishment on his face, had just entered from the first chamber.

The Major sat up at the same time as Philip. Several veins in his face had swollen, and he seemed to be endeavouring to speak.

"I—I'm most frightfully sorry, sir!" Philip gasped. "I couldn't stand the heat."

* * * * *

Tea-things had been set out in the library, and Brenda and her hostess were seated near the window, through which Jack Hemmings could be seen amusing himself aimlessly with a putting-iron.

"I hope," Hilda was saying, "that nothing else has happened to the car."

"I expect Uncle Ned has stopped in the town for his Turkish bath," rejoined Brenda. "He has been ordered them regularly."

"We'll wait, then," decided Hilda; then, casually: "You don't happen to have seen Philip anywhere about? He seems to have slipped away."

"He said he was coming back after tea."

"I'd rather he didn't do that," commented Hilda. "I'm afraid it will make things very awkward if your uncle——"

She paused, and the noise of a car in the drive percolated faintly through to the library. Hemmings, who came through the window-opening a few moments later, was

in time to witness the appearance in the room of Major Harrogate and Philip.

" Sorry I'm late," said the Major in his customary husky tone ; then he introduced Philip. " I believe you all know Windermere. He's just brought me along in a racing-car. Saved several minutes, but put years on me. Your chauffeur, Hemmings, will be along presently with the tourer."

He seemed quite unaware of having created a mild sensation.

" I met Windermere," he resumed, unconsciously anticipating a swift recovery by Hilda, " early this afternoon, and then, later on, in a Turkish bath. Strange place to meet again."

He accepted a cup of tea from Hilda, while Philip found himself a seat near the window.

" We heard about the first meeting," said Hemmings. " How did you get on about the damage ? "

" It was less serious than I thought at first," answered Major Harrogate ; " splintered one of the back mudguards. It was being repaired while I went for treatment. In my opinion there is no adequate treatment for reducing weight. I've tried 'em."

He proceeded to expound some unorthodox views on the subject, while—

" Please explain," whispered a sweet voice in Philip's immediate neighbourhood.

Philip leaned towards Brenda, and, stirring his tea mechanically, quietly narrated to her a synopsis of the second encounter.

" When," he concluded, " the Major recognised me in the Turkish bath, and I had introduced myself, he wouldn't allow me to apologise. He said he was only too pleased to see me. He said he'd been wanting to have a word with me before I took the summons out against him."

" Before *you* took out a summons ! " exclaimed Brenda.

" Well, I certainly threatened to," explained Philip, " at the time ; though, between you and me, I should hate to summons anyone. The Major, however, appears to have taken it seriously, and he had a word or two with the chauffeur, who seems to have hinted that the Major might have left me a little more room to get by. Your uncle, by the way, wants me to give him a few lessons at the wheel. He says he is being gradually driven to buy a car owing to the wretched quality of the refreshments served in restaurant-trains. In short, he is going to stay on here for another week at least so that he can take the lessons."

" Do you mean to say," commented Brenda, " that the accident after lunch was Uncle Ned's fault ? "

" It would be difficult to say," returned Philip, impervious to the implication of her question. " The fact is, the Major doesn't like the prospect of it being decided in court. You see, he has omitted to take out a licence to drive a car."

Brenda was silent.

" Er—I am giving the Major his lessons in the morning," added Philip nervously. " It occurred to me that you might like to learn to handle the racer too."

" But how can you teach two people at once ? "

" Er—I thought the second session might be squeezed in of an evening."

" Philip," said Hilda suddenly, " don't stir the bottom out of that cup, please. The sugar's in front of you."

# JANUA VITAE.

**THEY told me that Thou wert a cave of hiding,**
**A place to crouch in when all joy was still—**
**Thou art a shout upon a strong wind riding,**
**A golden city shining on a hill !**

**They said Thou wert a peace past sick endeavour,**
**Where broken men might dream what they had been—**
**Thou art a strong gate lifted up for ever,**
**Where conquerors ride in !**

**MARGARET WIDDEMER.**

# LE ROY LE VEUT

## By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of "As Other Men Are," "And Five Were Foolish," "Valerie French," "Jonah & Co.," "The Brother of Daphne," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

After passing ten weeks in Etchechuria, 'the lost country' of Southern Europe, conducted by their self-appointed courier, himself an Etchechurian, four travellers reach the centre of 'The Pail' and begin their last and strangest adventure in this remarkable land.

THE barge had not been moored for more than a quarter of an hour when the call of a silver trumpet blazoned the evening air with delicate pride.

As the four came on deck, Gog was descending the gang-board to greet a personage of some importance.

The latter was magnificently apparelled in a tabard of great beauty, mounted upon a superb black horse and accompanied only by the trumpeter who had sounded the call.

After a short conversation, Gog louted and the other raised his peaked cap, and then, turning his horse on its haunches, galloped away with the trumpeter at his heels.

Thoughtfully the courier made his way to the poop.

"My friends," he announced, "we're off. That was Unicorn—one of the five Heralds. You're to be at The Palace this evening at ten o'clock."

"This is rather sudden," said Simon.

"I half expected it," said Gog. "And now if you'll sit at my feet I'll put you wise."

With that, he placed his hands upon the edge of a 'gate' table and, turning a somersault with great deliberation, assumed the pose of a tailor in the centre of the board.

The four sank into chairs.

"About your visit to-night," said the courier, "there is to be no ceremony. Unicorn emphasized that. He also said you weren't to come if you were tired. But I saw no object in saying you were when you weren't, so I asked if he'd send a pinnace at half-past nine."

"Is The Palace on the river?" said Patricia.

"On a tributary," said Gog. "Just about two miles off. The Verge is thirty miles round by ten across and lies full in the middle of The Pail, and The Palace—or rather The Park in which it stands, lies full in the middle of The Verge. Both The Park and The Verge have four gates. Those of The Park are called after the four winds, and those of The Verge are called Ancestry—by which we came in—Pedigree, Lineage and Descent. Incidentally, The Verge is sanctuary, so we shan't be troubled by gentry of Snuffle's ilk. When——"

"One moment," said Pomfret. "Are there any unmarried Princesses adorning The Court? Because, if so, I shall be unavoidably prevented from obeying His Majesty's commands."

"Their Majesties'," corrected Gog. "Yes! There are no Sultanas," he added gravely. "The royal succession is not hereditary, so Their Majesties' children, if any, take no unusual precedence and do not appear."

"Then Their Majesties are elected?" said Eulalie.

The courier nodded.

"By their predecessors, as the three living beings best qualified to maintain the traditions of The Pail."

"Three?"

"Three. The King of Arms, The Queen of Hearts and The Knave of Wits. As soon as they're chosen, they're royalized by letters patent; and royal they are from then until they retire—which their motto, *Noblesse Oblige*, compels them to do in due season. They're appointed together, they rule together and they retire together. They're all three equal, and they and their Supporters compose The High Court of Maintenance within The Pail.

"You see, Etchechuria, as you call it, is founded upon Tradition. Tradition has

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made it what it is, Tradition has kept it secure through all the ages, and Tradition alone can save it from going the way of the world. Well, The Court of Maintenance maintains the traditions of The Pail.

"Now the maintenance of traditions requires considerable skill. It's rather like the work of a master-forester. If the wood of tradition is to flourish, this custom must be lopped, this nursed, this dunged, this propped, this moved, this encouraged to grow and this cut down. Then, again, the soil must be kept pure. . . . To do all this you need a fine head, a gracious sympathy and a firm hand. Well, the Knave has the first, the Queen has the second and the King the third. . . .

"I said they were all equal, and so they are. They each have their own quarters, and the State Apartments are so many Common Rooms in which every table is round. The King is supported by Heralds, the Queen by Maids of Honour and the Knave by Pursuivants. The Palace is their headquarters, but they move about quite a lot, for although their work comes to them they often return its call. Sometimes three of the Supporters go in their stead."

"I should love to be a Herald," said Patricia. "Did you ever see anything so lovely as Unicorn's dress?"

"It was very good-looking," said Gog, "but they all wear tabards at Court. From Their Majesties downwards. The blazonry's different, of course: but the tabard's the Court Dress."

"The women too?"

"Certainly. At work or at play the Court is a beautiful sight. I once saw it *passant* in the sunshine—I tell you, it hurt my eyes. The King of Arms goes always in cloth of gold, the Knave in silver and the Queen in crimson, violet or green. Their chief Supporters—Lion, Domesday and Garter—wear cloth of gold and the others respectively silver, crimson, violet and green. And coat armour over all. The King and the Heralds ride black horses, the Queen and her Maids bright chestnuts, and the Knave and the Pursuivants blue roans." He rose and stepped down from the table as though he were passing down stairs. "And now I think I'll tell them to serve dinner at eight. Then you can——"

"But you haven't said what we're to wear," cried the girls in unison.

"What you please," said the courier. "I've never yet seen either of you look anything but your best, so——"

"I shall wear my seal-coney sock-suspenders," said Pomfret. "I look quite ravishing in them."

"Wait a minute," said Simon. "What about the Court etiquette?"

"There is none—for you," said Gog.

"Now then," said Pomfret. "Pull yourself together and think. There must be millions of things we mustn't do. It's no good telling me to-morrow that I oughtn't to have blown my nose before midnight or that if I was going to take off my boots I ought to have faced North. I don't want to have to be pardoned on the scaffold: I want to enjoy myself."

"So you shall," said the courier.

* * * * *

The pinnace slipped through the water at a high speed, past the silence of mead and forest under a yellow moon.

Presently the stream curled, and as the craft took the bend the four saw a rampart ahead like a city wall. In the midst of this was a tremendous gateway, which admitted the river like a road, but a huge portcullis was down and its bars were fretting the glare of torches within. As the pinnace drew near, its master put a horn to his lips and sounded a hunting call, before whose notes had faded the ponderous barrier had begun to lift. As this rose clear of the flood, the water that fell from it made a silver fringe, through which the scarlet and blue of household troops turning out could be distinguished. The next moment the craft was in the gateway, which proved to be of great depth, with stairs that ran into the water on either side, a fine vaulted roof and a second portcullis barring its inner mouth. When the guard had made sure of the pinnace, the first portcullis was lowered and the second raised, and an instant later the boat passed through a belt of maples into a scene of almost fantastic loveliness.

The moon was shining full on a sleeping landscape through which the river stole like a silver vagabond about his mystery. To the right lay a deer-park, wearing the immemorial grace of long entail, sublime in its security against the hand of man. To the left stood an old grey mansion on rising ground. The house was long and low, of two storeys, built in the Tudor style—a place of mullioned casements and chiselled coats of arms, of finials and tracery and stony 'breath of kings', naturalized long ago by kiss of sun and cousin german to the rookery of aged elms that stood beside it.

At one end the panes of a great oriel,

which bespoke the hall, blazed like a giant ephod, badging the night with unimaginable splendour: in the midst, set back in a fair courtyard, two low flights of steps met on a common terrace before a proud doorway, of which the huge door was open so that a sash of light streamed out over the flag stones and soon down a broad stairway, whose steps were of living turf: to the left, an exquisite tower rose out of the pile, lending the whole an air of high matters and turning the seat of a nobleman to that of a Constable.

As the four gazed upon the mansion a slant of melody, rich and gay and plainly many-tongued, came floating out of doorway and window to set the prospect smiling in its sleep and nod like a lovely plume over the casque of silence.

The pinnace passed slowly to the stairs which served a balustered terrace upon the bank of the stream and so into the sash of light which streamed from the great doorway. There the craft stopped in midstream, and ropes from bow and stern were cast to the liveried watermen who were waiting with a broad gang-board at the head of the stairs.

Suddenly a fanfare rang out. . . .

Then figures appeared, moving in the great doorway, and a moment later a little company was descending the path of light. At first, it was hard to distinguish more than the outline of man, but as the pinnace was berthed the door of the house was shut, leaving the moonlight mistress of the lovely field.

The picture was worthy of its frame.

Eighteen heralds upon a stairway of living green, walking in no sort of order, but coming down as they pleased, with an easy grace of manner and jests on their lips. One—a soprano—was lifting a beautiful voice, singing ‘ Under The Greenwood Tree ’, with exquisite abandon—the time-honoured summons floating up into the night like a sweet-smelling savour.

All were handsome and shapely and wore their gorgeous habiliments with a complete artlessness, which, with their debonair air and the absence of any pomp, argued a familiarity with magnificence which was most impressive, while the splendour of the coat-armour, thus casually displayed, beggared description.

Three only were covered: and they wore Caps of Maintenance. All wore their hair cut short, shaped to the head behind and falling about their ears, and all were wearing tabards rich and glorious as the wimple of the setting sun.

“As Pomfret sat perfectly still, returning the stranger’s gaze.”

As they approached, it was easy to discern the Queen of Hearts and her Maids, for, while the men’s tabards were voluminous and stiff

upon them, those of the women, though of the same length, that is to say knee-long, were supple and more slightly built and indeed vastly becoming to their beautiful wearers.

" And these my Pursuivants," said the Knave. " Domesday, Chancery, Title, Chequers and Chose."

At every name someone either curtseyed

" The latter took the whistle from his mouth and moistened his lips."

or bowed, but as the four never knew from which quarter to expect the gesture they bowed and smiled indiscriminately till the recitals were over, while Pomfret put up his hand and continually said " Nunc, nunc."

" And now that we all know one another," said the Queen, turning to ascend the steps, " let us go in and dance."

" Because," said the King of Arms, " friendships are found in the parlour."

" And lost," said the Knave of Wits, " in the counting-house."

At this there was much laughter in which the King joined, although the amusement aroused was plainly at his expense.

" *Touché*," cried the Queen, bubbling. She turned to the four. " You don't under-

When Gog alighted, the retinue fell back to let Their Majesties advance, and as the four disembarked the King of Arms came forward with the Queen upon his right and the Knave on his left.

" We're very pleased to see you," he said, stretching out his hands.

" More than pleased," said the Queen, in a musical voice.

" Charmed—and relieved," said the Knave.

Before the four could make any decent reply—

" These are my Heralds," said the King. " Lion, Unicorn, Leopard, Barbican and Mail."

" And these my Maids," said the Queen. " Garter, Girdle, Surcoat, Mantle and Dorelet."

stand that, cousins, but the Knave's private apartments are officially known as 'The Parlour', mine as 'My Lady's Chamber', and the King's as 'The Counting-House'. . . . But we're not always so clever. As I think you know, we've no Logic within The Pail, and as one can't rule without it we import it as best we can. That's not at all easy to do and the consequence is that we husband what we have most jealously."

"But we each had a ration to-night," said the King of Arms. "In honour of your arrival."

"Moreover," said the Knave, "we're confidently looking to you to replenish our slender stock."

"Er, anything we can do," said Pomfret, "I mean, er . . ."

"I'm sure that you will," said the Queen, gently.

"You can work wonders," said the King. "See what you've done with Gog."

"We haven't done anything," said Patricia. "Gog was always——"

"Assimilation," said the Knave. "It's simply through being with you. His instinct has always been outstanding, but one finds that now and again. Sunset, The Mayor's Aunt and Pride have three of the finest instincts within The Pail."

"I don't know about her instinct," murmured Pomfret, "but Sunset's very good at assimilation. She very nearly absorbed me."

At this there was a roar of laughter, and the Knave lifted his head and carolled lustily,

*"I'll be your blotting—blotting-paper,*
*You be the ink."*

—a saying, which justly occasioned a further explosion of mirth.

As they came to the flagged courtyard the great door was opened by men-at-arms, and the music which had fallen to a murmur swelled into the love-sick measure of an exquisite valse.

"We dance in the hall," said the Queen, leading the way within. "I can't tell you why," she added, putting a hand to her temples and knitting her pretty brows. "There's probably some good reason, but I can't think what it is."

"It's the obvious place," said the Knave.

"Of course," said the Queen. "How stupid." She turned to a Maid of Honour. "Garter, go get me that phial from the great chamber."

As the Maid turned to do her bidding—

"That's right," said the King of Arms, frowning. "I can do with another draught. I laughed very loudly just now, but to tell you the honest truth, I can't think why."

They passed down a stately gallery, past steel-clad body-guards and so through double doors into a mighty hall, so beautiful in all particulars that for one long moment the four could hardly believe their eyes.

From hammer-beam roof to floor it was panelled with black old oak, which rendered the light, dispensed by six vast candelabra, with the peculiar dignity of polished wood: at one end rose a huge oak screen, magnificently pilastered and carved, in which there were two doorways, each shut with crimson curtains and sentried by men in mail, and above the screen was a gallery, whose forty occupants in crimson livery were making the music of which the place was full: at the other end a dais led to the great oriel —its panes now heavily curtained with crimson and its deep window-seat laden with cushions of the same colour: upon either side of the hall was yawning an immense fire-place of chiselled stone, with a slow wood fire slumbering upon its hearth, and, above, a crimson arras, plainly veiling a clerestory, was running the length of the chamber: below this upon the panelling hung two rows of shields, whose faded quarterings told of traditions and their maintenance in bygone days, while upon either hand of the oriel two aged standards, stiff with majesty, professed such faith as honours its defenders: built into the panelling on either side from screen to fire-place and fire-place to oriel was a row of chancel stalls, heavily carved and furnished each with a cushion of crimson velvet, while if there had been tables, these had been withdrawn, leaving the white flagged floor, which was wonderfully smooth and polished, without encumbrance.

Garter was speaking. . . .

"Madam," she said, offering a small blue bottle of curious glass, "the phial of Logic is empty."

"Empty?" cried the King and Queen.

For a moment there was a dead silence. Then—

"I'm afraid," said the Knave, "I'm afraid that's my fault. I was the last to have it, you know, and I rather think that the present vacancy was, er, occasioned during my tenure."

"Don't dress it up in speech we can't understand," said the King, putting a hand to his head. "You have the advantage of us. D'you mean to say you drained it?"

"I think I must have," said the Knave, stroking his chin.

The King and Queen raised their eyes to heaven in protest too profound for words. At length—

"Well, all I can say," said the latter, "is that our good cousins' visit is more than timely."

"There I'm with you," said the King heartily. He turned to bow to Eulalie. "And now," he added, taking the girl in his arms, "my cousins, lords and ladies—on with the dance!"

* * * * *

"Now here," said the Knave, looking up from a sheet of parchment, "is a very nice point. Some months ago an ogre, called Bagpipes, settled in a cavern five miles from the village of Grey Cock. From time immemorial it's always been the custom to engage an ogre single-handed, and single-handed to dispatch him or not as the case may be."

"A very good rule," said the King. "It keeps up the standard of chivalry and it puts the ogre in his place. To be killed by a man who could almost lose his way in one of your boots is most humiliating."

"Quite so," said the Knave. "The trouble in this case is that no one has yet come forward to take Bagpipes on. Meanwhile the death-rate in Grey Cock is rising by leaps and bounds, while the condition of the curtilage of Bagpipes' cavern is daily becoming more insanitary."

"Of course," said Pomfret, "I'm beginning to understand why The Pail is not over-populated. A good healthy ogre who's not afraid of his food is worth half a dozen colonies."

"There," said the Knave, "you're touching a very big question. That The Pail should overflow is not to be thought of, so a census is taken every month, and—and the returns most carefully considered. The watched pot never boils, you know. . . . But to return to the point. It's time that Bagpipes was reduced. Yet to send a troop to reduce him would be to create a most lamentable precedent."

"Grey Cock," said the Queen firmly, "has suffered more than enough. Only yesterday two more children failed to return. As they were last seen playing 'Last Across the Mouth' of Bagpipes' cave, the gravest fears for their safety are entertained."

"All the same," said the King, "an ogre is a one-man job. I've never killed one myself: but then that sort of thing never interested me. If we send a troop, the removal of ogres will cease to be a knightly enterprise."

"And that," said the Knave, "is unthinkable."

"If I were you," said Simon, "I should treat him like an ordinary individual and summon him for 'Nuisance' forthwith. I mean, you've ample grounds, haven't you? Quite apart from the condition of his lair? I shouldn't word the summons too politely. Require him 'to show cause why he shouldn't abate himself', or something equally downright. Then send someone who is superfluous—Snuffle, for instance—to serve the summons. . . ."

"Yes," said the King. "Go on."

"Well, the proof of the service is in the eating. If he serves the summons he won't come back."

"That's certain," said the Knave.

"Very well. When he fails to return, you send and obliterate Bagpipes for Contempt of Court. That won't be creating a precedent. It'll simply mean that you're upholding the dignity of the Court."

There was a moment's silence.

Then—

"What did I say?" said the King, looking round. "Solved in a moment. And we've been racking our brains for more than two months."

The Queen's eyes were sparkling.

"It's a brilliant idea," she said.

"Simplicity itself," said the Knave, annotating the parchment. "Chancery can attend to the preliminaries, and"—he turned to the King—"who will you send to mop up?"

"Mail," said the King. He turned to Pomfret. "He's very good at extermination. By the time he's finished you won't be able to guess where Bagpipes has been interred."

"And now," said the Queen, "tell them about Tell-Tale."

"That's a hard case," said the Knave, picking up another skin. "Tell-Tale's the name of a ford five miles South of Strong Box. When you use it you have to pay toll to The Farrier's Daughter. A commoner pays a tester, but a lord's above such niggling and just flings her his purse."

"A *beau geste*," said the King nodding. "It's very good for the lord and better still for The Farrier's Daughter."

"Well, one day," said the Knave, "there was a justing. Lists had been set up at Strong Box, and several lords attended and

knocked one another about. When it was over they feasted, and when the banquet was over one of the lords suggested that they should go to the fair."

"A very proper proposal," said the King. "'None but the brave deserves the fair.'"

"Quite so," said the Knave. "Well, it was a very good fair. There was a clown and a puppet-show and a strange fish, and ten of the lords enjoyed themselves very much. The other ten didn't. They hung about, watching the others enter and leave the booths, listening to their applause, having the clown's drolleries indifferently retailed to them by their comrades and, what was worse, seeing their own servants spending their pence like water and having the time of their lives. And this was all because they lived South of Tell-Tale, while the others lived North, or, to put it more plainly, because on his way to the justing each had flung his purse to The Farrier's Daughter, so that he hadn't so much as a penny to see the strange fish with, while the clown, who was much more expensive, was out of the question. . . .

"Well, once bitten, twice shy. The next time there was a justing at Strong Box, those ten lords went round by Black Sheep Bridge. . . .

"You can't exactly blame them, especially as before the next fair was held the clown died of a quinsy and the other ten were always saying how splendid he'd been and that no one could ever take his place. But the trouble is that their action set up a precedent. Lords, great and small, who were wanting to cross the water began to display a preference for Black Sheep Bridge. At first they made excuse, fearing that the river might be swollen or maintaining that the other was the prettier way, but after a while any lord who went by Tell-Tale came to be considered to have more money than brains."

"A very sordid conclusion," said the King, blowing through his nose.

"And a most ungallant one," said the Queen. "The Farrier's Daughter is a most charming girl."

"Indeed," continued the Knave, "things have come to such a pass that 'to go by Tell-Tale' is in danger of becoming a proverbial saying equivalent to 'to lose one's mind', while it is the practice of mischievous children in the vicinity so to direct or, I regret to say, actually misdirect strange lords that they pass by the ford to their subsequent derision.

"Well, there are the facts. If you can suggest any way of correcting the disorder and of restoring the venerable tradition that where his pocket is concerned a lord is above mental arithmetic, you'll be doing the Court a great service, while as for The Farrier's Daughter, I should think she'd eat out of your hand for the rest of her life."

Pomfret fingered his chin.

"I suppose," he said, "you couldn't destroy the bridge."

"That's an idea," said the King warmly. "I like that. That'd cramp their style—the niggards."

"Against their will," said Eulalie. "And that's no earthly."

"Besides," said the Queen, gently, "what about all the poor people who use the bridge?"

"I must confess," said Patricia, "I'm rather sorry for the lords—the original ten, I mean. It was very hard to have to miss the clown."

The King shrugged his shoulders.

"*Noblesse oblige*," he said. "You mustn't sell your birthright for—for—— What do they sell birthrights for?"

"A pot of message," said Pomfret. "I mean, a mess of pottage."

"That's right," said the King. "Well, you mustn't do it, you know. It's—it's unthinkable."

"If I were you," said Simon slowly, "I'd put up some finger-posts."

Their Majesties stared.

"Where?" said the Knave.

"Several," said Simon, "scattered about for some miles, so that no one who's approaching the bridge can very well miss one. Could that be done?"

"Easily," said the Knave. "Go on."

"Well, then you put on the posts

*THIS WAY TO BLACK SHEEP BRIDGE*

and underneath

*NOTE. ONLY THOSE LORDS WHO CAN AFFORD IT SHOULD CROSS THE RIVER AT TELL-TALE.*

I don't say it's ideal," added Simon, leaning back in his chair, "but from what I know of human nature I think it would divert quite a lot of the traffic concerned: and after a year or two I fancy the old tradition would be re-established."

This admirable solution of the difficulty was deservedly received with acclamation

by the Queen and the Knave, while the King called for wine and drank to Simon with great circumstance.

"Not that I follow you," he said gravely, setting down his cup, "because I don't. Everyone knows the way to Black Sheep Bridge. Besides, if they need direction at all, they need it to Tell-Tale. Still, understanding, as you probably know, is not my forte, and if the Queen and the Knave approve your plan I'm proud to endorse their opinion and honour a master wit."

"You see," said the Queen to Eulalie, "that's how we always decide. If we're at all divided on any point, one always gives way to two. We're very seldom divided because, though we work together, our duties are really distinct. Broadly, the Knave administers, the King executes, and I temper the wind: but such duties are bound to overlap, and though the King makes light of his understanding he's really the biggest power within The Pail. I consider that Bagpipes ought to be reduced and the Knave will see that he's summoned, but it's the King that's going to put him where he belongs."

"And that," said the Knave, throwing down his pen, "with the minimum of effort and the maximum of effect. But his outstanding virtue as a fellow councillor is that he always knows to a hair whether the game we propose is worth the candle."

"Come, come," said the King, rising. "I refuse to be overrated. Besides, we've sat long enough. To-morrow's the first of Autumn, so let's make the most of to-day. But, before we rise, explain why we don't interfere when our friends are waylaid. It's beyond me."

The Knave cleared his throat.

"The King is right," he said. "You must find it strange that we seemed so glad to see you and yet, but for your own wit, for all our puissance you might have fallen by the way. But we are not Justices of the Peace, and with right and wrong beyond The Verge we have nothing to do. For better or for worse The Pail is ruled by Tradition, and for us to use our power otherwise than in its maintenance would be unprecedented."

"I do hope you understand," said the Queen earnestly. "I'm not at all sure I do."

"Of course, we do," said Patricia. "Perfectly."

"Besides," said Pomfret, "I bought what trouble we've had, and that's been negligible. Our reception has been—well, words fail me. Look at last night."

"Look at this morning," said the King, clapping him on the back. "And now come and see the stables. We're rather proud of our nags."

So ended the first of many councils to which the four subscribed. Indeed, they drifted naturally into the *rôle* of assessors, sitting in The Council Chamber three days out of five, exploring the voluminous patchwork of Customs in which The Pail was swaddled and making the Court of Maintenance free of such judgment as they had. It was a fascinating exercise and one which was never dull, and may be likened to that of ordering a treasury of gems, each precious one of which has been so fashioned as to tell its own curious tale.

As well it might, the Court made much of its guests.

The barge was towed into The Park and moored before The Palace at the foot of the steps, the stables were put at their disposal and they dined and danced at Court whenever they pleased.

The Heralds, Maids and Pursuivants took the four to their hearts and would, if encouraged, have sat at their feet all day, while the King, the Queen and the Knave plainly delighted in their company and stood upon no sort of ceremony so far as they were concerned. The supporters were eager, simple, pleasant-minded and plainly of high degree and seemed each to take after the Royalty to whom he or she was officially attached. Their Majesties themselves set a standard of chivalry, not perfect perhaps, but, considering their natural shortcomings, above all reasonable criticism.

It was clear that the Queen of Hearts and the Knave of Wits considered the King of Arms to be greater than they: of this regard the King of Arms himself did not appear to be conscious, and since he plainly considered the Queen of Hearts and the Knave to be his peers, things other than greatness were added unto him. His was, indeed, a most attractive character—merry, downright, and unearthly strong, at once most unassuming and wearing majesty as naturally as a woman her wedding-ring, and by these pleasant qualities immeasurably adorning the office which he filled.

Physically, he was a fine-looking man: his blue eyes were fearless and his hair was fair: of much the same height as the Knave but more stoutly built, he showed a great breadth of shoulder and carried his head high:

indeed, his general appearance and demeanour accorded with the title he bore, and, handsome as was his company, his presence alone would have betrayed him as the first gentleman of this strange realm.

The Queen of Hearts, as was fitting, was of singular beauty and possessed great personal charm. Her wit was quicker than that of the King of Arms, but though there were times when she could compare with the Knave, on the whole her reasoning powers were much slighter than his and though she could, so to speak, float upon the tide of argument, any attempt to strike out generally showed that she was out of her depth. Her eyes were large and grey and full of that gaiety which springs straight from the heart, unschooled by the mind into an artful flourish: there was an exquisite bloom upon her delicate skin, her hair was shining and her form the very pink of elegance. That her dignity was not so outstanding as that which distinguished the King was due to his presence alone, for she bore herself as can only a great lady—with the attractive self-possession of a little child.

The Knave of Wits was in some ways the most striking of the three. Now curiously solemn, now brilliantly debonair, at times exuberant in speech, at times silent and dreaming, of admirable address and astonishingly clear-headed for one so handicapped, he was by no means simple to measure as were his fellows and gave the impression of a strange, dark jewel, which is flashing one moment and sombre the next, whose depths baffle inspection, which is not like other stones, although wherein it is different you cannot tell.

It was he, especially, who considered the convenience of the strangers, seeing to it that their privacy was never violated and that they always felt free to come and go as they pleased, arranging with Gog that the latter should suggest diversions, lest his direct suggestion should wear the air of a command, and actually forming a habit of calling for and drinking ale in the midst of a Council that Pomfret might thus unashamedly enjoy his favourite beverage.

The four began to find their heritage even more goodly than it had seemed without Date. . . .

So for five glorious weeks, while Autumn—for there was no Winter within The Pail—waxed under rain by night and sun by day, dressing the country side in gold and crimson till all The Verge was one great Heralds' College and every sprig and spray was bearing arms.

Then came a day when the Court rode to Shepherds' Clocks, a village beyond The Verge, and the four with them.

* * * * *

Pudding-String was away. Of that there was no doubt at all. Leopard had warned Pomfret on no account to allow him to take the lead, and Pomfret, exulting in the perfect movement of the magnificent horse, had forgotten the Herald's advice. And now—Pudding-String was away and leaving the cavalcade as a racing car leaves a bevy of limousines.

Had the country been open Pomfret, who was quite a good horseman, might well have pulled the black up, but, since they were in the forest, to attempt to do anything but steer his mount clear of the trees and their branches and roots would have been suicidal. Indeed, he was in constant danger of being struck out of the saddle, if not killed by overhanging boughs, for there were oaks in plenty and Pudding-String was going like the wind: by dint, however, of keeping extremely cool, lying low on his horse's neck and never ceasing to ride for all he was worth, after eight or ten minutes the rider had his reward, for the ground began to rise in a steady climb, and a sudden clearing gave him the chance he required. The clearing was none too large and the ground was beginning to fall, but Pomfret had made up his mind to go no further and, by alternately pulling and easing the runaway's mouth, convinced the latter of his determination with about thirty paces to spare.

"And that," said Pomfret, "is that." He turned the horse round. "You know you're too impetuous. That's what's the matter with you. Rushing about like that." He took out a handkerchief and started to mop his face. "And if I said 'Stop' once, I said it a hundred times. . . . And now supposing, my fellow, you found your own way back." He threw the reins on Pudding-String's neck. "I couldn't retrace your steps for a hundred yards, and we must have done close on four miles."

As if in answer the horse stopped to snuff the air: then he looked round about him and, finding himself lonely, whinnied lustily.

"That's the style," said Pomfret. "Do it again."

But Pudding-String's efforts to regain touch were over. He certainly looked round again, but that was only to make

sure that the clover upon his left front was locally unrivalled, while as for lifting up his voice or advancing unimpelled in any direction other than that of green food, such ideas did not seem to occur to him and nothing that Pomfret could do could get them into his head.

At last—

" Well, if you think I'm going to sit here and watch you gorge," said the latter violently, " you're simply miles out," and, with that, he picked up the reins and kicked the cause of his troubles into a canter.

At the edge of the clearing he stopped and, after trying in vain to be sure of the way he had come, struck at a walk into the greenwood. . . .

He could not know that he was bearing too much to the East or that the cavalcade —led in hot chase by the King, Simon and Leopard, with Chose and Eulalie as connecting files—was bearing too much to the West. But when, after more than an hour of advancing, shouting, listening and casting about, he had seen no sign of the others, Pomfret dismounted, off-saddled, wisped his betrayer with bracken and, so fastening him that he could feed without undue inconvenience, laid himself down on the turf and went to sleep.

This was typical of the man. To visit his displeasure upon Pudding-String would not have occurred to him in a thousand years. Pudding-String was an animal and so his very good friend. If the animal had erred, that was because he knew no better and offered no reason why he should be denied ordinary consideration. As for going to sleep, repose was good. It was also better than continuing an unprofitable search and refreshed brain and body for further endeavours. Finally, the hour, the place and the circumstances were inviting slumber, and to decline such an invitation would have been contrary to Pomfret's faith. The future could go hang—and very nearly did.

Pomfret awoke for no reason that he could specify, but with that indefinable feeling that there was something wrong. At first, he saw nothing to account for this intuition, but, glancing at Pudding-String, he observed that the horse had stopped feeding and was eyeing a neighbouring ash. As Pomfret followed his gaze, a yellow chaperon, prodigiously twisted and coiled into a very turban, was protruded from behind the trunk, to be immediately succeeded by a face which was lean and sallow and saucer-eyed, whose lips were pursed upon a whistle some six inches long.

When the eyes found Pomfret awake, they started out of their sockets, while the cheeks became distended as though to blow, but as Pomfret sat perfectly still, returning the stranger's gaze, after a moment or two the latter took the whistle from his mouth and moistened his lips.

" I'm—I'm looking for a noble," he faltered. " A very distinguished man. Some —some friends of mine want to make him a little present, to—to mark their appreciation of his ways." His eyes began to goggle as he sought for words. " A sack of gold, I think. And—and two or three barrels of beer."

" How nice for him," said Pomfret steadily.

" Y—yes, isn't it ? " stammered the other. " But then he's a charming man. They simply worship him, you know." He hesitated. " I—I suppose you haven't seen him by any chance. His name's—*Pomfret*."

" Not that I know of," said Pomfret, stifling a yawn. " What's he like ? "

The stranger stared harder than ever.

At length he swallowed.

" They—they only want to reward him," he said uneasily. " They wouldn't hurt a hair of his head."

" Quite so," said Pomfret, watching the whistle descend with the tail of his eye. " What is he like ? "

" He's tall and broad," said the other, " and, er, well-liking. And he wears loose hose and stiff shoes and a broad-brimmed hat. They only want to reward him," he added hastily.

" He must be rather like me," said Pomfret comfortably. He touched his jodhpurs. " I don't know that you'd call these loose, but . . . What did you say his name was —' Lamprey ' ? "

" No," said the stranger. " ' Pomfret.' "

" He's a lucky fellow," said Pomfret. " Fancy a sack full of gold. The beer doesn't interest me—I never touch it : but a sack of gold . . . What did you say his name was—' Turnspit ' ? "

" ' Pomfret '," said the other, putting up his whistle and advancing from behind the ash. " And now that I see you're not he, I can put you wise. You must forgive me, brother, but for a moment or two I thought you were the villain himself."

" ' Villain ' ? " cried Pomfret. " I thought you said——"

The stranger wagged his head.

" That was a wile," he said. " A little

stratagem. That was, in case you were he, to make you deliver yourself into my hand." Not appearing to notice the horse, he sat down by Pomfret's side and tapped his knee. "It's a very good thing for you that you're not he. He's not going to get any gold. Or beer either. He's going to be transformed."

"Is he indeed ?" said Pomfret, wondering whether the cavalcade was really trying to find him or having lunch. "How—how very interesting. Er, what shape is he to be inducted into ?"

"That of a skewbald baboon," said the other, "of vulgar habits, with a fleshy proboscis or trunk and a weakness for fried fish. It's all been worked out. The idea is to make him repugnant."

So soon as he could speak—

"I see," said Pomfret. "They do seem to have thought of everything, don't they ? I mean, when you'd got used to his trunk there'd always be the fried fish, wouldn't there ? And even if you plugged your nose—exactly. Yes." He wiped the sweat from his brow. "I like the 'vulgar habits' very much. That's a beautiful touch. I—I wonder who thought of that."

"I believe," said the other, "that was Sunset's idea." Pomfret started. "'A woman scorned' you know. Pomfret trifled with her in the morning and married another girl in the afternoon. But the 'skewbald baboon' was Sunstroke's. He's as mad as a hamper of hornets in a North-East wind. They say that Pomfret sold him some magic boots and that the only magic thing about them was that once you'd got them on—and that took some doing—you couldn't get them off. Anyway, he's still as lame as a tree and more than testy if you come too close to his feet."

"This is most interesting," said Pomfret.

"Yes, isn't it ?" said the other cordially. "Quite a little drama—with Pomfret doubling the parts of villain and clown. The beautiful thing is he doesn't know he's going to play the clown," and, with that, he threw back his head and laughed uproariously.

The fellow was greasy and looked as though he had often slept in his clothes, which were not so much shabby as ill kept, while his person was ill cared-for and argued an aversion to bathing, thus sharing with that of Snuffle the unenviable distinction of affording the only evidence which any of the four had encountered of uncleanness within The Pail.

Pomfret rose to his feet.

"Well, well," he said. "Sow the zephyr and reap the blast. What did you say his name was—'Crumpet'?"

"No, 'Pomfret'," said the other, rising. "What's yours ?"

"Spotlight," said Pomfret shortly. "By Search out of Swivel. And yours ?"

"Groat," said the latter. "I'm very pleased to have met you. Very pleased."

"Every time," said Pomfret, "every time. And——"

"In fact, my dear Doorstep," said Groat, laying a hand on his shoulder, "I don't know what I should have done without you."

"Oh, try and think," said Pomfret, edging away. "And my name——"

"Which way are you going, dear Doorstep ?" said Groat, detaining him.

"Look here," said Pomfret. "I told you my name was Staircase—I mean, Spotlight. Why abuse the information ?"

"Don't mention it," said Groat. "Which way are you going ?"

"I really don't know," said Pomfret warily. "If I was thereabouts I might have a look at The Verge. I'm told the view from, er, Lineage is lovely."

"So it is," said Groat eagerly. "So it is. You mustn't miss it. Besides, that's my way too." He looked round cautiously before proceeding. Then he approached his mouth to Pomfret's ear. "You see, between you and me, Pomfret—our quarry—'s lost. He's beyond The Verge and he's lost—on a Herald's horse. And it's a puncheon of rum to a rock cake that he'll try to make Lineage. He left The Verge by that entrance and it's the only one he knows. So entirely between you and me *we're closing in*," and, with that, he drew back and rubbed his hands as one who has communicated tidings which cannot fail to provoke unqualified approval.

"Are—are you indeed ?" said Pomfret, involuntarily wondering simultaneously whether to add vulgarity to a baboon was not to perform a work of supererogation and what his companion would say when he noticed Pudding-String. "I mean—splendid. Er, who's 'we' ?"

"Sunstroke and—and others," said Groat. "So if you come with me, you'll be in at the transformation. Have you ever seen one, Doorlight ?"

"No, I haven't," said Pomfret, wondering in which direction Pedigree lay. "And what's more I don't think I'd better. I'm—I'm on a diet, you know, and—and any

undue excitement is very bad for me. Besides, I've just lost my memory and that's enough for one day. I suppose you haven't seen one lying about ? "

" I'm afraid I haven't," said Groat. " When did you have it last ? "

" I can't remember," said Pomfret. " That's the devil of it. It's like looking for a pair of spectacles when you need them to find them with. I tell you, Snoak, I can remember nothing. What was that fellow's name—' Spongebag ' ? "

" No, ' Pomfret '," said the other. " You know, my dear Spotstep, I've thought once or twice that your memory must be rather defective. If you remember——"

" But I don't," said Pomfret. " I tell you, the inconvenience is frightening. I believe I'm making for Pedigree, but—you'll hardly believe me, but I can't remember the way. And it's no good your telling me because I should forget it at once."

" No, you won't," said Groat warmly. He pointed East. " The Long Lane's a mile over there. No one could miss it if he tried. And The Long Lane leads to Pedigree as straight as a die. What are you going there for ? "

" I can't imagine," said Pomfret, picking up his saddle and setting it on Pudding-String's back. " I know I had an object, when I set out, but Heaven only knows what it was."

" I should go home," said Groat, staring.

" I can't," snapped Pomfret, reaching for the girths. " I don't know where I came from. I tell you, Bloat, it's most embarrassing."

" One moment," said Groat suddenly. " How did you come by that horse ? "

" I've no idea," said Pomfret, bitting Pudding-String up. " I'm not at all sure that it's mine. Isn't it awful ? "

" D'you think you found it ? " said Groat. " I mean—Pomfret was last seen riding a Herald's horse, and—and——"

" Who's Pomfret ? " said Pomfret, mounting.

The other recoiled.

" ' Pomfret ' ? " he cried. " Why Pomfret's the man I've been saying——"

" Oh, you mean Sunstroke," said Pomfret, " the baboon of vulgar habits that Staircase is going to transform into a pair of boots. Well, what about him ? "

Groat put a hand to his head.

" You've got it all wrong," he said weakly. " What I said was that——"

" Stoat," said Pomfret gravely, " you're talking through the seat of your hose—a confusing and inelegant practice which I fear you must have caught from the baboon. And now I must leave you. Should you meet a man called Spotlight—an eventuality which I feel to be improbable—be good enough to thank him for me for the loan of his personality and say that I found it almost as engaging as you did and much more serviceable. Give the baboon my love and tell him, if he feels he must see me again, to be at The Water-Gate of The Palace to-morrow at noon—with the usual ingredients. You can come too, if you like, because, though you mean anything but well and your toilet leaves much to be desired, your value as an information bureau can hardly be over-estimated. So come. And while the baboon is lunching we'll talk through the portcullis. But—at the risk of sounding ungallant—one stipulation I must make, and that is—' *Don't bring Lulu* '."

With that, he touched Pudding-String's flanks and cantered away. . . .

Groat's brain worked slowly.

In fact, it was nearly three minutes before a frenzied whistling suggesting that he had ' arrived '. And by that time Pomfret had sighted the stout box ramparts which were flanking The Long Lane.

A moment later he was flicking along the ride at a hand-gallop. . . .

A quarter of an hour later he was within The Verge.

* * * * *

Twenty-four hours had gone by.

" If we had to choose between them," said the King of Arms' voice, " it would be extremely difficult. They're both exquisite."

" I agree," said that of the Knave. " And equally dignified. But mercifully we don't have to."

" I'm sorry for Simon," said the Queen. " I'm afraid——"

" Tush," said the King of Arms. " After a week . . ."

His deep voice faded, and Pomfret, who had been peacefully dozing under a convenient chestnut, lay still as death. Presently he rolled over cautiously and, raising himself by inches, peered over the golden sea of bracken at the retreating figures. These were now some sixty paces away, strolling unattended in the deer-park with their heads in the air. For a long time Pomfret regarded them, open-mouthed. Then he assumed a sitting posture, took out his handkerchief and wiped his face.

Patricia. Something had been decided to her injury. Some fatal lot had fallen upon her. She was to be taken . . . sacrificed . . . married to the Knave or something. Her and Simon's happiness was to be ripped from them to honour some barbarous usage, which because it was old was sacred—had to be served. . . . And it was all decided. Word had gone forth. . . . Patricia. . . .

Gog. Gog would know. He must get hold of Gog at once.

The barge was between Pomfret and The Palace, and the King and the Queen and the Knave were between Pomfret and the barge. To stay still, however, was unthinkable, so Pomfret struck through the bracken towards The Water-Gate, now crawling, now stooping as he ran, until he had gone so far from his couch beneath the chestnut that any who might observe him strolling towards the barge must assume that he had come from quite another direction.

As he approached, the King, the Queen and the Knave were ferried across the water while Gog watched them from the poop of the barge, standing stiffly to attention upon his head to the great amusement of Their Majesties who were laughing heartily.

As they began to ascend the green staircase Pomfret slipped up the gang-board and on to the poop.

"What's the matter ?" said Gog before he could open his mouth.

"Breakers," said Pomfret shortly, drawing him down on to a bench.

"Beyond The Verge—yes," said Gog. "I've some rather ugly news."

"What ?"

"'Sunstroke—and others.' Well, the others include The Steward of the Walks. He's out to attach your body for Contempt of his rotten Court. He swears he'll outlaw you if it takes him twenty years. As he's five hundred foresters under his horn, he's a pretty formidable proposition—beyond The Verge. I can't think how he missed you the other day. But he won't make another mistake. What's worse, if he can't get you he'll take one of the others instead and do a deal—your body in return for their health. The Royal Presence is sanctuary, so you're all of you safe when you go out with one of Their Majesties. But to omit that precaution would be extremely foolish. Some people might call it rash."

"That," said Pomfret, "is annoying, because we must omit it to-night."

Gog opened his eyes.

Then he frowned.

"What," he said, "do you know ?"

"This," said Pomfret. "A quarter of an hour ago——"

"*Tr-r-oop*," rang out Simon's voice. "*Right* WHEEL-L-L !"

Pomfret stifled an oath and rose to his feet, as, with riding-whips at the slope, the light-hearted line which had cantered silently alongside executed an admirable turn, riding knee to knee in the most approved fashion.

"*Tr-r-oop*. . . . HA-ALT !"

The parade halted.

"*Car-ry*—SWORDS !"

The whips came to the carry, and Simon rode forward and saluted as an officer should.

Gravely Pomfret put a finger to the brim of his hat.

"Very fair, Mr. Beaulieu," he said. "Very fair. But I should like to see a little more zip. Oh, and Number Three's sword"—Number Three was Eulalie—"is about as much out of plumb as Number One's." Number One was Barbican. "Never forget," continued Pomfret, "that those are the little things that matter. They won't win battles, but they'll make the General glad. When I was the mascot of the Fortieth Foot and Mouth, commonly known as The Try-Hards, our slogan used to be, 'Bottle-wash, mouth-wash, and eye-wash—and the greatest of these is eye-wash'."

Here the parade broke up amid laughter and ironical cheers, and when the girls and Simon had dismounted Barbican and Title took their horses and cantered away with Girdle in the direction of the bridge.

"I can't tell you now," said Pomfret, returning to Gog. "As soon as they go down to change. . . ."

That the girls should change seemed shameful—they were so admirably dressed.

The Queen and her maids rode a-cock-horse, and since their ordinary Court Dress would not have been convenient for such a seat, a special riding-habit had been devised. Copies of this array had been made for Patricia and Eulalie and suited them to perfection.

Soft doeskin boots, thigh-high, were held up by straps to some belt you could not see. Above this a kilt of green or crimson, heavily pleated behind, swayed as they walked and stayed in place as they rode, while a simple white silk shirt, long-sleeved and open at the neck, made an effective setting for a little coat, short, square-cut, wide open and fairly ablaze with quarterings both before and behind.

As they came to the poop—

"The King of Arms," said Gog, "is tickled to death with this drill. He saw you doing it yesterday and he's talked of nothing else since. He wants Simon to teach the Heralds and the Heralds to teach the troops. I said it was an innovation and as such should be condemned, but he only threw a roll at me and told me to stick to my last, and, when I asked what that was, the Knave said, 'Ask The Court Troop-leader. He's just been created.'"

"The trouble is," said Simon, helping himself to ale, "that I'm a bit rusty myself. If I had——"

Three trumpets blared at close quarters—a crisp, high-pitched call that brought Gog to his feet and made Pomfret choke over his tankard.

For an instant the courier peered at the farther bank.

Then he gave a great cry and fell upon his knees.

The four rose, staring.

Upon the bank three trumpeters were standing, like breathless images. Behind them nine men-at-arms made up a solid square of blue and steel and scarlet, motionless as death. And, descending the lowest steps of the staircase of turf were Lion, Garter and Domesday, each bearing a roll of parchment and wearing their peaked caps. And that was all. Above them the house lay silent and rosy under the setting sun: its terrace was empty and its door was shut. Only the standard, hanging limp against its mast above the tower, gave any sign of occupation. The park was vacant. Barbican, Girdle and Title were out of sight. The very breeze had fallen and the whole world was still.

Herald, Maid and Pursuivant passed up the gang-board of the barge and on to the poop.

When they were up they stood for a moment in line. Then they uncovered, and at once a fanfare rang out.

It was a long stately call, and ere it was over Pomfret, Eulalie and Simon had each been touched with a roll upon the shoulder and then had the parchment given into their hand.

As the call faded, the three executors covered their heads and turned, and a moment later they were ashore again and mounting the cool green steps.

Once more the trumpets blared. . . .

Gog, crouched like a dog, was clinging to Patricia's ankles, pressing his face against her insteps and wailing brokenly.

"My lady, my lady, my queen, what will you do? If only your hair had been fair—your beautiful hair. . . . But the Queen has to be fair. . . ."

Patricia stood very still, smiling a little and looking extremely noble and well content.

"Come, Gog," she said gently. "If three's to go into four, there must be one over."

"Oh, my lady, my queen. . . ."

Pomfret tore open his parchment.

TO OUR RIGHT TRUSTY AND RIGHT ENTIRELY BELOVED COUSIN POMFRET GREETING WHEREAS BY VIRTUE OF OUR GREAT OFFICES THERE IS VESTED IN US AND US ALONE THE POWER OF APPOINTMENT AND WHEREAS IT HATH SEEMED GOOD TO US TO EXERCISE THE SAME IN YOUR FAVOUR BE IT KNOWN UNTO YOU BY THESE PRESENTS THAT IN ACCORDANCE WITH CUSTOM WHEREOF THE MEMORY OF MAN RUNNETH NOT TO THE CONTRARY WE THE KING OF ARMS THE QUEEN OF HEARTS AND THE KNAVE OF WITS DO HEREBY CALL AND SUMMON YOU TO THE MOST HONOURABLE OFFICE AND DIGNITY OF KING OF ARMS LORD HIGH CONSTABLE OF TRADITIONS WITHIN THE PAIL AND THAT IT IS OUR PLEASURE THAT YOU PRESENT YOURSELF AT NOON TO-MORROW AT THE GREAT HALL OF THE PALACE THERE TO TAKE THE OATHS OF RENUNCIATION AND MAINTENANCE TO BE INSTALLED AFTER THE IMMEMORIAL USAGE AND TO RECEIVE THE PATENT OF ROYALTY.

GIVEN UNDER OUR HAND AT THE HIGH COURT OF MAINTENANCE WITHIN THE PAIL UPON THIS LAST DAY OF AUTUMN ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE.

*Le Roy le Veut*
*La Reine le Veut*
*Le Chevalier le Veut*

Eulalie's and Simon's were to the same effect, appointing them Queen of Hearts and Knave of Wits.

With one consent they let them fall to the deck.

"Nothing doing," said Pomfret.

"The answer," said Simon, "is in the negative."

"'Eyes have they, and see not,'" said Eulalie, shaking her head. "Well, well. When we get home I shall tell everybody I meet, and no one will ever believe me."

Gog was sitting back on his heels with starting eyes.

"You—you . . . can't . . . *refuse,*" he breathed, as though he were afraid of the word.

"Don't be silly," said Pomfret. "We don't happen to care for the game."

The courier looked round wildly.

Then he caught up one of the rolls and got to his feet.

"'We don't happen to care for the game.'"

"Sirs," he said earnestly, "I assure you this is no game. You are within The Pail. This is a Writ of Summons, and, as such, must be obeyed."

"And if," said Pomfret calmly, "if it is disobeyed. . . ."

"Then, sir," said Gog, "*it will become a Death-Warrant.*"

* * * * *

The sun was resting upon the rim of The Pail—a blood-red business in a welter of grey and crimson, glaring upon a helpless world. As the four gazed, it sank behind Velvet, leaving an angry stain upon the sky, against which the mountain stood up like a crag of ebony, clear-cut and menacing.

The glint of mail came from the tower of The Palace, and the next instant the royal standard was hauled down.

"Behold, the night cometh," said Pomfret quietly. Then he turned. "Supposing we went below. I know they say walls have ears, but, personally, if I'm to conspire I'd rather do it in a stateroom than on the quarterdeck."

"Come, then," said Patricia, and led the way from the poop. . . .

When the door was shut, Pomfret turned to the courier and laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Gog, my fellow," he said, "you made a statement just now which interested me very much. You said that, should I decline to obey the command I have just received, I shall be condemned to death."

The courier inclined his head.

"What makes you think that?" said Pomfret.

Gog spread out his hands.

"My lord," he cried, "it is the custom. From time immemorial——"

"It is said to be the custom," said Pomfret. "But as no one has ever declined to——"

"I saw it observed," said Gog, "five years ago."

There was a deathly silence. At length—

"Tell us," said Eulalie.

The courier moistened his lips.

"There came a stranger to The Pail—a man of England. He came not as you did, but by chance. He lost his way in the mountains and, stumbling through Balk, was found by a Ranger upon Velvet half dead of hunger and fatigue. He was a nice man and gentle, and found favour within The Pail. The Court liked him well, and he often assisted its councils as you have done.

"Then one day he left The Pail . . .

"Upon what conditions he was allowed to go I do not know, but one promise they made him give—and that was that he would come back. I believe he gave this freely, for he was happy here."

In a voice trembling with excitement—

"What was his name?" breathed Patricia. "I believe I met him once—but I can't remember his name. If I heard it . . ."

"His name was Marlowe."

"'*Marlowe*'!" cried Patricia. "That's it. Marlowe! That was the man who said he was 'going back'."

For a moment nobody spoke.

Then—

"Go on, Gog," said Simon.

"He returned," said Gog, "with a maid. That was why he went, I think—to marry a wife. She was very young and gentle, and I think she was very wise. But—her hair, too, was dark. . . .

"For a while they were very happy. And then one day a Writ of Summons was served . . . calling him to be the Knave of Wits. . . ."

He paused there for a moment and covered his eyes.

"I was there when he came to The Presence, with the Writ in his hand. . . . And he smiled as he spoke of the honour that he had been done and told how it went to his heart to have to decline. . . .

"Lion cut him down in the Hall. I saw it done. . . .

"His wife died in childbed next day. . . ."

There was a long silence.

At length—

"Knowing this thing," said Simon, "why did you bring us here?"

Gog looked round wildly.

The anguish in his big brown eyes was a pathetic sight.

"I never thought," he cried. "I never dreamed. It seems so plain now, but until I heard the trumpets it never entered my head. You see, I've no Logic. . . ."

"Blame me if you like," said Patricia. "The whole thing was my idea. But I won't hear a word against Gog." She stepped to the courier's side and laid a slight hand on his arm. "No one could have been more faithful."

"And so say all of us," said Pomfret, taking the courier's hand.

Simon and Eulalie cried aloud their assent.

"I spoke without thinking," said the former. "Gog, I take it back."

Two big tears welled out of the courier's eyes and rolled down his jolly cheeks.

"When I was at your mercy," he faltered, drooping his head, "you were gentle and

"'You—you . . . can't . . . *refuse*,' he breathed, as though he were afraid of the word."

very kind. . . . You gave me good and I have returned—evil. . . ."

Pomfret stepped to a side-board and poured out wine. Then he gave the cup to Patricia. When she had drunk he gave it to Eulalie. When Simon also had drunk Pomfret put the cup to his lips. Then he gave it to Gog with a steady smile.

"If that were so we shouldn't do this," he said.

The courier stared upon the chalice.

Then, without moving his eyes, very slowly he turned his head.

The four followed his gaze.

On a table where he had put them lay the three Writs. . . .

*Le Roy . . . La Reine . . . Le Chevalier le veut.*

"Quite right," said Simon gently. "We understand. As an Etchechurian, you mustn't drink of this cup." He turned to the others. "We ought to have thought of this. Even if he would, Gog's too good a friend to involve."

"True," said Pomfret, stretching out his hand for the vessel. "My fellow, you can thank your jolly white self for the finest compliment that ever a man was paid. *We actually forgot that you were not one of us.* And if that doesn't show you what we think of you, I don't know what will."

Gog's eyes returned to the chalice. . . .

Then he lifted his head.

"My lord," he said gravely, "no man can serve two masters—not even an Etchechurian." He whipped the vessel to his lips and drained it dry. "And now for one more jest," he cried, sending the cup spinning and catching it on his nose. "A very nonsuch of drollery that shall set the ages in a roar and turn a fool into a statesman." He cut a caper and spun into the air. "The die is cast," he continued in a strange exultant tone, "and if you'll listen to me I'll save us all—I, Gog, who can do anything because anything I do is nothing, who am almighty because of no account, who take precedence of the world because I have no place."

The four stared open-mouthed.

"What on earth d'you mean?" breathed Eulalie. "Who—who are you?"

"My lady," said Gog, "I have awaited that question for fifteen weeks." He made a low bow. "My lords, ladies and good friends, I am The Court Jester."

* * * * *

The King of Arms was always abroad betimes, but for once his guests were before him. Indeed, it was not yet eight o'clock when he reined up his horse in the ride which at this hour he always frequented and, after peering for a moment into a neighbouring dell, fell into a fit of suppressed laughter at once so convulsive and prolonged that Leopard, who was in attendance, became quite alarmed for his well-being.

Mounted, girt with a gigantic two-handed sword, surrounded by a vast French horn, buttressed by a pair of kettle-drums, wearing the plumed steel helmet of a Captain of the Household Troops and eating a banana, Gog was instructing a section, composed of Pomfret, Patricia, Eulalie and Simon, in the art of warfare and particularly the use of the sword.

"Now before we go out on patrol I want you all to master Simple Division. It's a very beautiful exercise. On the command 'One' you offer up a short prayer, step lightly upon the saddle—thus, and, wrapping the digits of the right hand about the hilt, draw the sword or sabre from its scababbard, sheath, socket or sacking as the case may be. On the command 'Two' you smartly resume your seat—thus, moisten the lips and raise the sword or sabre with a sharp semi-circular movement over the right shoulder until the file on your left says 'What about it?' or otherwise indicates his aversion to sudden death. On the command 'Three' you give one cheer and a half and serweep the sword or sabre forward after the manner of a ferlail, thus dividing any opponent who may happen to be in its path," and, with that, suiting the action to the word with all his might, the instructor flew out of the saddle in the wake of his blade to dive into a clump of rhododendrons, from which his legs protruded like two substantial staves each of which was hoisting the private pennon of Buffoonery itself.

Before the laughter had died, however, he was again upon his feet, still eating his banana and folding up his sword after the manner of a two-feet rule. He then threw a somersault on to his charger's back, begged Pomfret, who was leaning forward, if he had brought his seat with him to sit upon it forthwith and shame the devil, recommended Patricia not to squeak in a deer-park during the autumn months, desired Eulalie not to infringe the prerogative of a blancmange, reminded Simon, who was talking, that the mother's meeting had been postponed to four o'clock and plunged into a dissertation upon the art of taking cover.

"And now," he concluded, "if you aren't

super-charged for all emergencies, that's your funeral. I'm sorry we can't make a day of it, but I understand that three of you have a somewhat important engagement at twelve o'clock. Still, if you've all got your brass rations we ought to be able to get through some good practical field-work in five hours. *Half sections—right.* TR-R-R-ROT."

With that, he blew upon his trumpet, cantered to the head of the column and then fell upon his kettle-drums like a demoniac, producing an astonishing volume of most admirable music, executing a perfect hurricane of flourishes and finally leaping upon his saddle, bending backwards and continuing to drum like a madman, with his shoulders between his legs. . . .

Not until they were beyond The Verge was the mask of Comedy dropped.

Then in a leafy bottom a mile from Descent a halt was made.

So far all had gone well.

They were six miles from The Palace and beyond The Verge. No suspicions had been aroused, and the guards at Descent could, if necessary, testify to the heat of the dispute between Pomfret and his commanding officer regarding the wisdom of the latter's decision to operate out of Sanctuary. With his own ears the King of Arms himself had overheard their plans—to parody tactics all the morning and be at The Palace by noon. Finally, no man in his senses who was anxious to reach The Dish, which lay due North, would leave The Verge by Descent and thus clap fifteen miles on to his journey.

They could, therefore, safely reckon that until eleven or later not even the Knave of Wits would find in their absence any cause for surprise and that even when they continued to fail to appear nothing but an accident would be suspected and at first inquiries and search would be made to the South and not to the North.

They were all superbly mounted, the girls on chestnuts, Pomfret and Gog on blacks and Simon on a hot blue roan.

And now it was nine o'clock, and the foot of the path to The Dish—a ladder which was known as The Aisle—was thirty-five miles away.

Preparations for swifter progress were made in feverish haste.

The helmet, the French horn and the kettle-drums were bestowed amid the branches of a neighbouring tree, the girls put on peaked caps such as Surcoat and Dorelet would officially wear, Pomfret wrapped himself in The Invisible Cloak, and Gog produced The Sovereign Touchstone from a little soft gold bag which was fastened beneath his apparel about his neck. A moment later, down to its stirrup-irons and girths, Pomfret's magnificent black was caparisoned with gold.

"Splendid," said the Jester, standing back to survey his work. "Now mount again, will you? . . . Very good. I'm afraid you must quit your stirrups. . . . That's better. And keep your hands very low. Hitch the reins over the pommel. . . . Oh, very good, If everyone we meet doesn't think that the King of Arms has taken the toss of his life it'll be because he's half-witted."

The idea was valuable.

Pomfret, for whom five hundred foresters were watching, was out of sight, while the empty saddle of the King of Arms himself not only would probably protect Simon but would, if carefully exploited, divert all attention from the cavalcade. Apart from this, the presence of Surcoat and Dorelet, officially covered, while concealing that of Patricia and Eulalie, would suggest that the party was abroad upon some matter of state and assist it to ride roughshod over any inclination to interference.

The Jester then restored The Touchstone to its bag and gave the latter to Simon to bind about his neck. This done he inquired if Pomfret had the map and, receiving an affirmative answer, vaulted on to his charger and seized the golden bridle of the seemingly spare horse.

"In case of accidents," he said, "don't forget that we're making for Sacradown. From there we go to Redbreast and so by Crooked Thighs to the foot of The Aisle. Crooked Thighs is out of our way, but I must see Goosegog. Still, at the very latest we should make The Aisle in four hours. The climb won't be funny, but it's got to be done—quick. Directly they guess you're escaping, they'll toll The Great Bell of Misfeasance, and that'll alarm The Pail. Once The Pail's alarmed it's the instant duty of every inhabitant to arrest anyone who shows haste whoever he may be.

"Once you're in Balk they can't touch you, but until you're there you mustn't so much as sit down. And now, *en avant*—in absolute silence, please. And if anyone tries to stop us, take your cue from me."

For half an hour nothing happened and the steady canter was maintained with scarcely a hesitation for nearly six miles.

Then, as the five eased up for a sharp ascent three men in Lincoln Green rose out of a covert on the crest and, darting into the ride, held up their bows and cried to the comers to 'hold'.

"'Hold'?" howled Gog in reply, pointing to the riderless horse. "With the King of Arms unseated and as like as not on his back with a broken leg?"

"The King of Arms?" cried the foresters, doffing their caps.

"Or worse," shrieked Gog. "Has Unicorn been this way?"

"No, my lord."

"Then, forward," cried Gog, to his company. "And, you three, scour the forest to East and West. If you find His Majesty sound your 'rally' forthwith. Five hundred nobles to the man who finds the King."

With that, he was gone, with the others thundering behind. . . . .

The heather of Sacradown was a purple memory, the flaming maples of Redbreast were overpast, Crooked Thighs was ten miles distant, and it was eleven o'clock.

The five had forded a stream and were crossing a little lawn, when the blacks, who were leading, recoiled from a sinister figure which stepped from behind a rock.

Sunstroke.

To thrust by was hopeless—the horses would have refused. And the ground upon either hand was strewn with boulders and laden with fern-clad rocks.

As Simon and the girls drew rein—

"Well met," said Sunstroke, taking a horn from his belt. "Whither away?"

"Don't be a fool," said Gog. "Have you seen the King of Arms?"

Sunstroke stared very hard at the riderless horse. Then his eye shifted to Patricia and Eulalie. Twice his hand went up as though to remove his hat and twice stopped half-way to his head. Finally he uncovered.

"That's better," said Gog grimly. "I was beginning to think that sacrilege was to be numbered among your crimes. But I can't waste time upon you. Have you seen His Majesty?"

The great eye blinked.

"If he's been thrown," said Sunstroke, "he——"

"He has," snapped Gog. "We found his horse a mile back by Raven's Wing."

"Then you are coming wrong. I've been here for half an hour and that horse didn't pass this way."

"Then, out of the path!" cried Gog, touching his horse with the spur. "We must join Leopard at Rainbow and tell him as much."

"Why not go back?" said Sunstroke.

"Because, you fool, he's to wait there until we come."

"I should wait here," said Sunstroke. "When you don't appear, Leopard will——"

"Meanwhile the King lies bleeding." Gog rose in his stirrups and turned. "I call you to witness, Mesdames, that here is Contempt of Court. This vile and malignant reptile——"

"No, no," cried Sunstroke, backing. "I don't want to stand in your way. But I can't let that gentleman pass. I mean—you can hardly contend that this is The Royal Presence."

"Indeed," said the Jester coldly. "Well, I should urge that in mitigation. Not that it will help your case, but it'll interest Mail."

The mention of the dread avenger had a lightning effect.

Sunstroke let out a howl and danced to one side.

"No, no, I meant no ill. I was only seeking to——"

"Begone, filth," cried Gog, "and if you see His Majesty sound your horn. Only some signal service can save your life."

He set the blacks at the gap and a moment later they were up and out of the hollow and flying over the turf at a hand-gallop.

Fifty-five minutes later they drew rein at Crooked Thighs. . . .

The house was sunk in a circular grove of cryptomerias, a mile and a half about, and the property wore a more sombre aspect than the sage's summer residence, with which Simon and the girls were familiar. Indeed, there was something unearthly about this solid circle of dark red feathery towers, each casting the same blunt shadow and all inclining as one to every chuck of the breeze, while the glimpse of black and gold, which betrayed the enchanter's house, and the dark flash of a pool thickened the odour of sorcery with which the air was charged.

Fifty paces from the mansion Gog stopped and slid from his horse.

"I shan't be ten minutes," he said, "but all the same, I shouldn't dismount. Fancy meeting Sunstroke," he added, handing his reins to Pomfret. "You must have itched to ask if he had a spare pair of boots he didn't want."

Pomfret said nothing at all, nor did he take the reins.

And when Eulalie, deathly pale, thrust

her horse alongside and stretched out a small brown hand, this encountered nothing.

In a word, the great black horse was riderless indeed.

* * * * *

Pomfret lay on his back and looked at the sky.

The last thing he could clearly remember was crossing a ford. Then he had turned in his saddle to look at his wife. As he did so, the blacks had reared. . . . Not square in the saddle, with his feet out of the irons, with the reins hitched over one finger, he hadn't a chance. . . .

He had a vague recollection of falling backwards. . . .

His head was aching and he felt rather sick.

He rose and lurched to the stream. . . .

He drank gratefully and then sluiced the cold brown water over his head and neck.

This refreshed body and mind, and, finding a lump like a purse on the back of his head, he made for a tiny fall and let the water play upon the hurt. . . .

Five minutes later he felt as sound as a bell.

He left the stream for a rise and looked about him.

There was no one in sight. But The Clock told that it was a quarter past eleven, so, wondering very much how long he had lain unconscious and whether his absence had been yet remarked, without more ado he lugged the map from its fastness within his coat and, laying it down on the ground, desired to be conducted to Crooked Thighs.

At once the map flopped forward. . . .

He had covered more than two miles as fast as he could, when a sudden shadow danced, and he became aware that he was not alone.

Pomfret was too old a soldier to stop in his tracks, but he slightly slackened his pace, and, comforting himself with the reflection that he could not be seen, stared very hard at the quarter from which the shadow had come.

As he looked, a familiar figure limped from behind a tree, threw a hasty glance at the map and then put another trunk between Pomfret and himself.

Pomfret quickened his pace and the map conformed.

So did Sunstroke, moving parallel to his quarry about thirty paces away. . . .

Apart from the bodily pain which his progress obviously entailed, the dwarf was plainly beside himself with perplexity and agitation, for his eye was bulging and peering all ways at once, and he gave the impression of one who has flushed his prey, but is at his wits' end for the way to effect its capture.

So for a while they proceeded on parallel lines, but after a gruelling furlong Sunstroke began to incline towards the map until he was rather too close for Pomfret's liking. In fact, the latter was on the point of breaking into a run when the map flopped into a beechwood.

Till now, they had been upon turf, but the wood was strewn with leaves, upon which the noise of footfalls would be unmistakable.

Pomfret hesitated, and the map at once slowed down.

Not so Sunstroke, and a moment later the dwarf was between Pomfret and the precious parchment.

Pomfret wondered what to do.

Not to proceed was unthinkable : to proceed was to be heard.

After a moment he went forward, picking his way.

Twice Sunstroke stopped and listened, and twice Pomfret stood still with his heart in his mouth. Twice the dwarf essayed to pick up the map, but each time Pomfret spurted and the parchment flopped out of his reach.

Pomfret began to shake with laughter.

They were out of the beechwood, and Sunstroke, who had just missed the map for the seventh time, was raising his fists to heaven in an eloquent paroxysm of exasperation, when Pomfret, unsteady with mirth, caught his foot in the bracken and fell to the ground.

The next moment it was all over.

Sunstroke had the map, and, though Pomfret approached as close as ever he dared, the spell was apparently broken, for the parchment never fluttered, but suffered its hideous captor to do with it what he would.

Pomfret glanced at The Clock.

Five minutes past twelve.

Cursing himself for his folly, he instantly got to his feet and, fetching a cautious compass until he was out of hearing of the dwarf, did what he could to pick up and continue the line which would bring him to Crooked Thighs.

After ten minutes, however, he decided to retrace his steps. The others would come back for him and, Sunstroke or not, they were certain to pass the beechwood on their

way to the ford, while, if he was going wrong . . .

Cursing himself for moving, he turned about.

He sought the beechwood until it was half-past twelve and then, realising that he was not only utterly lost but wasting invaluable time, turned his face to The Clock and fervently prayed that the others would presently do the same.

When later the thought seized him that they would ride back and back, past the ford and Redbreast, past the purple heather of Sacradown, he gave a terrible cry and flung himself face downward upon the earth.

*A further episode in this series will appear in the next number.*

# SONG OF AN ANCIENT HEDGER.

**I'M slow, they say,**
**In body and soul;**
**I live in a lone**
**Forsaken hole.**

**I know the lore**
**Of brooks and ponds,**
**Of thorns and briars,**
**And withy-wands.**

**And I have friends**
**Of feather and fur,**
**One brown mouse, and**
**A kingfisher.**

**The blind worm knows me—**
**So I think;**
**The robin shares**
**My meat and drink.**

**And many a venturous**
**Foal would stray,**
**And many a lamb**
**Would lose its way,**

**And many a yearling**
**Would be gone,**
**If it were not**
**For Hedger John.**

**Some folks will nod,**
**And some just stare**
**And never see me—**
**Still, I'm there;**

**And in Spring dusk,**
**Or Winter gloam,**
**I have a star**
**To light me home.**

**FAY INCHFAWN,**

*Author of "Songs of the Ups and Downs," "Through the Windows of a Little House," "Homely Verses of a Home-Lover," etc.*

"Catchum, panting with pleasure, promptly planted two paws on the back of the seat."

# LOCK, STOCK AND BARREL

## By ALICE GRANT ROSMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

CATCHUM looked at his plate of bones with distaste. Of course the woman meant well by bringing them, but what does a wire-haired gentleman care for bones when his entire universe has been suddenly upset?

A week ago he had been a gay and important young dog running the world for his pal, rushing, at the first sound of her golden voice, on urgent business with her about the house and garden, or stalking through the spring woods to protect her from the perils of the way.

Although this pal was a creature of silken ankles and swishing skirts and gentle hand, I'd have you know that Catchum was no lady's pet. His pal would have scorned such an encumbrance. She was proud of his manly beauty, but far prouder that he was a brainy chap, a dog of ideas. Her present treatment of him, therefore, was to Catchum the more inexplicable. She had basely deserted him, vanished in a night without any explanation.

In the past when she had gone away for a day or two, it had been to Catchum's regret, but always with his knowledge and permission. He was not an unreasonable dog. In her absence he had lived a busy life stalking the dragon housekeeper and pursuing his feud with Gaunt the gardener until the glorious moment of his pal's return.

This time, however, there had been no farewell, no dragon housekeeper left behind for his supervision, and even Gaunt was kind. Catchum didn't like it at all. The long grey house slept in the sunshine, but its eyes that used to blink at him so merrily were shuttered and cold. A little wind blew the daisies over the lawn, but Catchum, watching dolefully, head on paws, was not even moved this morning to join in the chase.

They had taken his pal. Somebody or something had taken her. Catchum was vague about the form of this monster, but after his long daily searches for him, he caught him in his dreams and growled.

"He's fretting for her, that's what he's doing," said Mrs. Gaunt, the lady of the bones, profoundly. "You wouldn't half think he knew."

Mrs. Gaunt had removed his nightly headquarters to her warm kitchen, because, chained in the little garden outside, he had

howled to wake the dead, as she put it. Of old in his corner of the garage, he had been subjected to no such indignity, but alas, even the garage yard was closed against him now.

Rising languidly he sniffed his bones, then buried them for future reference, and made for the little gate that opened on the drive. Unaccountably it was shut fast, however, and beyond it there was Mrs. Gaunt, keys jangling and red of face, escorting a tweed-clad stranger.

Was *this* the monster who had taken his pal? Catchum barked, growled, whined, scratched and finally tried to leap the gate, but to no purpose. He was a prisoner.

Ages later, waking from a troubled sleep, he heard Mrs. Gaunt come back, and with her Gaunt himself, heavy and lumbering.

"Sort of cold and unfriendly—that's what 'e called the place," she was telling him with brisk hostility. "Said 'e'd thought it would 'a been open and ready for him with a staff of servants, and mind you, not a word of the young lady that he's pushed out at a moment's notice."

"Well, I never," said Gaunt the gardener.

"And who lives about here? he wants to know," proceeded the hostile voice, "at the Manor, he says. 'Oh, there's new people there,' I told him short. 'The gentry's gone from *all* the old places now,' I said, and hope he liked it."

"Well I never," said Gaunt the gardener.

"He's looking over the village an' you're to get out the big car he says, for he'll drive back to London, and may you break your neck, thinks I, and very near says it."

"Well I never," said Gaunt the gardener.

The gate was open at last and Mrs. Gaunt coming in was too much engrossed in her own indignation to notice Catchum as he shot out on business of his own.

So it was that a wire-haired gentleman vainly scouring the gardens in his daily search for this unknown enemy who had stolen his pal, came to the garage gates half an hour later, and not only found them open, but saw inside something that set him quivering with excitement and delight. Long and shining, bright in the sun, the big car was out of the garage, ready for a journey.

She must be coming back, then. They were going to meet his pal. Catchum knew a thing or two about what happened when the big car went out. Following an immemorial game into which his glorious pal had always entered with zest, he jumped into the back of the car and crouching on the floor where Gaunt would be unlikely to notice him, he waited.

## II.

THROUGH a land which spring had touched with a pale loveliness of green and gold, Captain Anthony Paris drove the big car lovingly, a light hand on the wheel, humouring at first, coaxing a little until she responded with a gentle purr of comprehension.

The heart of Captain Paris, chilled for days past by alien glances, warmed to this shining creature as to a friend at last, and whistling softly he lifted his gaze to feathery woods and a road deep-hedged and winding, and saw again that country which in far places he had called Home.

The whistle grew louder, and a wire-haired stowaway cocked an ear and quivered with delight. Then feeling that all must surely be well with the world again he jumped on to the back seat and rode like a gentleman.

They came to a signpost and the shining car slowed down to read its friendly message. One arm pointed to London, fifty-seven miles away, but Captain Anthony Paris looked at it with a hostile eye. Cold welcome in cold London he had discovered two days ago.

The other sign directed him to Golden Amberley, five and a quarter miles, down a twilit road under an arch of beeches, with a little river running alongside and primroses and daffodils starring the grasses.

"Fishing!" said Captain Anthony Paris, peering at the green waters with the eyes of an expert. "Hang London!" and turned the shining car towards Golden Amberley.

Having metaphorically shaken his fist at London, he felt pleased with himself, for he was an impulsive young man who had not for a long time been able to follow his impulses in this satisfactory fashion.

Every now and then during the past month he had awakened like this to the glorious fact that he was no longer the slave of circumstances and the Colonial Office, but a person of property and independence.

The cable which had brought this stupendous news had pursued him for five weeks about Central Africa where he was doing a job of work for a paternal Government that wouldn't have known his name if it heard it. The cable informed him that Sir John Paris of Greentrees, Sussex, having died intestate, he was heir to the estate valued at forty thousand pounds. Letter following.

Letter was probably following him still, for what impulsive young man would wait for his correspondence in a country like that, with home and fortune calling. He had never seen Sir John Paris, nor Greentrees in Sussex, but he felt it was a kindly act of the old boy to die intestate and thereby rescue a young relative from the danger of being eaten by lions or deafened by nigger minstrelsy.

"Jolly decent of the old lad," said Captain Anthony Paris, dashing homeward as fast as the ship would carry him.

At Aden he had bethought himself to cable the solicitors, "Arriving England 10th. Please have Greentrees in readiness."

He had been rather pleased with that phrase "in readiness." It sounded so large and comprehensive, as though he were a person accustomed to owning vast estates.

The solicitor, however, seemed to have no such delusion regarding him. He had been kept waiting half an hour to see the senior partner of Braithwaite, Simpson and Jones, and then ushered into the presence as one who is about to bow before royalty. (He had been informed by an obliging clerk in the interval that Messrs. Braithwaite, Simpson and Jones had departed this life half a century ago and the present senior partner's name was Mr. Scorer—a sinister touch!)

Mr. Scorer was one of those conservative old gentlemen who have never been out of England and therefore regard all "foreign" countries and the people so benighted as to inhabit them, with suspicion. This theory had been strengthened by young Captain Paris's telegram from Aden. Mr. Scorer could conceive no country so lost to all sense of decency that a cable from Braithwaite, Simpson and Jones, London, would not reach the cable-ee within a day or two. Nor did he know that "letter following" had been a fatally true description of that important document. Believing Captain Paris to be fully conversant with the circumstances of his inheritance, his high-handed order to have Greentrees in readiness had seemed merely a piece of poor taste.

As a life-long friend of the late Sir John Paris, Mr. Scorer knew exactly what his intention had been with regard to Greentrees, and rescuing young relatives from the lions had not been one of them. Sir John's death on the hunting-field, between the destruction of one will and the signing of another, had defeated a purpose very near his heart—so near, indeed, that it should have been effected long before but for his obstinate refusal to believe that a man of his robust health need think of dying for many years to come.

So, when a large, bronzed young man was ushered into his presence, Mr. Scorer was not to be moved by a disarming grin and a rather deprecating boyishness. He thought instead of the girl, inadvertently disinherited through his old friend's carelessness, and froze.

"We—ah—hardly thought you would wish to—ah—take possession of Greentrees so soon in the—ah—circumstances, Captain Paris," he informed him in a tone of reproof. "At such short notice it has been practically impossible to have the place in actual readiness. However, the—ah—present occupant has vacated the house so that you will be able to make what arrangements you wish.

"There are," continued Mr. Scorer, giving the young man no opportunity to interrupt, "numerous technicalities to be gone into, as no doubt you fully appreciate. However, that you inherit the estate lock, stock and barrel, through my old friend's unfortunate accident, makes them simpler than they might have been. I have sent for Brawn, the Greentrees agent, to meet you here at 11 a.m. on Thursday, and we can then get some of the business settled. I trust that will suit your convenience."

Captain Anthony Paris, feeling rather like a schoolboy up before the Head, muttered:

"Thanks very much, sir. Of course any time—what I mean is—I don't want to hurry anybody."

"Quite," said Mr. Scorer, who read in this innocent statement a belated and weak apology for turning out "the present occupant." "You'll pardon me a moment—what is it, Jobson?"

Jobson, who had entered after a discreet knock, approached the throne and murmured a few words.

"Ah?" said Mr. Scorer, beaming at Jobson, "Yes. tell the Duchess I shall not keep her waiting two minutes."

Then as Jobson withdrew, the senior partner rose and held out a cold hand to his erring visitor.

"You'll excuse me, I know—an important client. On Thursday at eleven, then. Good day."

Captain Anthony Paris, recalling this interview as he drove to Golden Amberley, suddenly threw back his head and laughed.

"Duchess, indeed! That's the stuff to

give 'em. Don't believe the old blighter's got a Duchess," he decided.

Duchess or no duchess, he was determined that no interview would drag him back to town on Thursday now. Let 'em wait and wonder. He felt in his bones it would do Braithwaite, Simpson and Jones plus Scorer good to wait and wonder.

It was quiet on this twilit road and Captain Anthony Paris drove slowly, sniffing the scent of damp earth and young bracken and whistling as he drove.

By and by a cyclist came into view and on an impulse he stopped the car and waited for him.

"I say—any chance of some fishing about here, do you know?" he asked.

The man jumped off his bicycle.

"Yes, sir. You keep on to Golden Amberley. Brodie, of the 'Golden Arms,' 'as the rights to a good stretch of water. He puts up gentlemen for the fishing regular, does Brodie. Thank you, sir—fine dog you got there."

"'I dare say you *have* one like him. It's an awfully decent pattern for a dog,' conceded Captain Anthony Paris with his engaging grin, 'but just take a look at his collar.'"

"Eh?" said Captain Anthony Paris.

"Know a bit about dogs, meself," said the cyclist, nodding towards the back of the car. "Pedigree, I'll lay. You can't miss 'em."

So Captain Anthony Paris looked behind him and met the bright eyes of his wire-haired passenger.

Catchum had his tongue out and was panting contentedly. He grinned his best dog grin at this god who was driving him to find his pal.

"Oh—er—yes, rather," said the god, with great presence of mind. "Fine dog, aren't you, old boy?"

Catchum, panting with pleasure, promptly planted two paws on the back of the seat next the driver, after the invariable custom in this game as played by himself and his pal.

"Come along, then, you rascal," invited the god with prompt understanding, and the next moment Catchum was over into the seat beside him.

"'E'll do," said the cyclist, with admiration, and touching his cap, was off.

Captain Paris sat and grinned at his passenger. Here at least was something friendly in a cold and hostile land. How in the world the dog had come there he hadn't the faintest idea, nor at the moment did he greatly care.

He held out an inviting hand to the little beggar.

"Shake, old bean," he said.

Catchum shook and licked his face.

This ceremony of course disclosed a small silver plate on his collar, and in a moment the god was reading

PARIS, GREENTREES, SUSSEX.

"By Jove," he said, and suddenly recalled

the frigid words of Mr. Scorer—"Lock, stock and barrel." "Then you're mine, old dog—go with the place, do you? My hat, that's the best news I've had for a month."

Catchum wagged an ecstatic tail.

III.

SYLVIA IVERY sat in Mrs. Gaunt's parlour, her pretty head held high, and heard that lady's story—with embellishments—of the new owner's comments on and contempt for beautiful Greentrees.

It had been her home for years and, but for her godfather's procrastination and untimely death, would now have been her own property.

Sylvia loved the place, but at first she had not shared the anger of her friends against the young man who, through no fault of his own, had won what she had lost. The solicitors had persuaded her that in all likelihood he would not choose to live at Greentrees for some time to come at least, and might in the exceptional circumstances be expected to allow her the use of the house, at a rent she could easily afford.

"'You can have the collar,' said Miss Ivery."

They did not tell her that they had put the matter to him even more strongly than that, pressing her moral—though not legal—claim to a portion of the estate, for Miss Sylvia Ivery was a young lady of independent spirit who would have indignantly forbidden such a course.

She was angry with herself now that she had stayed at Greentrees at all, for Anthony Paris's cable from Aden, coming as they supposed it did, after receipt of the solicitors' letter regarding the tenantship of Greentrees, seemed like a deliberate snub. She had packed up at once and departed, extracting meanwhile from Mr. Scorer a reluct-

ant promise that he would not mention her to the heir in any way again.

Catchum, her godfather's last gift to her, had been left behind meanwhile, in care of Mrs. Gaunt, until she could make arrangements to have him with her, and this morning she had come back to claim him, before the new owner should arrive.

He, of course, had already come and gone again, driving the big car as large as life, Mrs. Gaunt assured her, painting this villain of the piece in lurid colours. "Bold as brass 'e is—not one of our sort, miss, as I says to Gaunt, and if you can see your way, miss, once you're settled, we'll be proud to serve you."

Sylvia, gazing wistfully out of the window towards the old house she had loved so well, smiled her thanks, then turned startled eyes to the gardener's wife.

"He's coming back—Gaunt's coming back, and he doesn't seem to have found Catchum."

Gaunt hadn't found him, and soon he and his wife and Sylvia and half the village were scouring the country-side in search of him.

It was Sylvia who met the cyclist toiling towards Greentrees. He was not a local man who would know Catchum, she was sorry to see, but she stopped him with the little smile that made most of the world her friend at sight.

"I've lost my dog . . . a wire-haired terrier," she explained. "I suppose you haven't seen him along the road?"

"No, miss—not on the road, I haven't," answered the man. "I did see a wire-haired—away back, but he was in a big car with a gentleman, sitting up in the back seat he was. That wouldn't have been your dog."

"Oh," said Sylvia, suddenly white. "Driving the big car as large as life," Mrs. Gaunt had said. "Sitting up in the back seat he was."

In a flash she saw it all. She and a wire-haired gentleman had so often played this game.

"I suppose the car was going towards London," she said to the man.

"No, miss. 'Twas on the road to Amberley. The gentleman asked me if there was fishing thereabouts an' I sent him to Brodie at the 'Golden Arms,' but I wouldn't be thinking that was your dog. 'E seemed to know the gentleman all right—jumped over and sat beside him, 'e did."

"Thank you very much," she managed to smile, and went on hurriedly up the road.

It was Catchum, for a certainty, and there was no help for it, she must go after him without losing a moment. A quarter of a mile on there was a little inn where she knew she might get a motor of sorts. Ten minutes later, this ancient chariot was hurrying her to Golden Amberley.

## IV.

Captain Anthony Paris found the "Golden Arms" all that it had been represented. Brodie was able to provide rod and tackle and after a decently cooked luncheon his new patron, with Catchum at heel, departed for the golden pool in the best of spirits. Catchum didn't know this new part of the game, but he was trustfully certain that the god would produce his pal in good time. The god had a voice and manner that spoke to the heart of a discerning dog, though solicitors and gardeners' wives might be less understanding.

And so, when through the green twilight that hedged the pool, there came suddenly the sound of a familiar footstep, Catchum knew that his faith in the god had been justified, and nearly went mad in his excitement and delight.

"Catchum! Catchum, darling old man," exclaimed his pal, hugging him violently. Then she turned upon the god with blazing eyes.

"He's *my* dog—you've taken my dog," she said.

Captain Anthony Paris had thrown his tackle down and was gazing at her in stunned admiration. She was tall and slim and dressed in a cream sports suit and little cream hat from under which a pair of bright dark eyes had blazed at him indignantly. Captain Anthony Paris liked this, and determined to make them blaze again.

"Not on your life," he denied, cheerfully. "That's my dog. If you don't believe me, look on his collar—'Paris, Greentrees, Sussex'—my name and address."

"I am not interested in your name and address," said the lady, coldly. "My godfather gave the dog to me."

"Not this dog!"

"It *is* this dog. Perhaps you don't realise who I am."

"Diana of the Woods, of course," said Captain Anthony Paris.

"There is no occasion to be funny."

"I didn't think it was funny," confessed the young man, plaintively, "but I did think it was rather poetical."

"My name," she told him freezingly, "is Sylvia Ivery."

"By Jove! That's better still," said Captain Paris, with delight.

He looked so frankly pleased and so much astonished that for a moment Sylvia softened.

"You may not have meant to steal him, I know," she said, "but when you found him in the car you might at least have sent him back. He hid in the back of it, of course. He always does when we go out in that particular car."

"Oh, come, you know," protested Captain Paris, "now you're trying to persuade me it is your car as well as your dog."

"That," said Miss Ivery, flushing scarlet, "is in very poor taste."

"I say!" The young man suddenly became sober. "You know, I was only ragging, but you are so determined this is your dog. I dare say you *have* one like him. It's an awfully decent pattern for a dog," conceded Captain Anthony Paris with his engaging grin, "but just take a look at his collar."

"You can have the collar," said Miss Ivery, unfastening it from Catchum's neck with trembling fingers and flinging it indignantly at the young man's feet. "And I'll send you a cheque for the dog, even though he was a present, as you're so determined to claim everything. Perhaps, you will expect me to pay for the pearls my godfather gave me, too."

With this parting shot, she picked up Catchum and haughtily departed.

"Great guns!" said Captain Anthony Paris, staring after her.

She knew his name, then. Who in Hades was the girl and what was it all about? "As you're determined to claim everything," she had said . . . "The pearls my godfather gave me." Was the poor girl mad or——

"By Jove!" exclaimed the young man, and sprinted after her.

"Hi, Miss Ivery, I say. Do wait a moment," he begged her boyishly, and Catchum struggled out of her arms and barked his approval. He hadn't quite liked this desertion of the god who had found his pal. It wasn't sporting in the eyes of a wire-haired gentleman.

"I'm sure we've been talking at cross-purposes," Anthony said to the girl. "I dare say you'll think I'm an awful mug, but I give you my word I don't know what it's all about."

Miss Ivery said coldly:

"I've told you that my godfather gave me the dog."

"Yes, but who *is* your godfather?"

"You know that perfectly well."

"Look here," said Anthony, patiently, "I've never been in this part of the country in my life before to-day. I've been almost continuously out of England since the early days of the war and I came back to it only yesterday. Now will you believe that I don't know what you're talking about?"

Miss Ivery looked at him. It was a very level glance, and in spite of herself she instinctively liked and trusted what she saw.

"My godfather was Sir John Paris," she said at last.

"Good Heavens!"

Anthony dropped on to a fallen tree-trunk, then jumped to his feet again and said:

"I say, do sit down and talk this over. Of course, that accounts for it, but you do believe I hadn't the faintest notion who you were, don't you? You see, I didn't know the old boy from Adam, though we were distantly related, and it was the most unexpected stroke of luck for me—coming into the estate. I knew he had no family, and I didn't even know he had a god-daughter."

"But I've lived at Greentrees since I was ten," said Sylvia. "The solicitors wrote and explained all that to you. They seemed to think, as you were out in Africa, you would not probably want the place immediately, and would perhaps allow me to stay on as a tenant until I could make other arrangements. You *know* they wrote."

"My hat!" said Captain Paris, aghast. "Then I've sort of turned you out?"

He remembered Mr. Scorer's chilly welcome, the cold and unfriendly eyes of Greentrees and the hostility of Mrs. Gaunt, and suddenly felt a new liking for the lot of them.

"As a matter of fact, I haven't had that letter yet," he explained. "The cable said letter following, but the cable itself had been following me for over a month, and I didn't wait for any letter. I pushed straight home. You must have thought me a cad, and I'll bet old Scorer thought so too. I went to him yesterday, but he said he had a duchess to see and sent me packing. I was to come back to-morrow like a good little boy. Look here, you *do* believe me, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said Sylvia Ivery, and smiled.

Catchum, scenting a suddenly friendlier

atmosphere between his pal and the god, signified his approval of this state of affairs by jumping on the log and sitting up between them with his tongue out.

Sylvia smiled at Anthony over the head of a wire-haired gentleman.

"Sorry I was such a beast," she said, "but you know your telegram from Aden—in reply as we supposed to the solicitors' letter, did seem rather a snub. 'Get this woman out of my house at once' and all that."

"It's appalling," said Anthony, "and of course you shan't go out of the house."

"I've gone," smiled Sylvia.

"But I won't have it. You must go back again immediately. In fact, I'm not sure you aren't legally bound to go back. You belong to Greentrees and Greentrees belongs to me. Q.E.D. Sir John was your godfather and guardian, so I must be your godfather and guardian."

"Very ingenious," smiled Sylvia, "but you see I happen to be of age."

"I can't help that," said Captain Anthony Paris in a determined manner. "I'm not going to have my step-god-daughter wandering homeless about the world. Joking apart, do be a sportsman, Miss Ivery, and help a poor chap out of a hole. I'm not only a stranger to the neighbourhood, but to the whole business of a lord of the manor. If you leave Greentrees and I go and live there, I'll be hated on sight. It's only natural, and I shall most certainly make a mess of things. But if you'd stay on for at least a bit until I find my feet, it would be doing me a real kindness. And then perhaps you'd let me come down occasionally and meet people in a friendly way instead of as a sort of interloper. You know they do think me an interloper, now, don't they?"

There was guile in this question, for Captain Anthony Paris was by no means dull and he was pretty certain now that his inheritance had been more or less at the expense of this girl, though he naturally could not ask her that. Her answer convinced him.

"You know how idiotic and illogical some people are," she said.

"Splendid," said Anthony. "Then that means you are neither and you're going to help me like a pal. Come along, I'm going to drive you back to Greentrees at once."

"But it's shut up," said Sylvia. "The servants have gone except one or two who live in the village. Please don't think that was my fault," she added pleadingly. "I truly tried to make them stay and have the place in readiness for you, but they had nearly all been with us for years, and you know how those people resent a change."

"Then they shan't have a change," said Anthony. "Good Heavens, if you've got some genuine family retainers, hang on to 'em for Heaven's sake. There's a telegraph office at Amberley, I suppose. Come along, we'll wire to the whole bang lot of them to return at once, delay fatal. That settles it, and you'll simply have to help me. How could I give orders to cooks and housemaids and housekeepers? Now, honestly, do I look as though I could?"

Sylvia considered him.

"You look," she said, at last, smiling faintly, "as though you could do anything you set out to do."

"Hooray," cried Captain Anthony Paris, throwing up his hat. Catchum flew after it and brought it back to the feet of the god with a smile of triumph and satisfaction.

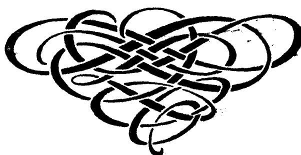
* * * * *

When Captain Anthony Paris said goodbye to Catchum and his pal at Greentrees late that afternoon and left to catch his train for London, the old house had opened its eyes again and through the dusk they glowed at him, no longer hostile, but friendly and kind. Mrs. Gaunt had scoured the village for help, made fires and performed miracles, for Miss Sylvia had come home again for the present at least.

The girl would give him no more definite promise than that, but Anthony was content. And as he turned for a last glimpse of Greentrees, he smiled a secret smile.

Sylvia was part of Greentrees and Greentrees was his.

"Lock, stock and barrel," said Captain Anthony Paris.



"'Look what I've got!' she exclaimed. 'Such bargains!'"

# THE JUMBLE-SALE

## By R. T. LEE

### ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

"I'VE had a letter from Cicely Fenning," said my wife. "She wants to know if we can send her anything for the jumble-sale at Puddleton."

"I should just think we could," I answered. "The house is full of things we don't want. I was thinking only the other day that we must get rid of some of the rubbish."

"Rubbish?" said Barbara. "That won't do. I'm not going to have rubbish from this house displayed before everybody in Puddleton, thank you."

"But, my dear Barbara," I said, "who's going to know where the things come from?"

"Well, Cicely will know, anyhow; and she'll probably hand the things over to a servant or the Vicar's daughter, and say, 'Those are some things from the Bentons,' and then your rubbish will be inspected to see how many times you have your things darned and patched before you discard them."

"What," I asked, "are jumble-sales for if not to enable the well-to-do to get rid of rubbish for the benefit of the poor?"

"You evidently don't know the Puddleton jumble-sales," said Barbara. "There are lots of nice people living round there, and they all go—Cicely told me so."

"I see," I said. "It is rather a smart affair, is it? Quite a social function. Does Royalty attend to open it?"

"A little laboured, that bit of humour, wasn't it?" said Barbara.

"If jumble-sales are such serious things," I said, "I will think it over and see what I can send. There is that old suit I use for cleaning the car."

"If you're going to send that, you must have it cleaned first."

"Ridiculous!" I said. "Whoever heard of having things cleaned for a jumble-sale?"

"But I tell you all the nice people go to it. Last year the Brains were there from Orford, and the Appletons, and those people from the Grange, and lots more."

"What did they buy?" I asked.

"I don't know what they bought," said Barbara testily. "All I know is that I'm not going to let you send that greasy old suit of yours unless you have it cleaned. One must have some self-respect, even in one's contributions to jumble-sales."

"What are you going to send yourself?" I asked.

"I shall start," answered Barbara, "by making a collection of the useless things I've had for Christmas."

"From past experience," I said, "I know that you will thereby be depriving many of your friends of New Year's presents."

"Then," went on Barbara, "I shall send several jumpers that are a bit out of fashion, and one or two dresses—things I am not ashamed of."

"I shall send that greatcoat I had dyed a couple of years ago," I said brightly.

"That atrocity!" exclaimed Barbara. "You certainly will not."

"But, my dear girl," I remonstrated, "what else is a man to do with the garments his wife will no longer allow him to wear?"

"There are some things you might very well send," said Barbara. "Your dress shirts, for instance, are getting dreadfully frayed."

"Perhaps," I said sarcastically, "you would like to suggest that I should send this dress-suit too?"

"I was just going to," said Barbara.

"Of course," I said, "you will have to take my name off any garments I send."

"Not in the least necessary," said Barbara, "so long as they are clean. How ridiculously particular you are! Personally, I mean to put my name in that Lucille dress of mine. I don't see why the Brains and the Appletons shouldn't know that I sometimes have a smart frock."

"It's all very well," I said, "but I know what happens. Some Puddleton blackguard commits suicide or gets run in for being drunk and disorderly, refuses to reveal his identity, so they search his underclothing and find he's me!"

"Then you can take off the markings yourself," said Barbara, and left the room.

Really, I couldn't have believed that a jumble-sale was of sufficient importance to cause so much heat and unpleasantness.

However, eventually we had both made our collections. Barbara's looked like a bride's trousseau with her wedding presents thrown in. My own collection dwindled from day to day, as I surreptitiously extracted several old favourites from the pile and restored them to their hiding-places, and by the time it was ready it consisted of a boxful of old razor blades, a few collars about five inches high which I had worn at Oxford twenty years ago, the suit I used for cleaning the car—this, I admit, was sheer bravado—and, to give tone to the lot, a gold-topped malacca cane, which I had always found too dressy for my simple tastes.

Then came Barbara's inspection. My final contribution was quite different from my original selection. The friends of many years were ruthlessly reft from me, with their race—as I considered—but half run. My second-best dress-suit went, two or three of my boiled shirts, and other garments most expensive to replace, but too intimate to mention. I had never before looked upon a jumble-sale as a medium for self-sacrifice. However, I managed, unseen, to stuff in my car-cleaning suit in all its natural greasiness.

A few days later Barbara informed me that Cicely had sent us an invitation to the sale.

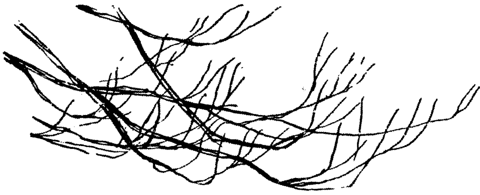
"But does one send out invitations to jumble-sales?" I asked. "I always thought one stuck up a notice in the village shop, and that the parson gave it out before the sermon."

We went to the jumble-sale. I should have thought it was an "At Home," but for the presence of a sprinkling of village folk amongst the well-dressed throng. Barbara was wrong, however, about the fastidiousness of the "nice people." There was no nasty pride about them. They bought what was cheap. The doctor's wife bought, for sixpence, an old steel helmet of mine, saying she could make it do beautifully for a bird's bath. Mrs. Brain shied off the Lucille dress, but bought one of Barbara's hats for fourpence.

"This annual sale is such a great institution," she said. "We poor things, hidden away in the country, can wear anything so long as it is clean and re-trimmed, and yet we shouldn't like to exchange hats in the ordinary way—splendid institution."

As we pushed our way round, Barbara

suddenly exclaimed: "Good Heavens, there's Dolly Burnham! I never thought of



her being here. That gold whistle with a compass at the end is what she gave me for Christmas. She's sure to spot it."

My dinner-jacket and waistcoat went to the Squire's son, whose father had refused to pay any more of his debts at Cambridge. I wonder whether it is still second best, or has been promoted. Perhaps the Squire's son wears it at Cambridge evening functions. At any rate, I know that the Squire's

"'I picked up these plus-fours at the jumble-sale yesterday,' he said. 'Three-and-six, and in jolly good condition. How do you like them?' 'I like them immensely,' I replied. 'I have always liked them.'"

gardener now clips the front hedge in dress trousers and a boiled shirt.

Personally, I attempted to buy a suit of overalls to clean the car in, but Barbara said: "You can't buy those; they have just been handed in by that filthy-looking man who looks after the Vicar's pigs."

"Oh, that chap," I said; "he's just bought my gold-topped malacca cane!"

As we came out we found the Hon. Mrs. Appleton superintending the loading of her purchases into her governess cart.

"Look what I've got!" she exclaimed. "Such bargains!"

We looked. There were a broken bamboo flower-stand, a hockey stick minus the binding, a small roll of faded wall-paper, a megaphone, and a pogo.

"And what will you do with them?" I asked stupidly.

"Do with them! My dear man, don't you understand that each one was a bargain? If I can't find a use for them, I can send them to the jumble-sale next year."

The next day I played golf with the fellow from the Grange. "I picked up these plus-fours at the jumble-sale yesterday," he said. "Three-and-six, and in jolly good condition. How do you like them?"

"I like them immensely," I replied. "I have always liked them."

I think Barbara's ex-Christmas presents went well. Three of them came back to her at the New Year, including the gold whistle-cum-compass.

"You see, it was all right, after all," I said. "Dolly didn't remember she had sent it you for Christmas."

"The cat!" said Barbara. "Of course she knew."

When we got home Barbara said: "By the way, why did you send that greasy suit of yours when I told you not to?"

"Well, I——"

"And you didn't even have it cleaned! Anyhow, I'm glad it's out of the house. Who bought it?"

"Well," I said rather shamefacedly, "you wouldn't let me buy the overalls, so I bought the suit myself. It was my only purchase. What did you buy?"

Barbara was inclined to be evasive, then she said: "My dresses and hats looked so nice, I couldn't bear to think of any of those people having them, so I bought them all back, except the hat Mrs. Brain bought, which I never liked."

"And yet," I said, "it was you who insisted on my sending my dress-suit and plus-fours. In future, whether the jumble-sale be at Puddleton or Timbuctoo, I send nothing but rubbish—you understand, absolute rubbish!"

# SONGTIDE.

**IN deepmost winter**
**When no stream stirred,**
**The cuckoo, the linnet,**
**The paradise bird**
**Perched pining unheard**
**Till song should awaken,**
**And April, green April,**
**Bestir in the bracken.**

**In fresh mid-April**
**The brooks ran free.**
**Bird in the bush sang,**
**Bird on the tree,**
**And the springtide sea,**
**And the seamew winging,**
**And "April, green April!"**
**Was all of their singing.**

**ERIC CHILMAN.**

THE LIMIT.

"D'you think you could marry a chap like me?"
"Oh yes! if he wasn't *too* like you!"

# THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### THE TEA INTERVAL.

*By R. D. C. Graham.*

AT something after four o'clock the jaded toiler in offices feels more than commonly jaded. His pen (or evening paper) falls from his nerveless hand: alternatively he awakes out of a fitful slumber. In either case it is clear to him beyond a peradventure that a spot of tea will sensibly reinvigorate him. Pat to the thought enters a beautiful creature who places beside him a delicious cup of tea and some thin and appetising bread-and-butter. Having gratefully consumed these viands, he finds his energies so fortified that he is able by and by to score several tries (and finally to convert one of them) in the glorious game of "homeward squash."

This kind of thing, I feel sure, occurs habitually in well-regulated offices, but not, alas! in the one which I adorn. Such a *chic* little repast is technically styled "better typists' tea," and is but an ideal to very many of us. This is the ambrosial refreshment which nourishes merchant princes, heads of departments, and splendid fellows of the like calibre. In the Civil Service, for obvious reasons, they partake of it at about a quarter past three. With these awe-stricken eyes I have beheld it fleetly conveyed (doubtless to G.O.'s C.) along the august corridors of the War Office.

Let us leave these favourites of fortune and consider "normal typists' tea." This product is generally far too strong and the cups too small. Nor are the "eats" well chosen. Those sugary pink-and-white biscuits may please the eye, but as foodstuff they lack a certain something. Still, one mustn't be too exacting. When during the so-called meal you are engaged in (*a*) drawing an abstract of title, if there is such a thing, (*b*) casting up a ledger (being careful, however, not to hit the ceiling), (*c*) telephoning urgently with one hand and dictating letters with the other, or (*d*) wishing hard that you had placed less faith in that selection for the 3.30, you do not insist upon the optimum. For my part, if I could be supplied with "typists' tea"— even the "worse" grade, which tends to be lukewarm and unsweetened—not a word of complaint should pass my nib.

But what they do give me is "office-boys' tea." Brrrrrr! That is indeed a very noisome

compound. Its most sinister characteristic is that it doesn't taste in the least like tea. Strange unanalysable flavours suggest the ingredients of the witches' brew in "Macbeth." At times I have seemed to catch the authentic tang of a frog's toe. What really happens, I suppose, is that the boys (bless their frolicsome young hearts !) make it out of gum, paste, Indian ink, cinders, coal, cardboard, typewriter-oil and paper-fasteners. I don't think it can be a particularly wholesome beverage.

What a problem it is, this tea in the office ! There is but one solution, my dear Watson. I brave the wrath of my section commander, pop into an adjacent Tygers' or X.Y.Z., and order coffee. So would you if you had ever sampled that dog's-tongue brew prepared by our office goblins.

THE FIRST THOUGHT.

HUSBAND (excitedly) : A burglar has been here last night.

GOOD HOUSE-WIFE : Oh dear, in the middle of the spring-cleaning, too ! What must he have thought of the muddle ?

**TRAVELLING BY 'BUS.**

I CANNOT feel sorry that I live in a democratic age. There was always too much publicity about a sedan chair. People came and flattened their noses against the window-panes. "Oh, look," they'd say, interested, "he's got a teapot nose !" Nowadays you can get on to a 'bus and be sure of finding half a dozen noses even funnier than yours.

I like travelling by 'bus. I like the stolid stare of the man opposite. I like the fat amble of the wheels. I like seeing all the people who are in a hurry and can't arrive.

Some day I shall buy an omnibus and travel round Europe. English, because I should need something quiet and self-controlled. I once travelled from Nice on a 'bus which squealed with excitement all the way, "Aren't we dogs ? We're going to Monte Carlo !" until I was positively ashamed.

A Parisian omnibus, too, would worry me. It is always in such a hurry that nobody can get on or off. The conductor dislikes passengers. They stand on his feet. They hustle him. Whenever he sees one coming he gets the driver to flatten them out. The street congestion in Paris is not as serious as it is in London.

I feel that my nature is too morose to suit an Italian omnibus. You are expected to talk whether you know the language or not. Failing to comply, you pay a penalty, spit, for instance, to show that you are not too proud to violate the regulations, or else the conductor will decide that you are rich and English, and charge you double fare.

The Spanish 'bus goes so slowly that something has to be done to amuse the passengers.

A NEW EXPERIENCE.

MISTRESS (showing maid how to lay the table): There, Clara, that's the way to arrange the glasses.

MAID: Yes, mum—you see I've never been with a drinking family before!

LOCAL CELEBRITY.

"That's the champion lightweight of the district."
"He doesn't look like a boxer."
"He isn't. He's a grocer!"

The moment it starts they all begin to sing. They sing very loudly on a scale of three notes or so, and at the end of every few bars they lean across each other and slap their friends on the back. This is supposed to be encouraging. The conductor meanwhile stands in a corner and goes into hysterics. His nerves have long since broken down.

AN OVER-WORKED WORD.

"You're rather short, aren't you, caddy?"
"Yes, sir—I've only got a penny farthin'."

On the whole, I think our omnibuses are the best. Our conductors are tolerant. They do not throw you in prison if you have exceeded your distance. They do not pick you up by your face and drop you out when the 'bus is full. They will even act as a guide and forget to punch tickets. I once sat in front of two Americans who wanted to see London. The conductor treated them in that soothing manner which Englishmen use towards foreigners and other lunatics.

"There's the Cancer Hospital," he'd say, "and over there's the Chelsea Cemetery, only you can't see it. That's the house where Mrs. Jones was murdered last week—throat cut from ear to ear—and now we're coming to the Institution for Consumptives."

Give me an English 'bus with a conductor who is a humanitarian.

***Onun.***

It was a hot day and the traffic policeman was having a busy time. In the midst of it he saw an old lady looking across at him, so he held up a 'bus, four cars, a motor-cycle or two, and two loaded trucks.

The woman sidled up to him and the officer bent his head to hear her request.

"It's all right," she said. "I only thought you'd like to know that the number on your collar is the number of my favourite hymn."

"I had a wonderful dream last night," said Harold. "I bet you can't guess what it was." Peter was all attention. "Did you dream that the school was burned down?" he inquired breathlessly. "No," answered Harold. "I didn't dream that, though that wouldn't have been so bad. But what I dreamed was better. Why, I dreamed there never had been any schools at all."

A non-stop gramophone is announced as a "new invention." Then what is the name of the instrument that has been going on for years next door?

TO MAKE A PAIR.

"I hear Basil's having a topping time in Kenya. He tells me he has shot a crocodile twenty-five feet long."
"I should think you stood a good chance of getting a pair of shoes, dear—if he shoots another!"

TRIALS OF AN ARTIST.

FOND PAPA: Children are always good judges. We'll ask baby. Baby, who is this?
BABY (with delight): *Monkey!*

### THE HANDY-WOMAN.

Some young men, we are told, now insist on their *fiancées* attending a course of instruction in the domestic arts.

**Fair lady, ere I offer you my fortune, heart, and hand,**
**There's just a little thing or two I'd like to understand.**
**It's not that I'm concerned about your figure or your face,**
**But have you, dear, been trained to do odd jobs about the place ?**

**If in a frenzied moment I a window chanced to smash,**
**Or broke, by accident, the cord that helps to raise the sash,**
**Could you repair the damage done without the aid of man ?**
**Or solder saucepans when they leak, and mend the water-can ?**

**And if the geyser ceased to act, is that beyond your skill ?**
**Can you fix washers on the taps and save a plumber's bill ?**
**You can ! And also whitewash, paint and decorate ? That's fine !**
**No longer will I hesitate, but ask you to be mine !**

***R. H. Roberts.***

Dorothy's mother was entertaining a caller when the child, who had been playing on the floor, arose and yawned prodigiously. "Oh!" exclaimed the caller, "what a big yawn for a little girl." "Yes," agreed Dorothy, "and the funny thing is that I wasn't listening to you at all."

An archæologist was organising an expedition to one of the warmest parts of Asia Minor. He advertised for labourers to do the excavation work, but few applied. One was a middle-aged farmer, and the archæologist was doubtful if he could stand the heat. He warned him about it, and explained that the temperature often reached 100 in the shade. But the farmer was not to be discouraged. "That's all right," he said. "I'll not be working in the shade all the time."

From a local paper: "The plumbers have finished their part of the contract at the new garage and there now remains only the plumbing to be done." Yes, we know. Our plumber is just like that.

A WORD IN SEASON.

Park-keeper: 'Ere, I'm goin' to close the gates now.
Tramp: All right, mate—don't slam 'em!

### THE CHICKEN-RUN.

***By Treen.***

I MUST admit that Simpkins had the better of the matter of the hedge, but really I thought all along that his wife was the brains of the concern. Now I am certain.

Simpkins is my next-door neighbour and his garden runs down beside mine, the two being divided by a privet hedge, and owing to some prehistoric law—Ancient Lights or something—the hedge is my property. This is a sore point with Simpkins, who thinks that all things should belong to him; and then, there are my fowls. That's another.

I happened to start keeping poultry before Simpkins, and he was much distressed that anyone should keep anything before he did. Simpkins is like that. He waxed sarcastic, and murmured something about rats and noises in the morning. I kept a dignified attitude in regard to this.

The other morning I was feeding them and collecting eggs, when I saw my neighbour's repulsive face glaring at me from over the hedge. I inquired if he had forgotten to take his morning health saline. He did not reply to this.

"About this hedge . . ." he gobbled.

"Aha, my property," I retorted playfully.

"Yes," he snarled, "and yours to keep in sickness and in health. There's a hole," he added bitterly, "just large enough for one of your fowls to get through—not that only one gets through. . . . I should think that your food bill must have gone down. My garden produce has."

Simpkins is by way of being an enthusiastic gardener. Still, there's no accounting for taste.

I said that my fowls, being superior, would not touch inferior garden produce. Simpkins was annoyed at this, and the conversation laxed with some remarks of mutual recrimination.

We continued the next morning. Simpkins was, if anything, more annoyed, and when Simpkins is annoyed he goes a deep red, and Simpkins a deep red is a deal more repulsive than Simpkins pale. I told him this, and he retaliated by what I considered were puerile remarks about my ancestors and relatives.

"If I catch your highly coloured poultry in my garden again," he shouted—Simpkins thinks that the louder he shouts the better of the argument he is getting—"I'll wring their rotten necks."

I retorted acidly that my fowls, being White Wyandottes, couldn't be highly coloured, and further, should anything of a harmful nature befall, and/or, the said poultry, I should consider taking legal action—or the R.S.P.C.A.

Simpkins said that he would retaliate with the Allotment Holders Protection Society. I pointed out, sweetly, that as his was a back

A DISTINCT IMPROVEMENT.

MOTHER: But that's not the Duke's autograph, dear.

CHILD: No, he wrote so badly, Mummie, that I tore it out and wrote it again myself!

garden attached or apportioned to his domiciliary edifice, it could not very well be regarded as an allotment.

Simpkins had no reply to this, and I retired with the honours.

The hedge did not get repaired, and although Simpkins could easily have prevented my chickens from getting through, he was too mean or bigoted to do so, and I was treated several mornings to the exhilarating sight of my next-door neighbour throwing, first his wife's slippers, shoes, etc., followed by his own slippers, shoes, etc., out of the back bedroom window, accompanied by forcible adjectival phrases. I don't

know what their servant thought.; I know what I did.

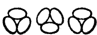
Then suddenly the controversy died down. No longer did Simpkins glare at me from his side of the hedge. No longer did he murmur threats and imprecations. Instead, he became affable, even cheerful, getting up early in the morning, whistling light-heartedly, and, he informed me between merry snatches of song, it no longer mattered about the hole in the hedge, for it led to a closer relationship, a greater "camaraderie" than heretofore.

I did not know the reason until last Sunday. I was fiddling about by the hedge when I heard Mrs. Simpkins talking to her husband.

"Well, Charles," she said, "I think that that old dog kennel, and the bit of hay, and those two crockery eggs, have been one of the finest investments we have made. We can, at least, be sure of our eggs being fresh."

"Yes, m'dear," giggled that utter fool Simpkins, "you have the brain." They both laughed inanely.

I have closed the gap in the hedge.



AN ENQUIRY.

JONES MINOR (as train is on the move): Porter! Porter!! Here, quick!
PORTER (dashing up): Yessir.
JONES MINOR: Is it true that you'd rather be a station-master?

"I HEAR that you have lost your valuable dog, Mr. Bowers," said a sympathetic friend.

"Yes, in a railway accident. I was saved, but the dog wasn't," replied Bowers.

"Oh, how awfully sad!" was the sympathetic comment.

A SAILOR sent his old mother a parrot as a present from overseas. Some time later he came home on leave. He looked for the parrot but could not see it anywhere in the house. Carefully broaching the subject to his mother, he asked her how she liked it. "Ah, it was a handsome bird," she said, "but it was a tough 'un."

IN Pennsylvania they have been broadcasting a rattlesnake's rattle, but what we should like to hear on the wireless is the noise made by a worm when turning.

A PARTY of scientists on the Argentine pampas, it is reported, have unearthed five glyptodons and a scelidotherium. The news has caused consternation in cross-word puzzle circles.

# The Magnetism of Beauty.

Sweet Nell of Old Drury • and King Charles • II •

## UNIQUE PROCESS FOR RETAINING AND REGAINING BEAUTY.

By MLLE. CHARLOTTE SIRIER.

DOES your skin chap or roughen easily, or become unduly red or blotchy? Let me tell you a quick and easy way to overcome the trouble and keep your complexion beautifully white, smooth, and soft. Just get some ordinary mercolized wax at the chemist's, and use a little before retiring, as you would use cold cream. The wax, through some peculiar action, flecks off the rough, discoloured or blemished skin. The worn-out cuticle comes off just like dandruff on a diseased scalp, only in almost invisible particles. Mercolized wax simply hastens Nature's work, which is the rational and proper way to attain a perfect complexion, so much sought after, but very seldom seen. The process is perfectly simple and quite harmless.

★ ★ ★ ★

IT is astounding the number of women who suffer from unsightly growths of hair on the face, and it will come as a piece of good news to know that there is a simple substance known as powdered pheminol which will remove it immediately and permanently. Mix a small quantity into a thin paste with a little water, and apply to the objectionable growths. In two minutes all trace of the hair will have entirely vanished, and your skin will be as soft and smooth as a child's.

★ ★ ★ ★

THE hair should be allowed to breathe, and the greasy film around each strand must be removed with a mild non-alkaline shampoo. Soaps should be tabooed. The very best solution for the purpose can be made by dissolving a teaspoonful of stallax granules in a cup of hot water. It stimulates the scalp to healthy action, and at the same time leaves the hair in that soft, fluffy condition so much admired. Any chemist can supply you with an original packet of stallax, sufficient to make twenty-five or thirty shampoos.

★ ★ ★ ★

ONE need not resort to the very questionable expedient of hair-dye in order not to have grey hair. The grey hair can easily be changed back to a natural colour in a few days' time merely by the application of a simple, old-fashioned, and perfectly harmless home-made lotion. Procure from your chemist two ounces of tammalite concentrate, and mix it with three ounces of bay rum. Apply this to the hair a few times with a small sponge, and you will soon have the pleasure of seeing your grey hair gradually darkening to the desired shade. The lotion is pleasant, not sticky or greasy, and does not injure the hair in any way.

## THE LOVE STORY.

*By Grace Mary Golden.*

THE tragedy of it cut me to the heart. For she was so young, this niece of mine, no more than a child in years, yet as she told me her experiences it seemed that she must be a woman indeed, saddened and disillusioned by the cruelty of life.

There was no waste of words or show of emotion about Margaret's recital, but a poignant simplicity that was the more touching, and as she passed from chapter to chapter I felt I could see it all and fill in the details for myself.

The lover of whom she spoke—I knew he must be tall and dark, handsome and athletic, with a deep manly voice, because she had so often told me that her ideal man was like that, and I guessed that he was what is known as a lady's man, so popular with the fair sex that at first he did not take very much notice of Margaret, only bestowing a little condescending admiration on her prettiness. Then, I imagined, he had become intrigued by a show of indifference on her part, either real or assumed, for Margaret, though young, knew better than to fling herself at any man's head. He became really keen in the end, falling passionately in love with her, and at last came the halcyon days of betrothal, when he vowed to love her as long as life should last.

And then—the sudden shattering blow! There was, I gathered, no gradual cooling off, no mutual discovery of incompatibility, only the blunt announcement that he no longer loved her at all! I wonder did he meet some other girl whose charms so far transcended Margaret's that he transferred his allegiance on the spot? Was he of the type that burns fiercely but not for long? Or did she perchance kill his love by some youthful inadvertence? I shall never know, for she was grimly silent on the point and I shrank from asking the direct question.

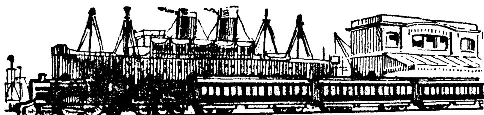
SYMPATHY.

WORKMAN (who has been deputed by mates to convey their sympathy to badly injured fellow-workman): You don't 'arf fall funny, George—w'y, they ain't done laughin' about it at the works yet!

Even as I wondered she repeated the story:

"He loves me—little—much—passionately—until death—not at all! Oh, dash! Three or four more plums, please, Auntie!"

And she passed up her plate, its edge symmetrically decorated with the plum-stones that were so innocently responsible for the tragedy.



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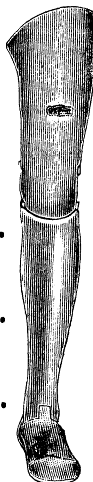

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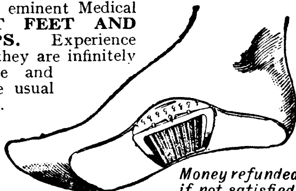

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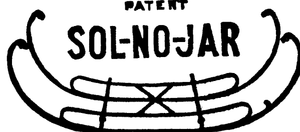


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**NURSING PREPARATIONS.**

It is suggested that chlorine gas could be used as a cure for colds.

**The house is in confusion, there is panic in the air,**
**For the family is arming for the fray ;**
**We are rushing back and forward as we hurriedly prepare**
**To overcome the illness of the day ;**
**But, first and most important, ere we call upon the "doc."**
**To give us an example of his skill,**
**An inspection of our gas-masks will occur at six o'clock,**
**Now that father's showing symptoms of a chill.**

**We have purchased respirators, since the malady began,**
**For those who've never handled them before,**
**And we're teaching them (by numbers), just as quickly as we can,**
**All the movements that we practised in the war ;**
**And it might, in this connection, be announced that Uncle John,**
**As every one who looks at him agrees,**
**Is improved in his appearance all the time he's got it on,**
**Now that father has been overheard to sneeze.**

**They can pull them on so quickly now that nothing can go wrong**
**(What a blessing sister Mary's had a bob !),**
**And we've stationed little Algernon to beat upon the gong**
**When the medico is getting on the job ;**
**In short, we show a rigid resolution to remain**
**Well and healthy when the doctor starts to waft**
**The fumes in his direction that will counteract the pain**
**Of father's having lingered in a draught.**

***T. Hodgkinson.***

REPARTEE.

"Ah, one 'arf the world don't know 'ow the other 'arf lives.
"I know—but that ain't *your* fault!"

ENTER Ivor, accompanied by a grubby little maiden.

"What is your name, dear ?" I ask.

"Nellie."

"And you play with Ivor ?"

A nod.

"And how old are you ?"

"I am as old as Ivor."

"What do you play at, when you are in the garden together ?"

"I play at what Ivor plays."

"But suppose Ivor wants to play at something you do not like, what then ?"

"I play at it."

"So you don't believe that thirteen is an unlucky number ?"

"Naw, there ain't anything in it."

"Well, where are all the people that lived thirteen hun'red years ago ?"

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# THE MAY WINDSOR

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# Mother the Health Doctor says

## My own childhood is not so *very* far away

Mother, the health doctor, is young enough to remember those little heaps of dirt and sticks, those chopped-up leaves and mud cakes that made the most delicious fare at dolly's tea-parties.

She knows, too, that disease germs lurk in dirt. But she is far too wise to forbid the natural playthings of little girls and boys. Wash frequently with Lifebuoy Soap—that's mother's rule. When the rosy and tired youngsters have finished play, then the wonderful health element of Lifebuoy penetrates deep down into the pores of their skins, driving out all impurities.

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# Lifebuoy Soap

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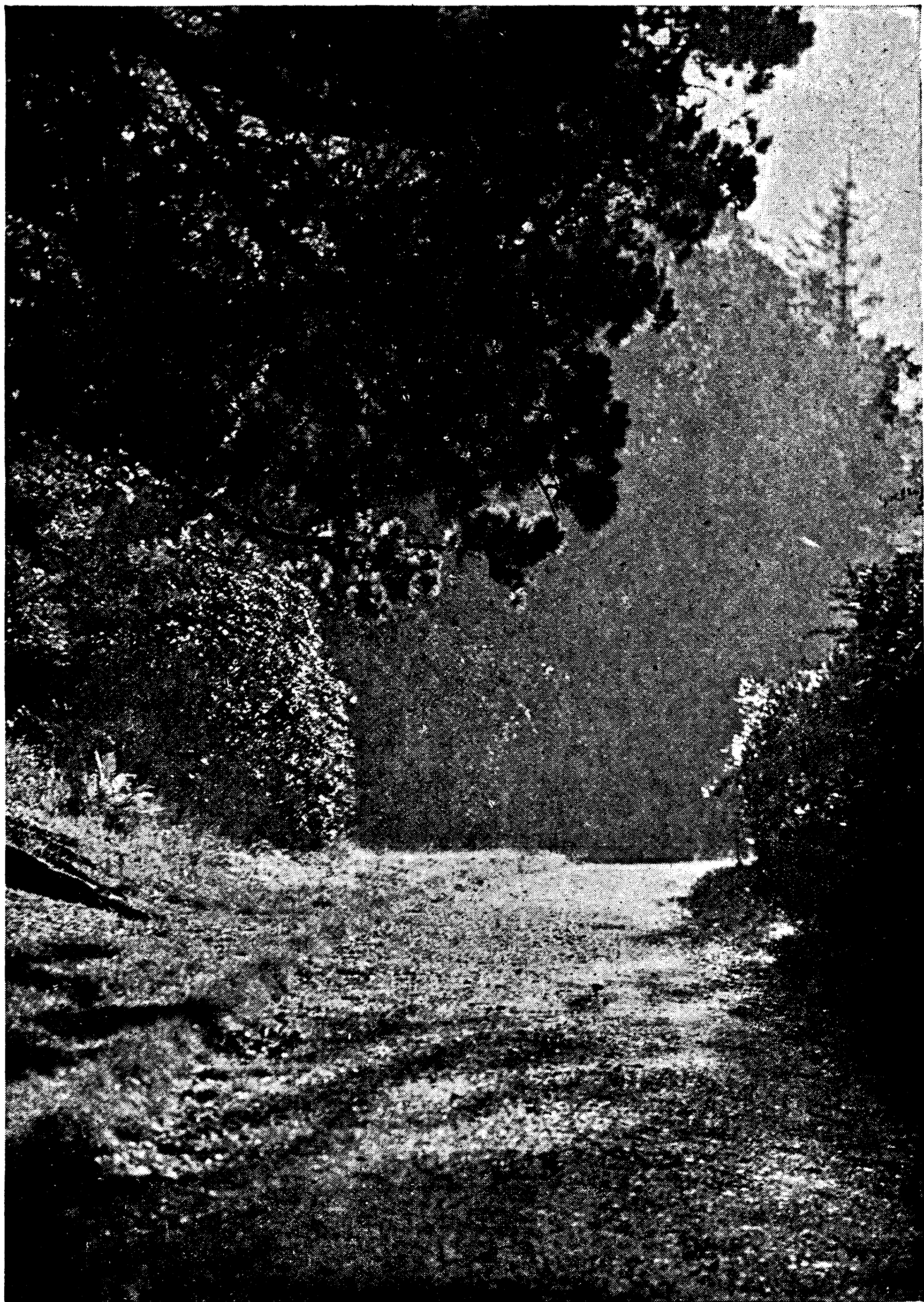


MORNING RADIANCE.

A Photographic Study by Cecil B. Waterlow.

"Harry was staring over the top of his card."

# THE BADGE OF SERVITUDE

By STEPHEN McKENNA

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT BAILEY

"*VISITORS to Croome Hall in Ascot Week attend at their own risk.*"

For six years Harry Newsome's form of invitation, or his acquiescence in the invitations which his friends issued to themselves, had not varied. The Ascot meeting, he would explain, lasted only four days ; and in that time he had always a great deal of money to make. He must be spared the distraction of feminine society during his working-hours.

"You should marry a rich wife," advised Arthur Pennoyer.

Harry shook his head without answering. A rich wife, as Mrs. Pennoyer proved, could be too dearly bought.

"We should then," said Captain Greer, "feel more certain of our invitations here. I'd applied for my badge and my wife had ordered all her Ascot frocks before we knew whether you were giving your usual party."

"I didn't know myself," said Harry. "I never do. I had an appalling Epsom and, if I don't make three hundred by Friday, I'm done for."

"If you married the right kind of wife . . ." began Colonel Daventry.

"Haven't we enough women as it is ?" Harry inquired wearily of his three much-married friends.

"If you had a wife, she could keep the other women out of mischief and we could race in peace," explained Pennoyer.

"I do that now, by choosing the men very carefully and leaving the women to take care of themselves."

To the eyes of a cynic, the care with which Harry Newsome chose his guests might seem directed to his own advantage. Colonel Daventry, though his beguiling young wife atoned for his own dullness, was only useful socially as an opponent at bridge. The best thing to be said of Pennoyer was that, whenever a party hung fire, he enlivened it by his willingness to bet a hundred pounds on any subject, from a date in English history to the prospect of an autumn dissolution, and that his knowledge of history was no more dependable than his predictions in politics. Captain Greer was so well-informed a follower of racing that Harry invited him in spite of a wife whose sole commendation was that no one could be sure whether she was more a fool or a liar. It was Mrs. Greer's foible to know people. She was prompt with the family name of the obscurest peer and prophetic with the title of the last creation. For half an hour each morning she read aloud the obituary notices in *The Times* and securely invented encounters with dignitaries of Church and State whose demise prevented their repudiating her pretended intimacy.

On the day when Harry could decide whether she was as foolish and untruthful as she seemed, he was determined never to invite her again to Croome Hall.

After six years the house-party had found itself; and the customary peace of the first evening, when no one could yet say "I *meant* to back Fairy Wand, but—like a fool—I was put off," was only threatened when Arthur Pennoyer selected, as a conversational opening, the threadbare question whether or no their host should begin to think of "settling down."

"I can't support a wife," Harry confessed, when at last he was invited to express an opinion, "but I should look favourably on any wife who would support me. Failing that, let me make money in the only way I know."

Half an hour before the first race on the first day Harry entered the enclosure alone. Following his invariable practice, he had—after an early luncheon—bidden his guests good-bye and promised to meet them in the Automobile Club park after the last race. He was now free to move *incognito*, from one o'clock until five, in the thick of friends who loyally refrained from recognising him. No one asked for a tip. No one cajoled him to carry betting-cards to unattainable bookmakers. No one took him for aimless walks in the paddock. No one introduced him to friends on leave from the Federated Malay States, not seen for (it must be ?) seventeen years. "Three hundred pounds to make; and only four days to make it in," Harry murmured to himself at short intervals. "I must get down to it." Methodically, industriously and successfully, he collected information, studied form and inspected the condition of the runners in the first race.

"I disapprove of young men who enslave themselves to racing," said Mrs. Pennoyer.

"It's all a blind," Mrs. Daventry affirmed. "Harry's in love."

"Did he tell you so ?"

"He said that a lot depended on this meeting. He said he wouldn't be able to look after me. He said that, if he was to know a moment's happiness again, he would have to work very hard."

"Or find a wife whose father had worked hard," sneered Mrs. Pennoyer. "Personally, I disapprove . . ."

The familiar opening, a hundred times closed by others, was now choked by herself. Isolated on a remote seat, Harry was interesting himself in a girl whose appearance held an indefinable air of wealth ("Cartier throughout," whispered Mrs. Pennoyer), as her expression conveyed an undoubted suggestion of helplessness ("Convent-bred !").

"Poor . . . *wretch*," murmured Mrs. Pennoyer, who disapproved of Cartier watches and convent education.

Such a girl, she decided, would have no more chance with Harry than a rabbit with a boa-constrictor. He would marry her and gamble away her fortune and then tire of her. She was just the sort of girl who would "fall for" just that sort of man (if one who disapproved of slang might use the phrase).

From a distance she studied his manner with the girl. They were not talking; they did not seem even to be acquainted; but Harry was staring over the top of his card with an interest that seemed to Mrs. Pennoyer (who disapproved of demonstrative men) unhealthy. Forgetting the privileges to which every host is entitled, she descended upon him to inquire what was going to win the first race. Harry, starting like a detected thief, mumbled that he had not yet inspected the horses and bolted guiltily to the paddock.

As she had not been invited to accompany him, Mrs. Pennoyer took his place and continued his interrupted scrutiny of the girl at the other end of the seat. Seen at closer quarters, there was nothing amiss with her clothes; nor with her looks; nor with her carriage. She curtseyed gracefully as the royal procession drove down the course;

and, when she turned to look at the royal box, Mrs. Pennoyer caught a glimpse of soft brown eyes, long, curling lashes and a little wistful mouth that seemed to be asking timidly for its first kiss.

Mrs. Pennoyer stood up, let her card fall and stooped to retrieve it. *Miss . . . Miss Joan . . .*

The girl bent down and picked up the card. In moving she had twisted the badge out of sight; and, as though she intended that no one should read it, she now sat with a small gloved hand over it.

"Oh, thanks so much!" said Mrs. Pennoyer, moving away in disappointment.

Had any of her friends a Joan of that age? Everybody seemed to be called Joan nowadays. Joan Yarborough, Joan Sturton, Joan Ambleside.

"I shall ask Harry, when I see him," Mrs. Pennoyer decided, forgetting her disapproval in human curiosity.

Though she saw her host at short intervals during the afternoon, Mrs. Pennoyer had no opportunity of interrogating him until they met in the garden of Croome Hall before dinner.

"A bad day," Harry grumbled. "I didn't actually *lose* money, because I didn't have a bet, but I lost a rare chance of making some. Sodamint the Second. I was given that by the owner, but I let it go. I must get down to it to-morrow. A great deal of money to make and only three days to make it in! One can't *concentrate* at Ascot," he continued with a return of his old impatience. "By the way, did you notice a girl in a floppy hat and a pink dress?" he inquired of Mrs. Daventry. "Quite pretty, I should say, though I didn't see her face."

Mrs. Daventry looked up eagerly to hail the dawn of a romance.

"I think I know the one you mean," she answered. "She's very pretty indeed, Harry."

"I was stalking her the entire afternoon," he confessed. "Her Christian name's Joan (I saw it on her badge). I was wondering who she was. The most amazing eyelashes . . ."

"I thought you hadn't seen her face," Mrs. Daventry teased him.

On the second day Harry entered the enclosure a few minutes before his usual time. Mrs. Daventry, arriving soon afterwards, asked Mrs. Pennoyer if she knew the name of a girl who was evidently exciting Harry Newsome's interest.

"The one he was pursuing yesterday?"

"Yes. Ah, there she is!"

The two ladies turned as a girl in a petunia frock walked into the enclosure. She was unattended; but, as she stopped to mark her card, Harry Newsome appeared by her side and affected to study the runners on the number-board until the girl drifted away into the paddock. He was observed there a quarter of an hour later, leaning over the rail of the far ring; he was observed again, pressing himself into one of the lifts; and, when the race for the Cup started, he was observed a third time, on the top of the stand. On all three occasions he was seen to be standing beside a girl in a petunia frock.

"It's an extraordinary thing," he confided to Mrs. Daventry before dinner, "I glued on to that girl the entire day, but I still don't know who she is. If she'd even spoken to anyone I know, I might have found out, but she seems to have come alone. An amazingly attractive girl. And she seems keen on racing. How old would you say she was?"

"Twenty? Twenty-two?"

"I don't approve of girls marrying before they're five-and-twenty," interposed Mrs. Pennoyer.

"They say," enunciated Harry, "that the proper age for a woman when she marries is half her husband's age *plus* seven. Now, I'm thirty. Half thirty is fifteen. Add seven. Twenty-two!"

"But you're not *seriously* thinking . . ." began Mrs. Pennoyer.

"I can't very well propose to her till I know her name," Harry laughed. "I wonder if Mrs. Greer could help . . ."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the men, who inquired how many winners Harry had found and expressed amazement when they heard that he had not had a bet.

"Beachcomber was a certainty," said Captain Greer.

"I was busy with other things," answered Harry. "As a matter of curiosity, I wanted to find out a certain name. . . ."

"Well, that's easy enough, when every one's wearing a badge," said Pennoyer.

"Not so easy as you think. I've tried for two days. . . ."

"I lay you five hundred to a hundred I find out before the last race to-morrow," Pennoyer wagered promptly.

By the morning of the third day the entire house-party of Croome Hall had received its instructions. Whoever sighted Miss Joan first was to report without loss of time to Mr.

Pennoyer what dress she was wearing. After that, every one was to employ his ingenuity in finding out who she was; to anyone who supplied information establishing her identity Pennoyer undertook to pay ten pounds out of the stakes.

" Mary St. Helens has a Joan of about that age," recollected Mrs. Greer, " but then she'd be an 'honourable.' The Hanbury girl is Joan, but she has blue eyes . . ."

" Isn't the simplest thing just to look at her badge?" asked Colonel Daventry, who was slow-minded.

" We've tried," said Mrs. Pennoyer, " but she always hides it away in some unexpected place or covers it with her scarf."

As the horses went down to the post before the first race, Mrs. Daventry hurried in triumph to a little group by the judge's box.

" First blood to me!" she whispered. " I've seen her. She's in cinnamon to-day, with a black-lace hat and scarf. Dull-gold stockings and shoes. There!"

Mrs. Greer looked eagerly across the enclosure, then looked away again with a frown of perplexity.

" Oh, my dear, I know her as well as I know you!" she told Harry. " She's been to my house. You're quite right! She's sweetly pretty."

" But who is she?" demanded the others.

"It will come to me. Her mother . . . Oh, it was on the tip of my tongue then!"

The group by the judge's box moved up the lawn in open formation, closing gently in on the girl in the black-lace hat till she was surrounded. Mrs. Pennoyer, disdaining finesse and eager for her reward, advanced with a smiling face and outstretched hand, exclaiming: "Oh, good morning, my dear!" But the blankness in the girl's startled brown eyes daunted her and she fell back, murmuring: "I *beg* your pardon! I mistook you for some one else." Mrs. Daventry brushed an imaginary bee from her own sleeve; but, though she looked in apprehension to see whether it had flown on to the girl's dress, she lacked courage to pursue it into the folds of the mantilla shrouding the badge.

"The girl, he decided, was frightened by the antics of his too eager friends. Instead of looking at the horses, she was glancing about her as though she wanted to avoid some one."

Doubtful of his friends' assistance, Harry

walked moodily to the paddock and spent the rest of the afternoon following a black hat and a cinnamon dress. The girl, he decided, was frightened by the antics of his too eager friends. Instead of looking at the horses, she was glancing about her as though she wanted to avoid some one. Whenever she observed him approaching, she melted into the crowd.

" I don't suppose she'll come to-morrow," he lamented to Colonel Daventry. " I shall win my bet, but I want more than that."

" Then make the most of your opportunities now," the Colonel recommended, pointing through the press to a black hat and a cinnamon frock.

Without waiting to answer, Harry gave chase. The enclosure was filling before the last race, but the girl was leaving early. Unattended, as always, she walked through the turnstile and into the road, evidently bound for the station ; and Harry, diving into the covered way, hurried ahead of her.

On the platform she did not try to avoid him ; but, before he could approach her, a maid in a black coat and skirt hurried up ; and the two walked down the platform together. Harry was starting after them when his eye was caught by the oblong cardboard of an enclosure badge. MISS . . . MISS JOAN . . . MISS JOAN DISTERN. The badge had dropped from her hand. It had nearly fallen on the metals.

Harry watched the stream of passengers pouring out of the covered way. Was there a chance that he might get into the same carriage as this girl ?

" No, her ladyship has to get back for a big ball to-night. Cardigan House."

Harry turned to find the little maid speaking. She was seated with her back to him, holding fast to a leather jewel-case. Beside her was the girl in the black hat and cinnamon frock.

" We were going to that," said the maid's companion, " but his lordship's death . . . You saw about that, I expect ? "

It was the first time that Harry had heard her voice : and, though accents were curable, he was disquieted.

" It was very sudden," said the little maid, " but he'd enjoyed bad health, poor old gentleman, for a long time."

Impatiently Harry Newsome rustled his paper. Surely the girl had better uses for her time than to discuss with her button-nosed maid how many years his lordship (whoever *he* might be !) had " enjoyed " bad health ! The maid was such a common little creature, too !

" It was hard on Miss Joan," said the little maid.

" Well, as she's never been, she doesn't know what she's missed," answered the girl.

" You *have* a nerve, I must say ! " exclaimed the little maid ; and Harry started at the surprising familiarity.

The girl laughed in a way that made him thankful to be screened by his evening paper.

" Oh, I don't know," she was answering modestly. " Of course, if you let on, I shall get the sack. And then I suppose I can whistle for another place."

" But if any of Miss Joan's friends had seen you ? "

" They did, bless you ! And they looked through me just like they do if they come into Miss Joan's room when I'm dressing her. *That* wasn't the danger : what frightened me was that somebody would read out the name. I kept it hidden as best I could, but the old busters at the gates kept saying, ' Your badge, please, miss ? Have you your badge ? ' and I was scared to death that one of Miss Joan's friends would see it. Talk about staring ! It's worse than going to court."

" Well, I must say ! " gasped the little maid. " You'll be doing that next ! " she gurgled.

Harry Newsome tried to walk away with dignity, but he could not back down the platform, and, if he turned, his face might be seen. The girl in the black hat and the cinnamon dress was continuing her narrative with unabated gusto.

" It was a brain-wave, as Miss Joan would say," she explained. " I had a letter to tell me that his lordship was dead and Miss Joan was staying on in Scotland with her father till after the funeral. No Ascot, no nothing : she'd be in mourning till the end of the season. Would I send up her black things ? And, if she wanted me, she'd let me know. Next day she wrote to say she wouldn't want me ; but I could go home if I was afraid to be alone in the flat. I was just starting out when I saw her Ascot badge ; and that gave me the idea. ' If you don't act silly,' I said, ' no one will be the wiser. There are all the clothes,' I said. ' If you keep your eyes open,' I said, ' and watch what the others are doing, you're safe. *You* don't know *them* ; and *they* don't know *you*.' There was a bit in the paper about the special trains from Waterloo. I just bought a ticket and followed the crowd."

A long silence was broken by sounds of confused motion, as the London train drew in.

"And you've been to Ascot," said an envious voice. "The Royal Enclosure."

"And curtseyed to the king and queen!"

"I should never have had the nerve!"

"I don't say I wasn't scared. There was one young lobster-eyes who followed me wherever I went. I'd do it again, though, if I had the chance, sure as my name's Minnie Weston. Well, so long, Katie dear. See you again some day, I expect. Is her ladyship going to Scotland this year?"

"I expect so. If they haven't married her off by then. My word, they do try! What about you?"

"We shall hang about here till August, I expect. Miss Joan talks about going to Venice in September."

Harry Newsome walked out of the station and made for the parking enclosure, where he found his party debating anxiously whether they should scatter in search of him.

Colonel Daventry studied his host's face with new interest.

"Any luck?" he inquired.

"I did what I went to do. I wanted to find out that girl's name."

At once the quiet of the parking enclosure, now almost empty, was riven by the clamour of excited voices.

"Oh, but we could have told you!" cried Mrs. Greer. "She's Joan Barclay. I was wrong in saying she'd been to my house; I don't actually know her, but the likeness to her mother is unmistakable."

"As I happen to know Joan Barclay . . ." began Mrs. Pennoyer in the tone of one who felt that a contradiction must be flat or nothing.

"I don't know the girl, but I know the dress," said Mrs. Daventry. "I saw it in Durand's just as it was being packed up. I asked who it was for; and the woman said Miss Joan Distern. I don't know if that makes you any the wiser, Harry, but that's the name. I know, because I made the woman spell it. Such a curious name . . ."

"I don't know why you should think it curious," interposed Mrs. Greer. "It's the family name of the Stradleighs. I expect you saw that old Lord Stradleigh died last week. I believe the new peer has a daughter: and for all I know her name may be Joan, but she would hardly be at Ascot when her grandfather's hardly in his grave. Besides, I *know* that girl was Joan Barclay. You must admit that there may be more than one black-and-cinnamon dress in the world. I think I may say I've won the ten pounds."

Harry Newsome waited to hear if any of the men had a name to put forward. Pennoyer showed the prudence to refrain from claiming a victory.

"It's very good of you all to take so much trouble," he acknowledged, "but the girl in question is not Miss Joan Barclay and she's not Miss Joan Distern. She is a Miss Weston."

Mrs. Greer set the fingers of her memory to turn the pages of a mental *Who's Who*.

"Weston? There's the admiral, of course. And there were some Westons I used to know in Derbyshire. Weston? Weston? I can't recall a *Joan* Weston, unless she's the admiral's daughter,"

"The name by which she seems to be generally known is Minnie," added Harry.

"Now that I come to think of it, the admiral used to talk about his little Minnie," Mrs. Greer recollected without hesitation. "If you want to see her again, Harry, I can easily bring about a meeting."

Breaking through his preoccupation, like sunshine through a mist, came the realisation that Mrs. Greer need never again be invited to Croome Hall. She was, Harry recognised, every bit as foolish as she seemed and somewhat more untruthful.

"This young person has already cost me three profitable days' racing," he replied. "I don't propose to follow up the acquaintanceship."

Mrs. Daventry sighed at the fading of a possible romance.

"I'm sorry. All our trouble for nothing! I don't grudge it, but she seemed *such* an attractive girl."

"I don't approve of men who aren't in earnest about these things," said Mrs. Pennoyer severely.

"Perhaps he's more in earnest than we think," whispered Mrs. Daventry, with a look of eager hope at Harry's grimly set face. "Now that we know her name, if there's anything I can do, Harry dear . . . I mean, if you *want* to see her again . . ."

"If I do, I can meet her out in Venice," Harry answered. "She expects to be there in September. Meanwhile, I have a great deal of money to make and only one day to make it in."

# THE LION MAN

## By RALPH DURAND

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

THE sun's rim dipped behind the mountains; the evening breeze shivered in the tree-tops; the temperature dropped perceptibly; and George Fawcett, Collector of the Malingeni District of British Central Africa, put on his hat and went out to inspect his kingdom. As a subordinate official of a minor British Crown Colony, he was liable to be dethroned by a Secretary of State; he was liable to have his methods of government criticised by Members of Parliament who could not have found Malingeni on the map; he sometimes got official wiggings from the Commissioner at Zomba: yet in actual fact his power was more absolute than that of any crowned monarch of Europe. "The beauty of your job is that you have no precedent to worry about," said the Commissioner when appointing him to his district. "Do your best, use your common sense, and make your own laws as you go along."

The laws that Fawcett made were often such as would have amazed Whitehall. In going the rounds of his district he often exempted from taxation a hut that was unusually well built. On the other hand, if a village offended his nostrils the taxes to which its inhabitants were liable were doubled—and there was no appeal against his fiat. He often settled long and complicated inter-village lawsuits about grazing or hunting rights by tossing up a coin; and when the Principal Medical Officer sent his assistant to Malingeni with orders to vaccinate the population wholesale, Fawcett decreed that "the White Man's Magic against small-pox" should be given only to those whom the chiefs and headmen recommended as deserving it. The natural result was that every one in the district intrigued to be operated on, instead of hiding in the bush, as they would otherwise have done, at sight of the dispenser and his lancets.

Fawcett first made the round of his Boma. His house stood at one corner of the compound. At another was the Bwalo, a thatch-roofed, open-sided structure where he sat when he dispensed justice or received the hut-tax. In a third corner were a fowl-house and a goat-pen, used temporarily to house the taxes of those who paid in kind. In the fourth was Fawcett's private zoo. As he walked up to the cages, a young leopard rubbed itself against the bars of its cage and purred, a bushbuck asked for sugar, and a monkey relinquished the pursuit that occupies so many of the waking hours of tame monkeys and demanded ground-nuts. Between the fowl-house and the Bwalo was the prison and the barrack of the twelve Askaris who guarded the prisoners, stood sentry at the compound entrance, ran messages, and between whiles formed fours.

Fawcett fed his animals, told the Askari sergeant that the prison was not as well swept as it should have been, asked the prisoners if they had any complaints, and then turned his attention to other outdoor duties. He was many things besides magistrate and revenue official. As Minister of Agriculture, he visited an experimental plantation where he grew seed for free distribution to whoever asked for it. Then, as Minister for Communications, he inspected a bridge that was being made over a neighbouring stream. As a specimen of engineering it was obviously the work of an amateur, but what it lacked in beauty it made up in strength. The bridge inspected and admired, Fawcett walked homewards through the village to see how his subjects were getting on. Here men saluted him by clapping their hands and scraping their feet in the dust as one wipes one's feet on a door-mat. Women, water-pot on head, filing up from the stream, folded their arms across their chests and bobbed. Fat little naked children squeaked "Mfumu," and ran away laughing. Fawcett laughed too. He was popular and knew it, and, being human, was proud of it.

At the foot of a flat-topped acacia tree a crowd of open-mouthed children squatted

round the blacksmith's forge. At the moment the forge was cold, and Kambiri, the blacksmith, was busy carving pieces of wart-hog tusk into excellent imitations of lion's teeth, which he would eventually sell as ornaments to vain young men who wished to pose as daring lion hunters without incurring the danger of meeting a lion. Kambiri grinned and held up the last he had made for inspection.

"Will the Mfumu buy?" he asked.

"Not that rubbish," said Fawcett, laughing. "What is this?"

He threw it over his back, took the forepaws in his hands, and made a rush at the group of children. It appeared that they had seen the game before. Some of them fled, squealing; others dodged and, shouting with laughter, tried to catch the dangling tail.

"Bring it up to my house this evening," said Fawcett. "Perhaps I will buy."

Fawcett did not want the moth-eaten skin. He had already collected more African curios than he ever expected to have any use for. But he was willing to pay a few shillings for it for the sake of getting the blacksmith to

"The crowd hushed and steadied as he reached it, and parted to let him see a dead body lying on the road."

Hanging from the eaves of the blacksmith's hut was a skin so old, discoloured and hairless, that it would have been difficult to believe that it had ever covered so lordly a beast as a lion if the claws had not been there to prove it. Fawcett lifted one of the dangling paws and examined it curiously. Where the pad of the paw had once been was now a sort of bag of antelope skin roughly but strongly sewn to the original hide, and heavily weighted with iron.

"What is this for?" he demanded.

"That is what I wear when I turn into a lion," said the blacksmith, chuckling.

talk. Kambiri was the leading local authority on native legends and customs. Squatting on Fawcett's verandah after dark, he would relate folk-tales, propound queer native riddles, or talk of the things that his people did and believed before the white man came to the country. The folk-tales—most of them were about the wonderful adventures of the hare in escaping the just vengeance of other animals—were childishly innocent. As a boy Fawcett had read the American-negro versions—in which the hare appears as "Brer Rabbit"—of the very same stories; and as a child he had come across some of

them in *Æsop's Fables*. Some of Kambiri's tales were uncanny. He would chuckle grimly as he told of wizards who turn themselves into owls and keep watch while ghouls do shameful things. It was gruesome tales that Kambiri loved best to tell. He would go down on all fours and hop about and snarl to illustrate with what ritual members of the Human Hyæna Secret Society ate their horrible feasts by night in remote forest clearings.

Fawcett made note of all that Kambiri told him ; partly because it was one of his ambitions to lecture some day before the Royal Anthropological Institute ; but principally because to govern black men successfully it is necessary to get at the back of the black man's mind and understand what, in his inmost heart, he believes.

Kambiri did not come to the Boma that evening, and as Fawcett smoked and watched the moon rise over Lake Nyasa he forgot him and turned his thoughts with justifiable satisfaction to the success he was making of his job. During the past year the hut-tax had been readily paid, cotton cultivation was steadily growing, crime had diminished, chiefs and headmen had shown increasing readiness to bring criminal cases to him for trial, instead of dealing with them according to ancient methods which involved compelling accuser and accused to undergo the ordeal by poison. He was thoroughly well pleased with himself.

That same night his kingdom began to crumble away from its foundations.

He was roused from sleep by a panting messenger who announced that a lion had come right into the village, and was killing right and left. Jumping out of bed, Fawcett looked out and saw that the village was ablaze with lights and as swarming with confused movement as a disturbed ants' nest. Already the Askaris were pouring towards it out of their barrack at the double. He slipped on his boots, loaded his rifle, and followed. The crowd hushed and steadied as he reached it, and parted to let him see a dead body lying on the road not fifty yards from the last of the huts. The lion had not come into the village, nor had it killed more than the one victim, but that it should dare to come as near as it did to human habitations was warrant enough for hubbub and excitement.

Fawcett wasted no time over a post-mortem examination. He organised the Askaris and such of the villagers as had pluck enough to follow him, and beat the neighbouring thickets and reed-brakes. At the end of an hour's fruitless work, the sergeant-Askari made a suggestion that he might profitably have made earlier.

"Mfumu," he said, "we have in prison a hunter."

"Fetch him," said Fawcett, and called off the beaters.

The hunter-prisoner was no hardened criminal. A week before Fawcett had sentenced him to a month's hard and useful labour at road-repairing for setting fire to a reed-brake that harboured buck and, incidentally, a square mile of pasture and a corner of the Collector's cherished plantation. The man bore no malice, however, and was delighted with a promise of remission of sentence if he found the lion.

First he critically examined the dead man's wounds, the crushed skull, and the long, deep, parallel scratches on the back. He illustrated in pantomime how a lion springs, and pointed out that a lion was undoubtedly the culprit, as the scratches from a leopard's claws would have been closer together. What puzzled him was that the lion had neither carried nor dragged his victim away. He was still more puzzled when he could find no sign whatever of lion tracks in the dust. After a long search he said that it was quite futile to search for the lion, because it was a ghost-lion.

Fawcett abused the hunter for a coward and a fraud, sent him back to prison, and despatched messengers inviting every white man within a radius of thirty miles to come and join in a lion-hunt. One was down with fever and could not come, but the other, a medical missionary, came at once.

Together, throughout three stiflingly hot days, they explored every thicket, every reed-brake, every patch of jungle that seemed capable of harbouring a lion. The Askaris and the prisoners came with them to act as beaters, but the free men absolutely refused. Real lions they were prepared to face within reason, but to hunt for ghost-lions was both futile and absolutely foolhardy. No man, they considered, should be asked to hunt a devil that had a lion's strength and the added protection of invisibility.

To Fawcett's intense annoyance, the Reverend Percy Dalbiac seemed rather attracted by the ghost-lion theory. "When you have been in Central Africa as long as I have," he said, "you will feel inclined to believe a great deal that is in neither the Catechism nor the medical text-books."

It happened that almost a month before a woman had been killed by a lion just outside the outskirts of the village. The first tragedy had been accepted as a regrettable but normal occurrence. The effect of the second, accentuated by the hunter's opinion on it, was utterly demoralising. Hut-tax became difficult to collect. Interest in Fawcett's cotton-growing experiments languished. In one of the villages young men danced the war dance without asking the Collector's formal permission. For this act of insubordination they were all arrested and sentenced to hard labour. The roads benefited, but Fawcett felt that he was losing his hold on his people. In his perplexity the Collector consulted an old chief who had hitherto taken very kindly to white man's rule. Pesani told him quite frankly that the people were nervous, worried, and dissatisfied with the way they were being governed. White man's law was excellent so far as it went, but it was obviously powerless to deal with an epidemic of witchcraft. If Fawcett could catch the ghost-lion, well and good. If he failed he ought to stand aside and let the people deal with it in their own way. What ought to be done, said Pesani, was to cause all chiefs and headmen to send to the Boma all men and women who might reasonably be suspected of sorcery. These should be given an opportunity of proving their innocence by publicly swallowing the poisonous *mwabvi* bean. If the ordeal had no worse effect than to make them grievously sick, they were obviously innocent and entitled to claim compensation from the administration. If, on the other hand, the poison killed them, they were obviously guilty, if not of being ghost-lions, at least of being something equally dangerous to the community.

Fawcett dismissed the chief with less than his usual courtesy, sent for Kambiri, and demanded information about ghost-lions. The blacksmith did not agree with Pesani. Ghost-lions, he said, were the souls of dead lions who took advantage of living men while they were asleep, entered their bodies, and compelled them to go out hunting. It was useless to try and catch the innocent host of the lion's restless soul, because if you did the ghost-lion would merely go into some other man's body. Some authorities considered that ghost-lions were merely agents employed by human wizards in their own private quarrels, in which case there might be some advantage in finding the wizard. But it was more probable that the wizard was already dead and had arranged his iniquitous partnership with the ghost-lion in the underworld.

Fawcett recorded what Kambiri had told him in his anthropological notes, and went from village to village trying to restore public confidence. But no one brought lawsuits for him to decide, no one paid hut-tax, no one even applied for the gratuitous cotton seed that was given to whoever asked for it. With a heavy heart the Collector reported the situation to headquarters, and asked that a Company of King's African Rifles might be sent to garrison the Malingeni district.

As there was nothing for these soldiers to do unless the expected rebellion broke out, the Collector commanded that every night and all night they should patrol the outskirts of the village in couples, and gave orders that no man was to fire unless an indisputable lion came unmistakably into the open. The King's African Rifles are a fine, courageous and well-disciplined body of men; but that savages, however well trained, should keep cool when such uncanny things as ghost-lions are about is too much to expect. Despite their orders, they blazed away at everything that moved, to the imminent danger of the sleepers in the huts. Three days before the full moon Fawcett ordered that they should patrol armed only with clubs, and that very night the ghost-lion made one of them his victim.

Next night Fawcett gave orders that the soldiers should spend the night in the huts in which they were billeted. He dared not order them out again lest they should refuse to obey. Moreover, he had been doing some hard thinking, and had evolved a theory that he meant to test. When quiet had fallen on the village, without a word of warning to anyone, he went out alone to patrol the outskirts of the village, unarmed and in disguise. He was convinced that he had a commonplace human murderer to deal with, and, in order to restore public confidence, he meant to take him alive.

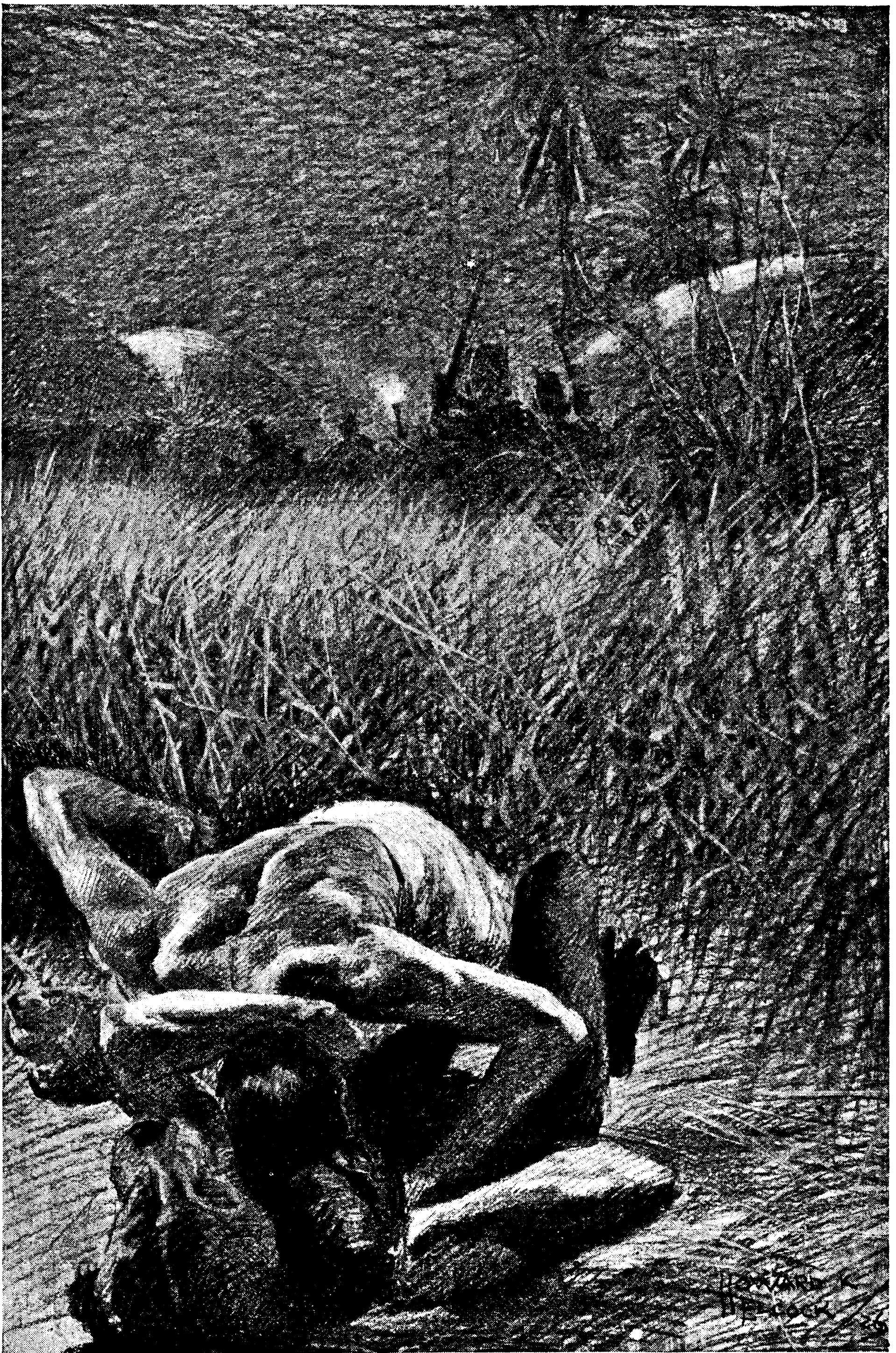
He decided to disguise himself because he doubted whether the murderer—as to whose motives he could frame no sort of guess—would dare to attack anyone who was obviously a white man. A towel round his waist and a pair of liberally-inked canvas tennis shoes sufficed for costume, and a dye made of burnt-paper mixed with oil coloured his skin sufficiently to deceive by moonlight. His decision to go unarmed was taken at

"The men of the King's African Rifles, aroused by his yells, poured out of the huts and flung themselves into the scrimmage."

the last moment. He had meant to carry a revolver, but discarded it because, at night and at close quarters, it is as difficult with such a weapon to make sure of shooting only to wound as it is to make sure of hitting. He next thought of taking a club from among his collection of native weapons, but discarded it because in the heat of excitement it would be easy and even excusable to hit too hard. Finally, he decided to rely only on his bare fists, the weapon with which an Englishman is most familiar.

There are said to be men—we should envy rather than admire them—who absolutely do not know what fear is. Fawcett was not one of these. As he patrolled the outskirts of the village he could—had he been able sufficiently to detach his mind—have composed a most interesting essay on the physical effect of fear. His heart thumped, his hands trembled, his throat burned, and he felt as if he might be sick at any moment. To balance this, his pride as a white man and his anxiety to regain the confidence of his people stiffened his heart.

It needed all the self-control he could muster to walk at the sauntering pace of a native who has nowhere in particular to go to and is in no hurry to get there. He walked



"Men who fight for their lives are not punctilious."

slowly past the places where the three murders had been committed, and saw nothing but the huddle of grass-roofed huts and the long grass, silver-grey in the moonlight; heard at first nothing but the hoot of the night-birds and the sigh of the wind in the trees. Suddenly there was a swift rustle in the grass a couple of yards behind

him. He swung round on his heel, saw a black figure leaping at him, and struck with the driving force of thirteen stone weight and the fury generated by nerves strained almost to snapping-point behind the blow.

The next moment he and a brawny African were rolling over and over on the road, locked in each other's arms. Men who fight for their lives are not punctilious, and when he tried later to recollect the details of the fight he could dimly remember using his fists, his feet, and even his teeth, in a manner not approved either by Lancashire or Queensberry rules. The fight was soon over, for the men of the King's African Rifles, aroused by his yells, poured out of the huts and flung themselves into the scrimmage. In three minutes a dozen brawny soldiers were sitting on a writhing figure that snarled and heaved and panted under their weight. Other men improvised a rope with wild vine torn from a neighbouring tree, and in two minutes more Fawcett's assailant, securely bound, was hoisted to his feet.

Fawcett, half blinded by a cut above the eyes, could not see who had attacked him, and he was too much exhausted greatly to care.

"Guard him well," he panted, "and bring him to the Bwalo in the morning."

* * * * *

Some day scientists will be able to tell us by what means news flashes from one African village to another very much faster than the swiftest runner could carry it. Until then, men who know savage Africa content themselves with the truth that what happens in one village may be known in another a hundred miles away before an hour has passed. As the mission station was only twelve miles from Fawcett's Boma, the Collector was not in the least surprised to see Dalbiac stride into his compound soon after sunrise, eager for breakfast, and full of congratulations that the ghost-lion mystery seemed likely to be solved.

"I was awakened at three o'clock this morning by the noise my people made talking about it," he explained, "and I was so much interested that I came at once."

"You aren't the only one interested," said Fawcett. "There must be three hundred people at least inside the Boma, and more are coming every minute."

The methods by which Fawcett tried the cases, civil or criminal, that came before him bore outwardly little resemblance to those in force at the King's Bench or the Old Bailey. He never put a witness on his oath because he knew that he would swear to whatever he thought would please the Collector, or else to what he thought would best serve his own interests. Truth was more readily obtained by summary and drastic punishment of any witness found guilty of lying. For much the same reason he did not empanel a jury. A casual onlooker would have supposed that he relied solely on his own judgment. As a matter of fact, his decision was guided very largely by the attitude of the crowd of spectators that always thronged the Bwalo when a trial was in progress.

If a single individual in the crowd shouted "liar," Fawcett supposed him to have interested motives, and promptly sentenced him to a day's road-making for contempt of court. But if the word "liar" was spontaneously murmured by the whole crowd, he allowed the general opinion to influence his judgments. He was always glad, therefore, to see the Bwalo well filled. He was especially glad to see it well filled this morning, for he expected to have to sentence a man to be hanged on circumstantial evidence, and it was important for the sake of public confidence that public opinion should support him.

The crowd was so dense that the Askaris had to clear a way for Fawcett and Dalbiac to reach the raised seats in the Bwalo. Then the sergeant-Askari shouted for silence. Every man in the crowd repeated the demand at the top of his voice, squatted down, took snuff, and prepared to enjoy a sensational morning. The identity of the prisoner was the first sensation. The man that the Askaris led bound to the dais was Kambiri, the blacksmith. From his shoulders hung the moth-eaten lion skin. To his wrists were still tied the heavily weighted fore-feet with which he had killed three men and tried to kill the Collector. The mystery of the long, deep, parallel claw-marks on the backs of the murdered men was explained.

Fawcett did not waste words.

"Listen, Kambiri," he said. "In the space of three moons you have killed three men. Do I speak truth?"

"You speak truth," answered the blacksmith.

A babel of astonishment rose from the crowd. A hardened Malingeni criminal will lie his way through a brick wall. Even a beginner will put up a stiff fight against overwhelming evidence. It was amazing that Kambiri should confess his guilt so

tamely. Fawcett was as much astonished as anyone.

"But why did you kill them?" he demanded.

"I had to," answered the blacksmith. "By day, as the Mfumu knows, I am a worker in iron. At night I am a lion, and I have to go out to kill."

A murmur passed through the crowd. Fawcett heard the word "bewitched" pass from man to man. It was not a verdict that he felt able to endorse; but Dalbiac left his seat, caught Kambiri by the chin, looked intently into his eyes, turned to the Collector and nodded.

"You don't mean to say that you, too, think he is bewitched?" asked Fawcett incredulously.

"Of course not. But I'll stake my reputation that he is mad, and that amounts to the same thing. Lycanthropy is his trouble."

"What's that?"

"You've heard of wer-wolves? There isn't the slightest doubt that popular superstitions in Europe about people who can turn themselves into wolves are based on the solid medical fact that people suffering from a certain class of mania actually believe that at certain seasons they take the forms of beasts of prey. The ancient Greeks knew it. Hence the name lycanthropy. In India to-day people believe—and they aren't altogether wrong—in wer-tigers. Among the Eskimo it is polar bears. The disease is rare, but medical science knows a lot about it. I'm prepared to swear that this poor fellow quite honestly believed that when he put on the lion's skin he turned into a lion, and if I'm right, he's not responsible for his actions."

"That puts me in a hole," said Fawcett thoughtfully. "If you are right, I can't hang him. What am I to do with him? Look here! You run a hospital. Will you take him?"

"Not if I know it," said the medical missionary. "How many children would come to my school, do you suppose, if they knew that I kept a wer-lion on the premises?"

"Pretty well most things are my job," said Fawcett gloomily. "I'm a magistrate, a judge, a tax-collector, a sanitary inspector, a postmaster, and a few other things, but I'm hanged if I ever undertook to run a lunatic asylum."

"Send him to Zomba and let the Commissioner decide what to do with him."

"The Commissioner would be pleased, wouldn't he! Think again."

"It's brutal to say it, but it's a thousand pities that you didn't shoot him instead of taking him alive. If you let him go you turn a dangerous lunatic loose on the community."

"And encourage the idea that anyone who has a private feud can safely murder another by pretending to be bewitched. On top of that I've got to pass a sentence that will appeal to what among these people takes the place of common sense."

For five minutes, amid heavy silence, Fawcett played with his pen, deep in thought.

"Listen, Kambiri," he said at last. "When I meet a lion I shoot it. Why should I not shoot you?"

Kambiri had a great deal to say on the subject of why he should not be shot. Most of it was, from a European's point of view, wildly irrelevant, but two arguments that he advanced stood out as more logical than the others; first, that as the fact that he was a lion was proof that he was bewitched, it would be more reasonable to discover who had bewitched him, and punish the sorcerer; alternatively, if the lion part of him that prowled by night deserved to die, the man part of him that worked iron by day was innocent and had a right to live.

"I have long wished to have a tame lion," said Fawcett. "By day you shall work at your craft. Your legs shall be chained by a light chain lest the spirit of the lion enter into you during the daytime, and you must have your forge inside the Boma and within sight of the Askari on sentry at the Boma entrance. At night you shall be locked in the inner room of the prison. That is my sentence. The *mlandu* is finished."

Years have passed since then, and throughout them all Kambiri, in spite of his delusions, has been a useful and hardworking member of the community. He is now so old and feeble that Fawcett's successor not long ago thought it safe to have the chain removed from his legs. No one had any objection to raise except Kambiri himself. He was so proud of being the Mfumu's tame lion, of which office the chain was the visible badge, that he pleaded with tears in his eyes to be allowed to retain it.

# CHALIAPINE AND HIS ART

## A PERSONAL STUDY OF A GREAT SINGER

By WATSON LYLE

WHETHER one meets Fedor Ivanovitch Chaliapine for the first time, as I did, in his own surroundings, or sees him at a distance on the stage or concert platform, the predominant impression is of a very magnificent specimen of manhood who enjoys life, and the mere fact of existence, in a full and rather boyish way. His fine head is held proudly erect. The face is keen and intellectual, the eyes straight-glancing and alert, and expressively changeful with the mood of the moment. The firm mouth is redeemed from hardness by a humorous play at the corners, for Chaliapine loves a joke and a good story. No doubt his superabundant vitality and capacity for entering whole-heartedly into the interests of the moment, explain this radiation of youthfulness from him, for he was born in February, 1873 (the date is given as "February 1st–14th"), in Kazan, an old town in Tartary.

That is fifty-three years ago, yet his artistic medium, his glorious baritone voice, remains full of expressive power and resonance. This is a phenomenal condition for the singing voice, although there have been a very few singers who retained their vocal powers when considerably older than Chaliapine, and his voice gives every indication of outlasting the best of these.

His facility in his art is largely instinctive, since the tuition he received in youth was fragmentary and haphazard. His parents were poor, and evidently not of a stock with distinct leanings to music or the drama. He was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and worked in the same street in which Maxim Gorky lived and worked in a cellar. An engagement in an ecclesiastical choir, as a boy, marked alike the beginning of his musical career and his education in music. The meagre payment for his services being quite inadequate for his needs, and the help he had to give to his mother, he also worked on the railway and steamboats. A life of starvation, indeed, physically and emotionally, was this for a child endowed with a vividly sensitive imagination. The conclusion emerges, however, that, richly gifted as he was, study in the best school of all—experience—was better for him than easier paths, and paths more deadening to personality, at a conservatoire, might have been. The evidence of the artist as we know him to-day supports the view that the life he had, perforce, to lead then, to keep to his art, played an important part in stabilising his priceless possession of personality, and in making him take particular note, as he went along, of how to make the most of his own especial natural excellencies in natural gifts, vocal and histrionic.

That kind of learning is not to be acquired mechanically, or in desultory fashion, for errors react as punishments, so that his fine intellect and (owing to the laboriously strenuous early years) physique developed along with his professional education and personality, all combining ultimately to fit him for his great place in the artistic firmament. Although he traces his success to an engagement with the opera company of M. Mamontoff, in Moscow, that opening to a big career could have been of little avail to anyone who did not possess his peculiar qualifications and capacity for hard

work. To complete the biographical interest, here it may be stated that his operatic debut was actually made about two years earlier, in 1892, in Tiflis, when he appeared in Glinka's opera, "A Life for the Tsar." He sang in opera in New York in 1904.

He unmistakably fully realises and enjoys his artistic eminence, and instinctively reacts to his surroundings, on and off the stage, with a chameleon adaptability that is, to the great artist, as natural as it is wonderful or interesting to the more ordinary beholder, according to his point of view. Withal, there is an underlying simplicity in Chaliapine, as one meets him in private life, that almost causes one to forget the splendid artist in the more intimate appeal of the man with whom, as they say, one immediately feels at home. He delights in the company of his friends, and has the happy knack of contriving that none who are in the room with him shall feel that they are being overlooked.

Few well-known artists provide such material for newspaper reporters as Chaliapine. He has ever some engaging anecdote to relate that gives them just the "story" they need for their journalistic copy. I remember once, when jokes about prohibition in America were still sufficiently novel to be attractive in the columns of a daily, he had for the reporters a comic yarn about a secret "nip" on the voyage over that was rudely disturbed by the sight of a ghostly face—a "spy"!—looking through the glass of the port-hole window. According to Chaliapine's vivid recital of the occurrence, the consternation of the law-breakers was appalling, until they realised that the face was the face of a large fish which was moving its lips in an envious fashion! He can be pretty much of the jovial host, although his tastes are simple; and mention of "nips" reminds me of an occasion when he made merry over the lemonade colour of his whisky and soda whilst others with him had drinks of average strength.

Like most singers, he pays considerable attention to keeping himself in hard, fit condition, which implies an abstemious habit of life. His swinging, buoyant stride, and lithe grace of movement, in even a comparatively small room, do not denote the ease-loving, habitual operatic lounger of conventional idea. They are more typical of the lover of the open air, the nomadic roamer for hours on end. Walking is, in fact, a favourite exercise of his—not the perfunctory perambulation spoken of as a "constitutional," but long, roving walks, for miles and miles, out into the country or along by the sea. It is no uncommon thing for him to start off on a long tramp, alone or with a friend, late at night, after his return from the theatre or concert hall. During his brief stays in London he indulges this love of roaming, and he has gone so far afield from his hotel, and the familiar surroundings of the Strand and West End of the Metropolis, as to find inquiry of a policeman necessary when he wanted to return on foot.

These nomadic impulses may survive from the wandering life of his early teens, when he wandered by the Caspian sea and the Caucasus as a humble singer and dancer; but that they are impelled by the innate need for communion with Nature, which demands satisfaction in most artists, is much more likely. Nature, and the beautiful things in Nature, appeal strongly to him. I remember how, one foggy day in London—it was a real "London particular"—he expressed a tender regret that the cut flowers exposed for sale should be subjected to the mirk and soot and defilement of the fog. As may be imagined, he has, as a singer, a special hatred of London fogs.

Paris is different; Paris, where he has made his headquarters since he was able to make a home for his family there. It was some time after he left Russia that Mme. Chaliapine and their elder children were able to get to Paris to take up their residence in that congenial city, where another little daughter was born to the singer and his wife. Chaliapine loves to romp with this child, to whom he is deeply attached, and is essentially happy with his family. Their re-union took place some months after his memorable reappearance from a sojourn in his native land lasting from the end of the brilliant Russian season of 1914, in London (for which the metropolis is under lasting obligation to Sir Thomas Beecham), until October, 1921. The Soviet government, it will be remembered, then granted him leave to go abroad to earn money for the purpose of helping to feed the people in the famine areas. This he was very successful in doing, and gave his first concert in the Royal Albert Hall. As I write, nearly five years later, I can remember the deep emotion of that event. The excitement of the audience was tremendous. They applauded again and again; and their pleasure was as though someone dear to

*Photo by*] [E. O. HOPPÉ.

FEDOR IVANOVITCH CHALIAPINE.

them, whom they thought dead, had walked on to the platform. Then, when the hubbub subsided, and his glorious voice was again heard, it was a joy to know that its beauty and its power were unspoilt by any of the trials and privations incidental to his position during the period of the Great War and its long aftermath in his mother-country.

He made his reappearance in New York after the War, at the Metropolitan Opera House, on December 9, 1921, as Tsar Boris, in Moussorgsky's "Boris Godounov," and has necessarily spent a good deal of his time in America because of his operatic work.

In his art he displays an unusual ability in getting right at the interpretative kernel

of the work he is studying, whether it is a simple song or an entire operatic rôle. His interpretative art has the magic of creative power in it, the vision, the imagination, that differentiate the presentation of a work of art by all great musicians and great actors from that of those who are more pedestrian, although sometimes more accurate, slaves to the musical or literary text which it is the province of the interpretative artist to translate into a living interest for his audience.

Chaliapine is marvellously sympathetic in the interpretation of rôles from the operas written by his fellow-countrymen, for he is very Russian at heart, and is happiest in nationalistic expression. He appears to be particularly attracted by the music of Moussorgsky, whose work he has done much to bring before the public, and the impression that he creates in the dramatic title-rôle in "Boris Godounov" is not likely to fade quickly from the memory.

Among songs by the same composer that are favourites of his, may be mentioned the "Song of the Flea." The pomposity, the mock-solemnity, and the underlying venom of the pestered courtiers that he contrives to infuse into this comparatively slight song, are an object-lesson in the compelling power of the best interpretative art, which explains the popularity of the song with both artist and audience. As another example of the transformation that he can achieve with quite simple material, may be cited his unforgettable version of the "Song of the Haulers on the Volga," a Russian folk-song that has been paid greater attention by composers and singers than probably any other folk-song in the world. Whenever he appears on the concert platform he holds his listeners enthralled with it. First is heard, a long way away, the almost whispered sound of the melody, like a pathetic wail from the far distance. Gradually, nearer and nearer, it gains in strength and volume until, with the climax, it becomes a fierce cry of desperation, fitting contrast in tonal suggestion to the eerie finale which expresses the emotional depths of human abandonment and grief. When it is over, and we are, so to speak, as one with the poor, shivering wretches at the tow-rope, it is hard to appreciate that the whole effect has been created by the voice of this one man, for in this interpretation his accompanist usually exerts a very subordinate influence. It is credible that the impassioned tone-picture has been built up from impressions received in those far-off days when the singer worked as a stevedore on the steamboats that sail on the Volga.

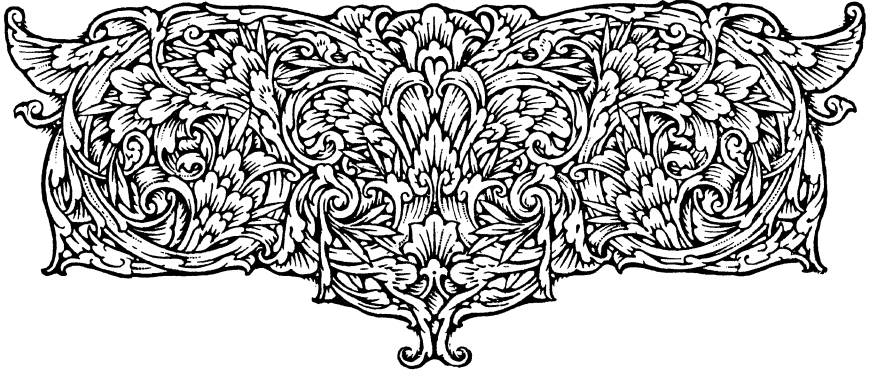
Borodin's opera, "Prince Igor," with its strongly national music, often gorgeously orchestrated, appears to be also specially congenial to Chaliapine, and in it he has won some of his most notable triumphs. In complete contrast to the play of the primitive emotions and semi-barbaric vein called for in this opera is his art in the pristine freshness of "Don Giovanni," where, true re-creative artist that he is, he revels in the beautifully rounded phrases and the polished vocal tone demanded by the music of Mozart. Concert audiences are familiar with his singing of "Madamina" from this work.

In 1902 he was asked to sing at "La Scala," Milan, in "Méfistoféle," that opera of Arrigo Boïto which will be included in the season of grand opera at Covent Garden in May–June of the present year, when Chaliapine makes an appearance, once again, in opera, the form of music with which he is peculiarly identified throughout the civilised world. It is an art-form, too, in which he pays much attention to the works of the older masters, to Mozart, Donizetti, Rossini, "Il Barbiere di Siviglia"; Gounod's "Faust" (one almost writes "of course"), and Verdi; while in the course of his concert programmes (as well as by his gramophone records) he keeps alive the remembrance of some composers of opera, such as Bellini and Meyerbeer, whose star may be said to have set, as well as of those contemporaries, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Rachmaninoff, whose "Aleko" we still have to hear on the stage here.

As everybody who has been a member of one of his concert audiences is aware, he follows the original plan of announcing his programmes impromptu from the platform at each concert, stating the number of the song in the book of lyrics (and excerpts from his operatic repertoire) that constitute his concert before the singing of the item. There is thus always the spice of adventure about a Chaliapine concert, for one really does not know exactly everything that he will choose to sing, although there are certain established favourites, such as the "Song of the Flea"; "Song of the Haulers on the Volga"; "The Two Grenadiers" (Schumann); "Die Doppelgänger" (Schubert); "When the King went forth to War" (Koenemann); "In questa tomba" (Beethoven); and "Madamina" (Mozart)—some of which at least are pretty certain to

be sung, and to be sung in a distinctive manner that makes us forget their familiarity.

One can truly say of Chaliapine that he is able to absorb the varying idioms of the music of the extremely diverse composers and nationalities to which allusion has been made, and it is in this respect that he emerges as pure gold from this acid test in interpretative art. The types of music in which he, possibly, shows pre-eminence over his own prevailing high standard are the dramatic, the humorous, and the lyrical; but, as I have indicated early in this article, his adaptability is infinite.



## JENNY'S GARDEN.

HOW gay my Jenny's garden is
In May's enchanting prime,
With early warbled ecstasies
From chesnut, may and lime;
Speckle throat's
Liquid notes—
The cuckoo's mellow chime!
But when her fingers take their track
Across the white notes and the black
Or she sings
To my strings,
What bird can answer back?

From crocus to chrysanthemum,
From Martinmas to Lent,
To Jenny's garden still I come,
And though she seems content,
Yet 'tis still
P'raps she will,
P'raps she won't consent!
I wish she'd make the matter clear,
And whisper softly in my ear
A simple "Yes"—
And then I guess
I'd know which way to steer!

ALFRED PERCEVAL GRAVES.

" He hated the name as he had seldom hated anything. Its facetiousness made him see red. As soon as he obtained possession of the house he wiped out that name. He did it with crude and unnecessary violence."

# WHAT MR. DUMPHRY DID FOR WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

By BARRY PAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LENDON

IT has already been admitted that there were semi-detached houses in Tessel Road. They were few in number. Owing to the trees and shrubs in their front-gardens a careless passer-by might never have suspected that they were only semi-detached. But it is just as well to face the facts. Most of the houses in Tessel Road were detached, standing in what might with a little generosity be called their own grounds. It was a high-class residential neighbourhood as any of the local house-agents would have told you. But it did actually contain semi-detached houses, and one of them, " Myholme," was bought by Donald Fayre, the painter.

He was almost solely a painter. He had probably less practical sense than some dogs. He knew nothing about money, cared nothing about it, and hated to think about it. He was very fond of his wife, who had been his model, and of his three charming children. Apart from that nothing existed except painting.

I cannot tell you why he bought Myholme, nor in all probability could he. He had just sold three pictures, which was at that time rather unusual. He felt that he could

buy something. With the expensive assistance of a building society he purchased Myholme. He hated the name as he had seldom hated anything. Its facetiousness made him see red. As soon as he obtained possession of the house he wiped out that name. He did it with crude and unnecessary violence, the principal tool being the kitchen poker. The name had appeared in "Almosta" stained-glass in the fanlight over the front-door. He smashed the fanlight. The name was also painted on the gate. He smashed the gate. And these wild and irrational acts constituted about the only pleasure that he ever got from his possession of the house.

It was really quite unsuitable for him. It had no studio and he had to purchase something superior with an oak floor and put it up in his garden. The children in the next house were learning the piano and took it earnestly. In eight months he did not sell another picture, was heavily in debt, and loathed the whole concern. He sold the house and contents and the studio in the garden by auction without reserve, paid everybody, and trekked for Chelsea. Three months later the newspapers were full of him and he is now perhaps the most fashionable portrait painter in London. But that does not concern this story.

The auction sale at Myholme on a Saturday morning was not well attended. Dealers had not considered it to be worth their notice. But Mr. and Mrs. Dumphry were both there.

Mr. Dumphry's first purchase was a couple of paintings by Donald Fayre which he secured for rather less than the cost of their frames. Those two paintings now occupy places of honour in the Rest House, and Mr. Dumphry will tell you how he was one of the first to recognise the genius of Donald Fayre. He would hardly be human if he kept off it. Then Mrs. Dumphry came into action. She bought in one lot two saucepans, three mouse-traps, and a toasting-fork. She did not want any of them, but on the other hand she got them for very little. It was now Mr. Dumphry's turn to play, and as a matter of fact he had not intended to play at all. The studio in the garden was put up. The auctioneer dwelt on the beauties of the oak floor and the felted roof. This was no vulgar contraption in corrugated iron. The auctioneer then invited somebody to give him a start. A humorist in the back benches suggested ten shillings. Mr. Dumphry did not approve of this at all.

"Five pounds," he said firmly and resonantly.

He did not get it for five pounds, but he got it for very little more, in fact for about one-twentieth of its original cost.

He had bought it in reality by accident, but he was quick to show Mrs. Dumphry that that was the purchase which had really caused him to attend the sale. It could be put up at the end of his garden and would serve as a pavilion to sit out in after dinner in the summer-time.

And that might have been its ultimate fate but for the fact that Mr. Pierce Eveleigh, the celebrated architect, carried Mr. Dumphry off for a night at the Old Vic. Mr. Dumphry had seen Shakespeare played by Beerbohm Tree. He had seen Shakespeare played with a projecting stage and ladies with green wigs and gilded faces. He had learned and hated Shakespeare at school. But this was the first time that he had been to the Old Vic.

It made a profound impression. He felt that this was the way that Shakespeare meant his work to be played. Shakespeare had no sympathy with scholastic dust or the fripperies of affectation. Here it was played heartily as if the players enjoyed it.

Thus far thus good. But the impressionable Mr. Dumphry became instantly convinced that this was the way in which he personally had always wished to see Shakespeare played. It also looked to him quite easy to play it that way—sufficient proof that the actors were artists. Before the final curtain was down he felt that his lifelong enthusiasm for the work of Shakespeare could be stifled no longer.

"That," he said to Pierce Eveleigh with conviction, "is the real Shakespeare. That is Shakespeare as I have always understood it. And if this kind of thing can be done about three doors from Waterloo Station, why is it that in Tessel Road we're doing nothing for Shakespeare at all? Nothing whatever," he repeated bitterly.

"I don't know about that," said Pierce Eveleigh. "I've gone without my dinner to-night."

"You had an egg with your tea," said Dumphry, intellectual and contemptuous.

"I had two—if you'd been a wise man you'd have done the same—and I shall have supper when I get back. But it means a change in my habits. It means a reasonable amount of self-sacrifice. I journey up to London in the evening in a slow and dismal train, I pay a few shillings for my seat, I

travel back by a train which is just as slow and dismal, and also overcrowded. I have done this not once but many times because of my enjoyment of Shakespeare's work. I shall probably do it many times more. But you, who made your first visit to the Old Vic to-night, you turn round and reproach me."

"Oh, no, no," protested Mr. Dumphry. "That would be the last thing that would occur to me. Nobody could appreciate your artistic and general culture more than I do. I was not speaking of individuals—I was speaking of Tessel Road generally. And I still say—what has Tessel Road done for Shakespeare?"

"For that matter," said Pierce Eveleigh, who had common sense except where his professional work was concerned, "what has Upper Hamilton Terrace done for Shakespeare—or Southampton Row—or Park Lane—or any other old street?"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Dumphry, "I know. But Tessel Road is in a special position. I doubt if you will find a more genuinely beautiful road in any of the London suburbs. But if we are to have the—er—the Greek ideal, it must be an interior as well as an external beauty. I've been thinking of Shakespeare for many years past, and my experience to-night has simply brought the thing to a head. Tessel Road has definitely got to do something for our greatest national bard."

"All right. But what? If you like to buy the site of two of those semi-detached houses, I should be quite willing to pull down the houses and put up a Tessel Theatre which might do us credit. But these things mean money. What are you proposing to do for Shakespeare yourself?"

"Perhaps," said Mr. Dumphry with dignity, "it would be better to ask what I have already done. I have purchased a large studio and I have had it erected in my garden. It is not a theatre. I admit it. But it would be quite possible to put a stage at one end of it and to produce from time to time in the right spirit certain scenes from the works of Shakespeare. And that might lead up to the Tessel Theatre in the end."

"There might be difficulties," said Pierce Eveleigh.

"No doubt," said Dumphry. "To what particular difficulties do you refer?"

"Well, I was told the other day by a man who's had a lot to do with amateur shows that it's very easy to find the actresses and not too difficult to find the actors, but that it's the dickens of a job to find the audience."

"No doubt an audience for Shakespeare has to be trained. I have always realised that. So I should begin slowly."

"How?"

"No stage at all, no scenery, no costume. A few friends in Tessel Road and elsewhere would be asked to come in after dinner one night. We should adjourn to the studio for a little music. Copies of Shakespeare would be lying about. I might suggest that we should read a scene from, say, 'Twelfth Night.' And after that there might be light refreshments. Don't you think that kind of thing might become popular?"

"Light refreshments are always popular," said Pierce Eveleigh gloomily.

"And so we should go on slowly, with the general interest in Shakespeare increasing at each step until we were acting complete plays. It might—I don't say it would—but it might in the end lead to the erection of that Tessel Theatre, dedicated to the work of Shakespeare."

And this started Mr. Pierce Eveleigh on the subject of theatre architecture. Some of the London theatres, he generously admitted, were better than others. But not one of them—not one in the whole of our vast metropolis—was quite what it would have been if Pierce Eveleigh had been the architect. And with this we may—indeed, we must—agree wholeheartedly.

Mr. Ernest Dumphry appeared to listen, but by now he was not thinking much about theatres. It is a nasty thing to say, but he was not even thinking about Shakespeare. He had not supplemented his tea with eggs or any other form of baseness. He had had no dinner. He was ravenously hungry, and unable to think about anything except cold steak-and-kidney pie and the fact that he would very soon now be enjoying its society.

He found Mrs. Dumphry and supper both awaiting him when he got home, and so far as common politeness would permit, for the first fifteen minutes he gave his attention almost entirely to the latter. Then, when the first fierceness of his appetite was diminished, he became conscious that his wife was saying:

"Oh yes, and both Queenie and Barbara said that I must on no account forget to say that they think you're a perfect darling to have bought that studio for them, and that it's miles the best dancing-room in Tessel Road."

"Dancing-room ?" said Mr. Dumphry, perplexed, as he refilled his glass. "I didn't buy that studio to be a dancing-room."

"I know. I told them so. I said that the real reason why you had bought it was in order that we might use it as a pavilion to sit out in on summer nights after dinner."

"That was not the only reason," said Mr. Dumphry darkly.

"Well, it was the only one you told me. And, as the girls said, the one thing wouldn't interfere with the other in the very least."

"And I understand they have already tried it as a dancing-room."

"Yes. I was telling you about it. The electric light was connected up to it this afternoon. Some of their young friends happened to come in after dinner and we went over to see if the light was all right. Then, I think it was Barbara who suggested it, we carried the gramophone over and started. I must say the place seems absolutely made for it."

Ernest reflected. Dancing would no doubt come in for the purpose of some of the plays. There was "A Midsummer Night's Dream," for instance, and he had no wish to discourage dancing. His benignity had increased considerably during the last thirty minutes.

"Eileen said that she knew a boy of eighteen who had taken six lessons from a professional and could not do it as well as that if his life depended on it. Mr. Dumphry was pleased. Said he supposed it was a fluke."

"Well, well," he said, "I have other ideas, but I don't think they need shut out dancing altogether, not by any means. I'll speak about it to-morrow at breakfast."

II.

MR. DUMPHRY, at breakfast on the following morning, expressed his great desire to do something for Shakespeare, and described his plans. Of course, he added, he did not want to interfere with the dancing at ali.

"You'll be putting up a stage?" asked Barbara.

'Not immediately. But ultimately, perhaps. Why?"

"Queenie and Barbara were dancing together, and a very charming couple they made."

"Oh, Dad, you see the whole studio is only about thirty foot by twenty, so when you stick up a stage there isn't very much room for anything else."

"And," added Queenie, "if we're going to do 'Hamlet,' who's to play Hamlet?"

"I should not think of doing 'Hamlet' for some time to come," said Mr. Dumphry. "When the time came I should probably offer the part to Pierce Eveleigh, as being the most important resident in the road."

"That doesn't seem to be any reason why he should be able to play Hamlet," said Queenie.

"No, no. That is so undoubtedly. It is merely a reason why he should be asked to play Hamlet."

For the moment the girls did not pursue the subject further. They were wise virgins. They had seen their father's enthusiasm swell up and subsequently subside before.

So later in the morning Barbara and Queenie took counsel with their dearest friend, Eileen Thompson. Now Eileen was young and pretty, but she had other qualities. She had more tact than all the serpents of the field—her enemies said she had more cunning than a cart-load of monkeys, which is perhaps a coarse way of expressing the same thing. A plan of campaign was evolved. It was perfectly simple and based on the well-known scientific fact that one method by which a rabbit may be removed from its hole is to insert a ferret. In this case the rabbit, I grieve to say, was William Shakespeare, and that excellent wife and mother, Mrs. Dumphry, was more or less lured into the conspiracy.

When Mr. Dumphry returned from business that evening he found his daughter Barbara, on her way home, had stayed to meet him at the station—a somewhat unusual but welcome attention. His other daughter was in the drawing-room. Queenie was prone to eccentric—not to say indelicate—sprawling on couches or even on the hearthrug, whereof her father disapproved. To-night she sat, demurely correct, in a chair. She put down the volume of Shakespeare which she had been (or might have

been) reading, and rose to greet her father affectionately. Queenie admitted that her school-teaching had rather put her off Shakespeare, and both then and at dinner he delivered his scathing indictment of the academic treatment of Shakespeare. He was heard with respect and avid interest.

"I see it all now," said Queenie. "Not even Shakespeare can be forced and plugged into people. I'm certain you're right."

Previous to dinner Mrs. Dumphry had maintained that Ernest looked tired with his hard day and that if only he would be guided by her he would take a small bottle at dinner. After a decent display of reluctance, he consented to be guided by her, and dinner consisted of those dishes which struck the deepest chords in Mr. Dumphry's —let us say Mr. Dumphry's being. These are sordid matters. They should make no difference. But they do.

By the end of dinner Mr. Dumphry's temper was at its sweetest and his pleasure with things as they are was at its height. A child of three could have played with him. What chance then had he against so accomplished an operator as Eileen Thompson?

Eileen was most apologetic when she called. Her big brown eyes looked appealing. She said she was really so sorry to be troubling them again so soon, but she thought she had dropped a little green pendant of hers on the floor of that delightful dancing-room. Might she go over and have a look for it?

"Of course," said Queenie and Barbara. "We'll come over and help you."

"We'll all come," said Mr. Dumphry. "Why not? It will be the first time I've seen the inside of this wonderful dancing-room by night."

So they all went over to the studio. Eileen found her pendant with surprising quickness. But it is always easier to find a thing when you have not really lost it. Mr. Dumphry, still enjoying the end of his cigar, wandered over to the gramophone and started it. In an instant Queenie and Barbara were dancing together, and a very charming couple they made. And then, to Mr. Dumphry's amazement, his wife began to dance with Eileen. It was more than twenty years since he had last seen his wife dance with anybody.

As the music stopped Eileen came up to Mr. Dumphry.

"Might we have just one more?" she said. "Because I should love to have one dance with you."

Mr. Dumphry protested. He maintained that he was old and fat. He knew nothing whatever of this modern dancing.

It availed him nothing. Eileen had danced in London the week before with a man at least ten years older than Mr. Dumphry, and he had been just about the best man dancer in the room. Nobody took any notice of age nowadays. She certainly would never have called Mr. Dumphry fat, though fat men were notoriously light on their feet. But if he did not want to become fat, what could possibly be better than dancing? As for learning it, there was really nothing to learn. It was just like walking. First this, then this, and again.

Mr. Dumphry let himself be persuaded. He made one round of the studio and came back to his seat amid universal applause.

His daughters laughingly accused him of having taken secret lessons. Eileen said that she knew a boy of eighteen who had taken six lessons from a professional and could not do it as well as that if his life depended on it. Mr. Dumphry was pleased. Said he supposed it was a fluke. They might as well try another. At half-past eleven that night they were still dancing.

The name of William Shakespeare was not mentioned in the Rest House on the following day. But Mr. Dumphry mentioned that the Greeks thought much of dancing. He also said that he rather thought he might put up a small musicians' gallery at one end of the studio. The victory of the conspiracy was overwhelming. It was about a month later that Mr. Dumphry was taken to task by Mr. Pierce Eveleigh.

"This dancing's all very well, Ernest," said Pierce. "But what about Shakespeare?"

"Well, I've thought it over," said Mr. Dumphry. "There is the insuperable difficulty that it would be necessary, when we came to a complete performance, to charge for admission, and that would mean that every Tom, Dick and Harry in the neighbourhood would have a right to come tramping down my private garden to the studio. It couldn't be put up with. No doubt I should have thought of it before. I'm inclined to think, Pierce, that you're right. I'm taking my wife and the girls up to the Old Vic next week. We shall have to give up our dinner, but what does that matter?"

"You can always have an egg with your tea," said Pierce Eveleigh.

"I might," said Mr. Dumphry.

He did. He had three.

# MONSIEUR DE BARSAC'S BOOTS

By C. KENNETT BURROW

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT

THE atmosphere of Victor Toulmin's workshop might be said to consist less of air than of odours. He never opened the windows,—cobblers, as a race, scorn open windows,—and he appeared to resent the opening of the door, even when a customer came in. The odours that could be detected by a sensitive nose were those of leather, wax, stale paste, heelball, cheese and onions. Old Victor Toulmin never worked without an onion within reach. The floor of the workshop was littered with bits of leather, ends of waxed thread, nails past further use, onion-peel, cheese-rind. No one had ever seen him sweeping out the place, though there was a rumour that he did it at midnight twice a year.

The September sunshine, struggling through the panes of the sealed and dusty little window, shone on his bald head, bent over his work ; on the heavy boot into which he was driving vicious-looking nails ; and on the unpapered wall behind him, which had, in some remote past, been lime-washed, but now presented a surface of dingy and pock-marked greyness. Victor looked up, laid down his hammer, slipped the iron foot from the boot, and laid both on a bench at his left. Then he rose, took off his apron, and stretched himself.

"Three o'clock," he murmured. "And I have two miles to walk to the Château. Heavens!"

He went into an inner room, his bedroom (Victor was a bachelor and fended for himself), removed his exceedingly dirty and ragged blouse, and slipped on another, rather more respectable, which he took from a nail behind the door. In one corner of this room was a small cooking-stove, with a shelf above it holding a couple of cooking-pots and a frying-pan. At the other end of the room was an ancient bedstead, with a tester and heavy curtains. For dressing-table he used a cobbler's bench that he had picked up cheap. The operation of washing, when he found it necessary, was performed in a back yard.

Returning to his workshop, he tumbled four pairs of boots into a small sack ; a fifth pair he wrapped up in a piece of crumpled brown paper and tied the parcel round with unwaxed thread. Then he put on a broad-brimmed, soft felt hat of the true Breton fashion, slipped his feet into straw-lined sabots (he seldom wore boots himself), opened the front door, locked it behind him, and clattered up the one street of Pontiac.

At that hour not a soul was abroad. Many men and women were at work in the fields, and those that remained at home were attending to indoor concerns. The children were shrilly repeating lessons in the forbidding-looking schoolhouse. The *gaufrettes de Pontiac* (more treacle than honey) and other alluring confections in Madame Bovet's window attracted no envious young eyes : Lavier, the grocer, sat behind his narrow counter adding up figures in a book with fierce abstraction. Outside the butcher's shop,—the shutters of which were closed,—a fat and nondescript dog blinked contentedly. Nothing could be heard but the monotonous voices of the children and the clack-clack of Toulmin's sabots on the cobbles.

"Pontiac will never make a noise in the world," Victor murmured to himself. "Its time has gone by. Once, they say, it was big and prosperous. But, there, they say anything!"

About midway of its length the street turned sharply to the left and mounted an unexpected and abrupt stretch of hill. When Victor had to ascend that hill, or

the mere thought of an ascent occurred to him, he found it necessary to make a call at the tavern of the Seven Stars. He could always find other reasons for calling there, but on this occasion he had a valid one.

On a bench outside the tavern sat the *patron*, Jules Patisse, and by his side a young man who clearly did not belong to Pontiac. He wore a suit of light cloth, somewhat the worse for wear but unmistakably well cut, a soft collar, and a flowing tie. His face was lean, but bronzed and healthy, his eyes dark, quick, and astonishingly bright. Toulmin glanced at his boots with approval. They were good, even elegant, boots, but not designed for the pitiless roads of Brittany under a September sun.

"Give me cider," Toulmin said, dropping his sack on to the bench. "No, but red wine. I am tired of cider."

"You will not be tired of it to-morrow, Victor," said Patisse. "Put your head inside the door and call Georgette. She will bring it to you."

"You become lazy, my friend," the cobbler said. When Georgette had brought the wine he took a seat on the bench and swallowed it at one draught.

"That is better," he said. Then he produced the loose boots from his sack, selected a pair, and handed them to the innkeeper.

"Those are yours, Jules. They will not stand much more patching. When they break down again give them to the poor or to Picard's pigs." Victor laughed at his own joke, the young man smiled, and Patisse took the boots gloomily.

"You are a fool, Victor!" he said. "A cobbler who knew his trade would make these last another year—two years. . . . What have you in that parcel?"

"Ah, that is a question! Those are the boots of Monsieur de Barsac, who, as you know, honours me with his custom. I am about to carry them to the Château."

"Do you speak of M. de Barsac of the Château de Pontiac?" asked the young man.

"No other," said Victor. "Have you the honour to know him, monsieur?"

"No, but I have heard of him."

"Who has not? He is a wonderful man."

"Are the boots wonderful?" asked the stranger.

"You shall see them, monsieur," said Victor gravely. He opened the parcel and produced M. de Barsac's boots. "You will notice," he continued, "that these are shooting boots. They were not made yesterday; they are, in fact, of an old pattern, but M. de Barsac, being a careful gentleman, has kept them well oiled and the leather is soft. I have, you see, reheeled them—a good piece of work."

"Undoubtedly," said the young man. "Permit me to offer you some more wine." Victor accepted the offer. It was in anticipation of it, indeed, that he had produced M. de Barsac's boots.

"What I ask myself," he said, "is this. Why should M. de Barsac need these shooting boots? He has not fired a gun for twenty years."

"It is possible," said Patisse, "to wear shooting boots without firing a gun."

"Not for M. de Barsac," the cobbler said. "M. de Barsac only wears what is right for the occasion."

"Have you watched him, then, from the time of his rising to the time of going to bed, both in his own house and other people's?"

"That is not necessary," said Victor. "One knows that M. de Barsac is a gentleman of high lineage—that is enough." He wrapped up the boots again, looked towards the hill, and sighed.

"It is very hot, Jules," he said.

"You are tired," the stranger said sympathetically. "I have a fancy to see the Château de Pontiac at close quarters, and if you will permit me I will deliver M. de Barsac's boots for you." Victor hesitated.

"But suppose, monsieur——" he began.

"You would say, suppose I do not deliver the boots, but walk away with them? There is no fear of that. The good *patron* here has my luggage, which is spread out in what I hope is his best bedroom. It is worth more, much more, than M. de Barsac's boots. However, if you still doubt me——"

"As I told you before, Victor, you are a fool," said the innkeeper. "I will myself be responsible for the gentleman. He offers to save you a tiresome journey, and you reward him by doubting his honour. Certainly, Victor, you are a fool!"

"I meant no offence," said the cobbler. He handed the parcel to the young man. "Take it to the back door of the Château; not, for the love of heaven, to the front!"

"Good. I go straight up this hill until I come to the St. Etienne road on the left, do I not?"

"Yes. Half a mile along that road you find a lane to the right. Take that, and it

leads you to the gates of the Château."

"Good," said the young man. He rose, requested Patisse to provide the cobbler with more wine, and set off briskly up the hill with M. de Barsac's boots under his arm.

Maurice Solonet was, at the moment, contented with the world. It had not, by any means, provided him with everything that he demanded, but he was grateful for past benefits and confident of opportunities to come. One had, of course, to make one's opportunities,—they did not grow on every bush,—and was he not making one then? He smiled to himself as he turned into the St. Etienne road, and, depositing his parcel on a low, loosely-built stone wall, he looked down on the straggling roofs of Pontiac and a broad stretch of country that met, ten miles away, the shimmering blue line of the sea. It was not a rich country: many outcrops of grey rock indicated that the soil, for the most part, was shallow: but wherever cultivation was possible the labour of men and women had subdued nature to a placid fertility. Maurice turned and looked at the westering sun whose mellow gold was splashed upon him through a plantation of maiden-like young birches.

"This is very good," he said aloud, "this is very good. And now for the Château de Pontiac."

M. de Barsac's house was not imposing, but it had a beauty of its own. Its grey stone was weathered and starred here and there with lichen, the roof was tufted with moss and house-leek, and roses still bloomed against the walls. A turret on the right with a conical roof, gave dignity and a touch of romance to what otherwise might have seemed no more than a considerable farm-house. Over the wide doorway there was a carved escutcheon, and the gates, which opened on to a small courtyard with deep grass borders, were of fine wrought-iron work. These were ajar. Solonet pushed through; then, remembering the cobbler's instructions, he took a path that led round the base of the turret to the back of the house, where he found a stout, florid, middle-aged woman standing at an open doorway, with her hands under her apron, apparently taking the sun. She wore a white cap that stood up in hard pleats at the back. Maurice took off his hat, bowed, and approached this person.

"These, madame," he said, handing her Toulmin's parcel, "are M. de Barsac's boots." The woman stared at him.

"'You will notice that these are shooting boots. . . . I have, you see, re-heeled them—a good piece of work.'"

"These may, as you say," she said, "be M. de Barsac's boots, but who are you?"

"For the moment I am Toulmin's errand-boy. I find the occupation pleasant."

"A strange errand-boy, monsieur. You cannot deceive me. I know a canary from a sparrow."

"I do not attempt to deceive you, madame. The truth is——"

"Yes, let us have the truth."

"That I offered to do this little service for Toulmin. He is an old man, madame, and he was tired. I left him taking a little refreshment at——"

"Yes, yes—at the Seven Stars. That man goes to the Seven Stars like a rat to cheese. M. de Barsac particularly wished to see him."

"Well, madame, I can take any message to Toulmin that M. de Barsac has to give."

"Then perhaps you had better come in and wait." She drew aside from the door and admitted Maurice to a large kitchen where two maids were at work. They glanced at him inquiringly. The other woman gave them a reproving look and left the room, hugging the parcel.

"Good day, mesdemoiselles," Maurice said.

"Good day, monsieur," they chirped in chorus, and then smiled at each other.

"The Château de Pontiac is a charming place," Maurice said.

"That is only because you do not know it," said the elder of the girls. "What with the loneliness, and Madame Fourchet's temper, and M. de Barsac's whims——"

"Come, come, Julie," said the other, "he is a good master."

"At any rate," Maurice said, "this is a good kitchen and kept to admiration." Everything, indeed, was in perfect order: copper cooking utensils and comfortable-looking casseroles of brown earthenware gleamed from the shelves; the floor, of large red tiles, was spotless; the tables were scrubbed white, and from the beams hung hams in canvas jackets and herbs in paper bags.

"I begin to feel hungry," Maurice said. The directress of this delectable region reappeared.

"M. de Barsac will see you, monsieur," she said. "Heavens, I did not explain to him that Toulmin himself was not here! M. de Barsac is somewhat agitated, and when he is like that I myself become agitated and forget——"

"It is of no consequence," Maurice said, rising. "I can take M. de Barsac's instructions. I have an excellent memory."

A moment later he found himself in a room which appealed immensely to his taste. The furniture, though not all of one period, was excellent: a Louis-Quatorze cabinet almost took his breath away. The pictures . . . But where was M. de Barsac?

The sound of stamping came from behind a screen; then a voice cried irritably:

"Come here, Toulmin, idiot that you are! These heels are too high and the boots pinch like the devil."

Maurice slipped round the screen (he could have sworn it was painted by Boucher) and beheld the bent figure of M. de Barsac. He was fumbling with the boots.

"If you wish it, monsieur," Maurice said, "I will take the boots back and give Toulmin a rating on your behalf."

M. de Barsac glanced up sharply, straightened his back slowly, and peered gloweringly at Maurice. M. de Barsac's face had a purple tinge,—probably due to his strained stooping posture,—and his close-clipped moustache bristled.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "I expect to see that leather-scraper, Toulmin, and I see——"

"Toulmin's messenger, monsieur, at your service."

"Tsh! Tsh! You are no cobbler. You have neither the manner nor, I dare say, the addled brains of a cobbler. I tell you, monsieur, that you intrude upon me. Is this some trick? Who are you? I repeat."

"I am a sculptor, monsieur, taking a little holiday. I am staying at the Seven Stars. There I made the acquaintance of Toulmin, who had paused to refresh himself before climbing the hill. As I had a particular desire to see the Château de Pontiac, I offered to save him the journey here and deliver the parcel."

"This is very well," said M. de Barsac, "but it is not enough. Why did you wish to see the Château de Pontiac?"

"Because I had often heard of it and of M. de Barsac."

"Ah! You attempt to flatter me. But again, monsieur, that will not serve your turn. I am not unapproachable. Why did you not come to the front door?"

"Because Toulmin told me to come to the back."

"A plague on Toulmin! I beg you to forgive my violence. The man is an imbecile. Look at these boots, now——"

"One moment, monsieur. I was afraid that if I came to the front door, without a

parcel, I might be refused admittance. My name is Maurice Solonet."

"Sacred Heaven!" cried M. de Barsac. He kicked off the boot and rose. Then, taking the young man's arm, he led him from the shadow of the screen into a better light. He limped slightly, because one foot was bootless. After a close scrutiny of Maurice he said, in a changed voice:

"Yes, I believe it. You are my poor sister's son."

"She died without your forgiveness," Maurice said quietly.

"The end came so suddenly. I would have forgiven,—I had forgiven. She had gone before the news reached me: I was in England at the time,—a most gloomy country. You may remember that I wrote to you from there."

"Yes, but you said nothing of forgiveness. Therefore I sent only a formal reply to that letter. Now we meet for the first time."

"For the first time," de Barsac repeated, "and you come in at the back door!" He wagged his head solemnly. "Nevertheless," he went on, "you are welcome, Maurice: the next time you shall come in at the front. . . . Your mother was my only sister, and when she made that disastrous marriage——"

"On the contrary, a most happy marriage. My father was poor, but what of that? There was always food in the house, and, monsieur, there was love."

"Ah! Love! Yes, yes, Maurice, there is something to be said for love." De Barsac, looking out of the window into the courtyard which was now half in shadow and half in light, fell into a muse. After a time he roused himself and said:

"I was wrong, Maurice. I acted unkindly, perhaps wickedly. I have too much pride; I confess it. Did you come to Pontiac expressly to see me?"

"I hoped to see you. At any rate, I knew I could see the outside of the house in which my mother was born."

"You hurt me," said de Barsac. "However, I deserve it. Why did you not come before?" Maurice hesitated. M. de Barsac, however, did not observe the hesitation, for, at that moment, the gates of the Château were thrown open and a motor-car jolted slowly into the courtyard.

"Heavens! It is Madame Crochard!" cried M. de Barsac. Maurice scrutinised the lady who descended from the car with deep interest. She was tall, dark, handsome, and carried her age, which might have been about forty, with an air of youthfulness,—not for the purpose of disguising her years but because it was natural to her. She said a word or two to the chauffeur and then approached the house. A bell rang. De Barsac darted into the hall.

"Angélique," Maurice heard him say, "that is Madame Crochard. Show her to this room. Not to the drawing-room, I tell you! Here!" The bell rang again. M. de Barsac returned to Maurice: he was evidently elated, and also decidedly nervous.

"Madame Crochard——" he began in a confidential whisper.

"Look at your feet, my good uncle," Maurice said. "That is hardly the way in which to receive——" M. de Barsac groaned and disappeared behind the screen. He emerged, as Madame Crochard was announced.

"Madame," he said, "this is an unexpected honour. It has, in fact, been a day of pleasant surprises. Permit me to present to you my nephew, M. Maurice Solonet, who has just turned up from nowhere, so to speak." Madame Crochard bowed, Maurice bowed. Then both, as though by a common impulse, glanced downward. On one of M. de Barsac's feet was a heavy, well-oiled shooting boot, on the other a light, well-polished black boot. The eyes of the visitors met again; both smiled. An understanding was established between them.

"I have come, M. de Barsac," said Madame Crochard, "to ask you to postpone our little excursion for a day or two. M. de Barsac," she added, turning to Maurice, "has promised to take me out shooting. That is to say, I am to watch him shoot. I wish to complete my education in country life."

"Can you handle a gun?" De Barsac asked Maurice.

"I can be trusted with one, but I am not a good shot."

"Then you shall be of the party."

"I have no gun." De Barsac waved his hand.

"I have two," he said, "so that is settled." By this time the two elders were seated, and de Barsac, stretching out his legs, became aware of his odd boots. He drew his feet under him with a jerk, looked appealingly at Madame Crochard and menacingly at Maurice, and made a curious choking sound in his throat. The visitors had apparently observed nothing. Maurice, who had remained standing, said:

"I must now return to my inn. The Seven Stars will be awaiting my arrival with interest."

"You are staying, then, at that strange little place ?" said Madame Crochard. "I adore such inns, but, alas, the conventions forbid one to gratify all one's wishes."

"You, at the Seven Stars, madame,—the idea is impossible!" cried de Barsac. "And of course you, Maurice, will leave there at once and come to me."

"With your permission, good uncle, I will remain there for the present. I wish to study peasant types. Toulmin, for example." De Barsac's feet moved uneasily under his chair; he bent forward a little more.

"Well, change your quarters at any time you choose," he said a little stiffly. "I will have a room prepared for you here."

Maurice left the Château de Pontiac, by way of the front door, in high contentment. M. de Barsac was not at all the kind of relative he had expected to find. The young man's mother had always insisted that her brother's only faults were pride and stubbornness: these had also been her own, though they had not diminished her charm. And there was certainly something attractive about M. de Barsac: his petulance did not injure his simplicity, his obstinacy did not impair his real kindness of heart. On reflection Maurice had to admit that the breach between brother and sister had been kept open by the woman rather than by the man. He had made advances that she had refused to meet; her pride had been greater than his.

When Maurice reached the village Toulmin was sitting in the same place outside the Seven Stars. His sack, however, was now empty; he had delivered the other boots to their owners.

"So you have returned, monsieur," he said. "That climb would have half killed me. Such a sun, monsieur, such a sun! Did you see M. de Barsac ?"

"Yes, I saw him."

"And what did he say ?"

"He said that you were a fool and also an imbecile," said Maurice, patting the cobbler on the back.

"That is nothing, nothing! M. de Barsac is a gentleman of spirit. And the boots, monsieur ?"

"He declared that the heels were too high. But you need give yourself no further trouble about them, my friend."

"Was he surprised that old Toulmin had so distinguished a messenger ?"

"More than surprised, I assure you." The cobbler chuckled himself into a cough.

"Patisse's wine is sour to-day," he said. "Cider is the right drink for a man."

Maurice dined alone in a small room which opened out of the large general room of the Seven Stars. As the evening advanced the sound of voices increased, mugs and glasses clattered, benches scraped on the bare floor. A fiddle struck up lugubriously an old Breton air that should have been played with a lilt. Maurice told himself that, so far, he had done very well. He had established himself in Pontiac: the front door of the Château de Pontiac would open at his bidding.

A sudden silence fell on the outer room. Maurice heard his own name spoken, and then the voice, toned to reverential politeness, of Patisse. The door opened, and M. de Barsac was bowed into the room by the innkeeper.

"M. de Barsac," he announced, and closed the door quietly.

"I do not wish to intrude, Maurice," de Barsac said, "but I felt restless. When I am in that condition it is necessary for me to walk, and what more natural than that I should walk into Pontiac ?"

"What, indeed ? I was thinking of you."

"Without any bitterness, Maurice ?"

"With pleasure and affection," said the young man frankly.

"That is excellent. We shall be friends,—more than friends. . . . Curse these boots! Still, they will soon become easy. Why did you not tell me that I had inadvertently put one on in my agitation at the arrival of Madame Crochard ?"

"How could I, when she was already in the room ?"

"That is true. I am sure she noticed it, Maurice,—her eyes do not miss much. What an impropriety, what an impertinence, it must have seemed!"

"Not at all. A mere accident, easily understood." M. de Barsac shook his head. He sat down and leant his elbows on the uncovered table.

"I confess to you," he said, "that I have the strongest possible desire to stand well in the eyes of Madame Crochard."

"She is a neighbour of yours ?"

"For the present, yes. She is the widow of M. Aristide Crochard, of Nantes,—the name is well known and honoured. She has taken the Villa de Rocher for three months. Of that time one month only remains."

"That is a pity," said Maurice. "You will miss so desirable a friend."

"Miss her? Yes, yes, Maurice, I shall miss her. This is a district of barbarians: there is no society. I shall soon be the last of the old order that remains. Therefore to me the coming of Madame Crochard was, shall I say, a revelation?" M. de Barsac, looking straight before him, appeared to be conjuring up a vision of that revelation. After a moment's silence he sat back in his chair and turned his gaze on Maurice.

"Now as to this shooting expedition," he said. "Nothing but the desire to entertain Madame Crochard would have induced me to take up a gun again. I am not a man of slaughter, Maurice. I almost wish that I had never referred to the subject of shooting. However, you have arrived at an opportune moment. I had intended to invite M. de Morier,—whom I detest,—but you can take his place."

"I am a poor shot, as I told you."

"You are modest,—a rare quality in youth, and one that I commend. . . . And your arrival is fortunate in another respect. Madame Crochard told me, after you had gone this afternoon, that a niece is coming to stay with her, from Paris. It appears that the child has become infatuated with an undesirable person,—an artist, I understand,—and her mother thinks that a few weeks' retirement in the country may cure her."

"I should imagine that the country would have precisely the opposite effect," said Maurice, smiling.

"Madame Crochard is rather of the same opinion. She is herself romantic."

"This persecuted child, then, is to be one of the shooting party?"

"Yes; that is why Madame Crochard suggested the postponement. Mademoiselle Maurois is to arrive to-morrow,—Tuesday. We shoot on Friday."

"Mademoiselle Maurois—on Friday," said Maurice. "Did Madame Crochard happen to mention the name of the undesirable person for whom Mademoiselle Maurois is supposed to have an infatuation? I know so many undesirable persons who are also artists."

"She mentioned no name. She probably does not know it. Madame Maurois would not think it necessary to give it."

"No doubt you are right. The name of so unimportant and undesirable a person is of no consequence." Maurice sat on the edge of the table and filled a pipe. "Well, well," he added, "it is a most amusing world—even Pontiac is amusing!" M. de Barsac did not seem to hear this qualified appreciation of Pontiac. He laid a hand on Maurice's arm and said:

"If you will not leave the Seven Stars to-night, I beg you to transfer yourself to my house to-morrow. You are of my blood, and it would be unbecoming for you to remain here. Madame Crochard would wonder at it. Moreover, Maurice, would it not be as well to have a little practice with the guns before Friday?"

"Good," Maurice said. "I accept gratefully. I will come to you to-morrow. I make only one condition,—that I may visit the Seven Stars as often as I like. The real Pontiac is here."

"You are mistaken, Maurice. The women of Pontiac are not here. They would have a different tale to tell of the Seven Stars. Our Breton peasants are not angels. . . . However, come here when you like, only do not drink too much of Patisse's abominable wine." M. de Barsac got cautiously to his feet, swore at the boots, and then declared that they were almost comfortable. He would on no account permit his nephew to accompany him on his return journey.

Left alone, the young man pondered. He was a little excited, decidedly amused, and somewhat perplexed. Was it possible that M. de Barsac's heart had blossomed late in an affection for the romantic Madame Crochard?

On the following morning Maurice took up his quarters in the Château de Pontiac. It had so often been described to him by his mother that the place seemed familiar, though the present owner had redecorated the interior and added some of the finer furniture. M. de Barsac, he soon discovered, had a fine taste in furniture and had made no mistakes. In the kitchen region, for no very clear reason, Toulmin's late messenger was regarded as a hero.

M. de Barsac's restlessness had not departed. He had had a bad night, he told Maurice. He was nervous and irritable, yet at the same time almost pathetically anxious to put the young man at his ease.

"Do as you please," he said. "You are at home. We will discuss your prospects later. A sculptor, you said? Can a sculptor make a living?"

"Many do not, but I have succeeded better, perhaps, than I deserve. At any rate, I can afford to take a holiday."

In the afternoon M. de Barsac produced the guns. Maurice would not have been surprised to see muzzle-loaders, but they were breech-loaders, excellent of their kind, though somewhat out of date, and they had been carefully cleaned.

"Now, Maurice," said M. de Barsac, "we must have that practice," and he proceeded to put on the shooting boots.

"Have you any trained dogs?" Maurice asked. "I have seen none about the place."

"I have no dogs. I had intended to invite M. de Morier, as I told you, and he would have brought his, but as he is not coming we must do without."

"Madame Crochard does not expect to see any very exciting sport?"

"No, no. It is the idea that appeals to her."

"I see," said Maurice, with great gravity.

For two hours they tramped over M. de Barsac's estate. They put up a few pheasants and a couple of coveys of partridges. M. de Barsac's shooting was hopeless: he took so long to aim that the birds were out of sight before he pressed the trigger. One pheasant fell to Maurice's gun, and finally M. de Barsac killed a sitting rabbit and a brace of thrushes. On their return he was extremely depressed.

"Maurice," he said, "I should never have spoken to Madame Crochard about shooting. I always disliked it. I have no skill. I shall make a fool of myself."

"Courage, good uncle! Madame Crochard will not be too critical."

At ten o'clock on Friday morning Madame Crochard arrived at the Château de Pontiac with her niece, Mademoiselle Maurois. Mademoiselle Maurois was extremely pretty,—M. de Barsac could not refrain from patting her cheek,—and exceedingly demure. She had not at all the appearance of a girl pining for an absent and forbidden lover. When she was introduced to Maurice she blushed and looked at him timidly, but there was no timidity in his frank gaze.

"So the great day has arrived, M. de Barsac," said Madame Crochard. "And what a perfect day! It seems wicked to kill things on such a day, particularly birds." M. de Barsac coughed nervously.

Maurice was supporting the lady, and Henriette was dabbing her left cheek with a handkerchief."

"If you would rather postpone the expedition——" he began.

"By no means. Let us set out at once."

"Perhaps we shall not kill much after all," Maurice murmured to the girl.

"No? Perhaps you will not try, M. Solonet. Perhaps you have too tender a heart."

"I admit," he said, "that I have a tender heart."

The housekeeper brought in wine and an immense variety of cakes. She brought them in herself in order to get an impression of the singular party before they left. Otherwise she would only have had a view of their departing backs. She felt uneasy about M. de Barsac.

"What beautiful confections!" cried Madame Crochard. "One discovers that Pontiac produces everything! You have not come to an uncivilised desert, Henriette."

"It is all lovely," said Mlle. Maurois. Maurice was assiduous in his attentions to her. There was nothing to suggest pining in her appetite for cakes. Madame Crochard watched her smilingly: she, also, was fond of cakes. M. de Barsac hovered about restlessly: the boots still troubled him.

"'Madame,' he cried, 'what has happened? Speak, I implore you!'"

Towards eleven o'clock the expedition started. M. de Barsac wore a shooting-jacket,—a little tight, but otherwise presentable,—a cap to match, leather leggings, and the maligned boots. Maurice wore the old suit in which he had first presented himself at the Seven Stars. Each man carried a gun and a cartridge satchel. Madame Crochard and M. de Barsac walked a few paces in front of Henriette and Maurice. Henriette glanced at him from under a broad-brimmed hat, not of the fashion of Pontiac.

"This is fun," she said.

"It will be, I can promise you that."

"Come, come," said Madame Crochard, pausing, "when are you two going to begin? I see no birds. Ah, there, monsieur, there is a rabbit!" She pointed towards a turf bank. M. de Barsac raised his gun to his shoulder cautiously and fired.

"But it had gone, monsieur, before you shot!"

"Never mind, madame," said M. de Barsac doggedly, setting his lips, "they will not all escape." Soon after a couple of pheasants whirred up from fresh stubble: both men fired, and both missed.

"I believe," said Madame Crochard,

"that M. de Barsac hit one of their tails. I see a feather floating down." M. de Barsac set his lips still more firmly.

"Have patience, madame," he said. "It takes a little time to get one's eye in."

"Of course, of course." The unexpected report of Maurice's gun made Madame Crochard jump.

"He has hit something!" cried Henriette. "Look, it still moves!" Maurice ran forward and returned with a hare: its infinitely pathetic eyes were glazing in death. Henriette caught her breath.

"This is cruel, horrible!" she said.

"But no doubt, mademoiselle, you like hare soup," said M. de Barsac.

"Oh, I will never touch it again!"

"This is foolish," said Madame Crochard.

"I once had a pet hare," the girl protested tearfully.

"Well, well, child, we will leave these gentlemen until you have recovered yourself." Madame Crochard took Henriette by the arm and led her away. Maurice dropped the hare.

"Had we not better abandon this performance?" he asked. "We have at any rate proved ourselves capable of killing something."

"You have, Maurice, but I have not," said M. de Barsac grimly. "I have to justify myself in the eyes of Madame Crochard. It is a matter of honour."

"As you will," said Maurice, shrugging his shoulders. The ladies, now about fifty yards away, had turned and were watching them. Maurice, who had determined not to fire another shot, moved towards them. At that moment a wood-pigeon, flying low, flashed along the turf bank. M. de Barsac jerked his gun to position, the barrels following the flight of the bird. He blinked and pressed the trigger. There was a sharp cry. M. de Barsac saw Maurice running forward and Madame Crochard leaning heavily on Henriette's shoulder, her face hidden.

"My God!" cried M. de Barsac. He flung down his gun and ran stumblingly towards the group: even at that moment he was conscious of the discomfort of the boots.

"Madame," he cried, "what has happened? Speak, I implore you!" By this time Maurice was supporting the lady, and Henriette was dabbing her left cheek with a handkerchief.

"It is only, monsieur, that you have shot me instead of the pigeon," Madame Crochard said, smiling faintly. "But it is nothing."

M. de Barsac groaned: he tried to speak, but failed: his eyes bulged with distress and fear. Maurice took the handkerchief from Henriette and examined Madame Crochard's cheek.

"Fortunately," he said, quietly and reassuringly, "the wounds are not serious. Three pellets struck, but they have only penetrated just below the skin." From each of the punctures flowed a little trickle of blood. M. de Barsac groaned again.

"Shall I be disfigured for life?" sighed Madame Crochard. M. de Barsac recovered himself suddenly.

"A doctor!" he cried. "A doctor!"

"I will go home," Madame Crochard said. "We can stop at Dr. Lauret's in Pontiac on the way."

"I beg you, madame, to remain in my house until the doctor has seen you," said M. de Barsac.

"You are very good, monsieur, but there is no necessity for that. I am perfectly well. What are three scratches? I am glad that the pigeon escaped. I gladly suffer this little inconvenience for its life."

"I am desolated!" said M. de Barsac. "The devil must have been in it. For a man to shoot his guest, and that guest Madame Crochard—it is terrible!"

"Terrible, indeed," Maurice whispered to Henriette.

"At any rate," she said, "he killed nothing, and you did."

M. de Barsac insisted on accompanying the injured lady and Henriette to the gunless security of the Villa de Rocher. As Madame Crochard took her place in the car she turned to Maurice and said:

"Come to me to-morrow, M. Solonet. I would like to have some conversation with so good a shot, but do not bring the hare with you. Poor Henriette has had enough of hares."

"So have I, madame," said Maurice. "To-morrow, then, at the Villa de Rocher." M. de Barsac looked from one to the other in some surprise. The car jolted across the courtyard and glided through the gates.

It was four hours before M. de Barsac returned. He had walked back from the Villa de Rocher and he entered the house limping. His aspect was grave. He dropped into a chair and sighed.

"Maurice," he said, "I have made a fool of myself. I was convinced that I should. First I gave Madame Crochard to

understand that I could shoot, and then,—sacred Heaven!—I shot her. Smile if you will—I am resigned."

"You take it too seriously."

"Too seriously!" cried M. de Barsac. "You say too seriously? I told you that I wished to stand well in the eyes of Madame Crochard. How do I stand now?"

"Perhaps higher than ever."

"That," said M. de Barsac, "is the speech of an imbecile! Madame Crochard is romantic,—at least that was my belief. She aroused romance in me—a man is never too old for that. And yet, Maurice, this romantic lady,—she told me with her own lips—has resigned herself to—to M. de Morier, whom I detest! I make no accusation, but I feel that Madame Crochard a little deceived me."

"Possibly, though probably unintentionally. Romantic ladies——"

"And you, too, deceived me," cried M. de Barsac, rising abruptly and as suddenly sitting down again.

"I?"

"It is useless to deny it. I have the truth from Madame Crochard. You, Maurice, are the undesirable person to escape whom Mlle. Maurois was sent into these wilds. And she finds you here, established in my house." Maurice did not appear to be in the least disturbed.

"So Henriette has confessed to Madame Crochard?" he said. "No doubt, finding her so romantic——"

"We have had enough of that word. Mlle. Maurois confessed that she had informed you of her coming to the Villa de Rocher. Immediately you think of me. If I will receive you, what an admirable opportunity for seeing Mlle. Maurois under the most favourable conditions."

"Madame Crochard has anticipated me. I had intended to tell you the truth about all this to-day, and if possible to enlist your sympathy on my behalf."

"In short," said M. de Barsac, "to get me to use my influence with Madame Crochard, who, in her turn, would try to convince Mlle. Maurois' mother that you were not undesirable, but had suddenly become the nephew of Raoul de Barsac."

"That would, at least, have established my respectability. Also the situation amused me. You will admit, good uncle, that it was rather pretty?"

"I admit that it was impertinent," snapped M. de Barsac.

"Then I apologise, and if you wish it I will at once retire to the Seven Stars."

"You will do nothing of the kind. If you were ten times as bad as you appear to be you should remain at the Château de Pontiac. . . . As to my influence with Madame Crochard, I have none, absolutely none. How can one influence a lady whom one has nearly killed?"

"I would not have asked for your influence. I can fight my own battle and Henriette's."

"I believe," said M. de Barsac, "that Madame Crochard and Mlle. Maurois are in collusion. Madame Crochard will report favourably of you—perhaps too favourably—to the authorities. I lose, you win. I do not complain: you are my sister's son. I am not a poor man, Maurice. Young love is foolish, no doubt, but one may encourage such folly without being ashamed." Maurice was deeply touched, and also a little hurt: there had been no hint of the sordid in his adventure.

"You are infinitely good," he said, "but I had not thought of anything beyond being received willingly by you."

"And you came by way of the back door. I shall never forget that."

The housekeeper entered and said, with an air of disdain, that Toulmin, the cobbler, wished to see M. de Barsac.

"Toulmin! Send him here, send him here!" M. de Barsac bent down and began to take off the shooting boots. "That rascal!" he muttered. "If these heels had not been so high——"

When Toulmin slouched in, hat in hand, M. de Barsac raised towards him a purple face and flashing eyes. Then he picked up the boots and flung them at the cobbler.

"Take them, imbecile!" he cried. "Keep them: wear them, and may they blister your feet!" The boots fell short of their mark, but the cobbler rubbed one leg as though it had been hit.

"M. de Barsac," he quavered, "it was good work, my best."

"Go!" said M. de Barsac. "Go to the Seven Stars and thank God that you are permitted to leave this house alive. You had the impertinence to send M. Solonet to the back door. Here—take this, drink to his health in Patisse's best wine."

# FRENSHAM'S PARTNER

## By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

"YOU mean that I am to go down there to act the spy."

At the note in the younger man's voice Frensham frowned impatiently.

"I mean that I am offering you an easy way out of your—difficulties. I'm going to cancel your debts to me in return for one simple service——"

"Oh—it's simple enough," said Bill, with a short laugh. "Spyin' on a girl and a horse——"

Frensham, smiling, reached for his pipe.

"Put like that it sounds quite melodramatic, doesn't it? Five-reel drama of Love and Hate, featuring Bill Carthew. . . . Never mind, my boy. It's either that or—well, you know the alternative, don't you?"

Bill, who knew the alternative and its stark impossibility only too well, said nothing. He looked at Frensham's grave, strong face, and realised for the seventieth time that a debt of six hundred cannot be paid with thirty pounds, nine shillings and fourpence, and a dog licence. . . .

And Frensham wouldn't wait.

Perhaps it is only fair to state that he had already waited two years.

Frensham took his pipe out of his mouth.

"All you have to do," he said in his patient, reflective voice, "is to go down to Fontley Magna and find out whether I've any foundation for suspecting that—my partner is breaking our agreement with regard to Ariel. Listen. When old Amberley died I promised that his girl should carry on in his place as partner in our concern—she's always lived down at his old barn of a place at Fontley Magna—seems to like it, too—fourteen miles from anywhere—and it's not anywhere, then! Still, that just suited my plans—the loneliness of the place—and the stretch of galloping across the downs—place where they picnicked in the flint age, but where no one but a stray shepherd goes now. It's right off the track, you see. So I sent Ariel down there—where he'd every chance of remaining a dark horse until his training was finished. . . . Janet understood the necessity for that well enough . . . and of how much depended on his being safeguarded." He paused, looking at Bill with an odd smile. "I have to take you into my confidence."

"That," said Bill, "is quite in accord with the five-reel drama."

He was conscious of a furious impulse to anger this man who had the whip hand . . . to tell him that he could find someone else for his preposterous errand.

*But for that six hundred pounds*——

Frensham merely surveyed him steadily.

"It is essential that I should find out if Janet has—found anyone to talk to in Fontley Magna."

Bill Carthew frowned.

"Since you don't even trust your partner, I must feel honoured by your confidence."

And then, for the first time, he saw Frensham discomfited, a dull red in his face and a glint in his steady eyes, as he answered curtly:

"I have to safeguard interests that are not only mine. . . . There must be no chance of Ariel's brilliance getting known—for several reasons. I rely on you as I should on a detective."

"You're—jolly sure I'm agreeing!"

"Yes," said Frensham simply. He took a time-table from the desk. "There's a train at ten to-morrow morning that'll get you to the nearest station to Fontley soon after three. I'm afraid it's a tiresome journey—two hours, local line—and then you've those fourteen miles of road. . . . Go to the Cat and Fiddle—they'll make you comfortable there—and they're outside the village, and less likely to get gossiping. You can find your way to the place by this map

I've drawn for you—you don't want to get 'em curious about you by asking questions." He paused. "The rest I shall leave to your ingenuity—and discretion."

So an unwilling pilgrim went down to Fontley Magna, cursing Fate and Richard Frensham. . . . And at five o'clock of a golden April evening Frensham's map had guided him successfully to the lonely house in the green hills.

A wrought-iron gate, set in a high hedge of holly and clipped beech, led to a winding drive between tangled shrubberies where the Japanese quinces and cherries ranged bridal white and rosy pink against glossy-leaved rhododendron and magnolia, already decked with lilac and pearl blossom. With no definite plan of action, Bill Carthew pushed open the gate and entered. He had not gone a dozen steps before voices warned him of someone's approach from the direction of the house. He halted; the voices—those of a man and girl—pricked into memory the parting words of Frensham: "The rest I shall leave to your ingenuity and discretion."

"Miss Amberley addressed the rhododendron bush. 'You can come out now, please.' Bill Carthew came out, and confronted a tall, slim girl with grave, grey eyes."

With a frown of distaste, the amateur detective stepped aside to the cover of the shrubbery. As he dropped on his knees on the wet earth, the owners of the voices came into line with his place of concealment, but his view was restricted to their feet.

A pair of masculine field boots, worn but well cut, and a pair of feminine tan brogues,

fitting admirably an admirably slender foot. . . .

The voice appertaining to the latter was admirable also, low and clear and sweet-toned as that of the thrush that sang from a spray of blossoming cherry: it also held a touch of imperiousness as it adjured the owner of the field boots to remember their bargain.

"I shall remember *you*," said the field boots firmly.

Cold dismay and cramp in his left foot assailed Bill Carthew simultaneously. A perambulating spider journeyed round his neck unheeded, as he realised that Frensham had been right, and that something, at least, of his suspicion was justified. . . .

Janet Amberley *had* "found someone to talk to" in Fontley Magna . . . someone who wore field boots and spoke of a "bargain"——

And it was up to him, Bill Carthew, to listen and spy . . . and report to the man who had made this the price of a cancelled debt.

The field boots moved (with evident reluctance) out of Bill's range of vision; the brogues remained stationary.

"Good-bye, Tony!" said the girl's voice cheerfully. "I shall come to the two-mile track to watch them exercising, you know!"

"Rather!"

With which fervent assent, the field boots tramped away. As the sound of them diminished and died, Miss Amberley addressed the rhododendron bush.

"You can come out now, please."

Bill Carthew came out, and confronted a tall, slim girl with grave, grey eyes. The cramp in his foot seemed to have passed to his tongue at the sight of Frensham's partner. But Janet was serenely self-possessed.

"I don't know what you're hiding there for—at least, trying to hide. But I'm afraid if you've been there long you'll have rheumatism—it rained all night. If you come up to the house I'll give you a cup of hot coffee. . . . You're trespassing, you know, as well as—as whatever you've done to make you hide like that. But I'm not going to give you away."

She interpreted his continued silence as doubt and fear, and flushed slightly.

"On my word of honour . . ."

"It isn't that——" Bill protested hurriedly.

She looked at him.

"I'm quite sure you haven't done anything—horrible. . . . But you must have done *something*, or you wouldn't be hiding there. . . ."

Bill gazed despairingly at his boots. He was not enjoying himself. He thought, not lovingly, of Frensham, upon whom he placed the entire responsibility for his present position—rather unfairly forgetting that six hundred pounds.

"I promise you," the girl repeated, "that I shan't give you away. But there's one other thing—you'll have to stay here for three days—perhaps four. I—I'm very sorry, but it can't be helped. No one will know you're here. After the four days you'll be perfectly free . . . and anything we—I can do . . ." She put a small, firm hand on his sleeve. "Please come at once—there's no one about to recognise you afterwards."

Obeying her, Bill tried to think coherently. His first impulse had been to refuse. But while her sympathy with his imagined plight roused his shame, it did not quite succeed in banishing the memory of that six hundred, and the action upon which it depended; he did not definitely plan to turn this opportunity for inside information to his advantage, but he found it quite in accordance with the situation as it stood. So he followed Janet Amberley to the house.

This was a picturesque place, old, rambling and irregular, built of stone weathered to a hue varying from golden ochre to velvety dove-grey—though indeed the front was almost cloaked with a pear tree trained against it, and an old gnarled vine of wistaria. Four white pillars supported a quaint, round-roofed porch; the low, wide doorway stood open to a panelled hall that ran the depth of the house, and the windows at the further end framed a view of a flagged courtyard and an archway in a holly hedge, above which rose the roofs of stabling.

That the stables were tenanted, despite the obvious shabbiness of the old house and gardens, was at once apparent by the sounds that reached the hall. Bill Carthew, glancing involuntarily in their direction, sensed the girl's quick movement. She still retained a hand upon his arm, and now she guided him to the staircase, along twisting corridors with unexpected shallow steps, to what he judged to be the extreme end of the eastern wing of the old house. Finally she unlocked a door that shut off three communicating rooms.

"The old nurseries," Miss Amberley explained, as Bill Carthew glanced from the

bars across the big window to the gay frieze where lambs and rabbits sported. "There's a camp bed in the other room, and I shall bring you food. . . . No one will ever know you're here. Old Katie is our only house-servant—and Cousin Miranda, who lives with me, never comes up here. And I shall keep the door locked, as usual." She paused, her great, grave, grey eyes on his. "Of course, you won't try to—to escape," she said. "Because it—it would be foolish, anyway. When Dick—I mean after the twentieth—it won't matter."

Left alone, Bill sat down on the broad window-seat and called himself a fool. He had taken the line of least resistance: allowed Janet Amberley to think him a fugitive rather than a spy . . . the former being undoubtedly the pleasanter character. . . . And unless he *did* escape from this absurd durance, he stood in no better chance of carrying out Frensham's errand (the errand that meant six hundred pounds!) than if he had not come at all.

The idea was rotten, of course. After her frank sympathy. . . .

At which point in his reflections Janet Amberley returned with a tray, two rugs and a pillow, and a couple of illustrated papers.

Thus began the oddest time that Bill Carthew had ever experienced.

He discovered that none of the windows looked in the direction of the stable-yard. But one, commanding a view of the rolling downs that surrounded the place, included in that view a long, level stretch that proclaimed itself the two-mile steeple-chasing track. . . .

At seven o'clock in the morning following Bill's incarceration, there could be seen approaching the track three objects whose identity was patent to the young man behind the bars of the nursery window—a roan and a chestnut 'chaser, their glossy coats shining in the morning sunlight; and a grey cob, this last ridden by Janet Amberley.

From the vantage point of a knoll above, the girl watched the trial performance over the hurdles. Bill was long-sighted, and it seemed to him that while the roan was bestridden by a stable-lad, the chestnut carried a rider of indefinably different stamp, and in a flash he remembered Janet Amberley's parting words to the field boots.

So it seemed that she had not only "found someone to talk to," but, unknown to Frensham, had actually mounted that someone on Ariel, the horse upon which so much depended!

Bill Carthew found this development disconcerting. Abstractedly he watched those flying forms . . . as Ariel and his stable companion skimmed the hurdles.

The situation was absurdly fantastic and involved. For here was Ariel, whose promising brilliance must be kept in obscurity, tangling the deeds and motives of four people—Frensham, hard and resolute, who suspected his partner of disregarding that necessity, and thereby endangering their chances; Janet Amberley, who, it appeared, was certainly acting in definite contradiction to his orders; "Tony" of the field boots, an unexpected factor in the game; and himself, sent out to spy the land, and now impotently situated behind a locked door—the unhappy object of a charming damsel's mistaken sympathy.

She came in all fresh and rosy from her morning ride, bringing his breakfast. . . . As she set down the tray:

"I suppose you've been watching," she said, glancing in the direction of the window.

"Yes."

She looked at him thoughtfully.

"That is why you're here," she said.

He started, getting red. Had she found out his errand for Frensham? It seemed impossible——

"I'm going to explain. One of those horses—the chestnut—is entered for the big race at the Weatherbury 'chases on Thursday. He belongs to my partner, who sent him down here because it's so remote from everywhere. He's got enemies. That sounds melodramatic, but it's true. If they found out how brilliant and promising Ariel is, they'd try to get at him before the race. It's only two days off now—and there mustn't be a chance of anything happening to him. So I kept you here—just to avoid all possibilities of your being questioned wherever you might have gone when you left here. . . . You see—I daren't take any risks. She paused, and Bill, struck by the sudden shining gladness of the big grey eyes, watched her grimly. "When Dick—Mr. Frensham—comes," she said, "you'll be able to talk to him. He—he'd help anyone—down and out. . . . He's like that——"

Bill was too utterly dumbfounded to reply. . . . The memory of Frensham rose up before him—Frensham's face, grim, and hard, and resolute, as he drove his bargain, daring to distrust this girl who spoke his

name with such a note in her voice. . . .

And yet—and yet there was the unexplained "Tony."

In a sudden helpless anger at his own wretched position as cat's paw in a game he didn't understand, Bill Carthew said the unpardonable thing.

"Thank you. It may interest you to know that it was Frensham who sent me here."

"Sent you here?" She looked at him incredulously.

"Yes. Listen!"

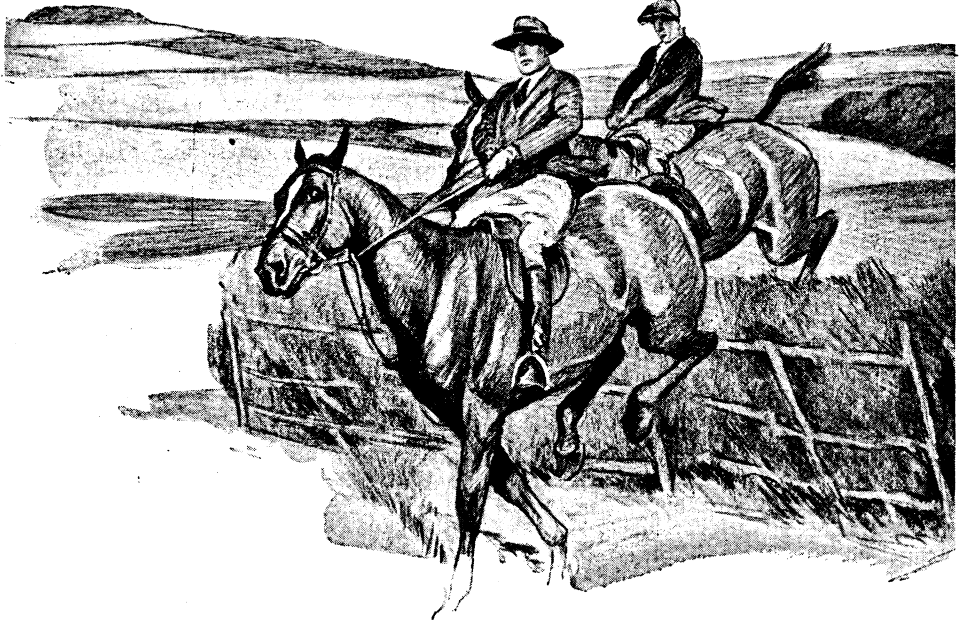
Standing very still, her hands resting on the table behind her, Janet Amberley heard the truth concerning Bill Carthew's presence.

It was true. A moment later the man whom Bill imagined to be two hundred miles away had reached the porch. . . . Without a word Janet turned, and, with her prisoner following, went down to meet Frensham.

Cousin Miranda, it appeared, was breakfasting in her room. So they found Frensham alone in the big hall. He gave one glance at Carthew, then addressed the girl abruptly.

"Janet! What is Anthony Fortescue doing here?"

She tilted a proud little head of burnished russet, and answered him evenly.



"The roan was bestridden by a stable-lad, the chestnut carried a rider of indefinably different stamp."

In a sort of defiant relief at relating that truth, he thrust aside the thought that he was betraying Frensham. He saw all the rose colour fade out of her little flower-like face, sensed the fact that her hands were gripping the table-edge, and continued relentlessly—deriving a queer, perverted satisfaction from the fact that, while the stark truth presented himself in no heroic light, his position was shared by Frensham.

At the end she said:

"I don't believe you!"

Carthew, who had been standing by the small window from which could be seen the approach to the house, smiled crookedly.

"Well, you can ask Frensham himself. He's just coming up the drive."

"He's been riding Ariel. . . ."

"*Riding Ariel?*"

"Yes. Every morning for a week——"

"By whose authority?"

She stared. "Why, yours, of course! He came a week ago, and said you'd sent him—that you'd asked him to give Ariel extra schooling—and perhaps to ride him on Thursday. He's been staying in the village——"

"You believed him?"

"Of course! I've known him nearly all my life—and I knew he could ride——" She broke off with a little cold smile. "I haven't acquired your habit of distrusting—every one, you see."

For the second time Bill Carthew saw

shame in the countenance of Richard Frensham. He did not pretend to misunderstand her.

"Janet . . . it was because of that I came—because, after Carthew had gone, I hated myself for sending him. I'd have got here last night—but the car broke down—I've been tinkering at it for three hours in the dark—and then I had to leave it and get a lift on a mail van and then a farm cart. . . . I saw Fortescue coming away from here—he didn't see me. He—he is the man I told you of—who wanted to find out about the horse—that was why I sent Ariel here."

She gave a little cry.

Instinctively, Carthew and Frensham looked at her and away. For to both came the realisation that this, for her, was the third illusion shattered that April morning.

To Carthew she had given sympathy and pity, believing him to be in need of both. . . . And Carthew had played the spy because of six hundred pounds.

To Anthony Fortescue she had given friendship and confidence as to a sportsman—and all the time his motive had been to use her trust as a means to his own base and hostile ends.

And to Frensham, hard, cold and distrustful——

She looked at him and laughed, a queer, cold little laugh.

"Well, since you're here, my responsibilities are over, aren't they?" She turned to the long window opening upon the courtyard, went out, and through the archway to the stables, where Ariel thrust a lovely head over the door of his box, and the grey cob whinnied at her step.

"The girl watched the trial performance over the hurdles."

Somehow her action showed, as clearly as if she had spoken, that she turned from the company of the men who had failed her to the faithful beasts who had not.

* * * * *

Frensham remained at Fontley Magna, having intimated his intention of riding Ariel himself. During those two days preceding the steeplechases he and Janet encountered one another very little. It was

Bill Carthew who told the girl that after all she had been right: Frensham had "helped"—generously.

Anthony Fortescue, debonair and smiling, came to the house once; gently expressing to a grave-eyed Janet and an indifferent Cousin Miranda his regret at not, after all, having the honour to ride Ariel to victory. . . .

Frensham he did not see at all. Neither did Janet speak to the latter of his visit. It was, indeed, Cousin Miranda who perforce sustained the burden of the conversation that evening preceding the steeplechase fixture—and for once both Janet and Frensham were grateful for her fund of irrelevant trivialities. She retired early, with a graceful reference to the need of "beauty sleep" for to-morrow's excitement; though, indeed, it was Janet's unwonted pallor that seemed most to require it. Yet long after Cousin Miranda was wrapped in peaceful slumber, the girl, still in the little black frock she had worn at dinner, sat curled up on the deep window-seat of her room. Frensham, she knew, was still in the big hall, with his pipe and a spaniel for company.

The night was still and warm, a waning moon shadowed by a soft fleece of cirrus cloud. From where she sat Janet could see the bluff shoulder of down topping the two-mile track—where, three short days ago, she had watched Anthony Fortescue ride in careless, happy confidence. Fortescue was still at Fontley, having accepted Frensham's presence and intentions with no more than the aforesaid gentle regret. There had been no open quarrel; for he had eluded Frensham, and Frensham would not trouble to seek him out. Carthew had gone, grateful, a little ashamed, and rather bewildered—and very much relieved to find himself out of the whole affair. . . .

Janet wondered dully what would be the outcome of to-morrow's race—no, to-day's——

The stable clock was striking one. . . .

The sound was followed almost at once by the barking of a dog . . . then by a single shot.

She ran. . . .

Down in the stable-yard Frensham was standing at the door of Ariel's box—one arm hanging limp at his side—reassuring a white-faced groom.

"It's only in the shoulder. . . . But there's no good your going after him, Somers. He's clear by now—or else he'll get you at long range. If he hasn't done what he came for, at least he's put me out of action instead of the horse—which was what he intended, the cur!" He saw Janet. "You here! You ought to be asleep——"

She said:

"Dick! D'you mean—Fortescue's shot you?"

Something in the tone of her voice brought a sudden light to his grave eyes. But he only said curtly:

"Looks like it! He came here after Ariel—meant to have one last try to put him out of action. As luck would have it, he stumbled against a stable bucket before he got to the door. I got out and grabbed him; but he plugged me in the shoulder, and got away. Ariel's all right——"

In the light of the stable lantern which the groom held up, Frensham saw her face as she cried out:

"Dick! *Dick!* He might have killed you! Dick!"

He stared at her.

"Janet!" And then, as if to remind himself of an impossibility—"But—you can't—I sent Carthew——"

At which point the groom very tactfully hung the lantern on a nail and withdrew. . .

Frensham was white and grim, but it was not from the pain in his shoulder.

"Carthew didn't deserve your pity or Fortescue your friendship," he said. "But I—least of all, my dear . . ."

He heard her laugh for the first time in those three days—and knew that, deserving or not, the greater gift was his.

# AN ANIMAL HUNTER ON THE AMAZON

## By A. H. MORRIS

RECORDED BY HAROLD J. SHEPSTONE

MR. MORRIS, a young Canadian who makes it his business to collect living specimens of the fauna of the waterway and forests of Brazil for the leading Zoological societies, here relates some of his thrilling experiences. In his quest for his treasures he has met with many strange adventures, and has witnessed weird Indian ceremonies in the depths of the primeval forests.

IT was in 1911 that I began seriously to take up the work of animal collecting on the Amazon, that mighty river of South America. Previously to that I occupied the position of British Consular General at Para, in Brazil. While serving in the Diplomatic Service I was called upon to accompany ex-President Roosevelt on his famous journey across the hinterland of Brazil, when we discovered an unknown river over nine hundred miles in length flowing into the Amazon. It proved not only a unique experience, but a revelation to me of the wonderful and varied wild-life to be found in the forests of this fascinating but comparatively speaking little known land.

I was always fond of animals and my home and grounds at Para were always crowded with birds of beautiful plumage, tame monkeys, strange reptiles, queer fish, and even snakes. Many of them became so tame that I allowed them to roam at will about the place, often, I fear, to the discomfort of nervous guests who failed to appreciate the beautiful colourings and graceful movements of a snake as it wended its way across the rafters of the dining-room.

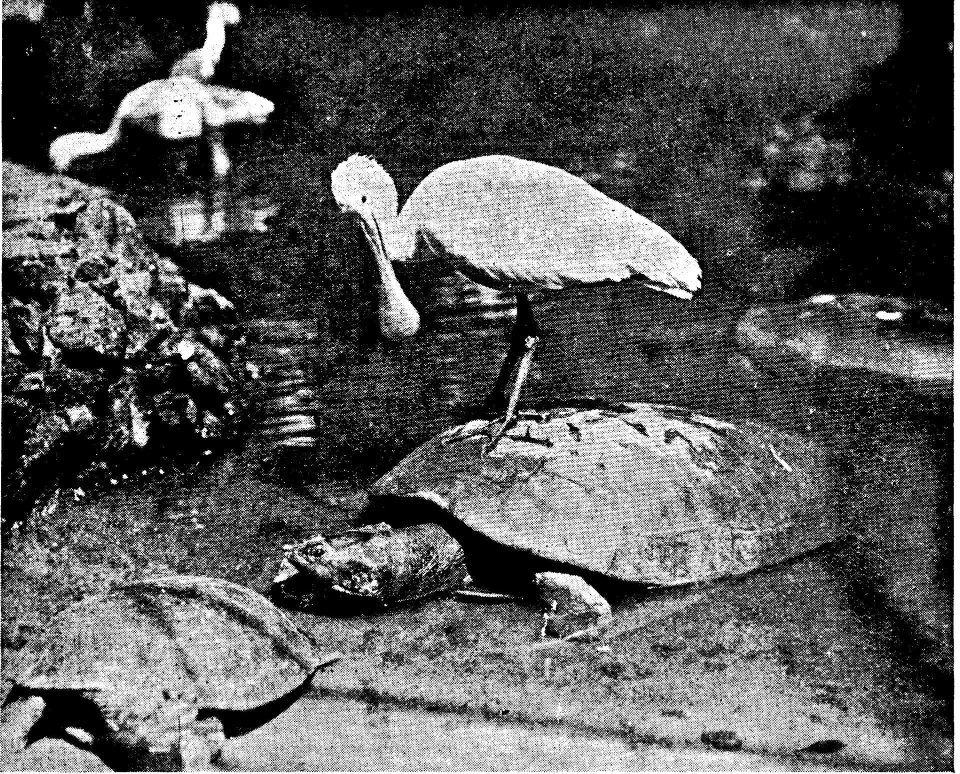
I took every opportunity of venturing into the forests and up the streams, studying the wild life in its native haunts and bringing back specimens to add to my collection. Captains of the big boats desirous of taking home a

A COATI—THE MONGOOSE OF THE BRAZILIAN FOREST.

rare parrot or other pet came to me, knowing they would find not only what they wanted, but a creature that was at least partially tamed and had been taught to thrive on food which civilisation could supply. As a result, the existence of my collection got noised abroad and brought all kinds of inquiries from naturalists all over the globe. It brought a request from the late Carl Hagenbeck, the animal dealer at Hamburg, offering to take all the specimens of the fauna of the rivers and forests of Brazil that I could supply, and it was really due to his initiative that I became a professional animal hunter.

When it is remembered that the Amazon is 4,700 miles long, possesses tributaries a thousand miles and more in length, and these in turn have innumerable lesser tributaries, the whole draining a tract of rich tropical country two-thirds the size of Europe, it is hardly surprising that the Amazon region should prove a rich ground to the animal hunter. On the Amazon and its tributaries I have travelled many thousands of miles, right up to the borders of Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and Venezuela, in quest of living specimens of the wild life of these regions. In the dense forests I have stumbled across primitive Indian tribes and have witnessed many strange festivals, and have encountered streams not marked on the map and whose existence was unknown even to the Brazilian Government.

I hunt in both the dry and rainy seasons, as certain creatures can be secured only in the former and others again in the latter.



TURTLES AND SPOONBILLS IN MR. MORRIS'S DEPOT AT PARA.

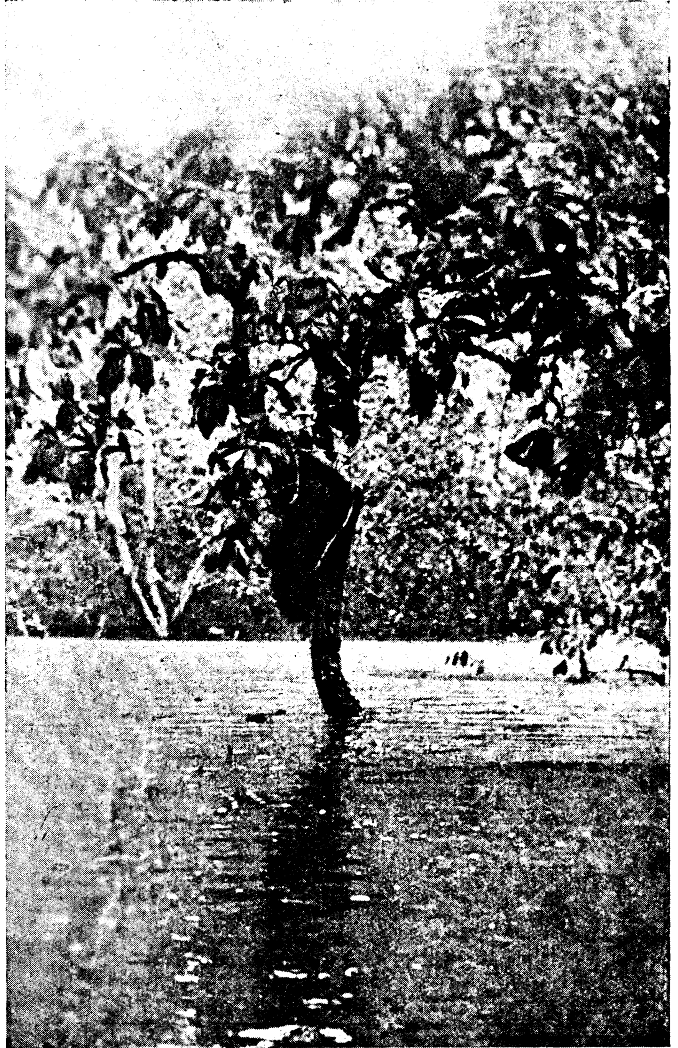
I use a canoe which was specially constructed for the work. It is thirty feet long, hollowed out of a single cedar log, and then expanded by fire to the proper shape. It measures five feet across in the middle, is five feet deep, and has a rounded bottom. In the foreward end are the stove, larder and lockers for food. The central portion is roofed with palm leaves as a shelter from sun and rain. I carry a crew of five natives: four paddlers and a pilot. In addition, I have my own black boy. It is necessary, of course, to carry a certain amount of tools for making boxes and crates to hold the

specimens taken. Then there are the traps, large and small, many coils of fine wire, and various kinds of fishing-nets.

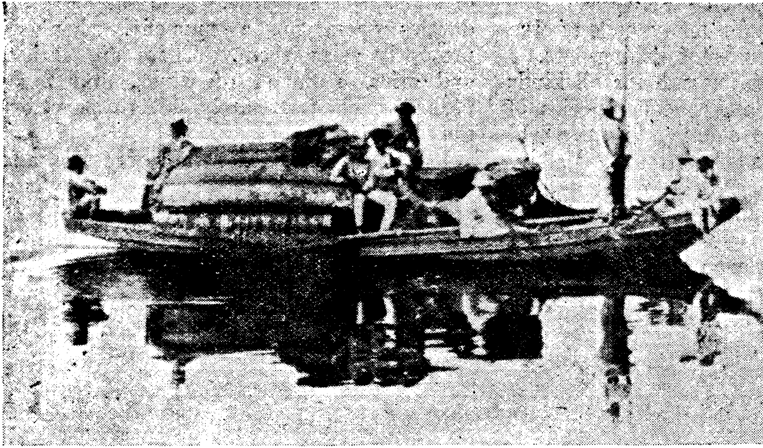
In the rainy season I search for all kinds of birds, waterfowl, and various species of snakes. There is no country in the world so rich in bird-life as the Amazon Valley. To the ornithologist it is a veritable paradise. Naturalists record over forty species of Amazon parrots, and they are among the largest creatures of their kind, and many of them possess beautiful plumage. Whereas the common Amazon parrot only fetches a few shillings, there are varieties worth to the collector as much as £10 and even up to £20. There are at least fourteen species of macaws, in addition to which there are parroquets, not forgetting the toucan with its huge beak, as well as the spoonbill, herons and cranes.

My mission is to secure the birds alive, and that means getting at the nests and securing the young ones just before they can fly. As so many birds build in the swamps, it is impossible to reach them in the dry season, but when the country is flooded you can approach in a small boat close to the trees and hollow trunks where the nests are to be found. True, travelling in the rainy season is trying. The rain comes down in the proverbial bucketful, and it pours incessantly for days at a time. No waterproof clothing will keep it out, besides which the atmosphere is hot and steamy. But one gets used to going about dripping wet to the skin. Then we not only secure the young birds, but the parent birds as well. We take the latter at night. Having noted the position of the nest, we creep up in the dead of night and flash a powerful electric torch in the face of the surprised birds. The sudden glare dazzles them for a moment, when we promptly seize them. There are shrieks and cries, a flutter of wings, and fierce pecks, which fortunately fail to penetrate the thick leather gloves.

It is the rarer species that we seek, and this often means long tramps right in the heart of the dense jungle. Here dwell many strange tribes who are suspicious of strangers, and tact and caution are needed. I always endeavour to make friends with them by giving them presents, for they can be of vast assistance to the animal hunter. What many of them appreciate most is rock salt. I was anxious to trap a specimen of that



NEST OF A WEAVER BIRD.



MR. MORRIS'S BOAT ON WHICH HE JOURNEYS ON THE AMAZON COLLECTING HIS SPECIMENS.

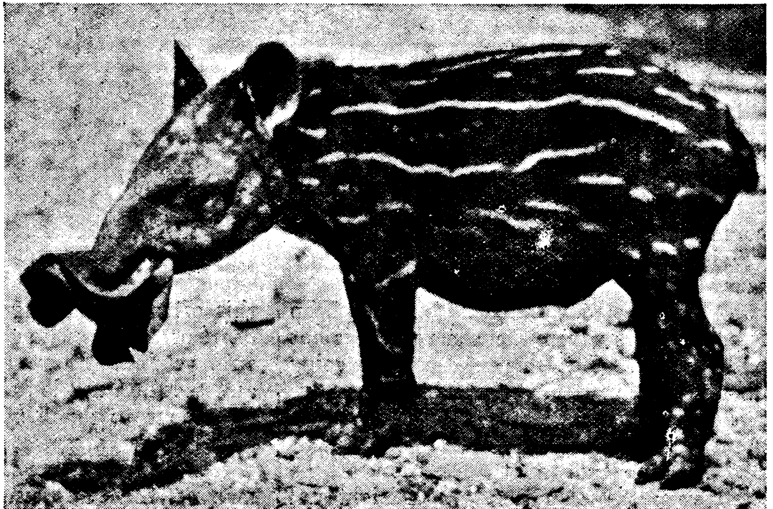
and they led me to the nests of the bird.

Another rare species of the Chatterers is the Umbrella Bird, so called because its feathers droop over its head like an umbrella. Its notes resemble those of a "fife," while those of the Bell Bird remind one of the ting-a-ting of a blacksmith's hammer.

But hunting birds at night in the swamps of the Brazilian forests is not all honey. There are the mosquitoes which never seem to sleep, ants which bite viciously, the vampire bat which loves to suck human blood, lizards, scorpions, spiders bigger than your closed fists, and a host of other weird creatures. There are swamps in the Amazon many hundreds of square miles in extent, and no one can say what wild life they contain. Even on their very borders I have heard the most fearful and uncanny noises. The Indians absolutely refuse to venture into them, and they have many legends concerning these cries, invariably associated with some fearful monster. Some day the great Brazilian swampy regions will give up their secrets, and I feel sure they will astound the world. What is very weird

strange and beautiful bird, the Cock of the Rock, and it was through the initiative of some primitive Indians that I succeeded. The head of this bird is crowned with a graceful helmet-like crest and its plumage is for the most part a brilliant orange.

We had been searching round for some time, meeting with no success, when to our surprise one night a couple of Indians came to our camp. I gave them a friendly sign and they approached. Then they told me that their chief had met with an accident, and they wanted to know if I could do anything for him. They led me to their settlement, and I found their leader had evidently been struck across the forehead by a fallen log, causing a nasty wound. I always carry a first-aid outfit, and after washing and dressing the wound, prepared the man a drink. I dropped some salts into a glass and then poured some water upon them. When the water started to fizz the Indians jumped in amazement. They took me for a white witch doctor because I could make water boil without fire. The chief declared that my "fire water" cured him, and when I informed him of my quest he sent for his warriors



A YOUNG TAPIR.

at night are the sinuous movements in the water, noting the presence of some gigantic water-snake.

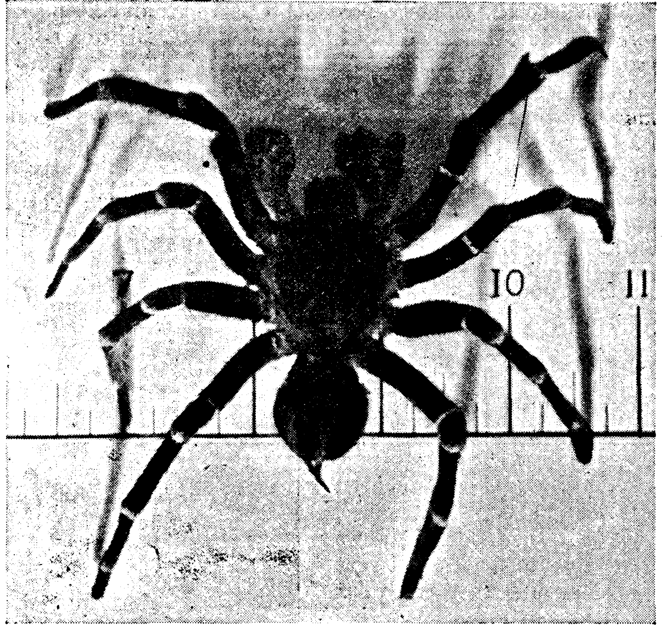
On the big island of Marajo I once caught two fine specimens of the water hog. I had caged them securely, and was resting one evening in our canoe, when a big anaconda suddenly shot his head out of the water and peered into the boat. Instantly I raised my machete and, striking with all my might, severed its head from the body. The next instant, however, I found myself and my crew in the water swimming for the shore for dear life. I asked my boy how the boat had overturned, and he declared we had been attacked by two big snakes, one on either side. As we were close to a village I sent for help, and they came out in their canoes. There lay our overturned boat, bottom up, but wriggling about like some live thing. What had happened was this. The anaconda travels in pairs. A couple had scented the water-hogs. I had killed one, but the other had got its head into the crate, and being unable to draw it out, had upset the boat. We righted the boat at last, and there was the great writhing snake still trying to get free. I quickly passed a rope over its neck and managed to secure it. It was a fine specimen, twenty-five feet in length, and it is now in the London Zoo. The skin of the other snake which I killed I have still in my possession.

While some of the snakes found in the Amazon Valley are harmless, others are very poisonous, one of the most venomous being the Jararaca, known as the fer-de-lance. I have secured many of these latter, which run up to nearly ten feet in length, and sent them to the Sero-theropic Institute at San Paulo, where scientists extract the poison and by diluting it produce an antidote for snake-bites. The bigger snakes or serpents I catch with the lasso. If you can secure their heads and keep out of reach of their tails, there is little risk. The smaller ones I take in nets or pin them down with a forked stick. If you can grip a snake by the back of the head and hold it down securely it can do little harm.

Curiously enough, the easiest of all animals to capture is one that is seldom seen in captivity, namely, the sloth. They spend their upside-down lives in the forests, moving hardly more than a snail's pace along the branches of the trees. To secure one you have simply to climb up and lift it from its perch. But the difficulty is feeding them. They consume certain kinds of leaves, and unless these can be supplied they simply pine away and die. I am hopeful,

A WAYSIDE HALT: A PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING A NATIVE WHO ACCOMPANIES MR. MORRIS ON HIS TRAVELS—ALSO A TAME MONKEY PERCHED ON THE BOAT.

however, of teaching them to eat bananas and ordinary green stuff, and bringing them alive to Europe.




A BIRD-EATING SPIDER.

The monkey-life of the Brazilian forest is most interesting. There are many species, but for size they do not approach the apes of the Old World. With the exception of a few very small species, they possess prehensile or grasping tails that are as useful as a fifth arm or hand. Perhaps the best known to travellers, though rarely seen in captivity, are the Howlers, which are again sub-divided into half a dozen species. The noise they are capable of making is almost beyond belief. It begins with a roar, changes to a growl, and after that to a deep groan. Over and over again I have stumbled across a specimen sitting by himself, roaring, growling and groaning, as if he enjoyed the sound of his own voice. So loud is the noise that it can easily be heard two and three miles away, and in the depth of the jungle it sounds very weird. Many on hearing it for the first time conclude that someone has been set upon by wild beasts. The noise is produced by a kind of drum or cup of thin bone at the top of the animal's windpipe.

Then we have the Sapajou or Capuchin monkeys, the Spider monkey, Owl monkey, Squirrel monkey, and the Woolly monkey. To see a group of Spider monkeys swinging their way through the forest by means of their prehensile tails is an uncanny sight. This creature can come as near tying himself into a knot as any living mammal can. They are, however, dainty feeders, very timid, and difficult to rear in captivity. The Owl monkey, so named because of its very large owl-like eyes, has a long hairy tail, which is not, however, prehensile. Neither does the Saki monkey, which is often mistaken for the Howler, possess a prehensile tail. It is blackish-brown in colour and its head is covered with thick hair parted in the middle and hanging down each side of its face, so that it looks as if it wore a wig.

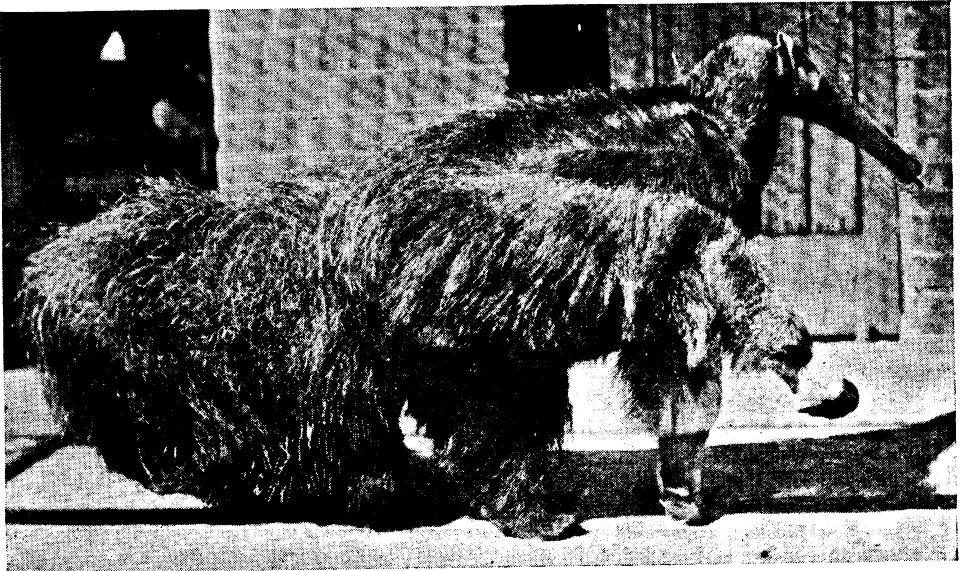
A BOA CONSTRICTOR CRUSHING A FOWL.

Its long, thick, black beard is parted at the chin. In drinking, the animal hollows its hand and uses it as a cup. It does this with great care, as it cannot bear to have its beard wetted. This is the only wild monkey known to use its hands as a cup. Evidently it does not favour trespassers, for it is very fond of pelting those who venture into the forest with twigs and small branches.

A CAPYBARA, THE LARGEST OF THE BRAZILIAN RODENTS, SENT TO LONDON'S ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS BY MR. MORRIS.

With a little ingenuity it is not difficult to trap the monkeys of the Brazilian forests. I have designed a large wooden box, divided into two or more compartments. In the farthest one is placed some tempting fruit or tit-bit which I know the animal likes. At first it is too nervous and frightened to take it, but gradually greed and curiosity gets the upper hand, and it ventures into the box. The moment it grabs the fruit it releases the catch. Down slides the raised panel and the surprised monkey is caught. On a single trip I often secure as many as thirty or forty monkeys, representing many species. If I cannot manage to transport them all I allow some to escape.

We take the tapir in specially set traps concealed in the heart of the dense forest. The bait consists of dainty leaves or shrubs, of which the animal is very fond. The trap is so set that the animal on grabbing the



GREAT ANT EATERS, SENT TO LONDON'S ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

A NEWLY CAUGHT EGRET IN MR. MORRIS'S DEPOT AT PARA.

food releases a spring which closes the entrance. This animal is very shy, but thrives well in captivity. When captured young they get very tame, and will follow their owner about like a dog. To box a large specimen, however, transport it through the forest and bring it a thousand miles or more down the river, is no light job. The big cats, such as the jaguar, black leopard, ocelot, puma, etc., are also taken in specially concealed traps. The bait here is a young live goat or fowl, but so placed that it is impossible to reach them, and the only harm that comes to them is a bad fright. These big cats are very vicious and have to be handled with tact and judgment. The puma soon becomes quite tame, but the leopards and jaguars are cunning and treacherous, and can never be relied upon.

The peccary, a species of wild swine, is another forest customer that never hesitates to put up a stiff fight. It hunts in droves, but even when alone will not hesitate to attack a man when wounded, and with its sharp tusks it can inflict some nasty wounds. You have to confine it in a steel cage, for it would quickly tear a strong wooden box to ribbons with its powerful tusks. We were short of meat, and on hearing the grunt of the peccary I very foolishly concluded that there was only a single animal about. So I ventured forth with one of my Indians to shoot it. But we soon discovered there was a drove of them, and with a single rifle it was hopeless. The Indian promptly began scaling the nearest tree, and I followed suit, and only just in time, for a couple of the peccaries were snapping at my heels. We had reached the upper part of the tree and I was about to grasp what I imagined to be a branch, when my companion shouted "Jararaca"! I promptly jumped back, for

MR. MORRIS AND A PET MONKEY.

this is one of the most deadly of the snakes. Getting my rifle in position, I fired at its head. The next moment it was being torn to pieces by the peccaries. We were confined in that tree till nightfall. Yet if you take the peccary when very young it becomes quite tame. I remember a well-known naturalist coming to my depot at Para, and could hardly believe his own eyes when he saw a peccary running about of his own free will, as well behaved as the domestic pig. Then there are the rodents, of which there are many species, the largest being the capybara, reminding one of a huge guinea-pig. They are semi-aquatic, and spend much of their time in the water. The paca is perhaps the most handsomely marked of these creatures.

There is certainly no waterway in the world which contains such a variety of strange fish as the Amazon and its many tributaries. I should say without fear of exaggeration that there are 3,000 different kinds of fish in the Amazon rivers. You could have a fish diet every day for five years and not taste the same fish twice. Many of the species are very vicious. There is the piranha, or cannibal fish, found on the black rivers. It is by no means a large fish, not much bigger than the British roach, with a heavily undershot jaw and very sharp teeth. Whether singly or in shoals, it does not hesitate to attack both animals and men. A bullock on venturing into the stream will be attacked by this fish in such numbers and so ferociously that the animal, losing much blood, is pulled under and devoured. I once heard terrible screams and on going to the bank found an Indian girl struggling in the midst of a shoal of these brutes. She had waded into the river, when the fish at once attacked her. We threw her a rope and dragged her ashore, but blood was streaming from all over her body, and we could do nothing to save her. You cannot catch this fish with a line, as they readily snap it in two; nor can you keep them in captivity, as when hungry they devour one another. I have secured specimens of the puraque, or electric eel. There is one at Regent's Park, a very fine specimen, now over six feet in length. Merely to touch it is to get a shock which you cannot shake off for hours. Scientists say it can give a shock equal to 500 volts. We had been fishing one day, and when the net was hauled in a native thrust his hand into the bag. There was a yell and a jump, as if he had been shot from a catapult. He had touched one of these fishes. For the next two hours he lay trembling like a leaf, and it was hours before we could move on again. Then there are various species of ray, resembling huge skates, which possess terrible stings, so strong that they will pierce thick leather.

An interesting creature is the manatee, or cowfish, which attains a length of eight feet and weighs about four hundred pounds. It has a face not unlike that of a cow, hence the name cowfish. It suckles its young at the breast. Its flesh, which resembles pork or veal in flavour, is considered by the natives as a delicacy. It is found on the Rio Negro, Tapajos, and Uassa rivers; and I decided to catch a pair and bring them over to the London Gardens. I accordingly built some special steel traps, and went off down the Tapajos looking for manatees. It was many weary weeks before our luck was in. But one night a pair, male and female, got into the net. Now a four-hundred pound fish is not an easy creature to hold. In their efforts to get loose they are likely to break the mesh of the net and get free. But we quickly hauled them up on to the shore, when they were helpless. We placed them in two crude tanks and set off home for Para. Unfortunately a rebellion had broken out, and the revolutionary authorities sent us to Obidos, where our prized treasures were commandeered for food. It was disappointing, but when things had quieted down I set off manatee hunting once more, and eventually succeeded in getting another pair to my depot in Para. Here I taught them to feed on green food which could easily be procured in England. I procured two wooden oval tanks, 8 feet long, 3 feet wide and 11 feet deep, placed the fish in them, and got them on board a liner bound for Liverpool. When we reached Lisbon all the green food had been consumed, and though I hunted all over the city I only procured fifty-six bunches of carrots, of which only the green tops were of use. Despite every care, one of the manatees succumbed while passing through the Bay of Biscay, and the other five hours after we had dropped anchor at Liverpool. It was a bitter disappointment; but I am off again shortly, and mean to have another try, and hope this time to be successful in bringing to Europe a living specimen of this strange fresh-water mammal.

One of the secrets of successful animal collecting is the acclimatisation of a newly-caught specimen to captivity and civilised

foods. So at Para I have established a depot where the animals remain for three months to a year before they are sent overseas. It occupies twelve acres of park-like grounds, surrounded by a brick wall, on the outskirts of the city. In addition to a commodious dwelling-house, there are a well-ventilated animal house, several paddocks, five aviaries, the largest one being 100 feet in length, 56 feet wide and 30 feet high, enclosing a number of small trees and a pond. It is stocked with herons, cranes, egrets, storks, parrots, macaws, toucans, and other birds and waterfowl. I have also several ponds, one large enough to accommodate such big fish as the manatee. It takes a staff of four men to feed and look after the collection. It has become a kind of show-place, and I get a number of visitors from the boats that call at Para. What surprises them more than anything else, perhaps, is to find monkeys, herons, cranes, snakes, and all kinds of creatures running about the grounds of their own free will. The tamer an animal becomes the easier it is to transport it, for it is the long journey overseas that is so trying and takes such a heavy toll of wild life. The Bay of Biscay is the animal-hunter's graveyard. It accounts for 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. of the death-rate of animals coming from the tropics.

# THAT YOUNGSTER SPRING.

**THAT youngster Spring's gone rattling by,**
***Sing derry, ding-derry,***
**A world of mischief in his eye,**
***Sing derry, ding-derry,***
**Two blackbirds at his coat-tails pecked,**
**His falling hat was blossom-flecked,**
**Crystals of dew his ribbons decked;**
***Sing derry, ding-derry.***

**That youngster Spring's a foolish boy,**
***Sing derry, ding-derry,***
**Yet none will stay him or destroy,**
***Sing derry, ding-derry,***
**He fills the air with Puckish fun,**
**He whips the cold winds till they run,**
**He wins to jest the frigid sun;**
***Sing derry, ding-derry.***

**That youngster Spring's a dreadful thief,**
***Sing derry, ding-derry,***
**Yet none will chide him to his grief,**
***Sing derry, ding-derry,***
**He filches Winter's bark and bite,**
**He plunders Summer left and right,**
**And casts the spoil for our delight.**
***Sing derry, ding-derry.***

**That youngster Spring's gone rattling by,**
***Sing derry, ding-derry,***
**A ripening mischief in his eye,**
***Sing derry, ding-derry,***
**To further folly he's compact,**
**Yet none will stop him—odious fact,**
**They'll watch him in the very act!**
***Sing derry, ding-derry.***

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

"The last sentence was sudden illumination. It painted pictures and set them moving before Dolores' eyes."

# ACHIEVEMENT

## By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

THE sudden failure of the electricity brought shadows into the restaurant. Dolores found herself trying to follow their whimsies, or to pin them down to some definite scheme. They refused; they were full of indeterminate edges that left wide spaces for her fancy to play in. This unknown person in the next alcove might be old, young, handsome, ugly—she had nothing save the shadow of his hands to judge by. Sometimes in puckish mood the shadows grossly enlarged these hands, as if the man himself became a mere appendage to moving wrist and flexible fingers.

The manager of the restaurant was profuse in his apologies. It was the first time the electricity had failed. Meantime he had sent a waiter for candles. He would do his best to meet the emergency.

Moving amongst the tables, he came to a pause against Dolores' alcove.

"I'm sorry, madam. The electric current . . . candles . . ." He was like a gramophone set to a permanent record of apology.

"Candles will be delightful," Dolores reassured him.

The manager's apologies travelled to the next alcove.

"A most regrettable incident . . . but I've sent for candles."

"They'll exactly meet the case," Dolores'

neighbour said. "These days we live in too strong a light. We leave no room for half-tones."

Dolores was conscious of a rush of colour to her face. So it *was* Cecil Thorne. She had commenced to wonder when she had seen his hands. They had always expressed Cecil. They were key to his personality. Now the sound of his voice left no room for doubt. And, of course, the sound of her own voice would prick Cecil's attention. She found herself half closing her eyes so that she should no longer watch his moving shadow. She heard him stirring, and the next moment his voice came sharply:

"Dolores? So near and yet so far. A panel of wood was as great a divider as the Atlantic. But now, of course——" He drew a chair opposite hers. "You've had tea? No? That's right. I'm going to have it with you."

"You don't leave me a loophole for refusal," she shrugged.

"Loopholes are dangerous. One's apt to lose things."

His order to the waiter was typical of the man. He remembered Dolores' favourite cakes; and that it must be China tea. Cecil could always be depended on for detail.

"Now we can talk," Cecil said to her abruptly. "Indecision—that's the topic."

She drew back quickly into a shell of reserve. She would have tossed him some light sentence that would serve for a screen, but it eluded her. His voice came determinedly into her silence.

"After all, we were made for each other, Dolores. Now and then mates are made in heaven. It's really presumption on your part to defy Providence."

"I'm afraid to say 'yes,'" Dolores said abruptly.

"Afraid? Nonsense. *Why*?"

She was watching his hands. They were supple, finely fashioned, full of individuality. His eyes followed hers, and he laughed suddenly.

"You always harp on fancy. In a sense I'm with you, as regards what my hands mean to me. I'd be stripped of everything lacking them."

"That's it. They're *you*."

He had been laughingly holding his hands out as if for inspection. But now his mood altered.

"I wouldn't change my work for any in the world. To bring beauty out of a slab of marble, to make it come alive, almost to have gestures, sight, breathing——"

She was watching, not his face, but his hands. They were more mobile than his face. They showed his moods, expressed exaltation or depression. They were the hands of a sculptor who served his craft with passion.

"Just now I'm at work on a figure of Dawn. There's surely a Dawn Spirit? Some triumphant embodiment of Light? At all events, I've dreamt of her. She has your eyes and mouth. . . . Dolores, let's get out of this. You've finished tea? Come along to my studio. I want to show you marble coming alive."

Dolores could have laughed at his eagerness. He had the variable moods of an artist—April was the month he personified. He paid for the tea, hailed a taxi, and gave his order to the driver in a few whirlwind moments.

"It will be quiet at home. We can talk." He eyed her laughingly. "At least I can. I chatter to stop you from refusing to marry me. *Afraid?* Dolores, why on earth? You didn't mean what you said just now?"

"I did. You could be cruel. *These* could." She let her hand rest on his for a second. "They mean too much."

"Tools." He moved them impatiently. "Just tools. Drop fantasy, Dolores. Or, rather, make a sensible medium of it. If I'm ever to do anything worth while it'll be through my hands. Success? Fame, even? There's a chance of it—thanks to my nimble paws."

She was constantly making mental pictures of Cecil's personality. He was clever, original, painstaking—a man of one idea. Cecil moved to one tune—his ears were deaf to other rhythms. He could make marble come alive, and that sufficed.

The taxi stopped at a house in Crown Square. Dolores always found the Thornes' house typical of the inmates. It was a patchwork of Cecil's personality and his sister's. Beauty, of course, reigned in Cecil's studio. Alice Thorne's rooms were drab. It was as if all the vitality of the house had been held captive by Cecil.

"Here's Dolores," Cecil called.

"Dolores?" A door opened and Alice Thorne came into the hall. She was a dim understudy of her brother—say the sketch that preceded the final painting.

"You've come to see Cecil's 'Dawn'?"

"And *you*," Dolores amended.

Cecil was leading the way to the studio. At Dolores' last word he looked back,

meeting her eyes. There had been the suggestion of a whip in her voice. " Sybil counts, as well as you," had been its implication. " You push her permanently into the shadows."

Cecil shrugged her " wireless " aside. He opened the studio door with a flourish. It was a delectable spot—beauty materialised. It was a shrine for the purity of chiselled marble. Dolores felt herself drowning in a sea of loveliness. But she reached land presently as she listened and watched. Cecil was a magician, evoking beauty from raw material. Alice Thorne was his slave, obedient and subdued. Cecil seemed by the merest gesture to obtain ready service. A glance towards the door presently was enough to send her from the room.

" Now we can talk," Cecil said contently. " I can tell you a thousand and one reasons why you should marry me."

" And I the one reason why I can't," Dolores retorted.

She was sitting on a divan drawn close to a wood fire. Cecil came and seated himself at her side. With a sudden movement he caught one of her hands in his. Dolores felt as if her fingers were caught and held in a vice. She tried ineffectually to set them free.

" You're the one woman," he affirmed. " There's never been another I cared a brass farthing for. I've always wanted you."

" And what you want you get ? "

" Usually—yes," he laughed.

He released her hand and began to roll a cigarette. " Things have generally worked out on my own lines."

She bent forward, speaking quickly. " I've watched your life, Cecil. You've carved it cleverly. But with pain."

" No—never."

" Not for yourself—for others. Your father and mother ? They were not artistic, not of your set. You pushed them permanently into the background. Your sister ? She could be useful in a drab way. You pushed her into a niche of service and kept her there." She touched his hands. " Clever hands—but cruel. They push everything into the shadows that doesn't serve you."

" As usual, you're fanciful." Cecil regarded his hands for a moment with mock gravity. " But you harp monotonously on one theme."

" So do you."

" What theme ? "

" Yourself."

" Drop your whip, Dolores. My shoulders smart. As I said, you're the one woman. You match my scheme of things. You're lovely sculpture come to earth. I want you."

She shook her head. " I can't. I should become one of the pushed." Again the light touch of her fingers on his hands. " Figuratively, your hands would always push and hustle me into a scheme of your choosing." Her voice tripped and hurried. " I should be marble to be fashioned. You've the clever hands of a sculptor ; but hard as the stone they work on."

She got quickly to her feet, pulling her cloak about her. She was half-way to the door before he reached her side. His expostulations were like hailstones about her ears. It was inconceivable that she should let fancy rule her . . . she was governed by whims, not common sense. . . .

At last she was free of him. Even Cecil must realise the finality of her decision. Back in her own flat, she gave herself up to the luxury of this finality. Cecil's persistent suit of her had got on her nerves. If he had been lover before sculptor . . . man before marble-hewer . . . soul before artificer . . . if . . . if . . . The army of " ifs " besieged her.

Gossip, of course, was busy with her name and Cecil Thorne's. Rumour whispered furtively that they had quarrelled . . . that Dolores had refused him . . . that, thinking better of it, he had never asked her . . . that success was his spouse, and a well-chosen one. . . . Tongues of rumour came to Dolores' ear. She wondered if they came to Cecil's. If so, he was indifferent. He moved along the path of success cool and determined. Dolores and he rarely met. Convention, of course, was a seemly screen when they did. The weather—politics—they became apt at conversation that showed them half-strangers in the eyes of the world.

Occasionally the screen shifted slightly. Cecil could always let enthusiasm loose if he spoke of his work. He was busy these days on a group of the world's toilers. He had conceived a mighty showing of activity to be caught and imprisoned in marble.

It was in a factory that Dolores met him, about two years after the studio interview. Dolores had gone with a friend who was studying textile industries. It was a whimsical twist of circumstance that Cecil Thorne should be touring the factory under the manager's guidance. He was after copy,

he told Dolores when they met. He launched into enthusiastic detail. This was the last study for his group — his labour neared completion. He wanted to show the sheer beauty of action.

"I've dreamt of it day and night," he said to Dolores. "It's been meat, sleep, drink." He glanced at her, with a quick laugh. "That bores you? I'm still the man of one idea? Still—dominated?" He held out his hands as if for inspection. "You're right in a way. They've been craftsmen to all my dreams."

Dolores was thinking how quickly the two years' separation seemed sent to oblivion. They were here together, and instantly the old theme held them enthralled. The crash and clang of machinery was a loud-sounding orchestra, setting the key to this repeated act.

"But I've never stopped wanting you, Dolores. You're still the one woman."

She stirred impatiently. His importunity was like a sea-tide, not to be overruled. It was as immutable as the passage of hours. It had the precision of a fixed law of Nature.

"I wish you were not fanciful," Cecil said. "And I wish these hands of mine hadn't started imagery in your brain."

"'I should be marble to be fashioned. You've the clever hands of a sculptor; but hard as the stone they work on.'"

She moved a few steps from him, impetuously backing from the sudden importunate gesture of his hands—as if, being his slaves, they would drag her from her pinnacle of rejection. She had an impulse to run, to make flight an ally. She took a few more quick steps away from him.

"*Dolores!*"

There seemed nothing save the sound of her name on Cecil's lips. It was shrill enough to drown the crash of machinery.

"*Dolores!*"

Her impulse of flight had tricked her. It had sent her headlong to disaster. The hanging folds of her dress were caught into the mighty teeth of a machine. It was as if some monster seized his prey and gloated over it. She was drawn as inevitably as steel to magnet. A second of Time was an unmeasured cycle. Detail was obliterated by the heavy brush of panic. . . . There seemed some battle in progress for the disputed possession of herself. This monster of iron, and Cecil's hands, masterful, insistent—she was a pawn for these two players.

"'You match my scheme of things. You're lovely sculpture come to earth. I want you.'"

The sound of her dress ripping and tearing spelt Cecil's victory. She found herself staring at his hands. They were masterful, not to be thwarted.

"A near thing," someone was saying. "Another moment, and the gentleman's hands wouldn't have been worth a brass farthing."

"Are they hurt?" She stooped to them suddenly. They were grazed, bleeding. "It's not——"

"Serious? Not a bit of it. They'll be as right as rain in a day or two. Don't worry, Dolores."

Words were the veriest traitors. When she would have had them nimble they lagged and halted. It seemed an interminable hour of suspense whilst Cecil's hands were being dressed and bound. The doctor's voice was a clarion call to her ears, though.

"A flesh wound only. You're lucky, Mr. Thorne. Another second, and your hands would have been done for."

Dolores could hardly have told how she got back to the privacy of her flat. Cecil had gone off to Crown Square in a taxi, and after his departure Dolores moved in a mist. Through the mist gigantic marble-hewn figures seemed to move and become vocal. They were victory in every shape. They were heroes. They trampled self under heel and were gallantry epitomised.

The telephone bell shrilled into the stillness. Dolores crossed to her writing-table and lifted the receiver.

"Yes. Who's there?"

" Cecil. Are you alone ? "

" Quite alone. Are you in pain ? "

" Very little. Dolores ? "

" Yes, Cecil."

" I'm sitting in my studio. But these marble things aren't sympathetic. They stare at me coldly. Fickle ! I've served them all these years, and to-night not a gesture of friendliness from them. . . . What's that you say ? Don't worry about my hands. They weren't worth a pin beside your safety. These marble things—or *you*."

That last sentence was sudden illumination. It painted pictures and set them moving before Dolores' eyes. Cecil's room, that casket for marbled loveliness—the group that was meant to bring him fame—she could see the firelight flicker in and out the marble and touch it to a cold mimicry of life. She saw Cecil sitting in the midst of these carven beauties, with bound hands. And then his voice—" These marble things —or *you*."

He was speaking again.

" You're there still ? Have you learnt things yet ? You understand ? Marble—or *you*. For the hundredth time I tell you that you're the one woman."

" And I——"

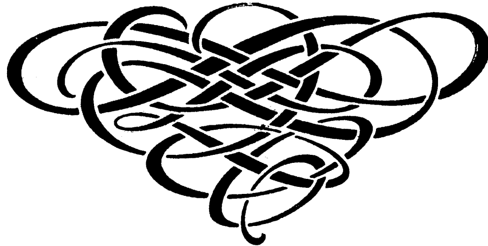
" Yes ? Finish your sentence."

" Not to-night. To-morrow I'll come and ask how those poor hands are."

" Always my hands. Forget them. They don't count. Mend that broken sentence, Dolores."

" Shall I ? Well, then . . . you're the one man."

She hung the receiver up quickly and stood there against her writing-desk, laughing, radiant.



## THE OTHER SIDE.

**THE other side is gaunt and grim,**
**Close-huddled wharves the margin rim,**
**Chimneys rise stark above ; a crane**
**Swings out and in a hungry chain**
**Where the full-freighted barges swim,**

**It reaches like a monstrous limb,**
**To snatch from off the river brim**
**What toll the tide has brought again**
**The other side.**

**But this is orderly and prim**
**With rows of trees and gardens trim**
**And straight smooth walls ; yet of the twain—**
**What Muse compels me ?—I am fain**
**For its sheer gracelessness to hymn**
**The other side.**

**ARTHUR H. STREETEN.**

"'Hush . . . don't say anything. Save me! Save me!'"

# THE EARLY BIRD

## By ALICE GRANT ROSMAN

### ILLUSTRATED BY C. FLEMING WILLIAMS

"SO young Troyne is on his way home from the East?" Colonel Boyle was saying to Sir Arthur Bird, as the two girls approached the terrace.

Sir Arthur scowled, not, however, at his friend and colleague, but because an assumed ferocity was the pose he wore before all women. He thought it kept them in their places.

Overhearing Colonel Boyle, the bright pair exchanged glances, and Sir Arthur's niece, Molly, who was a wicked imp, whispered to her friend Agatha Trew:

"That's the infallible Alistair Troyne, the old darling's pet exhibit. Hist! We must look into it."

With an appearance of innocence in itself highly suspicious, they therefore joined the two old diplomats on the terrace, and Sir Arthur watched them with a sardonic eye. He knew that only the mention of the young man could have persuaded them to waste their smiles upon anyone as incomparably aged as himself and the Colonel, just as he knew that between themselves they called him the Early Bird, an impertinent reference to an honour that had failed to come his way. He kept this knowledge and most other to himself, however, having learned in a long and spectacular life that often to know nothing is to learn much.

Colonel Boyle, waving aside the blandishments of the two young hussies, asked his friend:

"When is the lad's boat expected, by the way?"

"Lad?" exclaimed Molly, opening her dark eyes in pretended astonishment. "Darlings, don't tell me you know a real lad, or is he ninety?"

Sir Arthur surveyed her over his glasses.

"Um . . . No use, my dear," he snapped. "Your bright glances will be entirely wasted on Alistair Troyne. I am credibly informed he is woman-proof."

"Oh dear," sighed Molly; "and I was depending on him to teach me the turkey-trot. But, after all, I dare say those fussy old gentlemen in Bagdad or wherever it is

were merely pulling your leg. What do you bet?"

Sir Arthur, slightly nettled at this reference to men of his department who were considerably his junior, answered tartly:

"I never bet with minors or on a certainty, and your language, Molly, I consider both regrettable and unladylike."

"The young man's insensibility to the charms of your sex, my dear," observed the Colonel with his courtly air, "is, although it may seem ungallant to say so, the keynote of his success in a very difficult career. The more delightful you are the more impossible it becomes for any poor fool of a man to keep a still tongue in his head."

Molly, who had been sitting on the balustrade, jumped down and dropped him a profound curtsy, then rumpling her uncle's thin hair until it stood stiffly aloft, she beckoned her fellow-siren.

"Come away, come away," she ordered in a tone of reproof. "You are tempting the poor darlings to reveal affairs of State."

The "darlings" smiled a secret smile at the retreating backs.

"I don't think I like the sound of the Early Bird's little pet," said Molly when they were out of earshot.

Agatha, who affected brevity, agreed in a word.

"Prig!" she said.

"I'm afraid he's too good to be true, you know," went on Molly, "and the poor old Early Bird will find his pattern of virtue is a dark horse and a padded sell."

"Sounds a bit variegated to me," protested Agatha.

"Exactly. Villains always are variegated. Haven't they purple pasts and yellow streaks and black hearts? Those two old dears are very innocent really. Now, if they were *our* age they would know instinctively that no young man as infallible as Alistair Troyne could possibly be genuine. They are jolly confident we shall be overlooked by the paragon, but I should rather like to conduct a private test."

"Let us," said Agatha.

It was an attractive notion, for adventure had been scarce of late, and promising, brainy young men even scarcer. With much gusto they proceeded to sketch out a campaign, choosing with wicked delight Sir Arthur's nickname as a suitable phrase to brandish before the victim and trap him into self-betrayal. So Monday morning found them going back to town to perfect their plans for the paragon's undoing.

## II.

It seemed odd to Alistair Troyne that after six years in the more spectacular countries of the world, Adventure should come to him at last within twelve hours of setting foot in his own London. Of course, it was not really odd at all; for Adventure, like Love and Fame, those other jades which men must follow, does not wait on any man's invitation. She comes suddenly round the corner, a distracting minx, to take him unawares.

It was an auspicious moment, for this April London was to the exile an enchanted country. He knew nothing of London really, except from schoolboy raids upon it ten years ago. He had spent his young manhood in the quite unexpected and very hectic business of war; and because he had diplomacy in his blood perhaps, because he had charm and the frank smile that can hide so much, because he had a commanding officer who was fierce and angry, but a judge of men, they sent him when the fighting was over to help unravel those desperate tangles in the East—comic opera intrigue, public and private villainy arrayed against the innocent smile and the English patience of such men as he.

Alistair Troyne had loved and hated it, had worked hard and come home at last, a promising young man with the eye of his seniors upon him, and full of those pretty illusions about his native land which only long residence abroad can give.

He had been this afternoon to his Chief's house, and Sir Arthur had been kind, full of hints and promises for the future, but there was no hurry about that. Leisure . . . that was the best promise of all . . . a calm leisure. It was there in the old man's suave and gentle voice; in the great room, full of ancient, lovely things; in the hint of a girl's laughter heard as a door opened somewhere, and the gleam of bright skirts on the shadowed staircase as he left the house.

Alistair Troyne in his present mood found these things exciting, for wasn't he to dine here two nights hence?

And now, in the April dusk he was driving back to his hotel, and London loomed about him, lovely and mysterious and golden-eyed.

His taxi slipped past the Green Park, silver in the mists, and then in a press of traffic halted for awhile at Hyde Park

Corner. The Quadriga, darkly triumphant against the evening sky, the wide sweep of roadway crowded with vehicles that moved and paused and set to partners with a stately dignity, drew further on his feeling of well-being and content. It was good to be home again.

The traffic was released at last, and the taxi-driver let in the clutch and released the brake. At that moment the door burst open and somebody scrambled in and sank into the seat beside Alistair Troyne. He saw something soft and lacy, and a flash of silver slippers; he heard a husky voice exclaim:

"Hush . . . don't say anything. . . . Save me! Save me!"

The taxi was gathering speed, and the young man in his dark corner strained his eyes in amazed silence, but could not see the face of his visitor.

"Where . . . where are you going?" asked the husky voice at last.

"Well, where would you suggest? I am not an experienced life-saver, so you'll have to advise me, I'm afraid."

"Oh dear . . . I was just in front of you in my car, and I was being followed. Look . . . there they go down Grosvenor Place . . . that big red car. A 'bus got in between us, and I had just time to slip out and jump into your taxi; but when they get to Victoria, they'll discover I've gone, so we must get away quickly. Where do you live?"

"Oh, come," said Troyne, "you can hardly expect me to take you home with me. What do you suppose my wife would say?"

"Are . . . are you married?"

The young man laughed.

"Even marriage shouldn't prevent one from saving life," he pointed out, evading the question; "so if you'll tell me where to drive you . . ."

"Do you know Draycott Street?"

"No doubt the taxi-driver will."

"Oh dear, aren't you a Londoner, then?"

"That's unkind. I'm sure I haven't a Lancashire accent."

The lady in the corner seemed to be struggling with some emotion. Apparently it was exasperation, for she exclaimed:

"Don't you *ever* answer a straight question?"

"Not to strangers who get into my taxi without an invitation."

"I believe you're . . . shocked."

"Not at all. I'm enchanted, but I can't help thinking it must be a dangerous sort of hobby," said the young man cheerfully. "Suppose I were to call the police?"

"Oh, you wouldn't." A small hand came out appealingly. "Why, the Early Bird would simply kill me," said its owner.

"You don't say so? What, the chap who always catches the worm?"

"It's all very well for you to laugh, but if you haven't heard of the Early Bird you are certainly *not* a Londoner. Why, he's famous. . . . He's a scoundrel, an international scoundrel."

"And you are his accomplice? Splendid!"

"I'm not," said a smothered voice pathetically. "I'm in his power."

"Oh, come . . . not in this century?"

"You see . . . he's my guardian, and I'm not of age."

Alistair Troyne sat still for a moment and did a little quick thinking. He had not, up to this, believed a word of the interesting stranger's conversation. He had supposed her an adventuress—this talk of international scoundrels showing her to be unusually naïve, or to suspect him of being so. Now he was suddenly aware that her voice had been carefully disguised, and that she had betrayed the fact by a tone altogether too bland and youthful.

Convinced that she was some silly youngster out for a "rag," and determined to give her a fright, he leant over and seized the speaking-tube.

"Stop at the nearest police station," he ordered the driver.

In a moment the girl's hand was on the door, and luck being with her, they were once more stopped by a press of traffic. Before he could interfere she had jumped out and was rushing across to a taxi rank on the opposite side of the street.

Under the arc light as she passed it Troyne caught a glimpse of dark hair and the flash of silver slippers.

## III.

He had an interview with Sir Arthur and Colonel Boyle at the Foreign Office next morning, a misty morning, in which old London, seen from the sloping pavements of Whitehall, looked like a city of dreams. How, in this cold, life-giving air, he found himself loathing the blazing suns of the East! There was a spring in his step and he felt like a boy again, with all the promise of the world before him.

The two old diplomats, who had heard

enough of young Troyne to put them on their guard, were immensely pleased with him that morning. He was surprisingly unspoiled and had the keenness and youth that were bound to move them to a fine envy. Accustomed to judge men, they felt no doubts about Alistair Troyne, and when he left them, it was with the kindliest assurances that his future was safe in their hands.

" She had jumped out and was rushing across to a taxi rank on the opposite side of the street."

Alistair naturally said nothing to them of the adventure that had welcomed him to London. As he came out into Whitehall, however, he remembered it with a smile, for a big, red car, with a chauffeur in attendance, was waiting beside the kerb.

A hundred yards further on there was a small two-seater, whose owner seemed to be in difficulties, and as Troyne approached, a tall girl in goggles and a leather coat and cap hailed him abruptly.

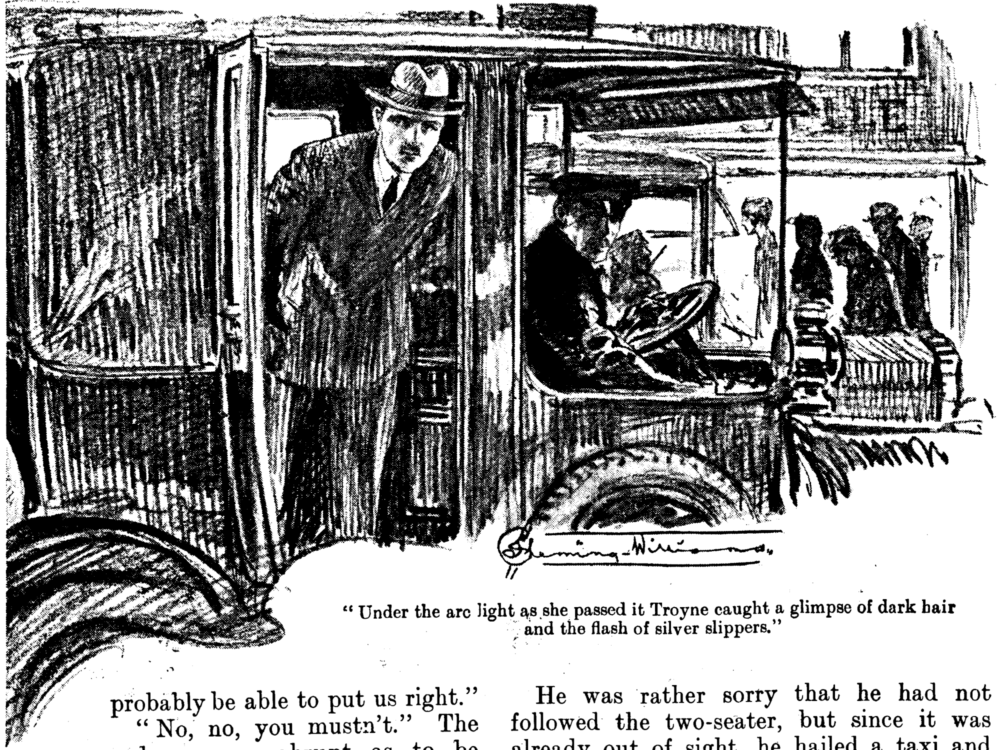
" Know anything about cars ? " she asked. " I can't swing her. Must be the cold."

Troyne went to her assistance, " swung her " without avail, and finally lifted the bonnet and peered inside.

" Got plenty of petrol, I suppose ? " he asked. " What about the throttle and magneto ? "

"Yes, they're set all right, and I had her filled up half an hour ago."

"I'm afraid I'm rather a mug at this," Troyne confessed at last, "but I'll go and get the chauffeur of this next car. He'll probably be able to put us right."



"Under the arc light as she passed it Troyne caught a glimpse of dark hair and the flash of silver slippers."

"No, no, you mustn't." The order was so abrupt as to be positively startling. "Why, that's the Early Bird's car," explained the girl in the goggles.

That, of course, was the moment when the paragon should have started, and proved himself no diplomat, but he did nothing of the kind.

"But, hang it all," he said, "if it were the King of Siam's he would surely lend a hand in an emergency, wouldn't he? I'll get him."

"No!"

The girl, peering into the car, suddenly laughed, and turned to him in apology.

"I'm the mug," she said. "Didn't turn on the beastly engine. So sorry to have troubled you."

And in two minutes she and the little car were careering up Whitehall.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Alistair Troyne.

It wasn't the same girl either. He was convinced of that . . . much taller and with a different voice . . . but it was certainly a rum coincidence. He began to feel an interest in the Early Bird and his red car, and determined to hang about and see what kind of person claimed the latter. Turning with this intention, however, he found he was too late. The red car was already gliding away in the direction of Westminster.

He was rather sorry that he had not followed the two-seater, but since it was already out of sight, he hailed a taxi and decided to trail the red car instead. There might be nothing to learn from this manœuvre, but his training had taught Alistair Troyne never to act on such an indolent and comforting assumption. And after all he had nothing to do at the moment, so he might just as well pursue the adventure.

The red car had turned down by the Houses of Parliament towards Westminster Bridge, and by the time his taxi came in sight of it was speeding along the Embankment.

Below the Savoy it drew up at the kerb and waited.

"Drive slowly past it," Alistair directed the chauffeur, and the next moment gave a whistle of pleasure and surprise. The two-seater had slipped out of Savoy Street, stopped on the opposite side of the road, and the girl in goggles was getting out. The traffic was heavy at the moment, and Alistair saw her peering about as though in search of someone. Then, as his taxi approached, the right-hand door of the red

car was flung open, and another girl stepped on to the footboard, evidently trying to attract the attention of the driver of the two-seater.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Alistair Troyne, and straightway forgot the Early Bird and all the world beside.

It had been part of the wonder of Alistair Troyne to hard-headed and cynical seniors that he was not a susceptible person, for he had about him the eternal boyishness that few women can resist spoiling. In the East, however, with its crude lights and cruder passions, he had been on his guard, had perhaps a little unnecessarily suspected every feminine smile of being a wile as well. Now he had come home from exile, and London had touched him with an enchanted finger. A difficult job successfully accomplished lay behind him, a future full of kindly promise before. Fate, being in a kindly mood, seized this auspicious moment to present to him that bright picture of mischief, Molly Carruthers, standing on the footboard of her uncle's car—a slender, boyish creature, bright-eyed and vivid in her little dark suit and soft white furs.

Alistair stopped his taxi a hundred yards further on, got out, and threw a handful of silver at the driver, who winked, then drove off in a hurry before this eccentric fare could repent his unbridled generosity.

That diplomatic and woman-proof young man, however, had become suddenly reckless. He walked back towards the red car, noticed that the girl in goggles had come over and was deep in conversation with its occupant at the further door, while the chauffeur sat impassive and unnoticing at the wheel.

He was sure now that there was some game afoot at his expense, though why or how he, a complete stranger to London, should have been chosen he could not guess. Almost certainly the lovely girl on the footboard was his visitor of the night before. He had caught, it was true, the merest glimpse of her then, and feeling that he had distinctly neglected his opportunities, he decided to make up for it forthwith.

Very softly he opened the door of the car and slipped into the corner seat.

When, a moment later, Molly had said good-bye to Agatha Trew and, turning, discovered him, he exclaimed in a stage whisper:

"Hush . . . don't say anything. Save me! Save me!"

Molly stared at him, gasped, and burst out laughing.

"How in the world did you know me?" she asked at last.

"Ah," said Troyne darkly; "we know everything at the Foreign Office."

It was the kind of speech Molly might have expected of the paragon, but somehow it did not fill her with scorn and loathing, as she had once supposed any speech of his would do. He had such a very infectious grin, and he had certainly scored in tracking her down so smartly. Here was a young man whose quick wits would make him a delightful playfellow.

"You won't tell the Early Bird, will you?" she begged.

"On condition that you answer one question," said Alistair, with an air of deep and exaggerated mystery.

"Fire away, then."

He looked cautiously out of both windows, and under the seats of the car for possible eavesdroppers, then put his question in a stage whisper.

"Who *is* the Early Bird?" he said.

## IV.

Molly came into the drawing-room demurely, a slim, a lovely picture of innocence and white chiffon.

"I want to introduce you to my niece, Miss Carruthers, Troyne," said Sir Arthur to his guest. "Molly, my dear, you've heard me speak of Major Troyne?"

"Have I, darling?" Molly looked sweetly vague as the young man started eagerly forward to greet her. "My uncle has so many majors and things scattered about the globe, you know," she told him demurely.

"By Jove, I am glad to meet you," said Alistair Troyne. Then, aware that the remark sounded altogether too effusive, he added hastily: "I mean, I didn't know you had a niece, sir."

"Ah, we all have our family skeletons, my boy," said the Early Bird, with a twinkle.

"I don't think you're much of a diplomat," Molly said to the young man reproachfully under cover of the conversation at dinner. "Why, you very nearly gave me away."

"I wouldn't for the world," he told her ardently. "Think how out of place it would be, because, of course, I shall want Sir Arthur to do that."

"To give me away?" echoed Molly suspiciously.

"Yes," said Alistair the woman-proof. "At St. George's, Hanover Square."

# THE LAST JEST

## By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of " As Other Men Are," " And Five Were Foolish," " Berry & Co.," " Anthony Lyveden," " The Courts of Idleness," Etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

After passing ten weeks in Etchechuria, ' the lost country ' of Southern Europe, conducted by their self-appointed courier, himself an Etchechurian, four travellers continue their flight from ' The Pail ' and conclude their last and strangest adventure in this remarkable land.

THAT on finding her husband gone, Eulalie should sway in her saddle was natural enough.

Simon caught her and lifted her down to the turf.

" Cordial," said Gog, shortly, thrusting a flask of leather into Patricia's hand. . . .

Then Simon came back to the horses and the two men stood together, watching the dragon-flies dart and thinking desperately. . . .

A long flash from the North announced that it was mid-day.

" No time to lose," muttered the Jester. He stood on his toes and looked over a horse's back. Eulalie was sitting up dazedly with Patricia's arm about her, propping herself with one hand and regarding the flask in the other with sightless eyes. " Take these two horses," he added, giving the reins to Simon, " and see that she drinks again. She'll be fit to ride in ten minutes, and I shall be back in five. But before we start we must water—now. I shouldn't talk or whisper. The greenwood is full of ears."

The next moment he was gone.

" Buck up," murmured Patricia. " Buck up, darling, buck up."

" Get up," breathed Simon to the roan, hauling his head from the turf. And then again, " Get up."

Eulalie sat and listened to the two commands, to the chink of steel upon steel, to the gurgle of running water, to the steady hum of insects about their business. These seemed to be the sounds of a play which she was watching, into which she had been suddenly plunged, out of the black—with a flask in her hand and a strong sweet taste in her mouth.

Then with a rush the mists parted, and with a stifled cry she got to her feet.

Patricia was speaking.

" Sit down, dear, sit down. We must wait a moment for Gog. Then we shall ride back at once and pick him up. And please drink this. If you don't you may faint again and let us down."

Eulalie sat down obediently and put the flask to her lips.

Presently—

" Has Gog any idea where we lost him ? "

" No, but he's got the map. So we're bound to meet him. It's only a question of time. And he's perfectly safe—he's got The Invisible Cloak."

Eulalie nodded.

Five silent minutes crawled by.

Then, with a sudden gasp, Eulalie tore off her glove.

" Of course," breathed Patricia. " The emerald ! "

Together, they peered at the stone. . . .

At first this was cloudy, and then a picture grew—a silver birch in the foreground and, beyond, a reach of sunlit bracken with a beechwood behind. Of Pomfret there was no sign, but under the birch stood Sunstroke —with the map in his hand.

As the picture faded—

" At least," said the Jester's voice above their heads, " he's somewhere this side of the ford. There weren't any stepping-stones, and Sunstroke's feet were dry."

" But he wasn't there," cried Patricia.

" You couldn't see him," said the Jester, " because of The Cloak. Neither could Sunstroke. And now to water."

Between them, he and Simon watered the horses at a rill. As they were bitting up—

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"We mustn't go too fast," murmured Simon. "I mean, when you can't see a man . . ."

"I know," said Gog, musingly, "and yet . . ."

"Yet what ?" said Simon.

"We've got to move," said the Jester. "For several reasons. You see, before very long they'll raise the alarm, and I happen to know that *The Cloak won't weather The Bell.*" Before Simon could reply, he had twitched a pouch from his shoulder and flung the thong that held it over the other's head. "You'll be cold in Balk," he continued, "and in that you'll find some wear. And down at the bottom you'll find a Rolling Stone. I had to fight to get it, but I pledged your word to Goosegog that when it had brought you to the fountain you'd let it go."

"But you'll be with us," cried Simon. "We can't leave you behind. Of course, you're——"

"That will depend," said the Jester, averting his head.

"On what ?"

"Seeing's not always believing," said Gog, sadly. For a moment he stooped to the water and, after peering for a moment, flicked a fly from the edge of his hood. Then he straightened his back. "And now for Pomfret."

One minute later they and the girls were mounted and flying the way they had come. . . .

The ford lay ten miles South of Crooked Thighs.

When to go forward is to make good an escape, it is hard to go back for mile after pelting mile and greet again the landscapes you were so glad to leave. These seem to stare, as though you were out of your mind. Familiar stocks and stones jab at your memory. A patch of broom you had marked laughs in your face. And all the time the grim fact that for every league you labour, instead of gaining three miles, *you are losing six* whispers its ugly message into your ear. . . .

In such case it is hard to go back—resolutely.

But the Jester's courage was high and his purpose shining. The man never wavered or swerved, but galloped steadily back, his ears pricked to gather the faintest sound, his eyes watching for a birch and a sunlit reach of bracken with a beechwood beyond.

And the three behind him.

There was no mistaking The Bell.

That a tone so bass could have been educed by human agency was in itself a moving thought. The roar of the very water under the earth, deep calling unto deep, could not have been more abysmal. And with the depth came resonance—an iron reverberation that entered into the soul. Sunlight, air and soil shuddered before its frown, a thousand hills, like timid scholars, repeated its fearful word, Doom, Death and Burial rode on its breath.

Before each shattering stroke all Nature winced like a hound under the lash. . . .

Exactly at a quarter to one The Great Bell of Misfeasance began to knoll, and thereafter once a minute to repeat its summons with an awful, deadly precision which alone plucked at the nerves.

Little wonder that before such a hue and cry five stout hearts stood still.

*The hunt was up.*

As the echoes of the first dread crash beat like frantic moths against the sides of The Pail, three things happened.

Pomfret leaped to his feet and began to stumble North towards The Aisle.

A mile away, his eye bulging with excitement, Sunstroke clapped a horn to his lips and wound a high-pitched call.

And Gog, who was galloping South, pulled his horse on to its haunches and, putting his head on one side, listened for all he was worth. . . .

Again the call rang out.

"There's the birch," cried Gog, pointing. "With the beechwood beyond. And now —About turn and keep twenty paces in rear. *Sunstroke shall play cat's-paw, and when he's plucked our needle out of the hay*——"

The thunderous shock of The Bell smashed the rest of the sentence.

* * * * *

An hour and a quarter passed before Pomfret was caught.

He might have escaped then, had he but dreamed that he was visible.

As it was, when he saw three foresters, who, with their backs towards him, were beating the undergrowth, instead of falling flat in the bracken, he continued openly to advance, merely making a slight detour in case his footsteps were heard.

Even then—such are the uses of audacity —he almost plodded out of his peril, for, when they had seen him, the fellows could hardly credit that one so careless of concealment could be the man they sought.

Indeed, when they ran towards him, and Pomfret, after surveying them, merely stood still, they could scarcely believe their eyes, and when, as they drew still nearer, he calmly walked to a tree and swinging himself on to a branch, took out a handkerchief and started to mop his face with the obvious detachment of one who has made himself safe, the three began to think that he had lost his wits.

Then Pomfret caught the eye of the leader and nearly fainted.

In fact, out of sheer surprise he fell down from the bough, and a minute later it was all over.

He fought like a lion—too late.

After a little they got him on to his face and, while two held him down, the third lashed his arms to his sides.

Gog, who had been stalking Sunstroke for over an hour, heard the birdlike call—and sighed with relief. . . .

The delay had fed upon the Jester's nerves and, though he did not show it, had done itself very well.

As for the girls and Simon, Hope and Gog had come to be synonyms. If he had bade them dismount and play at Bridge they would have done so.

At least, their tedious progress had excited no remark, as haste, since The Bell was tolling, must have done, for the greenwood was alive with men in Lincoln Green, excitedly scouring the forest in response to the note of the horn. Moreover, their mounts had been saved. Thoroughbred as they were, the horses had begun to flag, and the enforced easy, punctuated by frequent halts, had greatly revived them.

And now—Pomfret was caught.

Sunstroke had broken into a lumbering run, and Gog gave the signal to trot. . . .

Every quarter of a minute came the birdlike call.

When it was very loud, Gog threw his reins to Simon and went forward on foot.

Ahead the ground fell sharply, and Sunstroke had disappeared.

The call was discontinued.

From behind a stalwart oak, the Jester laid his plans.

The gaol was a hollow, and within a wide circle of gaolers the prisoner stood. Before him stood Sunstroke with his hands on his monstrous hips. Men were swelling the circle, one and two at a time, coming in out of the greenwood—*to be in at the kill.*

The Jester started at the thought.

Then he turned and ran as though for his life. . . .

Sixty seconds went by—while Sunstroke spoke of footwear, of pains and penalties and fools and lastly of the qualities of simian life.

Then, looking neither to right nor left, Surcoat and Dorelet, cantered lightly into the hollow, with Simon, leading a black, riding behind. For them the hungry circle, fifty paces away, might not have been.

Every one turned to stare, and most of the foresters louted, while a few went down on their knees.

Pomfret saw them, and Sunstroke—*phial in hand.*

The former never moved, but the latter tried to cry out, and the words stuck in his throat. His eye was goggling. . . .

A rustle, and the Jester was down 'like a wolf on the fold'.

They turned to see him upon them—a splash of green and crimson on a rack of black and gold.

The circle was shattered long before it could break: Sunstroke—phial in hand—was sent sprawling on to his back: Pomfret was lifted like a child and swung to the saddle-bow, and—the storm swept on.

As it came up with the others, they adopted its pace and an instant later the five were out of sight.

But not for long.

Within thirty seconds, from the higher branches of a magnificent chestnut a skewbald baboon was regarding their fast-diminishing figures with an emotion too deep for words.

* * * * *

As they came to The Aisle, a wandering breath of incense argued The Passing Priest.

* * * * *

Patricia fell.

Gog picked her up in his arms and staggered on.

The ascent was awful—six miles of one in three.

Up, up, up, over the close-set cobbles, by rock and hanging garden and the gush of a thousand springs.

Now the path was a staircase, and now a ramp, and often a union of both—a smooth-faced flight of steps with low sloping treads some six feet long that lured you into misprision of their hostility.

To and fro toiled the zigzag, back and forth—hairpin turn to the right and then to the left—an endless, narrow shelf, cut

on the face of Velvet and climbing up to the stars.

Up, up, up . . . staircase and ramp and steps . . . to and fro. . . .

There were moments when death seemed better than the hell of going on.

Ordinarily, the way was latent, and neither from above nor below could the eye discern its track. But now it was a writhing serpent already five miles long—a snake of blue and scarlet and steel and Lincoln Green, of crimson and violet, with a tongue of silver and gold, worming its way up Velvet, instant to avenge the honour of The Pail.

Up, up, up . . . staircase and ramp and steps . . . back and forth, till the heart slammed as a madman upon his walls, till the taking of breath was one long burst of sobbing and the sweat ran into the eyes and blurred the vision.

"The sun was up now, touching the peaks about them. Soon it would be flooding their path with its old splendour. And they were alive to see it—thanks to the greatest heart that ever stared Misfortune out of countenance."

The sun was going down.

All The Pail was flushed with its gentle light. Woodland and mead and water, manor and hamlet, peeping turret and mill — miniature, yet conspicuous — that matchless, magic diaper which Nature and Naïveté had wrought, was all rose-red.

Up, up, up. . . .

They were passing The Clock now, and the steady East wind that held its shining hand was stinging their strained faces and snatching their hard-won breath.

Eulalie stumbled, and Simon caught her wrist.

Behind came Pomfret. . . .

Four hearts broke that evening. Chequers fell dead, and Bulb and two of the men-at arms.

Up, up, up . . . to and fro . . . under

the setting sun and the scorn of the steady East wind. . . .

Eulalie stumbled again and nearly brought Simon down. The Jester's knees were sagging. A trembling which he could not control in Pomfret's limbs presaged revolt.

Lion, with the Knave on his heels, was seventy paces behind. For all his stature the man climbed like a cat.

Gog stumbled, saved himself somehow and staggered on. Pomfret was swaying from side to side of The Aisle, like a drunken man. . . .

The Dish was hard by, but the end of Tether was at hand.

The steps slid into a ramp and the ramp changed to a staircase that curled in a hairpin bend.

Lion and the Knave were a bare ten paces away.

Pomfret rounded the turning, caught at the root of a sapling and lay back against the wall. As Lion swung round he hit him on the point of the jaw. The blow was lifeless, but Pomfret had the ground. The Herald tottered, tried to throw himself forward, failed and fell back upon the Knave. As the two crashed to the cobbles, Pomfret heaved himself up and into The Dish.

The length of this had to be traversed and the thicket beyond.

Gog set down Patricia and shambled over the turf. Pomfret and Simon had Eulalie by the wrists. The girl's feet were trailing. . . .

" Balk . . . fine air," gasped the Jester. " Know when you feel the cold. . . . Don' forget put on coats. . . ."

Two foresters were leading, running like lean wolves. The Knave of Wits was behind them with Leopard and Domesday at his heels. The foresters were leaving the others and gaining fast.

The fugitives made the thicket with ten yards to spare.

" Strai' through," gasped the Jester, pointing, and turned in behind a tree.

As the leading forester passed him he caught his foot in a twinkling and brought the man down, but the other leapt over his fellow and ran straight on.

With a roar, the Jester was up and hurling himself in pursuit.

The fellow was five yards from Pomfret and Gog was ten yards behind. The thicket was thinning. You could see the world beyond. Patricia was out, and Simon, with Eulalie across his shoulders, was staggering clear. Pomfret was running so slowly he seemed to be marking time. His legs were wobbling like wheels that are out of truth. Patricia began to run back. . . .

As the forester's hand shot out Gog landed upon his shoulders like a stone from a sling. . . .

As the Knave of Wits came up, Pomfret crawled out of the thicket on hands and knees.

Not seeming to notice the four, the Knave glanced at the body in Lincoln Green. Then he looked sharply about him.

The Jester had disappeared.

* * * * *

The cold was intense.

Four great fleeces, however, each roughly fashioned into the form of a coat with a hood, kept the wind at bay, and the leather flask of cordial had worked wonders.

Slowly the four tramped after the Rolling Stone—a tiny barrel-shaped pebble which rolled faithfully forward up hill and down dale, shedding a glow-worm's light.

Save that they were all stiff, hungry and heartily sick of their clothes, after sleeping like the dead for twelve hours nobody seemed to feel one penny the worse. And now—very soon the sun would be up. Already the Eastern sky was growing pale.

They moved in silence and, as often before, in single file. Simon went first: then the girls: Pomfret brought up the rear. But he had no rein in his hand. . . .

The sun was up now, touching the peaks about them. Soon it would be flooding their path with its old splendour. And they were alive to see it—thanks to the greatest heart that ever stared Misfortune out of countenance.

As before, no sign of life was given them, save once, when a cream-coloured bear came lurching out of a cave on the flank of a combe, to fling himself down in the sunshine and take his ease.

The four tramped on. . . .

Presently they halted down in a dell they knew. For a little they sat in silence. Then Pomfret started to his feet.

" It's all been a dream," he cried. " It must have. Hang it, the thing's impossible. We've been asleep or something. We've dreamed of Kings and Jesters and Invisible Cloaks. We've walked with spirits—our minds have been possessed. There's something queer about this piece of country—we knew that before we left Stelthe. We were overwrought when we left there

and we had Etchechuria on the brain. And then . . ."

"And then?" said Simon.

Pomfret put a hand to his head.

"I don't care," he said doggedly. "I'll not believe it. We've seen a vision or something. We've——"

"Look," said Eulalie.

The girl had thrown back her hood and opened her fleece.

She still wore the peaked cap of Dorelet, and, though her white silk shirt was soiled and rumpled, the delicate blazonry upon the little coat glowed and flamed in the sunshine till her rich green kilt looked shabby and her boots work-a-day things.

Pomfret covered his face. . . .

After a while—

"He saved all our lives," he said brokenly. "And mine three several times."

There was a long silence.

Patricia turned to Simon.

"Tell me again," she whispered. "What were his actual words?"

"'That will depend'," said Simon. "I said 'We can't leave you', and he said 'That will depend'. And when I said 'What on?', he shook his head and said 'Seeing's not always believing'. Then he turned away and bent down and looked into the stream. He stared so hard that I thought there was something there, but I couldn't see anything and I came to the conclusion that he was looking at himself."

There was another silence.

"'That will depend'," sobbed Eulalie. "On us, of course. Something depended on us—and now it's too late. . . ."

Simon rose to his feet.

"We'd better get on," he said hoarsely.

Two hours later they came to a sudden valley and face to face with a dog.

"People," said Simon, turning. "We'd better button these coats. As it is, they'll think we're mad."

If there were people, however, they did not appear. The dog, a rough-haired Sealyham, seemed to be on his own. He stared at the four curiously, as well he might.

"Hallo, old chap," said Simon, advancing with outstretched hand.

The terrier hesitated for an instant. Then he backed round and away.

"Wonder whose he is," said Simon. "Nice-looking dog."

"He's a beauty," said Eulalie, stooping and putting out a hand.

This was true.

The dog was beautifully marked, his coat shone like silver, and the most unpractised eye must have found him thoroughbred. His fine, deep chest and carriage alone bespoke his blood.

He had quality.

Standing there in the gay sunshine, his soft ears pricked, tail up and little forefeet together, he was the very picture of vitality, but most of all striking was the eager, expectant light in the bright brown eyes, to which all the sweet of his nature seemed to have repaired.

"No collar," said Pomfret, going forward and putting out a hand. "Come on, my fellow. . . . There's a good dog. . . ."

The tail moved ever so slightly. Then the dog backed away.

"Now then," said Pomfret, stooping. "I always get on with dogs. Come and make friends."

Again the tail moved, but that was all.

After a long look the light in the eyes seemed to fade, and the terrier turned away.

Patricia went down on her knees and stretched out her arms.

"I knew you," she said simply. And then, "Come, Gog."

The rush of the terrier's greeting almost knocked her down. . . .

Five minutes later a peasant, who was riding a donkey from Stelthe, witnessed a strange sight.

On the turf at the back of a fountain four beings, fantastically robed in sheepskin, were dancing with joined hands about a small white dog, who was wagging his tail like mad and barking uproariously.

After watching them for some moments the peasant proceeded to the market for which he was bound.

Before leaving Murillo that evening he went to the pharmacy.

After listening to what he had seen the chemist sold him a phial of liver pills.

* * * * *

"In fact," said Pomfret, limping to the fireplace to set a log flaming, "he seems to have behaved like a hired bully of the Middle Ages, that is to say, a sort of private Bolshevist, whose job was to force a tavern quarrel on somebody his employer wished to efface."

"I can't imagine a better simile," said Patricia, looking up from the lazy business of brushing Gog, who was lying on his back before the hearth with his legs in the air. "'Offensive' conveys nothing at all."

"Simon," said Eulalie, "was marvellous. Pat and I were boiling, but Simon got

suaver and suaver and kept on handing the brute the tambourine as if he were the most gracious monarch that ever was foaled."

"Good," said Pomfret. "He's probably saved the game. I'm quite glad I wasn't there. My temper isn't what it used to be, and, to be perfectly honest, it never was. And you really think that it was because he found you shabby that dear Lionel got so cross?"

"I'm sure of it," said Patricia.

"But you're not shabby," said Pomfret.

"We've no pearls," said Eulalie. "Or furs. And our coats and shoes look nearly as cheap as they were. And Simon *is* shabby. Then again a pre-war taxi makes a bad private car."

"It was perfectly obvious," said Patricia, "that we were not his idea of what the prospective purchaser of his estate should look like, and, all things considered, I don't know that I blame him. But he might have said so, instead of asking Simon where he found his shoes."

"He didn't"—incredulously.

"It's a cold fact," said Eulalie. "And Simon laughed to glory and said that he liked old things and couldn't bring himself to throw them away."

Pomfret expired. Then he returned to his sofa, sat down and put up a leg.

"It's a very good thing I couldn't go," he said. "And Simon, as usual, is playing the only game. We hate dear Lionel very much, but we want what he's got far more."

"That's right," said Patricia. "It rained like fury while we were there to-day, but it didn't do any harm. Some places are above bad weather—very few, of course. But Dolores is one of them."

"Tell me again," said Pomfret, "what Simon arranged."

"Forty thousand for the place as it stands, the Agreement to be signed and four thousand paid on account a week from to-day. Bosch said 'Why not to-morrow?' 'Because I must sell out', said Simon. 'To-morrow I shall leave for London to see my broker.' Bosch couldn't very well kick at that."

Pomfret reckoned upon his fingers.

"Three days in Town," he said. "And by leaving to-day he's got four. . . . Four days in which to dispose of a King's Ransom which no one on earth will buy. It isn't too long, is it?"

"Don't be depressing," said his wife, picking up a note from the floor. "Hullo. Who's your lady friend?"

"Gertie the Godsend," said Pomfret. "Such a sweet girl. And the most simple tastes. To give Gertie lunch was a revelation. A crab and a bottle of stout was all she asked. And a bag of gooseberries about four."

Eulalie's grey eyes ran swiftly over the sheet.

"Well, that's very civil," she said. "Listen, Pat."

*The Carlton Hotel,*
*Biarritz.*

*Dear Mr. Tudor,*

*Only the fact that I am confined to my room with acute bronchitis has prevented me from calling upon you before now to express to you my heartfelt gratitude for what you did yesterday afternoon.*

*My chauffeur tells me that he was powerless and that but for your most brave intervention the runaway must have struck the car amidships with results which might easily have proved fatal to the little girl within. She is my only child.*

*I understand that your foot was hurt and that, though you made light of the injury, you could hardly walk. In case you may not have your car with you, my chauffeur has instructions (which, believe me, he is only too happy to obey) to call at your hotel for orders every morning until further notice. Since I cannot use the car and am too shaken to let my daughter use it again just yet, it is wholly at your service.*

*I trust you will not leave the neighbourhood before I have sufficiently recovered to come and thank you in person for a service which I can never repay.*

*Yours very sincerely,*
*John Courthope.*

*— Tudor, Esq.,*
*Hotel du Cheval d'Or,*
*Bayonne.*

"Much ado about nothing," said Pomfret. "And if only I'd done it the day before you would have had the car to splurge with this afternoon. Still, it's quite nice to meet a gentleman, isn't it? Now Lionel, when he heard my address, would have sent me a cheque. . . ."

Patricia nodded.

"I'm afraid he would have," she said. "He's the complete cad."

This was true. More. Mr. Lionel Bosch's bad form was so arrogant that even his immense wealth could not support the strain. And that is saying a great deal.

A man who could boast more than one malefactor in the short pedigree which his birth-certificate disclosed, he had fought his way up the ladder of success with a brute force which would have been almost admirable but for the ruthlessness and lack of scruple with which his record was staïned. Still, if they become rich and know how to entertain 'the evil that men do' may predecease them . . . may. . . .

Having tried England and failed, Mr. Bosch decided to try the South of France.

He bought an estate of many acres and great beauty a few miles South of Biarritz and North of Spain and, when a London firm had turned the aged chateau into a palace of ease, opened all gates and doors and ascended his self-made throne.

Be sure the courtiers came—once. But that was all. The wine was all right and the bands were above reproach, but, unlike the frogs in the fable, they wanted no king. . . . Mr. Bosch found them lacking in respect for his throne—silence, for instance, was not observed when he opened his mouth: and the courtiers for their part, while regretting the wine and the music, found Mr. Bosch's price just a little too high. And so the arrangement had fallen through, and Mr. Lionel Bosch, more savage than any bear robbed of its whelps, was out to sell Dolores for what he could get.

The property was attractive—a pocket duchy, with farms and streams and pastures, a water-mill and a chapel, vineyards and park and forest and no less than four lodge-gates. A slice of glorious country had been enclosed, and, though for lack of money the farms were hang-dog and the vineyards had lost their smile, the timber had not been cut and the natural beauty of the estate was as paramount as ever. The chateau stood high, surveying Spain and the Atlantic and, to the North, a plain that might have been Lilliput itself: from the house a crinoline of woodland went sloping every way, masking the vineyards and pastures and veiling the chateau from the neighbourhood. Indeed, the house was embowered, yet seemed to command earth, sea and sky at once—a coign so rare and notable that only the eye of one who had dreamed of such a thing could at first sight seize its significance. Here, with its bulwarks and satellites, its abundance of sun and air, its tiled bathrooms and private electric plant, was a veritable King's pleasance, fifteen miles from Biarritz, twelve hours from Paris and eighteen from London Town.

The four had heard of it while they were once again at Esteppemazan. Jeanne's brother was a scullion at Dolores and in view of the coming removal had been given notice. The four, who were wondering what on earth they should do and were more than a little reluctant to return even temporarily to a world which after their glittering adventure seemed curiously sordid, had pricked up their ears. Dolores sounded as though it would suit them well. . . . Simon had been deputed to spy out the land. His report proving favourable beyond belief, three days later Mr. Bosch had been formally approached, and the four and Gog had left the mountains for a tiny hotel at Bayonne.

Their circumstances were peculiar.

The Sovereign Touchstone, which had lost none of its virtue and was worth considerably more than all the gold mines in the world, was almost their sole asset. Eulalie had not a penny, nor had Patricia. Pomfret's few worldly goods had already been divided between his next of kin. Simon's pass-book showed a balance of one hundred and sixty pounds.

That The Touchstone must itself be converted into legal tender had been recognised from the first. Otherwise it would soon become a *damnosa hereditas* and breed more disaster than ever it had done within The Pail. That the conversion, however, would be a difficult and delicate business was manifest. The four had decided to go very gingerly. . . .

Then came Dolores.

The four had visited the property, seen and been beaten to their knees.

They wanted the estate wildly.

In half an hour it had leapt from a name to an ideal.

What was so serious was that they were not first in the field. At the moment when negotiations were opened Mr. Bosch had been upon the point of accepting a firm offer of thirty-five thousand pounds for the place as it stood.

To beat this was easy—on paper or by word of mouth. But the money had to be produced.

So Simon had left for London, with The Touchstone about his neck, to seek the fortune of them all.

He had ninety-six fleeting hours in which to find it. . . .

Eulalie laid back her head and closed her eyes.

It had been a full day.

In the morning she and Pomfret had been remarried.

A cold rain was falling, and the cathedral was a dim tomb, splashed here and there with the light of guttering candles, its chill breath laden with the sloughs of prayers. The priest was young and well-meaning, but he had not the makings of a prelate, and the hearts of the four threw back to another service when the sun had been a wheel-window and a church had grown out of the cool of the day.

Then Gog had been lost for ten minutes and had frightened them all to death.

Afterwards Dolores had been visited, and its truculent owner endured.

Finally, by a superhuman effort, to which even Pomfret had contributed, Simon had caught his train with two minutes to spare.

The abrupt change in their condition must have affected the steadiest temperament. Compared with that of The Pail, at the moment the climate was foul: their present quarters were mean, the fare very rough: in a flash they had fallen from an estate, high and shining as a dream, to that of the least of the tourists that visit a side-show place when other folk are at home. Over all, the inevitable reaction hung like a thundercloud. The great adventure was over, the stupendous march they had stolen on all the world was a thing of the past, a sense of flatness like a mist was blotting out the future. Only the turrets of Dolores, faint and illusive as a moonbeam, distant as any star, stood up unearthly and glistering to show there was still a sun.

A knock fell upon the door.

Then a filthy *chasseur* entered with a note in his hand.

This was addressed to 'Mr. Beaulieu'.

*Saturday.*

*Mr. Beaulieu.*

*Upon reflection I can see no reason why, if you possess securities to the value of the deposit you say you are going to pay, you should not telegraph to your Bank or brokers and so save valuable time. I am not the man to be mucked about and people who are in a position to purchase estates like mine don't have to ask for time to raise a tenth of the price. Unless, therefore, you are at my notary's office on Wednesday at half-past two I shall sell the property.*

*I may say I shall only accept spot cash or a banker's draft.*

*Lionel Bosch.*

When Patricia had read it aloud, she turned her head to the fire and sat very still.

After a

Patricia went down on her knees and stretched out her arms. 'I knew you,' she said simply. And then, 'Come, Gog.'"

moment, mistrusting the liquid look of her big brown eyes, Gog put his paws upon her shoulder and anxiously licked her face.

* * * * *

Before noon on the following day several things had been done.

Eulalie's emerald had been pledged : with the proceeds—three hundred pounds—an account had been opened at Biarritz : Pomfret had taken a room at the *Hotel du Palais* and Mr. Courthope's Rolls-Royce had been ordered for two o'clock.

Purchases, too, had been made—a myrtle-green velour Homburg, a pair of cloth-topped patent-leather boots, a malacca cane, banded with onyx set with diamonds, a large 'cultured' pearl pin and a box of Corona Coronas about which there was no deception.

Finally one hundred pounds had been deliberately expended upon a 'gent's fur coat', a garment of questionable style but indisputable magnificence.

Pomfret, who alone of the four had never met Mr. Bosch, was intending to do what he could.

Luck seemed to be with him.

The sky had cleared, a steady breeze had supplanted the blustering wind and, as the Rolls swam up the last sunlit reach of a great avenue, Mr. Lionel Bosch, violently equipped for riding, emerged from the main door of the chateau with a cowed-looking dog at his heels.

Pomfret let himself out of the car and advanced with open arms.

" My dear good sir, how are you ? No need to ask who you are. My name's Tudor—one of the Harrowby Tudors of Somerset. My brother, the extra Equerry —blast this foot ! Excuse me. I wouldn't confess it to every one, but I've a touch of the gout, Mr. Bosch. When old Ned Hampshire died, the Countess gave me a bin of his '34 port. Molten gold, you know. 'Don't drink it all at once,' she said, and I've tried not to. But it takes its revenge. We must crack a bottle one day—just you and me. We won't ask anyone else : we'll just——"

" Er, won't you come in ? " stammered Bosch, whom the delicious wave of well-bred geniality had swept off his feet.

" Standing there in the gay sunshine, his soft ears pricked, tail up and little forefeet together, he was the very picture of vitality."

" No, my dear fellow, no. I only arrived this morning and I've got to go back to-night. So I can't waste this glorious air. But I'm keeping my rooms at the *Palais* because I

shall be back in ten days. And then I shall put my feet up. And that brings me to business, my dear Bosch." He slid an arm through the other's and made for the terrace steps. "It's a sin to talk business on a beautiful day like this, and I'm keeping you from your ride."

"Not at all," said Bosch, who was none too fond of saddle-exercise, but knew it was 'done'. "Not at all."

"Now why," said Pomfret, suddenly stopping and regarding the harness upon his companion's legs. "Why can't Stoop make me some leggings like those?"

"I—I can't think," said Bosch, feebly.

"Neither can I," said Pomfret. "I've tried and tried and I've almost given up hope. The last pair he made me—I sent for him to come up and see them on. 'Why dress me like a farmer?' I said. 'I'm ready to pay. I haven't looked at your bills for twenty years. And this is my reward.' He looked very sheepish. . . . But these—these have got style. They're a gentleman's wear."

"They're not too bad," said Bosch, colouring with pleasure. "I—I got them at Crane's."

"I know," said Pomfret. "I know. I shall go there directly I get back. May I mention your name?"

"Of—of course," stammered Bosch, striving to take his place. "Er, only too pleased—my dear Tudor."

"That's splendid," said Pomfret, resuming his walk. "And now I've a confession to make. More than a confession—an apology. In fact I shouldn't be surprised if you ordered me off the place."

The bare suggestion seemed so fantastic that Mr. Bosch laughed heartily. And Pomfret with him.

As the amicable paroxysm subsided, Pomfret produced his cigar-case and wiped his eyes.

"Now these won't hurt you," he piped. "I mayn't tell you where they came from, but my brother got them for me: and now you can think what you like and I won't stop you."

Mr. Bosch took a cigar with bulging eyes. . . .

As they mounted the terrace—

"And now," said Pomfret, "to business." Mr. Bosch inclined his head. "I used to know the old Marquise from whom you bought this place. As a matter of fact, she was a connection of mine. I never stayed here, because the house wasn't fit. She used to ask me, of course, but I always refused. Not that I mind poverty—people can't help being poor. But they mustn't expect to inflict it upon their friends. Don't you agree?"

Mr. Bosch agreed heartily.

"I knew you would," said Pomfret, "but then you and I have a certain instinct. One doesn't talk about these things as a rule, because nowadays you never know where you are, but between gentlemen . . . Exactly. Well, she'd lost that instinct. Possibly she never had it. And there you are. . . . Poverty in its place I can stand, but on its hind legs—well, it becomes sordid. I assure you, Bosch, I used to come out of this mansion and go back to Biarritz and have a bath. I felt morally contaminated."

"I can quite believe you," said Bosch.

"I'm sure you do, my dear fellow, but how few would? Our school—the old, sensitive school is dying out. I well remember when my father received a letter from the Lord-Lieutenant asking him to subscribe to some public baths. The letter was headed *Cleanliness is next to Godliness.* My father struck out the words, wrote instead *Vulgarity is next to Poverty*, and sent it back. 'Ask me for money', he said, 'and you shall have it: but don't offend my senses by exposing the sores of pauperism'."

"Splendid," cried Mr. Bosch, carefully memorizing an anecdote which illustrated his own sentiments at once faithfully and with the style of an eighteenth-century print. "I'll bet that made the Lord-Lieutenant sit up."

"By Jove, it did," said Pomfret, slapping him on the back. "He still rode to hounds, but he always kept a field behind my father to the day of his death. But that's by the way. I knew the Marquise very well and I always said to her, 'If and when you're going to sell this property, let me know'." Mr. Bosch's eyelids flickered. "You'll think it strange that I should have left it there, but although, when I saw it, I used to find it desirable—as, indeed, I think anyone would: it's a gentleman's place, Mr. Bosch—when I was gone I used to say to myself, 'Don't be a fool, Pomfret Tudor: you don't need it and it's another place to keep up', and so I used to let the idea go. She never told me before she sold it to you, but I doubt if I should have bought if it she had. One can't see ahead, you know, Bosch. . . . If you'd told me three months ago that before the old year was out I should be gone in the wind, I'd've laughed in your face. . . .

Well, the doctor's orders are clear: you can bet I've had 'em confirmed—at five guineas a time. But it's always the same cry. 'Winter abroad, winter abroad, winter abroad.'

"Well, I naturally thought of this place. I'm not a hotel hack, and The Riviera's rather too full of—well, you'll understand what I mean when I call them 'The New School'."

Mr. Bosch understood.

"Well, the young Duke of Padua told me you wanted to sell. I don't know how he knew—you probably told him yourself. He was out here this summer. Quite a nice boy, but you may not have caught his name. Wants me to put him up for The Marlborough, but I really don't know. What d'you think?"

Mr. Bosch thought.

After a moment—

"No harm in putting him up," he said portentously. "I mean, you could always arrange that he didn't get in, couldn't you?"

"So I could," said Pomfret. "Bosch, my dear chap, that's a very good idea. It obviates the awkwardness of refusing, and the very fact that I have proposed him will divert his suspicion from me as blackballer. In fact, I should be the last person anyone will suspect. Hurray for the secret ballot."

The two laughed heartily.

"Oh, dear me," croaked Pomfret, "what fun we do 'ave! Never mind. Where was I? Well, the moment I heard that you were wanting to sell I told my man to pack, intending to leave for Biarritz the following day. That was a week ago. That night my brother had a stroke. Well, it was the first one he'd had and there was the devil to pay. He couldn't go on duty, and I had to go down and explain, and between the doctors and his wife and the general resultant confusion it became most painfully clear that I couldn't possibly leave until he was out of the wood."

"Naturally," said Mr. Bosch, "naturally. I—I hope——"

"He's better," said Pomfret. "Much better, thanks very much. That's why I'm here. And in another ten days I'm assured that he'll be about again. Then I shall be free. Till then—well, you see, I could hardly refuse, could I? I mean, in the circumstances. . . ."

"Of course not," said Mr. Bosch, who was, if possible, less certain than was Pomfret of the nature of the embarrassment to which the latter referred. "Of course, you couldn't."

"I knew you'd say that, my dear fellow. I knew you'd say that. Well, there you are. I didn't know what to do. Suddenly I thought of my man. He'd been a very good servant and he seemed to have a head. I've only had him six months, but he's done quite well. I believe he was a temporary gentleman during the war—commanded a tank or something. So I sent for him and gave him his orders that night. . . . These were quite clear. I told him to report to you, give you my compliments and say that I was prevented from coming myself. I told him to inquire what you wanted and, if it was forty thousand or under, to ask for immediate possession and close on my behalf. Then I made a mistake. I blame myself very much, but I hardly knew where I was. *I mentioned a Power of Attorney.* I said that if things got worse and I couldn't get out I might send a Power of Attorney for him to sign the deed."

Mr. Bosch put a hand to his head.

"D'you mean to say that that fellow——"

"I regret," said Pomfret, drooping his head, "my dear Mr. Bosch, I infinitely regret to tell you that *until this morning* Beaulieu was in my employ. And now if you like to ask me to leave your grounds, I shall understand how you feel."

"But what—I don't understand."

"My dear Bosch," said Pomfret, "through my carelessness—because at a moment of great mental stress I reposed undue—I say it, advisedly—outrageously undue confidence in a servant—a common man, with no sense of responsibility beyond the pressing of trousers and the blacking of boots—because in a rash moment I elevated a varlet to the position of a secretary, you and I have been the victims of a clumsy, fumbling, puerile attempt to defraud."

He broke off there and stamped about the terrace, raising his fists to heaven as though in a frenzy of inarticulate rage.

Suddenly he turned to the other and took off his hat.

"And now good-bye, my dear fellow. I don't like to use the word apology, but—well, I *had* to come and tell you. My impulse was to go back without letting you know, for he admitted this morning that he had never even mentioned my name. Then I said to myself, 'No. A Tudor must take his gruel'. And so I came. And now, good-bye."

Mr. Bosch stared at the outstretched hand.

"But I don't understand——"

Pomfret produced the letter which Patricia had opened at Bayonne the night before.

"That put the wind up him," he said. "You must have suspected something. My coming out was an accident—which he didn't expect. But you broke his nerve last night."

Mr. Bosch swallowed.

"I certainly thought," he said, "that he didn't look the sort of individual to purchase a gentleman's place. But——"

"Bosch, my dear chap, the whole thing was a blasted plant. *He meant to buy your estate with my money, sell it again to the fellow you mention in this letter and then clear out.* Last night he wired to me for a banker's draft and a Power of Attorney which he never intended to use. He wouldn't have got either, you know, I'm not quite such a baby-child. But the Power of Attorney did it. When I said 'Power of Attorney' he thought he'd got me cold. And now I must go." Once more he put out his hand. "I must catch the five o'clock and, as I've no servant now, I must pack my things. It's been a great pleasure to meet you and you've made my task easier than I dared to hope it could be. But there you are, my dear Bosch. Between gentlemen . . ."

Mr. Bosch expanded.

"Now don't you worry," he said, waving aside the hand. "I don't pretend I enjoyed that young blackguard's company and when I think of his airs I could break his dirty neck. But that wasn't your fault, Tudor. Did he tell you he brought two girls?"

"*Two girls!*"

"Two girls," repeated Mr. Bosch. "Cheap as himself."

"Impossible," said Pomfret. He took out a handkerchief and wiped his face. "My dear Bosch, you horrify me. That you should have been subjected to the insult of association with——"

"Come, come," said Bosch, genially. "All's well that ends well, Tudor. I fancy you spoiled his lunch."

"I give you my word," said Pomfret, solemnly, "that he left with a flea in each ear. And no ordinary insects. He's a third-class fare to England and a note, which I doubt if he'll use, to the nearest Labour Exchange. From the look on his face I rather fancy he'll try to emigrate before I get back. I don't think he liked the weather forecast in my eye. 'Further outlook, unsettled', you know."

Mr. Bosch laughed fatly.

"I'm only sorry," he said, "you didn't bring him here. I'd've skinned him. Never mind. And now we know where we are, when d'you want possession?"

Pomfret stared.

"You—you'll still sell to me?" he ejaculated. "I mean, after all this, Bosch, you're willing to deal with me?"

"Why not?" was the generous reply.

That Pomfret was deeply affected was perfectly plain.

In eloquent silence he wrung Mr. Bosch's hand.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you overwhelm me. But, if you're still willing, of course I'll take the place. I've not even a cheque-book with me, but——"

"My dear Tudor," said Mr. Bosch, "between gentlemen . . ."

Pomfret sighed.

Then he raised his eyes.

"Thank Heaven," he said piously, "that the old school is not yet extinct." He paused dramatically. Then—"I shall be back in ten days. Will you have the deed prepared? I'll sign the day I get back and give a banker's draft. As to possession——"

"You can walk right in," said Mr. Bosch. "We can sign the deed here at two, and I'll catch the evening train. Do you want the slaveys? Or shall I give them notice?"

"I'll take them over," said Pomfret. "If they know your ways they know mine. Are you sure you mean this, Bosch? I mean, I came to apologize—not to try to impose upon your good nature. I shouldn't like you to think——"

Mr. Bosch wagged a stubby forefinger. "Now then, Tudor," he said. "Between gentlemen . . ."

The slogan had gone very well.

Pomfret clasped his arm and the two passed down from the terrace and into the drive. . . .

As the Rolls slid down the avenue they waved to each other like schoolboys.

* * * * *

"You are a very persistent young man, Mr. Beaulieu. What do you want?"

The tone was abrupt, but the steady, appraising gaze was not unkindly and the mouth had a humorous twist.

Simon, who had rehearsed this interview fifty times, moistened his lips.

"I want five minutes of your time, sir," and, with that, he unfastened his collar and, getting hold of the cord which was round his neck, pulled this over his head.

The next instant a soft, gold bag lay in his palm.

Without opening the pouch, he felt for and gripped its contents between finger and thumb: then he opened the mouth of the bag and peeled this over The Touchstone till the latter was partly exposed.

The statesman watched his actions with a faintly increasing frown.

"Is this an invention?" he said. "Because if it is . . ."

Simon shook his head.

"It's not an invention, sir. It's a discovery. Walking on the continent not very long ago, I trod upon this stone."

"And your shoe turned to gold?" said the statesman, with a whimsical smile.

"Yes," said Simon, "it did."

The other sighed. Then his hand went out to a bell-push.

"I won't say I don't believe you, Mr. Beaulieu, because whether I do or do not is beside the point. *But this is not my job.* To be perfectly frank, nothing ever is—in the first instance. A man of your education should have known that. I am not an expert. I occupy a certain position, but the least of those below me is more of a specialist than I. If I had to give you a dog-licence I should have to ask a post-office clerk how to fill up the form."

"Sir," said Simon, quietly. "I beg you not to ring that bell."

The extraordinary earnestness of his tone would have made a hangman pause.

"Well?"

"Supposing, sir—just supposing that this fantastic nonsense were a hard fact. Supposing that this grey pebble was The Philosopher's Stone."

"Well?"

"Whoever possessed it could wreck the finances of the world in twenty-four hours. Supposing it fell into the hands of a European Power—a Power which was not too scrupulous. Supposing to-morrow some Power could turn out gold with a tenth of the labour that it can turn out smoke. . . ."

"Mr. Beaulieu," said the statesman, "you've come to the wrong street. You want to sell your discovery. Very well. I'm not a company promoter."

Again his hand sought the bell.

"One moment," said Simon, shakily. "I knew you wouldn't believe. No one would. What shall I turn to gold?"

The other raised his eyebrows.

"What about this table?" he said rather wearily.

Simon hesitated.

"I don't think you'll thank me if I do, sir. A golden table will be very hard to explain."

The other frowned.

"What d'you mean—'hard to explain'?"

"I mean," said Simon, "that a table's too big to hide. The secretaries, the servants must see it, and within two hours the Press——"

The statesman rose.

"Mr. Beaulieu, I have been very patient. Few men I think would have seen you: fewer still when they heard your business would have been as lenient as I. You come to me with a tale which I should hesitate to offer to a child of four. Instead of disputing its probability I ask you to prove what you say. Instantly, you make excuse."

"Allow me to ring, sir," said Simon, stretching out his hand.

For a moment the other stared.

Then he raised his eyebrows and gave a short laugh.

"If you please," he said.

The bell lay upon the table—an ordinary wooden case about a button of bone. Simon pressed the button with The Touchstone and a bell stammered outside. Then he stood up and away. . . .

The statesman looked at the bell: his look slid into a stare, the stare into a frown. . . . With a sharp movement he sought Simon's eyes. These looked steadily back. After a moment his own returned to the bell. . . . Then he sat down and, approaching his face to the button, surveyed it from every side. As once again he lifted his eyes to Simon's, came the wheeze of an outer door.

Simon's hand slid into a pocket, and the other picked up a sheet of blotting-paper and tossed it over the bell.

"It's all right. I rang by mistake."

The door closed.

"Mr. Beaulieu, is this a trick?"

"No, sir. I'll go to The Mint with you any hour that you please. But if you'll forgive my saying so, I'm terribly pressed for time. If it could be this afternoon . . ."

"Sit down," said the other, unscrewing the bell-push case. "I'm sorry I didn't believe you, but I'm not quite sure I do yet. When I *am* sure . . ."

Simon's hand left his pocket.

"Anything small, sir," he said, "which you can conceal . . ."

Half an hour later the statesman fingered his chin.

"There's only one thing," he said, "which we haven't arranged. And that is—what the devil are we to do with this bell-push?"

At once Simon got to his feet.

"I'll go to The Stores, sir," he said, "and buy another right away."

"Good," said the other. "Don't be long. I don't want to have to stay here indefinitely. But, I say, what a mercy you didn't, er, touch this table."

Simon smiled.

"It was a very near thing," he said. "In fact, if you hadn't let me ring, it would have been 'touch or go'."

The rest was easy.

At The Mint with the utmost secrecy, the virtue of The Touchstone was proved. Task after task was set it, test after test was applied: but Chemists and Assayers alike could find no flaw in its produce. All was golden fish that came to its net, and after two days the small, grey pebble changed hands for the last time.

That the thing must be purchased and destroyed had, as Simon had foreseen, been instantly recognised, and, since its owner was ready to sell and The Touchstone was able to furnish whatever price he desired, the matter was concluded with the least possible delay.

An account at The Bank of England sprang into being: a destroyer slipped down The Sound with sealed orders. And that was all.

On Saturday Simon left London with a banker's draft in his case, and late that night a lead casket, believed to contain the ashes of some notable unknown, was solemnly committed to the depths of the Bay of Biscay.

* * * * *

Dolores was sold.

The deed had been executed, the notary had left to lodge it at the Register Office and Mr. Lionel Bosch, with his back to a fireplace which was no longer his own, was insulting his *maître d'hôtel* for the last time.

As was his habit when addressing a foreigner, he blared—in deference to a curious conceit that by shouting he could improve the other's imperfect acquaintance with the English tongue. Also, fortified by the knowledge that the foreigner knew no better, he gave his grammar a rest.

"An' I've told 'im what you're fit for. 'E's got your number all right. So if you want to stay you'll 'ave to be born again. Mr. Tudor's a gentleman, the same as I am. An' you won't find no flies on 'im. 'E'll be back any minute now, an' as soon as 'e's 'ere I'm off. 'Ave you filled my flask?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is the car at the door?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, what are you standing there for? Go an'——"

"That's Fuenterrabia," cried Patricia, "and—and—Simon, what's the name of that headland?"

The clear voice came floating in at a window, and a moment later Patricia and Eulalie appeared upon the terrace outside.

"I can't remember," said Simon, strolling into view.

His face a rich plum colour, his eyes bulging, Mr. Bosch made a rattling noise and clawed at the air. Then he hurled himself at the plate-glass doors and, wrenching their fastening open, erupted violently from the room.

For a moment he swayed upon the terrace, waving his arms.

Then—

"Get to hell out of this," he raved.

Steadily the three regarded him.

"Why?" said Simon.

"*Why?*" howled Bosch. "*Why?* You impudent blackguard! You clumsy——"

"Don't you think you'd better go?" said Simon, folding his arms and leaning against the balustrade. "I mean, 'immediate possession' was one of the conditions of sale, wasn't it?"

Mr. Bosch appeared to have lost the power of speech.

His eyes were demoniac, his mouth worked uncontrollably, froth began to form upon his lips.

Patricia and Eulalie averted their eyes.

"You see," said Simon, beginning to fill a pipe, "I am the new owner." Mr. Bosch recoiled. "The two interviews I had with you were about as much as I could bear, so then my servant took over and saw the deal through." He raised his voice. "Tudor!"

"Sir," said Pomfret, appearing upon the steps.

"Is Mr. Bosch's car at the door?"

"It is, sir," said Pomfret.

Simon returned to Mr. Bosch.

"Your car's at the door," he said.

It is doubtful if the man heard him. Pomfret's appearance and demeanour were searing his brain.

Wearing a pair of black boots which were much more useful than lovely, a blue serge

suit which had plainly seen better days, a stiff white dog-collar and a decent black bow tie, bowler hat in hand, Pomfret stood there before him—the embodiment of deferential impassivity, as plainly oblivious of all but his duty to Simon as were the flagstones beneath him careless of whom they bore.

Mr. Bosch stared and stared, while his world rocked and tottered and a leering memory hiccoughed its mocking burden into his ear.

*Between gentlemen . . .*

Presently he turned and lunged uncertainly within. . . .

Two minutes later the four heard an engine start.

Then the door of a car was slammed.

At once came the whine of gears rising, and then—silence.

Mr. Bosch had passed. . . .

It was twenty minutes later that his wife laid a firm, slim hand upon Pomfret's arm.

"Come down to the lawn," she said. "And look at the house from there."

The two passed down the steps. . . .

Standing upon the turf, they surveyed the great façade.

"If I tell you something," said Eulalie, "will you swear to keep it to yourself?"

Pomfret regarded his lady in mild surprise.

After a little—

"I will," he said.

"And however much it may surprise you, to take no action?"

"I will."

"Good," said Eulalie. She raised a hand and pointed to the second floor. "You see those last three windows—the two at the end and the one in the turret beyond?"

"Yes."

"Well, we've never seen those rooms—Patricia and I. I believe Simon saw them—just as a matter of form."

"Well, what about it?" said Pomfret.

"This," said Eulalie. "*I can tell you what they're like.*" Pomfret started, and after a little pause the girl proceeded. "The turret-room leads out of the other—you go up two little steps: the fireplace in the first room is on the left of the steps: it's of white marble and there's a wreath carved in the middle with a vein running right across it from side to side: if you look at the windows I think you'll find that once upon a time they were barred, and under the first there's a locker—a window-seat with a locker, *where a child—might have—kept—her—toys. . . .*"

Ten days later the missing half of the puzzle was clapped into place.

*The Carlton Hotel,*
*Biarritz.*

*Dear Mr. Tudor,*

*It was easier to accept your kind invitation to lunch with you at your new home than to decline, because that would have necessitated explanations which would have been out of place in the lounge of an hotel.*

*I know Dolores only too well.*

*More than twenty years ago I rented the place from the Marquise de Quigny. We were very happy there for some time, and then one day our little girl (not the one you know—she was then unborn) disappeared. She was only four years old. The shock killed my wife—not at once, you know, but she was never the same again and died when Madrigal was born. Time is very merciful and has gone far to lay the ghost, but you will understand that, much as I should like to come, to revisit Dolores would be to call up memories which are better undisturbed.*

*I am afraid this means that I shall not see you again before we go, but I am counting upon a visit from you both the next time you come to England, and rely upon you to consider that an engagement which you may not break.*

*It was a great pleasure to meet Mrs. Tudor, of whom, I think, you must be very proud. I have only once before seen such very beautiful hair.*

*Yours very sincerely,*
*John Courthope.*

But Eulalie steadfastly refused to take her place, and nothing that Pomfret could say would induce her to share her secret with anyone else.

"You're my husband," she said, "and I'm awfully glad you know, because it was so nice of you to marry a thief. But what on earth's the point of telling anyone else? Pat and Simon would feel that this was more my home than theirs—which is the last thing we want: and as for—for my father . . . well, now he's got Madrigal, and I can't believe it'd amuse him to know that his elder daughter spent thirteen years of her life as a first-class crook. If I wasn't provided for, it'd be another matter. As it is—well, Miss Courthope and 'The Bank of England' are a couple of sleeping dogs, and, since we can't wake one without waking them both, we may as well let them lie. After all, *you* know, and that's good enough for me. . . ."

"So be it," said Pomfret, and sighed. "It's very hard, you know. This is the second time. First, The Steward of the Walks and then my own father-in-law. . . . And I should have got on with either."

* * * * *

It is June now, and Dolores is in all her glory. The estate seems not unlike a fragment of Etchechuria. There is the same beauty, the same abundance, the same simplicity of life: there is the same good fellowship between Nature and Man.

Pomfret and Simon and Gog have spent the day in the fields and Boy Blue Meadow now boasts a parade of haycocks which to-morrow four gentle-eyed oxen will contentedly carry to be stacked by Black Sheep Farm. This has been carefully restored: the buildings are white as snow and the garden is gay with flowers: the dairy, stables and byres are the pride of the ex-Service men who keep them, and an English forge is to be added in the fall.

The homestead among the vineyards is known as Strong Box and has been well-named. Its miniature windows, bluff gateway and squat, thickset walls give it the air of a sconce: and a sconce it was once—when Time was young. It is older than its proud mistress by many many years and was used to squire a castle of which no trace is left. And Strong Box, like Black Sheep Farm, has come again. Masons and joiners and painters have done their work, and the spruce black and white fastness now makes a model vintry of which its cheerful constables are justly proud.

But the favourite of all is Sacradown.

This is a toy grange and lies snug in a valley by the edge of a stream. Here is the mill that, full of new wood and iron, utters again its comfortable news: here are the paddocks and sick lines, and here the foals and calves find the great world a good place: here are the orchards and bee-hives, and here a baby brewery is beginning to lift up its head: very soon its honest perfume will mellow the evening air. But there is a scent here already which is more valuable. The gables and dormer-windows of Sacradown, its timbers and thatch and brick-nogging, the very oaks and chestnuts that crowd about it smell strong of England, and the veterinary surgeon, the bailiff and the forester who live there, who know nothing of Etchechuria, continually allege that when the good days left England Dolores is where they went. Be that as it may, the place is big with a treasure you cannot buy. . . .

The long car was out after tea, and the five sailed into Biarritz to leave a note for the Pomeroys, who are arriving to-morrow, and to watch the blossoming *plage* for half an hour.

And so home—at least, as far as a lodge. There three horses are waiting, and, while Patricia floats off with Gog, who is very gentle with her these days, to spend an hour with the roses and plan herbaceous borders for seasons to come, Eulalie, Simon and Pomfret are streaming across the park at a hand-gallop over the long, sharp shadows which the trees are making, to prove that the lot is fallen unto them in a fair ground and that they have a goodly heritage.

And now dinner is over, and the sun has not long gone down. But, since the moon is up, to-night there will be no darkness, and the firmament will only change its lovely golden habit for one of silver. Already the magical relief is taking place.

From a *chaise longue* upon the terrace Eulalie is watching the miracle and thinking that the lights of Fuenterrabia look strangely like those of Date. By her side sits Patricia, with the old eager look in her eyes: the regular wink of a beacon has these in thrall, and each time the slow flash comes she remembers The Clock and how they would wait until midnight to watch the sweep of its hand. On the broad balustrade sits Simon, a pipe between his white teeth: his eyes are upon the lawn which falls away from the mansion, and he is thinking of the broad green staircase that shall blow there next year and wondering if Time will make it as lovely as another he knows. His feet upon an oak table, Pomfret is taking his ease. His eyes are closed, but he is not asleep, for from time to time his left hand rises to set his cigar for a moment between his lips. He is listening subconsciously, as are the others, to *Pomp and Circumstance*, which is being most excellently rendered by the Band of the Coldstream Guards, but the sudden reflection that it is nearly ten o'clock, has whipped his thoughts back to the heat of a summer's day and the cool of a sanded parlour and the speechless amazement on the face of a little man, handsomely clothed in silver and Lincoln Green . . . *Lincoln Green.* Harlequin-like, his memory has pounced upon the colour and leapt to an imprisoning circle and Sunstroke with a phial in his hand, and thence to a splash of green and crimson on a rack of black and gold. . . .

Gog.

This is the hour which Gog loves best of all.

Sitting there at the head of the flight of broad stone steps, that lead from the terrace into a mystery of black and silver, he is the very pink of vigilance. No rustle, no whisper, no breath of slumbering Nature escapes his ear. A swift turn of his head, and he has caught that sigh, faint and elusive as the flicker of a dream. . . . In a flash he is down the steps and across the lawn, and after a moment or two his deep, challenging bark comes from the greenwood. He is in touch—with what ? With whom ? No one can tell. It is his secret. . . . And presently, a sturdy little shape will bob up the broad stone steps, and a touch on Patricia's ankle will tell her that Gog is there.

A pause and six dots. . . .

Greenwich is making Dolores free of her time.

Pomfret lifts up his voice, assuming the musical delivery of the Watchman of Date.

The canticle goes booming.

*Ten o'clock of a fine, moonlit night . . . and all's well. . . .*

# DOWN IN GRAND-MER'S GARDEN.

**DOWN in grand-mer's garden**
**Gather I flowers for you—**
**Daffy-down-dill and John-a-quill,**
**Starch Hyacinths blue ;**
**Dark-lanthorns swinging all,**
**Golden-Dust and Guelder-ball,**
**Heart's Ease, Honesty 'gainst the wall,**
**And Lad's Love true !**

**Snow-on-the-mountain**
**In grand-mer's garden grows ;**
**Double Daisies, Gracie-daisies,**
**Peerless Prim-a-rose !**
**Pride of London City,**
**And Little-come-pretty—**
**Oh, every flower's a ditty**
**When the May wind blows !**

**Down in grand-mer's garden**
**There's a pleasaunce green,**
**Where the flowers count the hours**
**Till your face be seen.**
**Let these honeyed nosegays all**
**Echo May-day's madrigal**
**Ere the rosy petals fall**
**And our May time goes !**

**ALICE E. GILLINGTON.**

# THE FIRE FIEND

## By H. MORTIMER BATTEN

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

AS the big red car loomed through the smoke, the fire-ranger left his party and, stepping into the centre of the trail, signalled to the driver to stop. It was so dark that they could hardly see each other's faces, yet as the ranger climbed on to the running-board of the moving vehicle, recognition was instantaneous and mutual between himself and the two occupants of the car.

"You here, McLeod!" exclaimed the driver almost incredulously. "Didn't know you were knocking round this country."

"Nor I you," replied the warden. Then he added with the faintest suggestion of a sneer: "Been up to look at your mines at Yellow Outcrop, I suppose? Well, I reckon you must be a fool, Hilson, to make such a trip with the whole country blazing."

"That so?" replied the other indifferently. He was groping for his gear lever, and as he did so he was conscious of the tight grip on his arm of the girl at his side. "Why did you hold us up?" he demanded as the car lurched forward again.

"Because you can't go on. The fires are running out in that direction. If you wanted to take risks like this, why the devil didn't you take them alone?"

Then for the first time the grey eyes of the woodsman wandered in the direction of the girl beside the driver, and as he spoke he reached down and knocked the gear lever into neutral, heedless of the muttered protests of the man at the wheel.

"Get out!" he commanded shortly, but neither of them stirred, and here the girl joined in. "Will you please leave us alone, Mr. McLeod?" she pleaded. "My husband is perfectly capable of managing our own affairs——"

"He is not, madam!" broke in the ranger. "If he had the faintest notion of what you are up against, you would not be here. I know. It is my business to know! We're in for the biggest son of a gun of a fire this country has ever known, and if it catches you—well, not even the Yellow Outcrop will buy you out!"

The girl writhed at the very obvious irony of his words, and with a muttered oath her driver again groped for the gear lever, but sinuous fingers closed with a vice-like grip on his wrist. "Look here, Hilson," said the fire-ranger thickly, "I can't risk the lives of my men arguing with you. Time is precious, more precious than you realise. My instructions are to get this party through to the lake and to pick up anyone I can *en route*. Five minutes from now it will be dark as night, and if you and the girl go on you won't stand a lame dog's chance. Are you going to fall in and obey orders?"

"No, not with you—you impudent hound!"

"Very well, then," and next moment Hilson found himself looking into the muzzle of a small polished automatic. "It's up to me to make you," said the ranger. "Get out, and understand this: Any member of the party who disobeys orders will be shot dead. Join those men, please, Mrs. Hilson."

She obeyed, trembling, and the mine-owner followed. Out of the luxurious saloon they tumbled, to fall in with what was surely the rag end of mining-camp scum. Mrs. Hilson thought that she had never before seen such an unprepossessing crowd as this band of unwashed, unshaven foreigners the ranger was conveying to safe territory. He himself was a fit captain, for his khaki cottons were torn and ragged, his face was blackened and unshaven, his red hair plastered about his forehead. But she and the owner of Yellow Outcrop knew that the man was in deadly earnest, though the outraged Hilson managed to mutter, "I'll make you sweat blood for this, McLeod!"

The ranger laughed. "I'll probably sweat blood before sunset without any help from you!" he answered. Then, turning, he gave brief instructions to his men to fall

in behind the car and push like the devil. "It's a good car," he flung over his shoulder, "and we may as well save what we can of her."

Within a few feet of where they had stopped ran an arm of a slough, narrow, deep, and sluggish, and down the steep bank of it McLeod and his men pushed the luxurious vehicle, while the mine-owner and his wife looked on helplessly. Finally it plunged headlong, disappearing bodily all but the canopy top, and as it went McLeod heard the girl mutter, "The brute!"

But the red-haired ranger had not yet finished. He turned to Mrs. Hilson and said quickly—"Your motor-coat, madam. You won't need it."

She shrank from him, but McLeod had obtained a grip of the coat, and she had either to wriggle out of it or have it torn from her shoulders. "I always tried to think of you as a gentleman," she hurled at him, her eyes flaming.

"I'm glad," he answered with quiet satire, and his eyes sought the ground. "I used to try to be, but it doesn't matter now. Unlike your rotten southern cities, this north country has no special use for polished hypocrisy. Moreover, when a man's been fighting earth fires for a hundred hours without sleep, he becomes little more than a machine."

He looked into her flaming eyes, then the wild indifference which hitherto had characterised his manners seemed suddenly to leave him. "Don't you understand, Kitty?" he said. "These hellish muskeg fires have got into my soul. I'm dead beat, and now we're up against it as never before."

He pulled himself up with a jerk, then as he met the eyes of the mine-owner he laughed recklessly, almost drunkenly, and taking a large stone he rolled her coat round it and hurled it into the slough after the motor-car. "That comb in your hair," he said. "Is it celluloid? If so, chuck it out!" Then he turned on his heel.

But she did not follow his advice, possibly because the comb was not celluloid, nor were the two big stones which adorned it brilliants.

"Now come on," said the ranger.

He took off his neck-cloth and gave the mine-owner one end of it to hold. "Follow the best you can," he said, "and keep a tight hold of your wife. The boys can look after themselves."

Then McLeod plunged into the bush, behind him Hilson and the girl, and behind them the mining-camp toughs, each hanging on to the neck-cloth or whatever it was that the one ahead held out to him. Locked between the ranger's teeth was a whistle, through which he was breathing heavily, so that its shrill note hardly ceased. In his right hand he carried a light, wide-bladed axe, which occasionally he used. He was following the slough by what appeared to be a game path, for they had to stoop low in order to make headway. The smoke was now stifling, and running in a doubled-up attitude through the partial darkness, stumbling constantly, at times falling, it was not long before the girl found the pace too hot.

"She can't stick it," Hilson gasped out. "I'm having to drag her bodily."

McLeod turned. The girl was on her knee, and the whole queue was waiting, cursing. The ranger threw one big arm round her. Behind them they could hear a roar like the noise of underground thunder, and now, as they paused, they could distinctly hear the fire running up the trees.

"It's no good, Mac," the girl panted. "I'm done. I can't make it. My ankles have given out, and it isn't fair to hold up the rest." But Mac was already swinging her along.

"I'll help you" he said. "We count on the lame soldier setting the pace, you know. That's part of the game."

Mrs. Hilson was aware that the ranger was practically carrying her, and his bony arms seemed on the point of crushing in her ribs. She partially freed herself, helping herself a little. Each moment breathing was becoming more difficult, the darkness more intense. She could hear the man's heavy breathing, and she feared his lungs would burst, so awful was the sound of it. Once he fell, and for a moment lay crouching, then his right hand dashed the sweat from his eyes. She heard a blasphemy, pitiable in its utter meaninglessness, break from his lips; she heard his teeth grit together, then he rose, dragging her after him. She tried to plead with him, but no word could she force from her lips. She was dangling limply, no longer able to control her muscles, nor yet her mind, in that stifling darkness through which they plunged. She wondered at his supreme endurance—after a hundred hours too!—at his marvellous sense of direction, for she had yet to learn that there is no limit to human endurance.

Time, black and swimming, immeasurable

and awful, seemed to pass, then the girl knew that they had reached a clearing in the forest and were at rest. Were they through with it? Had they gained safety at last? No, for she heard her husband speaking, and his words restored her reeling senses.

"Give me the gun, Mac," he was saying. "I can't follow another yard, and I'm not going to try. You go on with my wife and the others."

The girl did not miss the sudden look of appreciation and sympathy on the ranger's face, but she saw him stoop and drag her husband roughly to his feet, and as she

"'She can't stick it,' Hilson gasped out. 'I'm having to drag her bodily.'"

reached up at them, pleading, entreating, she heard the ranger cough out, "You can. If you're man enough for that, you're man enough to stick it. You don't know what

you *can* do. You've never had to try. Come on now or die. Come on!"

And somehow they went on, how, where, they did not know. Vaguely they were conscious that they were not following the directions of their own brains, for it seemed that, with some uncanny power, the master brain of the man in ragged cottons now ruled their movements and their powers of movement. Once more dense bush was around them, but now it was pitch dark, save that a million million glowing stars sailed through the super-heated atmosphere and settled like hornets upon their naked flesh. Then suddenly the darkness took on a dull copper glow, and the girl felt herself falling, sliding, in and out among the dead logs which strewed the ground, the underbush lashing her face like whiplashes, till in the rocking blackness she felt the tepid waters of the slough close about her. Almost at the same instant the bush on either side took light, and for a minute or more the heat and the smoke sent them cowering low in the water. Mrs. Hilson clung to the man who was holding her, conscious only that she must endure it, and endure it silently. Soon it seemed to abate a little, then she heard McLeod say, "Try to stand, Kitty, for God's sake, or I can't save you!"

"McLeod turned. The girl was on her knee, and the whole queue was waiting, cursing."

She did try, and somehow she succeeded holding on to some one. It seemed that there were men on every side of her, standing shoulder deep, and one of them was shielding her face with what appeared to be his jacket. She was aware of a thrill of pride and joy as she realised that it was her husband thus protecting her at his own cost, and she managed to gasp out, "Isn't it awful?"

"Never mind, old girl," said the mine-owner. "Keep going and we'll pull through somehow."

McLeod meantime was counting his men,

and so far none was missing. He said to Hilson, "We'll have to land. The lake can't be far away, and we should be able to make it before the big fire comes."

"The big fire!" Hilson groaned.

"Yes, that was only a forerunner. We couldn't live here when the big show comes along. We must gain the lake."

Mac waded out, helping both of them up the slippery bank. He blew his whistle, but the men did not stir. They did not want to leave the water.

Then the ranger began to curse, savagely and impatiently, and his voice seemed hardly human as he yelled one vile order after another. It seemed to Kitty that they were in the company of some awful devil of the fire fiend, for the ranger's red hair clustered over his blackened face, and his wild eyes were red as his hair. And now, yelling and cursing, he began to fire into the water with reckless impartiality, each heedless volley accompanied by his cracked and rasping shouts.

But the effect was wonderful, for the men, foreigners for the most part, were out of the water in double quick time, and fell in along the bank. The air had cleared just a little, thanks to the tearing gale which now prevailed. Sparks had ceased to fly, but here and there about them the bush was burning savagely. The very air quivered with that unearthly glow seen only in a nightmare, while on every side they could hear the dead trees crashing to earth. Then—they were plunging headlong through the bush again, with the unearthly screech of the ranger's whistle in their ears.

Soon even that sound was drowned by the throbbing of their own temples, the roar of the gale, the roar of the fire, the crashing of the timber, but their progress now was slow, for even Mac was giving out. So they gained a point at which there was no heavy timber, but across a belt in front of them the low bush was blazing and the very earth was on fire. Cross it they must, or die where they were, and the ranger looked round and nodded to Hilson. Then he drew himself up, tossed the girl over his shoulder, and, drooping and sagging though he was, his big hands almost touching the ground, he set off across the fire belt, blowing his whistle.

How they ever got across even McLeod himself never knew, but as he landed he looked back. He saw one of his men break formation and turn at right angles along the fire belt, two of the others following him. Then McLeod set down his load and went back into the fire belt. They saw him overtake the runaway and bear the man down, striking him across the face to restore his senses, and flourishing the little automatic under his eyes. Then, half dragging them, half driving them, McLeod got them out of the fire belt, took up his load again, and plunged on into the bush.

But they had not gone far when McLeod fell, and this time he could not raise his load from the ground. He saw Hilson at the side of him on all fours, and he heard him gasp out, "Stick it, man. Come on!" And McLeod was glad to find that Hilson was not only a millionaire but also a man.

But the rabble behind had seen their leader fall, and the man who had previously broken formation dashed off again into the burning undergrowth. Then Kitty Hilson saw a hideous and horrible thing she would never forget. She saw the ragged, red-haired ranger slowly raise the little weapon. Carefully and steadily he aimed at the runaway, and there was a crack, scarcely audible above the general din, but the man who had broken formation went down full length and did not stir again. The two who had followed him came meekly back to the party.

Even Mac could never recall what happened after that. He remembered grovelling on all fours through red-hot ashes, with a glowing furnace on either side. He remembered thinking that there was nothing left of his hands and fingers save the bones, and he was grateful that the bones at any rate were more or less impervious to fire. He thought he was some kind of gigantic clawed lizard, creeping through hell and pulling something after him which he must not in any case leave behind. He thought that there were other lizards behind him, and that he was leading them to water, to which they rightly belonged. So on through quivering, burning space, till suddenly, mysteriously, there seemed to be some kind of lull in the proceedings. Ahead there was no timber, and the air seemed to be better. Hard stones were underfoot, and there were no burning branches to lash their faces.

The lake—yes, the lake!—and as McLeod waded out his senses came reeling back to him. He looked for the girl, and to his joy he found that he was still dragging her after him much as he might have dragged a pack-sack he was too weary to lift. He peered through the surging blackness, and he saw dark figures loom up one by one.

He counted them as they passed—nine, ten, eleven—one missing. Oh, yes, of course, the poor devil they had left behind in the muskeg swamp!

About three hours later the holocaust burnt itself out, and as they dragged themselves into shallower water where they could rest their chilled and weary limbs, they heard in the distance the familiar chug-chug of a launch, searching the margin for refugees. As it drew nearer the ranger rallied his party in the water about him and again he counted them over.

"We're all right now, boys," McLeod told them. "The launch will pick you up and take you to the city and the rail-head." Then he turned to Hilson. "We'll salvage the car in due course, and you'll hear all about it when I've made up my report."

"Hang the car!" said Hilson. "Do you realise, man, what we owe you?"

McLeod shrugged his shoulders. "It doesn't matter," he said. "It's part of my job. I'd have done the same for anyone else I found in the bush."

He met the girl's eyes. She could not speak, but he read what was written there.

"It's all right, Kitty," he said. "I shall remember to-day, and when I think of it, for me the birds will sing, as the Indians say."

He laughed his old reckless laugh, then he turned almost savagely and faced her. "So even you know now what hell is like!" he said; then he left them.

He told his men that he was going ashore to see if it was possible to live there, and they watched him while he wallowed slowly out till he was lost in the smoke wreaths. Then, as the launch drew near, they waited for him to return. But he did not return, and eventually the launch went on without him.

"He met the girl's eyes. She could not speak, but he read what was written there."

# RIGHT HAND AND LEFT HAND

## By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

EDWARD BANKS served his articles with Mr. Twill, who was all the partners cf Brownlow and Twill, Solicitors, 429, Subton Road, S.W. When Banks passed his final examination, Twill got rid of his temporary and somewhat bibulous legal assistant, and took Banks on, at a fair salary, as a full-blown solicitor. On the strength of this, Banks got married. He went on very comfortably at office and at home for fifteen months. Then, one morning, Twill called him into his room.

"I've just heard from poor old Brownlow's executors," he stated. "As you know, I bought him out for two thousand, but he let the money stay in the firm on interest. Of course, the executors want the principal. I can raise one thousand, with some accommodation from the bank; but I can't find the other thousand. So I am forced to look round for a junior partner who can put that much in the concern. There's no one I'd sooner have than you, my dear chap, if you can arrange it."

"I'd have a job to find a thousand shillings," Banks stated gloomily.

"Umph! I'd have liked you to have the partnership, my boy; especially as I don't see how I can keep you otherwise. You see, if there are two of us, we can't very well afford a third fully qualified man. I hoped perhaps you'd relatives or friends who'd lend you the money?" Banks shook his head. "I should be very sorry to part from you. I'd give you favourable terms. Will you take a week to consider whether you can find a way of raising the wind?"

"I may as well take the week," Banks said, after reflection. "Thanks."

"It's only taking a week's worry," Banks' wife protested, when he told her. "We've nobody to borrow from."

"No. . . . Of course, Uncle Henry and Aunt Hester could easily lend it, if they would."

They were his uncle and his wife's aunt, and married to each other. Tastes run in families, Uncle Henry had remarked at the wedding breakfast.

"Them!" Jessie cried. "Oh, Neddie Bray!"

"I'm not ass enough to ask *him*," Edward said. "I thought perhaps your aunt had some of those finer feminine feelings that you brag over me about."

"She's more of a man than he is," Jessie declared. "She ran grandfather's business after he died. It wasn't amalgamated with your uncle's until they got married. I think it was the businesses that got married really. She isn't the sort of aunt to gush over her dear little niece. At any rate, she didn't. I hadn't seen her since I was a child, till they came to our wedding."

"They gave us two presents," he remarked. "That was acknowledging the double relationship. They were very decent presents, too."

"The music cabinet and the silver tray," Jessie said. "Ye-es. If they did anything they'd do it properly; but a music cabinet and a silver tray aren't a thousand pounds! If I wrote to her I should only be asking for a slap in the face."

"I thought you'd say that," he owned. "I was only doing the drowning man stunt, with Aunt Hester for the straw. We won't think any more about it. Uncle and aunt are the only possibles."

"And they're impossibles," she asserted. "If you ask me, they keep out of touch with us on purpose, so that we shan't try to touch them for anything. Anyhow, aunt is *quite* impossible."

The next morning, however, after Ted had gone to his office, it suddenly occurred

to Jessie that she ought to try even the impossible for "old Ted's" sake. So she sat down and wrote to Aunt Hester, asking for the loan of a thousand pounds to buy Ted a partnership, the profits from which should enable them to repay the loan, with interest, in a few years; so that it was really "a sound business proposition." (She had often heard her husband use the term.)

"I shan't tell him," she decided. "He'd be so mad when she wrote and ticked me off."

After Ted arrived at the office, it struck him that "a man with a little missus" must swallow his pride and risk a rebuff for the remotest chance of benefiting her. So he wrote to Uncle Henry, asking for the loan. He also described it as a sound business proposition.

"I won't mention it to Jess," he told himself, as he stuck the envelope. "When the answer came, she'd rag me for inviting a rebuff."

Uncle Henry and Aunt Hester had a good deal of separate correspondence; but, when they had read their letters, they always passed over any likely to interest the other. They did so upon the morning when Edward's and Jessie's requests arrived. When each had read the other's letter, they both shook their heads.

"Umph!" said Uncle Henry. "I don't like this duplication, Hester. It turns what they call a business proposition into begging."

"They reviewed their friends, but decided that those (if any) who had the money to lend hadn't the human feeling, and that those who had the human feeling hadn't the money to lend."

"You have expressed my feeling, as usual, Henry," Aunt Hester said. "The people who do that sort of thing are not the sort of people who repay loans."

"No," Uncle Henry agreed. "Of course, we never lend unless we are prepared to lose the money. So perhaps, my dear, that doesn't matter so much."

"I know that money doesn't matter

much to us," Aunt Hester said, "having no one to provide for." She sighed. "He is your nephew, of course. If you feel——"

"No, no," Uncle Henry said hastily. "I scarcely recollect the youth. But, if you have a regard for your niece—— A big, talkative creature with a lot of fair, fluffy hair, wasn't she?"

"You are thinking of her chief bridesmaid," Aunt Hester told him. "Jessie was a small, dark girl. They didn't even trouble to send us a Christmas card last Christmas, though they did the Christmas after they were married. If they had, I might have suggested talking it over with them when we are in town next week; but we have become practically strangers. Of course, if you feel that, having no nearer relation——"

"No, no," Uncle Henry cried quickly. "You are all the family I want, Hester."

"Ah!" said Aunt Hester. "Anyhow . . . Other people's children are not your own. . . ."

There was a pause. Each knew very well that Uncle Henry would have liked to have a son in the business, and that Aunt Hester would have liked to have a daughter in the house; but both thought that they had skilfully concealed their own feelings.

"Exactly," Uncle Henry observed presently. "Exactly. These young people are practically strangers to us, as you say; and apparently they consider us such strangers to each other that they may obtain the loan twice over! It isn't straight; not straight, my dear!"

"No," Aunt Hester agreed. "No. When you write, have a letter typed for me in the same terms. We always have the same ideas, but you express them better."

The letters to Edward and Jessie respectively regretted that Uncle Henry and Aunt Hester respectively were unable, through the numerous calls upon them in these trying times, to assist in the manner suggested. They added that the decision had been arrived at after consultation, as they did not hold that the rule of concealing the doings of the right hand from the left applied to husband and wife.

"That," Uncle Henry observed, "will convey to them that we do not approve of the duplicate request."

It failed to convey this meaning, as neither Edward nor Jessie knew of the duplication. Both congratulated themselves that the other was spared the annoyance of the cold refusal. They lamented together (without reference to their applications) that they had practically no relatives; "only a couple of selfish old pigs" (Jessie), "in whom human feeling, if any, has dried up" (Edward).

They reviewed their friends, but decided that those (if any) who had the money to lend hadn't the human feeling, and that those who had the human feeling hadn't the money to lend. The bank manager, whom Edward saw, professed that he had the feeling, but the people at head-quarters hadn't.

"He said," Edward reported, "that, if he had the power, he'd take the risk on his personal good opinion of me. Only gas, of course, but nice of him to say it."

"It's exactly my opinion of you," Jessie cried.

"Nice of *you* to say it," Edward acknowledged. "Where it's hard on us is that we *would* pay the money back. . . . Shall I tell Twill that it's no go, and look out for something?"

"Look out for something, boy," Jessie advised, "but take the week before you tell him. You never know what will turn up."

On the morning when five days of the week were up, Edward and Jessie were rather gloomy.

"There's somebody fishing after the partnership already," he said; "and I can't hear of anything at as good a screw as Twill gives me. It's deuced annoying to lose just *the* opportunity, because we can't borrow what we could easily pay back. If only we'd a real uncle and aunt instead of a pair of cold, calculating skinflints——!"

"It would be no use writing to them," Jessie declared, "if you're thinking of that."

"No, no!" he cried. "I'm glad we didn't. We shall never get a penny from them—even as a loan—while they live; and they're the sort to leave their money to charities. They'll have forgotten that we exist."

Nevertheless, soon after he arrived at office that morning "Mr. Henry Banks of Dullchester" called to see him.

"Surprised to see me, eh?" the old man suggested.

"Well——!" Edward said. "I—I'm glad to see you looking so well, sir. How's aunt?"

"All right, all right. Doing a little shopping in town. She doesn't dream that

I've come here. . . . It's like this, Edward. I don't know if you've noticed, but women are very extreme in their views; can't see that the exception is necessary to prove the rule. . . . Now, one of our rules is not to lend money. See ?"

"You mean that aunt wouldn't let you lend me that thousand ?"

"Tut, tut! We don't require each other's permission to spend a little money. She wouldn't dream of objecting to my spending a thousand upon what I might consider a family call. If I'd said at the outset that I'd proposed to do it, she'd have raised no difficulty; but if I'd done it after we'd discussed it, and I'd found out that she was against it——"

"The fat would have been in the fire, eh ?" Edward suggested.

"No, no! You don't understand your aunt—your wife's aunt. She would have been upset because we didn't agree as usual. That's all. I didn't want to upset her. . . . Well, I've been a young man myself. I know how hard it is to make a start without a little capital. You're my brother's son. We've none of our own. . . . It is a grief to her, Edward. I—the long and short of it is that I don't want her to fancy that I'm doing this for you because I haven't a boy to do it for. So she must never know of it. Here you are."

He handed over a cheque for one thousand pounds.

"Sir!" Edward gasped. "*Sir!* . . . Thank you! . . . *Thank you!* . . . It will give us a start in life: me and the little missus . . . and someone else, perhaps. . . . I'll draw up a proper bond. What rate of interest shall I put in ?"

"What's the use of a bond, when I shouldn't enforce it!" the old man said; "and she'd find the bond, if I go first. No, no! Call it a gift, Edward. The only condition is, that your aunt must never know. She might think that I hadn't been quite straightforward with her! Edward, my boy, women are a sex that it is very difficult to be straightforward with, or to agree with. So are men. We foresaw the difficulty from the first, and made up our minds to get over it, when we decided to get married. We were only going in for a business partnership at first. In fact, we were considering the deed; and then I said, 'Miss Hester ? Why not go the whole hog with our partnership ?' 'What ?' she cried. 'Get married,' I said. 'Why ?' she asked. 'No particular reason, unless you'd like to,' I owned. '*I* should.' 'It would have been better to have said that first,' she told me. She is very particular over expression. You should read some of her letters. 'We are two stiff, middle-aged people,' she said. 'Can we agree ?' 'Let's make up our minds to,' I proposed; and we did; and we have; till it's become a sort of mania with her. . . . Of course, we agree sometimes by one giving in; but this wasn't a case for arguing her over. She'd have thought that, having no son of my own, I wanted to console myself by—— Never mind about that. I must get back to town sharp. I'm meeting your aunt at Charing Cross at 12.5, and you know how women get on their hind legs if you're late!"

Jessie was dusting the drawing-room, and singing snatches of comic opera, when she had a caller; a well-dressed but sober-looking lady of about fifty.

"Why!" Jessie cried. "Aunt Hester! Well, I am surprised! . . . How are you ? And uncle ?"

"We are well, my dear. Your husband has gone to his office, I suppose ? . . . I came up to town with your uncle upon business, and thought I'd run down and see you without telling him. . . . I dare say you've noticed that men let themselves become obsessed by fixed ideas; hobbies. Your uncle's obsession is business. He sees everything from that standpoint. I can see things from several points of view. Women are more versatile. But he and I are in the habit of agreeing. I really couldn't oppose him about that money you wanted."

"Oh! It was he who wouldn't let you ?"

"Let me! You, a married woman, talk about your husband 'letting you'! Your uncle wouldn't dream of objecting to my spending a little of my own money to assist my own people. But I couldn't have him think that I was departing from our custom of agreement. He didn't even say 'don't do it'; but I know his ways. He balanced a fork on a knife while we were talking. We had your letter at breakfast. . . . He was right from the business view-point, of course. He always is. But I know how young people need a start, and . . . Here you are, my dear. I shan't miss it."

She held out a cheque for a thousand pounds.

Jessie screamed.

"Aunt! Oh, how kind of you! I don't seem as if I can believe it yet! I must look

at it again! How pleased Ted will be! Of course he'll make out a proper legal document, and——"

"No," Aunt Hester refused. "What's the good of a legal document when I shouldn't go to law about it? Besides, if I died first, your uncle would find it; and then he might think that I hadn't been quite candid with him. My dear, men are a sex that you *can't* be quite candid with. Your uncle is remarkably free from crotchets and prejudices for a man; but he has one very violent prejudice—that he and I should agree about everything. You know, we were not very young when we decided to marry. The idea arose from our contemplating a business partnership. He intimated that it would be very agreeable to him if the partnership were not confined to the business. I admitted that the extension would not be displeasing to me. I always felt it was a woman's duty to look after some man. They are so helpless in domestic matters! But I felt bound to point out that we were both rather set, and might find it difficult to agree. He proposed that we should make a point of doing so. We have done so. Mind you, Jessie, he would have given way if I had pressed the point, but . . . I think, my dear, that having no children of our own, he didn't like

"My dear, men are a sex that you *can't* be quite candid with."

the idea of my taking notice of other people's . . .

"Well, there you are, my child. It's a gift. There's no question of repayment. I must run off at once. I've kept the taxi outside. I promised to meet your uncle at Charing Cross at 12.5; and you know what a fuss men make if you keep them waiting."

Edward went home to lunch, and rushed at Jessie flourishing his cheque. She rushed at him flourishing hers. They both talked at once.

"Good gracious!" she cried after five minutes. "We must have been startled out of our senses. We've forgotten to kiss each other!"

They repaired the omission.

"There's another thing we've overlooked," Edward observed. "We can't keep both those cheques. You see they weren't given to us to do as we pleased with, but to buy that partnership. We can't honestly use any part of them for anything else. See?"

"I see that, of course," Jessie agreed, "worse luck! But I don't see how we're going to return either without upsetting either uncle or aunt. Of course we can't tell either of them about the other. Funny old things! . . . Dear, kind old things, though!"

"'How pleased Ted will be!'"

"I'll tell you, Jess," Edward said. "We'll return five hundred to each, and say that another kind friend has unexpectedly offered to find the money. So we think that the fairest way, and what they would both

wish, if we could consult them together, is that we should accept £500 from each, and that we shall always feel grateful to both for the whole amount. I'll write that to uncle, and you to your aunt."

"Really you *are* clever, Teddie," Jessie cried. "You *ought* to get on in the law!"

"It's what they'd wish, if they understood each other, you see," he said. "I looked at it like that. The right hand and left hand agree better than they know."

"Yes," Jessie said. "I'd rather squabble and row it out, like we do, than be a right hand and a left hand; but I suppose we are."

"We haven't settled yet which is which," Edward observed with a grin.

"That's all *you* know," observed Jessie, with another.

When Uncle Henry and Aunt Hester received the cheques for £500, they frowned a good deal, glanced at each other when they thought the other wasn't looking; finally set their respective lips, and passed over the letters and cheques, when they made their usual exchange of correspondence.

"Right hand and left hand, Henry," Aunt Hester remarked presently.

"It seems that we agree better than we knew," Uncle Henry said. "I suppose we have the same idea about these cheques?"

"Return them?" Aunt Hester suggested.

"Yes, together. . . . Will you write or shall I?"

"Does it much matter?" Aunt Hester asked. "We always . . ." She took out her handkerchief quickly. "I know why you did it like that, Henry. You thought it would hurt me, if you showed an interest in other people's chil——"

"Ssh!" said Uncle Henry. "We have each other." He went round the table to her. "Right hand and left hand, eh. . . . I don't believe either of us knows which is which!"

# WRITTEN IN APRIL.

**THE birds are singing—for their love is new,**
**I have naught but the memory of mine . . .**
**And yet it comforts that it once was true,**
**And knowing this . . . my heart shall not repine.**

**Only, because this afternoon the rain**
**Has made the wallflowers in the garden wet,**
**There has been borne into my heart again**
**With unexpected freshness, old regret.**

**SYBIL RUEGG.**

# WEATHER-WISE

## By CYNTHIA CORNWALLIS

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

"THE simple life is making a man of me," announced Henry importantly.

Edward continued to be absorbed in his study of some ants which were carrying away a large crumb of cake.

"Really ?" he inquired indifferently.

"What are your symptoms ?" Cynthia inquired doubtfully.

"I feel," declared Henry, "that I ought to be up and doing."

"Doing whom ?" grunted Edward suspiciously, pausing in his effort to frustrate the removal of the cake-crumb.

Henry suddenly noticed the ants and dropped on his knees beside Edward. "By Jove," he exclaimed, "isn't that interesting ? You know, those chaps are weather-wise. That means rain."

"What does ?" said Edward densely, putting his foot across the path pursued by the ants. They paused, nonplussed for a moment, and then resumed their task, running up over Edward's shoe and making a detour in the direction of his trouser-leg.

Cynthia leaned forward in her chair and began to watch them. "My dear Henry," she said, "how do you know that when these ants conceal a chunk of plum cake in the leg of Edward's flannel trousers it means rain ?"

"That's easy," retorted Edward; "it's always raining."

"Not at all," objected Henry in a hurt tone. "*The Daily Post* says so."

"But how could *The Daily Post* know about my trousers ?" asked Edward incredulously.

"Or that it would be fine enough for us to have tea in the garden ?" added Cynthia.

"I mean that I read about it in *The Daily Post*," Henry explained. "It was an article on how insects and things foretold the sort of weather that was coming along."

"Do insects and things affect the weather, or does the weather affect them ?" asked Cynthia doubtfully.

"Do human beings count ?" put in Edward. "I mean, do I take a mac because it's going to rain, or does it rain because I don't ?"

"Tell us more, Henry," urged Cynthia. "We seem to be surrounded by all sorts of unexpected dangers, and I'm so anxious to avoid doing anything that may cause it to rain to-morrow and spoil our picnic."

"The mere fact of your deciding to have the silly thing will do that !" retorted Henry. "However, I may be able to counteract it by staying at home and doing a job of work."

Edward looked incredulous. "A pretty forlorn hope, old man," he said, shaking his head. "Take plenty of waterproofs, Cynthia."

He sat up suddenly.

"Get out, you little brutes !" he cried, evicting the ants with unnecessary violence. "I'm not a blooming barometer."

He lit a cigarette and considered thoughtfully for a time.

"Got anything on your mind ?" Henry inquired searchingly. "You have a furtive expression that bodes no good."

"As a matter of fact," rejoined Edward lazily, "I was merely wondering what effect on the weather a fellow sitting on a plate of lard would be likely to have."

"Depends on the language the silly blighter used, I should say," replied Henry.

"Sulphurous !" said Edward reminiscently.

"Then it would probably have the effect of gunfire," decided Henry, "and bring the rain."

Cynthia laughed. "What idiots you both are !" she exclaimed. "And what a horrible idea ! Why should people sit on plates of lard ?"

"Only in cases of absolute necessity, I assure you," he replied, with the air of one having a grievance.

"Who's been doing it ?" demanded Cynthia, in sudden suspicion.

"I have," replied Edward simply.

Henry raised an eyebrow. "But why, dear soul?" he asked in polite astonishment.

Cynthia shook her head. "I fail to see the necessity for such a proceeding, but I perceive, dear brother, that you have a story. Let us have it."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Henry; "there's Doris coming."

"Thank goodness, *that's* done!" said Doris, sinking into a low wicker chair and closing her eyes.

"What's done?" asked Henry, handing her a cup of tea.

"The grub for to-morrow's picnic," answered Doris. "It's really a wonder that anything is ready at all, I've had such a lot of accidents."

things do happen! Anyway, I couldn't find the lard anywhere, so I chucked the pastry idea. As a matter of fact, I should have had to, for, quite by accident, I found the lard as I was coming out—a dreadful squashed mess on a chair in the hall. What it means, I don't know," she ended severely.

"It means rain," said Henry with conviction.

"Doris sighed. 'What did you expect?' she said bitterly. 'Henry is the frozen limit.'"

Henry made a sympathetic noise and held a match to her cigarette.

"There are no tarts," Doris continued. "I was fetching the lard from the pantry when the water for the eggs boiled over. I put it down somewhere—I don't know where—and rushed and put the eggs down to boil, and then something else happened—I forget what—you know the awful way

"No, Cynthia," murmured Edward confidentially, "I haven't any story—not really."

* * * * *

The day was cloudless and the May sunshine poured down in almost tropical heat. Henry had excused himself from accompanying the picnic party on the plea of business to look after, and went about his

self-appointed tasks in his shirt and an old pair of flannel trousers. It pleased him to think of Edward perspiring in his thick tweeds, and the girls in sensible woollies and armed with Burberrys, sallying forth with a picnic basket to spend a long day in the woods.

"'What a disgusting sight!' he said irritably."

In his new-found interest in the farmyard he pottered round as happily as a schoolboy. He sought old Mary's advice on the subject of rearing chickens, and spent some time with John in the lower farm, trying to accustom himself to the smell of pigs.

"It's a bad day to begin," he told himself, as he staggered back to the garden, mopping his brow. "I believe I'll wait for a cold day to learn about pigs. How hot it is, and that ass, Edward, in plus fours!"

He fetched himself some beer, and settled down under the mulberry tree in a deck chair, with his feet on the rustic table, and he was still slumbering happily when Cynthia and Doris crossed the lawn wearily and sank, dirty and dishevelled, into chairs, where they lay without speaking until Edward, flushed and moist-looking, stood beside them.

"What a disgusting sight!" he said irritably.

Cynthia opened one eye. "You needn't be rude," she complained. "I know our noses are shiny, and that we are melted and dreadful-looking, but who would have thought it was going to be a fine day? And that fool Henry insisted on our taking macs!"

"I didn't mean you," returned Edward. "I was alluding to this beer-sodden hypocrite who refused to come with us because of a sudden passion for work. *Work!* I ask you!" He paused, and looked anxiously into the tankard. "But he's finished the beer. He *would*!"

Doris sighed. "What did you expect?" she said bitterly. "Henry is the frozen limit."

"Sounds nice and cool, anyway," murmured Henry sleepily. Then, in surprise and some confusion: "Hallo, you people back already?"

He removed his feet from the table and sat up. "Had a good time?" he asked genially. "Hope it didn't rain. It's been quite warm and pleasant here." He paused and surveyed the wilted group critically. "I say," he went on with some concern, "you look a bit used up! Too much lunch, or was the weather a bit oppressive? I've been a bit worried about Edward and his plus fours."

"Please, Henry, be a brick and get us something to eat," begged Doris in a faint voice.

Cynthia dragged herself out of her chair. "Yes, old thing, come along with me and find some food."

"That is, if he hasn't eaten everything," remarked Edward disagreeably.

"Well, I'm blest!" said Henry in amazement. "Not had any lunch? Why, I thought——"

"Yes," retorted Edward, "we all thought! But everybody seems to have thought wrong."

"Between us all," lamented Doris, "we left the lunch behind."

"All but a packet of salt and pepper I put in myself," corrected Cynthia.

"I cut the bread and butter and put it ready somewhere," asserted Doris plaintively.

"I could have sworn——" began Edward.

"A bad habit!" interrupted Henry reprovingly. "As for the bread and butter, I wonder if that was the plateful I found on the top of the piano?"

"Very likely," said Edward. "Well, we will fetch it now. Better late than never."

"I'm sorry," said Henry, "but I thought it a pity to see it curling up and expiring in the heat, and so I——"

"So you ate it?" broke in Edward bitterly. "You would, of course!"

"Never mind," said Cynthia soothingly. "It's easily replaced."

"I'll fetch the eggs," yawned Doris, getting up and stretching herself. "I know where they are. Lovely brown eggs—a whole dozen. I boiled them yesterday and put them ready in the larder. Oh, Henry, be a dear and fetch them, while Cynthia and I get the bread and butter and Edward serves the drinks."

Henry looked at her sternly. "Brown eggs?" he repeated. "In a basket in the larder? My dear——"

They crowded round him excitedly.

"Don't say you've eaten them all!" cried Doris fiercely.

"It really is the limit, Henry," expostulated Cynthia.

"You are a low-down brute!" stormed Edward.

Henry waited in dignified silence till they had done. "My dear people," he said stiffly, "those eggs were mine!"

"Yours?" they scoffed.

"Yes, mine," returned Henry with emphasis. "Purchased at fabulous cost from the poultry farm up the lane. They are now safely under old Mary's broody hen. They represent the nucleus of my chicken farm."

There was a pregnant silence, and then: "I wonder," remarked Cynthia thoughtfully, "what sort of weather it foretells when a broody hen sits on hard-boiled eggs?"

# A COCKNEY BERGERETTE.

"COME into the Country,
Come into the Country,
Come into St. James's Park!"
Come into the Country,
Come into the Country,
I'm sure it's a lark—a lark!
I,—*think* it's a lark
In the sky or the grass,
Or a sparrow that sits on a tree
That iterates sharply whenever I pass
And always admonishes me—
"Come into the Country,
Come into the Country,
Come into St. James's Park!"
When the crocuses fling
Themselves down in a ring
And the daffodils make no remark,
Then,—it *might* be a thrush,
But I *know* it's a lark!
The chirrup and chatter that come with the Spring,
That chirrup and chatter from dawn until dark—
"Come into the Country,
Come into the Country,
Come into St. James's Park!"

CLAUDINE CURREY

THE MODERN ATTITUDE.

"Don't you think it would have been advisable to introduce this young man to your parents before becoming engaged to him?"

"Oh! that won't matter, Dad. Jack says that however much he may dislike my people he won't allow that to interfere with our engagement!"

# THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

### THE MAN HUNT.

***By B. A. Clarke.***

IN the coffee-room there had been a discussion upon the ethics of field sports, the humanitarian side being championed most imaginatively by one of the least imaginative-looking men I have ever met. Later in the evening, when he and I had the room to ourselves, I congratulated him upon his advocacy.

"There is nothing wonderful in my being able to present the case for the hunted," he replied, "seeing that I have been hunted myself."

And then he told me his story. "Last summer," he said, "a large party of us rented apartments at a farmhouse in Cumberland. With me were my brother and his better half, her brother and his young lady, an elder sister and her good man, and boys and girls of the three families, who, being too young to think about love, had a way of falling in love and becoming engaged thoughtlessly. When we were packing the day before our departure we found that we had over a great quantity of patent breakfast-food, and as no one had room for it in valise or trunk, we decided to use it for scent in a game of hare and hounds. I was made hare as the only one they could all chase with some chance of catching. Every one, including the married ladies, was to run. I was given a long start and no one might see me go. The surrounding farm being of two hundred acres, there was a considerable choice of lanes by which to leave it. Well, off I started across the fields, throwing out breakfast-food from a satchel. I hadn't gone fifty yards before the hunt began. A game-cock sampled the breakfast-food, and feeling that it was best to keep near the distributor, came hot-foot on my trail after giving a piercing view-halloo that brought poultry of all sorts and sizes upon me from all points of the compass. Some gave their attention to the scent I had already thrown out, and others made a motley pack that under the able leadership of the game-cock hunted me. Then two sheep joined in the chase. So far I had thought it a joke and had made no effort to distance my pursuers. But when a liver-and-white spaniel, a moth-eaten retriever and a collie joined in I ran for my life."

"How is it that the dogs didn't catch you immediately?"

"Well, you see, when the dogs neared me they would stop to eat up the breakfast-food that had just fallen, and this gave me another start. While the dogs were eating, the sheep would run round them and become my immediate followers, until they in turn stopped to eat, when the dogs would run round *them*, and so on."

"What of the poultry pack?"

"They had dropped out when the dogs took the chase up. The sheep stopped when I reached the road, but the dogs could leap the low fence. After that, for a short space I was hunted by dogs only, but when I was passing through a deserted-looking hamlet, the dogs then being some distance behind busy with a double handful I had thrown them, two or three cats joined in and a white pig. Another double handful stopped *them*. There being, for the moment, no quadrupeds visibly following me, a gander gave the view-halloo and I was hunted by a flock, or perhaps I should say a pack, of local geese. It was awful."

"Why didn't you cease throwing out food? It was that they were all following you for."

"How do you know what was in their minds? You have only reason, fallible human reason, to go upon. I had instinct—an animal's unerring instinct. Hunted like a beast, I had become one intellectually. I *knew* all that it was necessary for a hunted creature to know. In the barking, quacking, grunting and mewing of my pursuers I read diverse intentions. The geese were hurrying to a food distribution, and so were the cats. All I had to fear from them was irritation if, and when, their hopes were disappointed. But the dogs and the pig, who was the bitterest of all, were hunting *me*, their eating up the thrown-out breakfast-food was only a side issue. The horrible hunting impulse dominated them. Above all they thirsted to pull me down and tear me limb from limb. I heard this in the dogs' cruel barks and in the savage grunts of that unspeakable pig. And then I realised the appalling fact that my satchel was empty. I looked back over my shoulder. The dog pack was some way off eating its way along a section generously "scented." In front of them, was a school of cats, also eating, and in front of them again a bevy (if that's the right term) of ducks locally recruited. My only actual pursuer at the moment was the pig. I threw the satchel down in front of him, but he ignored it in his master passion to trample on and kill me. I could feel his hot breath upon my ankles, and my wind was broken. Fortunately there was a tree. How I climbed it I don't know, but climb it I did. Seated in the first fork I mopped my brow and watched the end of the run. A movement at the back was causing developments in front. First came a

A FAIR TRIAL.

"Let's toss up for it, an' if it's 'eads we goes to *The Green Man*, if it's tails we goes to *The Bull*, and if it stands on it's blinkin' edge we goes to work."

whirr of poultry, half flying, half running, dispersing through the bordering hedgerows. Followed the cats racing for my tree, their only refuge from the hounds now in full cry and with no breakfast-food to delay them. Of course the cats reached the tree and forgot the very existence of the dogs the moment they were safe. Last arrived the pack of hounds, six in all, below, mewing for patent breakfast-food, and when it wasn't forthcoming putting paws upon my thighs and shoulders, each paw with one claw unsheathed to give it a hold. What might not happen when the cats realised that they were to get no more? And then, like an April shower, my agony ceased. A wagon approached the driver singing and cracking a

TO SATISFY THE INQUIRING MIND.

DEAR OLD LADY (after asking to see the entire stock): There, darling, *now* you can see what those shelves look like empty!

an Airedale terrier, a dachshund and a wheezing Peke (the last, no doubt, a very recent recruit) having been added to the three dogs from the farm. They raged round the tree, but I had no eyes for them, my attention being occupied by a demonstration from the cats—not inimical, you know, just cadging, but even that is disturbing when the cadgers are twelve to one. They beset me on every side, from above and from formidable whip. At my urgent request he drove off the pack, the pig being the last to quit. I paid him to take me back to the farm. Here I found the make-believe hounds (including the married ladies) dispersed over the meadows trying to pick up the scent, but the farm live stock had not left a flake of it.

We returned home the next day. The young folk tried to pull my leg by pretending that at

the point where I had emerged into the road the hounds had assembled for another hunt under the leadership of the white pig, and wanted to take me to see it."

"Did you go?"

"You bet I didn't. It was a thousand to one there was no such gathering, but I had been chased once and wasn't taking even a thousand-to-one chance of being chased a second time. And knowing how it feels to be hunted, I have no toleration of hunters, whether they be men, dogs or pigs. Can you blame me?"

Honestly, I couldn't.

THE VISITOR'S RACE.

FOOTMAN (a champion amateur sprinter, announcing visitor): Mr. Jinks, m'lady.

As the man driving a weather-beaten donkey attached to a rickety little "shay" came near, the motorist stopped and hailed him. Good afternoons were exchanged and then the motorist inquired, "How far is it to the next town?" The other reflected at length and finally asked, "Well, just what is your idea of a town?"

HE is still wondering what she meant, if anything. When she happened along he was at one end of a line, the other end being far out in the lake.

"Fishing, I see," said the girl.

"Yes," responded the young man. And then he added, in a jocular vein: "Fish feeds the brain."

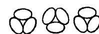
Strolling along, the girl pleasantly called back over her shoulder: "I hope you'll have a large catch."

THE nervous old lady went to the metropolis to visit her son, but through some inadvertency he was not at the railway station to meet her. As the son lived several miles from the station, the old lady was at a loss as to how to get to his home. She was afraid of the subways, street cars and taxis. Finally a porter procured for her an ancient cab, hauled by an even more ancient horse.

"There is no danger of the horse running away, is there?" she timidly asked the driver. "Why, no, ma'am," he cheerfully assured her. "This horse didn't even shy when the first railway trains came in."

"PARDON me a moment, please," said the dentist to the victim, "but before beginning this work I must have my drill."

"Good gracious, man!" exclaimed the patient, "can't you pull a tooth without a rehearsal?"



A COLONY of West Indian ants that carry umbrellas has recently arrived at the Zoo. They must have heard about our English spring weather.

**TEA-SETS AND TEASERS.**

***By Richard Carol.***

"RICHARD," said Ermyntrude, with a shocked expression in her lapis-lazuli eyes, "do you know what we have done?"

"Can't imagine," I said, regarding the ceiling with a puzzled frown. It's such a pity to disappoint femininity.

"We've asked the Gollops and the Trottoms along the same afternoon."

"Well?" I said, this time in real bewilderment.

"Don't you see? Trottoms gave us a tea-set as a wedding present, and Gollops a——"

She paused momentously, and I added:

"A silly sort of dish for stewed prunes and cream and sugar all in one. As if anyone would spoil cream by taking it with prunes! The idea's——"

"Dick," Ermy almost shrieked, "that was the Allens! The Gollops gave us another tea-set."

"Well?" I relapsed into the old formula.

"Nincompoop, don't you see that we can't possibly have tea out of two services at once. Which shall we use?"

"Trottom's," I said. "Trottom's *my* friend."

"No, I think the Gollops'," retorted Ermyntrude firmly.

"I knew the Trottoms before you knew the Gollops," I replied rather warmly.

"I'm hostess, and I'll have which set I like," countered Ermy.

"What about half of each?" I suggested as a compromise.

Ermyntrude looked at me. When Ermyntrude really looks, it's no use carrying on. The argument's over, finished, quite at an end—quite.

The afternoon came, and with it the Gollops and the Trottoms. Strange to say, I was not infused with enthusiasm. I felt that tea was going to be strained if things remained as they were. I resolved to have a word with Trottom beforehand just to explain matters.

Tea went off pretty well, much better than I had expected. The Gollops, of course, beamed, and seemed to enjoy the little meal immensely. Trottom, too, seemed fairly happy, though a trifle more thoughtful than usual. Mrs. Trottom looked doubtful. But that was

REGULAR HOURS.

ARTIST (to model who has fallen asleep): Sorry to disturb you, but it's time for you to rest now!

because Trottom hadn't had an opportunity of conveying to her my very diplomatic explanation. When he did that, and they talked it over quietly together, everything would be all right.

Then one evening, about three days later, I arrived home to find my Ermyntrude with that delightful puzzled look which sets off to such advantage those lapis-lazuli eyes I told you about.

"Dick," she said, "what did you say to Trottom last Sunday?"

"Oh," I murmured, "nothing much. Just explained our little—ah—difficulty, you know. Thoroughly satisfactory, of course—of course."

"Yes," persisted Ermy, "but *what* did you say?"

"Well," I replied, "I told him how we liked his tea-set very much better than the other, but that, unfortunately, as we were seven that afternoon, and it was a half-dozen set, we had to use Gollop's, which wasn't nearly so good, of course. But why this cross-examination?"

"This afternoon," said Ermyntrude, "the other half-dozen arrived."

An advertiser in a daily paper wants "a second-hand terrestrial globe." Would he like to try ours? Pessimists say it's coming to an end soon, anyhow.

**UNNATURAL HISTORY.**

According to a writer on popular fallacies, birds do not sleep in their nests, and they don't put their heads under their wings.

**In days when we were very young**
**How oft we've heard it said, or sung,**
**That in their nests birds made their beds,**
**And tucked beneath their wings their heads.**

**Believing it was quite O.K.**
**For birds to slumber in this way,**
**We've handed on to many a kid**
**The legend that they really did.**

**It's most annoying now to find**
**That birds do nothing of the kind;**
**It means I've got to tell my child**
**He's been misled; which makes me wild.**

**And if, perchance, he asks me now**
**Where feathered songsters sleep, and how,**
**And why from their warm nests they go,**
**Can I inform him? Dash it, No!**

***R. H. Roberts.***

Two newsboys were sitting in the gallery watching their first performance of "Hamlet." The final act, in which Hamlet does some wholesale killing, brought them to a high pitch of excitement. As Hamlet himself expired, the younger of the lads exclaimed:

"By Jove, Bill, what a time for selling extras that must have been."

THE ANTICLIMAX.

Brown: Good news, Jones, I've worked off a fifty-guinea drawing on old Vavasour.
Jones: What for?
Brown: Three pounds ten!

## ALL KEYED UP.

***By Herbert Hamelin***

OUR door-key was made in the days when metal was much cheaper than it is now, I fancy. Anyhow, you can't carry it about with you. I used to try, but the police are such nasty suspicious people, always wanting to know what I'd got in my pocket, and never believing me when I responded casually, "Just a little key, Inspector." So we have to invent places to hide it in. That is great fun, but the trouble is we have to keep on changing them, Lavender is so afraid of burglars discovering the hiding-places. It is, sometimes, great fun too, when we come home, trying to remember the last spot we have chosen.

It wasn't a bit funny, though, last night, when we came back in the pouring rain from a fancy-dress dance. We couldn't find the wretched key at all! From force of habit I looked under the mat, but it wasn't there. Generally when we are in a hurry and draw a blank first shot we just give the drawing-room window a tiny push and walk in, but burglars had been very active recently, and all the windows were bolted.

"I know," said Lavender. "In the gutter over the porch."

I leapt up lightly and brought it down—the gutter, not the key. It was very funny the way the water trickled down Lavender's bare back and made her wriggle; she didn't seem to appreciate it though. I told her that as her costume appeared to represent a Film Bathing Beauty she ought not to mind a silly little drop of water. She said, huffily, that she was a Watteau Shepherdess, new style, so I apologised.

She toddled off to try the cucumber-frame. I sped to the rescue on hearing howls for help.

"Whatever have you got?" I inquired anxiously.

"Nasty, cold, clammy frog," she groaned.

"I wonder if it's on the nail over the water-butt?" I suggested.

It wasn't, though. The nail had gone, and it wasn't even at the bottom of the butt, as the wretched woman made me risk my precious life to see—nasty slimy things, water-butts.

"How silly of us," panted Lavender. "Of course it's in the shed where Bloggs sleeps."

I don't think it was, though. Anyhow, I couldn't see it, and you can't expect any well-brought-up watch-dog to allow even a handsome, nice-mannered gentleman in the costume of Henry VIII to come routing about in his bedroom—at least that, I gathered, was the view Bloggs took of the matter.

THE RESULT.

WAITER: No, I wasn't always knock-kneed, but twenty years' constant cork-drawing 'ave written their story on my knees!

Then, of course, Buggins must come toddling out from next door to see what was the matter—interfering ass.

"Hullo! Lost your key?" he roared. "Where did you put it?"

It was only the fact that I had no lethal weapon handy that saved his life. I just took him kindly by the hand and led him to the gate.

"We have lost our key, old friend," I explained, "because we do not know where we put it. Go quietly to your little bed and spare a thought to two homeless orphans lost among the cabbages. Doubtless the little birdies will cover us with leaves."

"Oh! Nonsense!" he exclaimed. "I'll soon find it for you. I've just done a Memory Training Course. It's all in the little Pink Books, you know. Now, let me see, we must try the Sequence of Ideas Theory. Ah! Key. What picture does that call to my mind? Key . . . Watch . . ."

"Asylum?" I suggested kindly.

"Key . . . Lock . . . Door," he rambled on.

The worst of it was the silly ass was right. That was just where we did find it—in the door!

**AN IMPERFECT DAY.**

**I want you—nay—I *need* you so!**
**A sudden, stony-hearted fear**
**Obsessed me, searching to and fro,**
**To find *you* were not here.**

**The sun with sultry ardour shines,**
**The cloudless sky is turquoise blue,**
**Their radiant union combines**
**To mark my lack of you.**

**Though keen and sound in wind and limb,**
**How can I join the sport and play**
**With all my customary vim**
**With you so far away!**

**And how my grace and charm express**
**On airy, light foxtrotting toes**
**Without your clandestine caress**
**On brow and cheek and nose!**

**So, inwardly I seethe and fret—**
**My flippant banter's only bluff—**
**Oh why—oh *why* did I forget**
**To bring my powder puff?**

***Jessie Pope.***

After explaining to her class the use and meaning of a hyphen, the teacher asked why there was a sign of that kind between the two halves of the word bird-cage.

The small boy whose hand shot up first said: "Please, miss, it's for the bird to sit on."

Father had promised his small daughter that if she were very good she should go to a certain popular music-hall in the evening on condition that she behaved nicely during the performance.

She maintained an unusual subdued manner all day, and just before starting for the theatre inquired anxiously:

"If there should be a joke, would they mind if I laugh?"

A BIT MIXED.

"Your husband and Brown seem to be great friends?"
"Yes, sir, they be a regular David and Goliath."

It was cleaning day at the zoo. All the animals had to be shifted from the cages they occupied into fresh ones.

Pat was assisting with the transfer of the hyena.

"Stiddy there, lion," he quavered.

"What's the idea," asked a fellow attendant, "callin' that hyena a lion?"

"Have ye no tact?" he replied. "Can't ye see 'tis flattering the baste I am?"

A man recently stated that he earned twelve shillings a day by playing the bagpipes in the street. Does he mean by threatening to play them?

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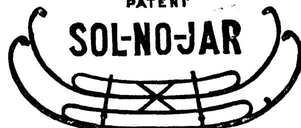


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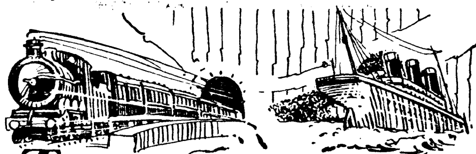

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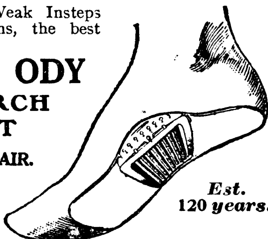

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Betty and Bobby were on their first railway journey. Mother instructed them to look out the window and watch the farms and villages go by. Soon she heard Betty inquire of Bobby:

"Be your own plumber," is the advice of a contemporary. But it has been pointed out that you can't go back for your tools if you are already at home.

FORCE OF HABIT.

House Breaker: Now then, 'op it, mate—the 'ouse is coming down.
Tenant: But where's my missus? I must 'ave my early cup o' tea.

"I wonder why people live in these small towns that the train doesn't stop at?"

Bobby put on the air of a wide traveller: "Why," said he, "somebody has to do the waving back!"

A beauty expert says that girls can improve the shape of their arms by kneeling down and pretending to scrub a floor. They can also improve the look of the floor by actually scrubbing it.

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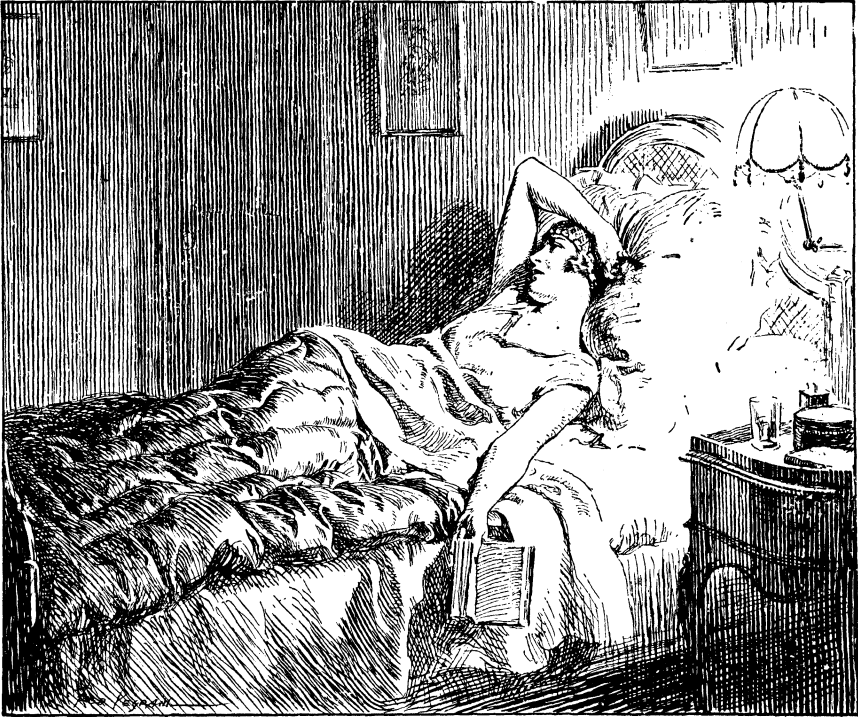

# "Why am I fretful *and* wakeful?"

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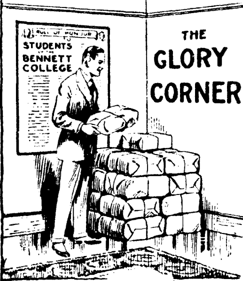


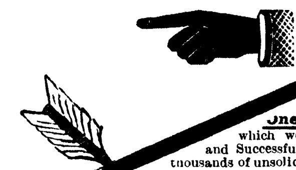

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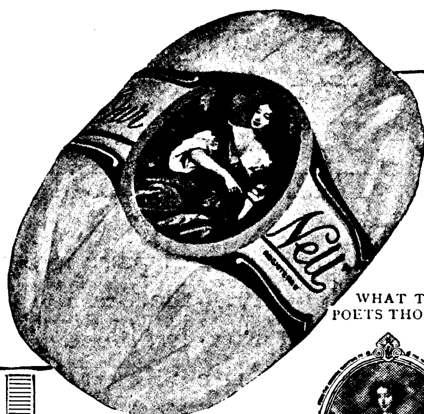


WHAT THE POETS THOUGHT

# "Our Nell" REGISTERED TOILET SOAP

*The poet Gray, writing to a friend in 1756, asked for "a pound of Soap from Mr. Field for mine is not so good here." Vide "Dent's Everyman Series." This was Field's Brown Windsor afterwards registered under the name of "United Service Soap."*

*In the "Life of Swinburne" (Clara Watts-Dunton) it is recorded that he too had a particular liking for another of Field's famous Toilet Soaps and in his house "they never permitted themselves to run short." The Soap referred to was Field's "Sapphire."*

A TOILET Soap of infinite charm. A fragrant Perfume and Complexion Cream in one, manufactured by the same House of Field whose Soaps were in demand centuries ago.

This Soap, combining the charm of a Complexion Cream and Perfume, imparts a delicate bloom and assures that natural softness and healthy glow of the skin so essential to women of charm. To use "Our Nell" is to appreciate the luxury of a Toilet Soap perfect in every sense.

**Sold in dainty boxes.**

3 Tablets @ 1/6 }
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Trial sample Visitor's size tablet sent free upon receipt of 1½*d.* for postage.

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| 4 in box. | 2 in box. | 4 in box. | 2 in box. |
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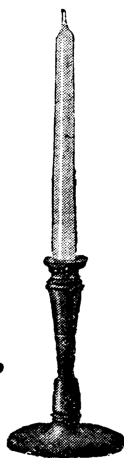
*The Ideal Gift for friends everywhere.*



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Sold at most high-class stores; if you have any difficulty send postal order and we will supply post free.

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*Established* 1642. *In the reign of Charles I.*

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PP3

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As essential as Fresh Air. Destroyed after use, infection is arrested in

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Sold everywhere 6d 1/- 2/6 & 4/6

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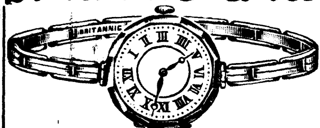


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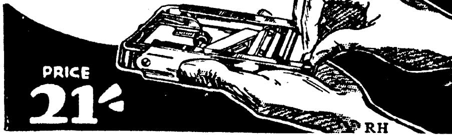


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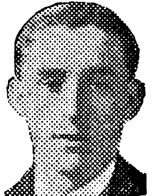

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# "CLUB BLACK" ENAMEL

For all Household uses, Cycles, Motors, etc.

**DRIES IN 20 MINUTES**

**In two sizes—6d. & 1/-.**

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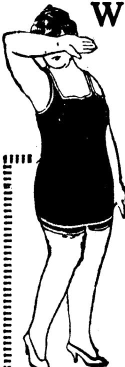

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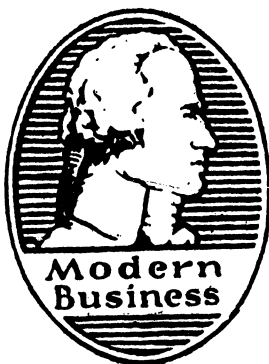


# Feeling the Pinch of Competition

READERS of CONAN DOYLE will realise that formerly medical education was entirely non-professional; medical degrees were unknown and barbers used to occupy themselves in surgery. Who, nowadays, would allow such a man to tamper with his body?

* * * * *

DIP into the pages of DICKENS and you will find that in his day the legal apprentice spent his time in the drudgery of a clerk; the advantages of a law-school were not for him. Who would care to engage a lawyer so trained for the intricate suits that engage the time of the courts of our day?

* * * *

AS with medicine and law, so it is with Commerce. The boast of the self-made captain of industry is still to be heard, but he begins to be regarded as an anachronism. One can safely prophesy that within the next twenty-five years he will have disappeared as completely from our midst as have the non-professional doctor and lawyer. No longer will it be permitted for the human destinies of thousands of workers, the critical balance of supply and demand, to be entrusted to a business manager who has not enjoyed a professional education at a graduate or post-graduate institution.

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Dr. Mackenzie's Laboratories, Ltd., Reading, England. POST FREE 2/3

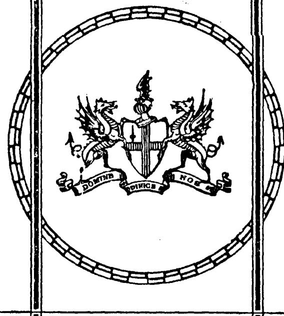
**PREPARE FOR YOUR HOLIDAY**

"He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies must carry the wealth of the Indies with him; so it is in travelling—man must carry knowledge with him if he would bring home knowledge."

## WARD, LOCK & CO.'S ILLUSTRATED HOLIDAY GUIDES

Bound in red cloth, round corners, size to fit pocket.

With many Maps & Plans & numerous Illustrations.

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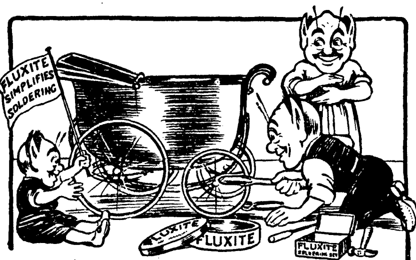


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*When her pram had broken down,*
*Now she smiles—all troubles end,*
*FLUXITE never fails to mend.*

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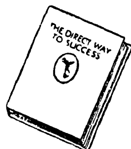


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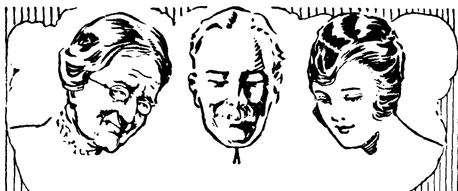

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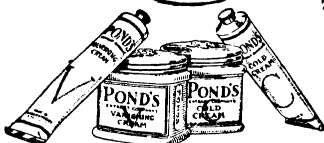


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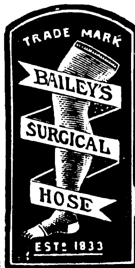


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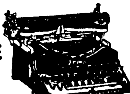

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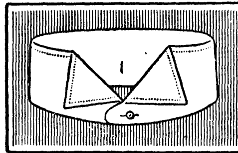

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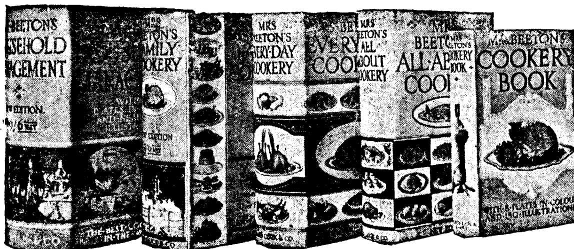

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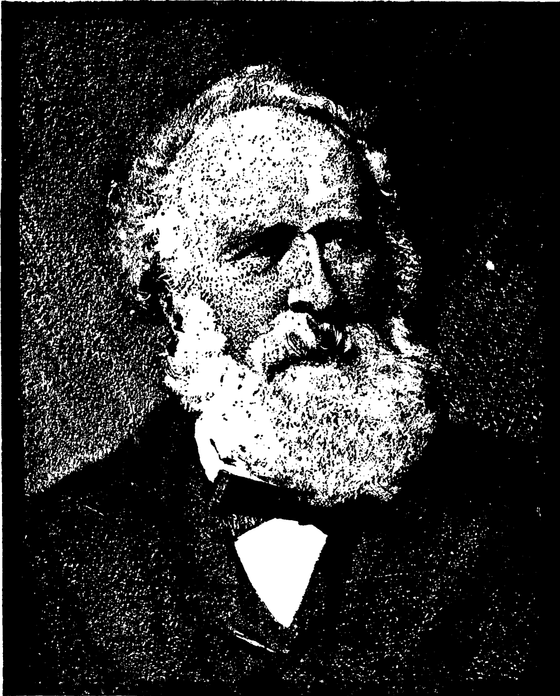

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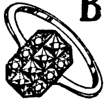

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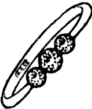

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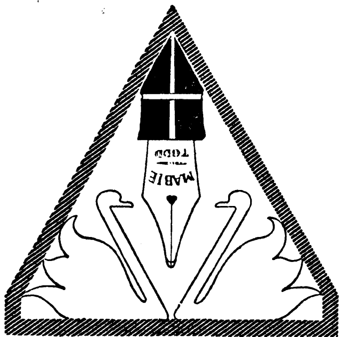


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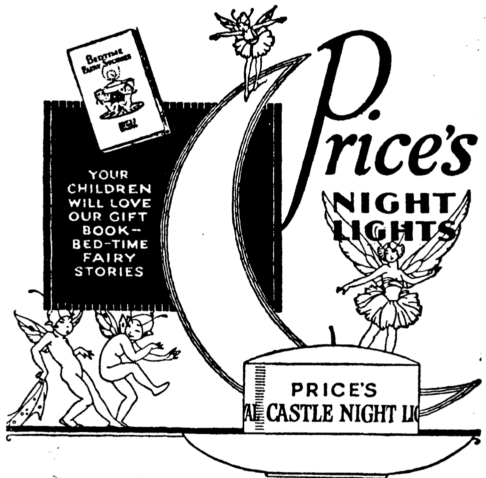


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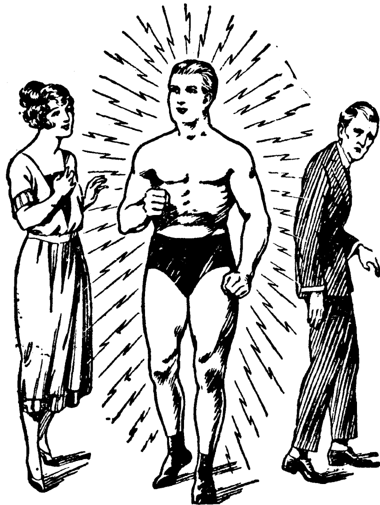

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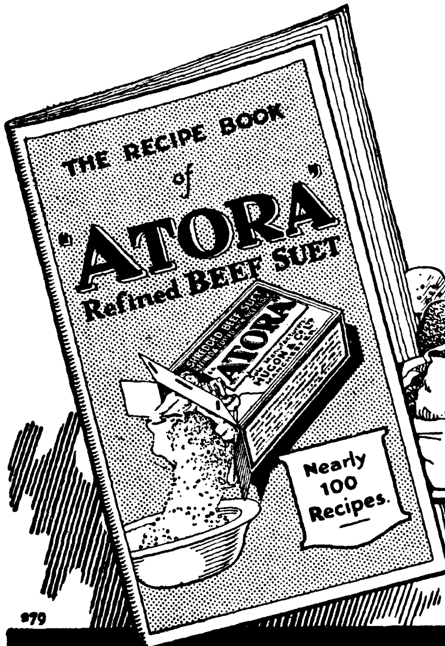


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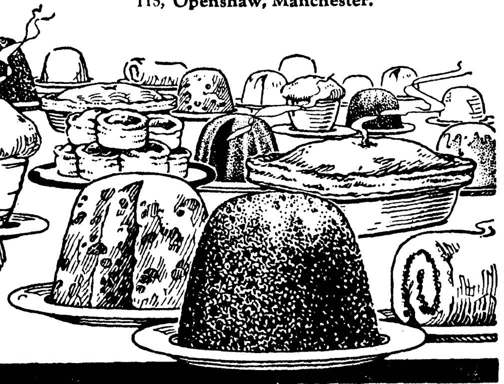

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# The Windsor Magazine.

No. 377.

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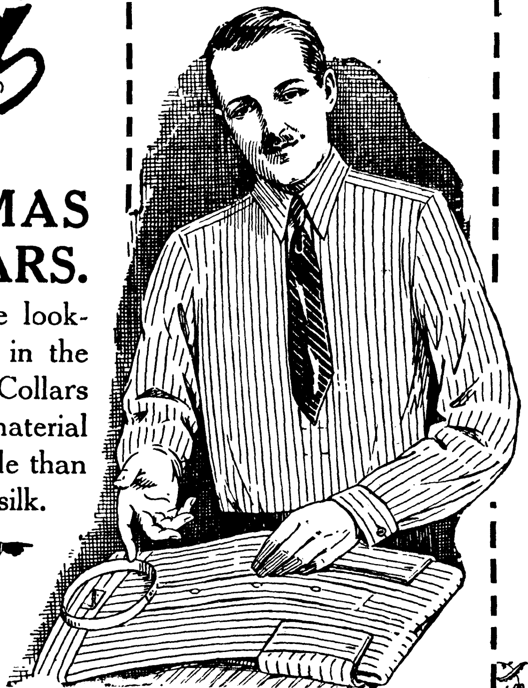

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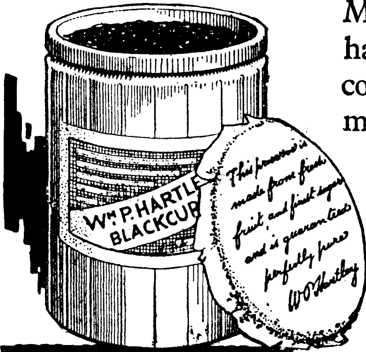

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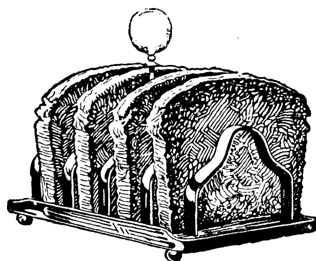

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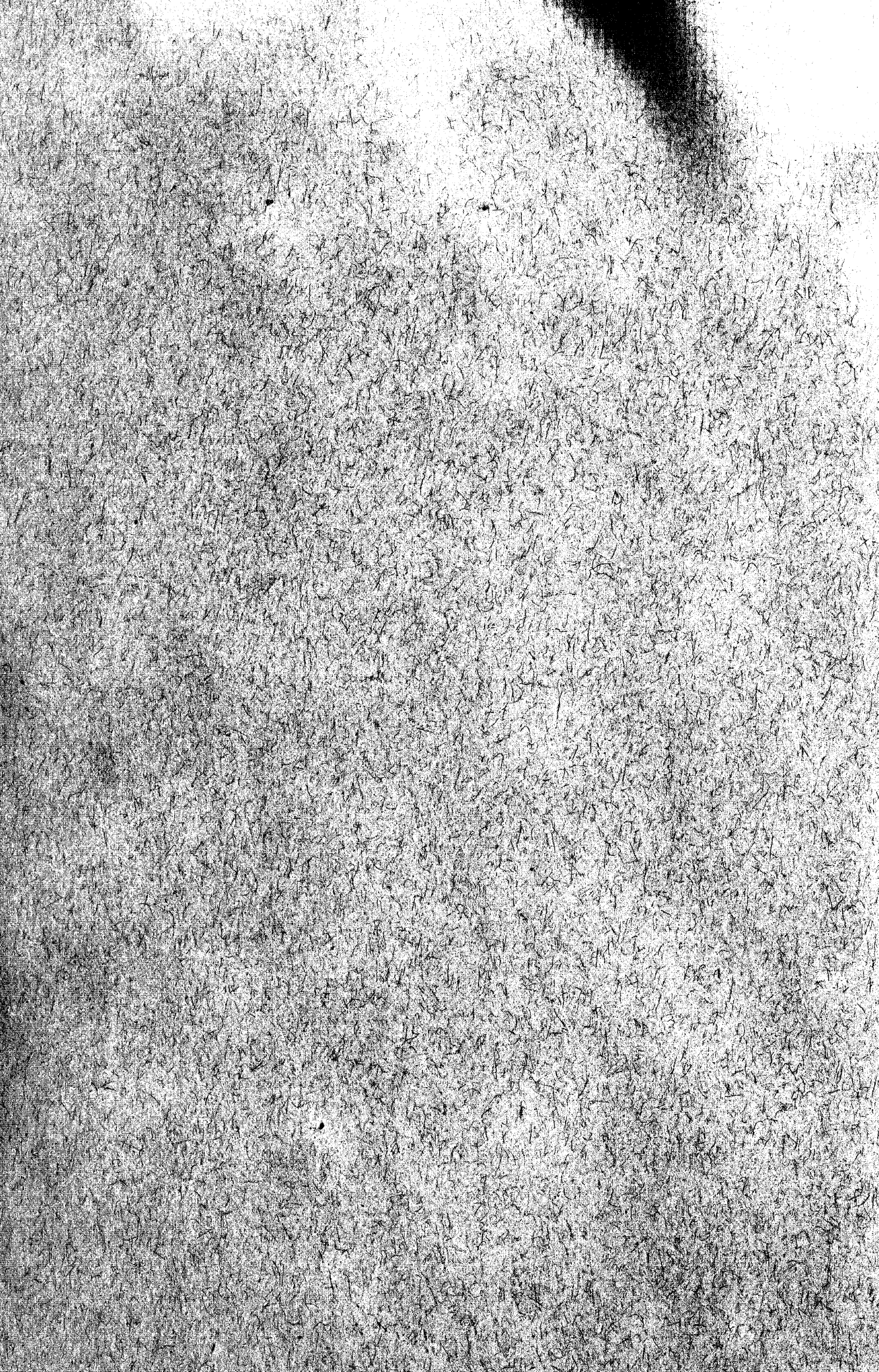

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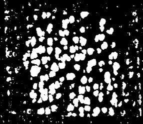

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