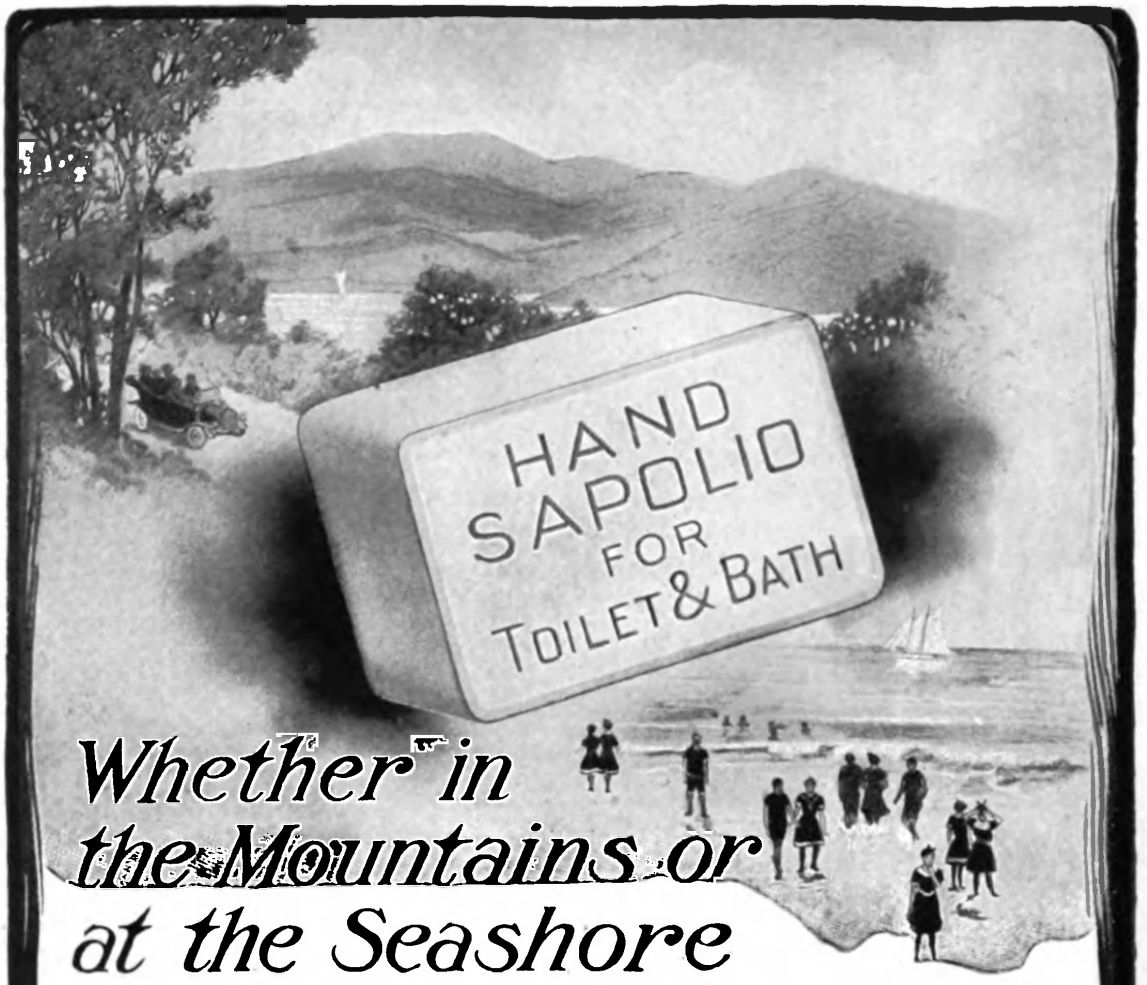
THE STRAND MAGAZINE

15 Cents

SEPTEMBER



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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for September, 1911.

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At the seaside of the future, according to Mr. W. Heath Robinson.

THE STRAND MAGAZINE
Vol. xlii. SEPTEMBER, 1911. No. 248.

The Seaside of the Future.

Forecasts of Well-Known Artists.

N Bond Street, in Regent Street, in Oxford Street, and in many shady nooks adjacent, professors of history in the future sit hard at work, charging high fees and attracting many eager listeners. Some trace over the lines on their customers' hands with a little stick; some stare into a glass ball and prattle fluently of all that is to come to pass; some take notes of dates and consult the Nautical Almanac, divining from the relative positions of planets at a particular moment of the past what sort of wedding Miss Serena Jones is to experience in the future; and others again are above all such superfluous toil, and simply stare over their customers' heads and lecture. If one half, one quarter, even one tenth the number of professors of history in the past were to establish themselves in London to lecture on their branch of history, exactly that number of landlords would be disappointed of their first quarter's rent, and the bankruptcy returns of that same quarter would rise by the identical figure. From which the philosopher may perceive that the future is a deal more popular than the past; and, although it is from the experience of the past that the wise predict the future, most people would seem to prefer to pay somebody wiser than themselves to do the actual work of deduction.

So we have had the vaticinations of the wise on all sorts of questions—the Future of Warfare, the Future of Electricity, the Cookery of the Future, the Metaphysical Ontology of the Future. But to THE STRAND MAGAZINE has been reserved the glory of first offering a guess at the Seaside of the Future; and not one guess only (that of the present writer), for we are privileged to present also the Revelations of Robinson—Heath Robinson, to be exact—the Bodings of Brock, the Horoscope of Hassall, the Soothsayings of Starr Wood, the Rhabdomancies of Rene Bull, and the Rhapsodies of Rountree.

Mr. Heath Robinson's prognostications are all for an increasingly decorous respectability and an extreme of personal comfort. We are to prepare for bathing-machines in the Gothic style, in the Chinese style, and in the classic Greek style, with pneumatic tyres and curtained windows and flower-pots in convenient positions. An ingenious adaptation of the angler's reel will be fitted to the front-door post to "play" bathing children into safety when they grow too venturesome. Decorous and butler-like attendants, in a tasteful combination of evening and bathing dress, will regulate the temperature of the water by curiously-simple and direct means; and not only regulate its temperature, but scent it and soften it with patent powders from convenient tins. There is nothing violent, nothing revolutionary or disturbing in the Robinsonian Revelation, except that the beach is swept bare of niggers and bun-sellers, and the visitors, it would seem, are expected to be vastly outnumbered by the attendants deputed to minister to their comfort. From which we may conjecture that the Seaside of the Future will be a deal more Select and a vast lot more expensive. So that we are forewarned to begin to save up.

But no doubt Mr. Robinson will allow us to supplement his suggestions with a few positive statements of our own. On the day when his system of warming and scenting the sad sea waves is inaugurated (and not an hour sooner) a corps of suitably-attired elderly laundresses will be ranged on the shore in case of rough weather, on the smallest approach of which they will immediately proceed, with large flat-irons, made hot at the same fire that heats the kettles, to iron

Mr. H. M. Brock's idea of the seaside a few years hence.

out the ocean to a proper and comfortable flatness; while a body of gentlemanly junior clerks will be at hand to supply sheets of the best blotting-paper to all visitors who wish to bathe without experiencing the uncomfortable wetness now inseparable from the pursuit.

Mr. Brock, on the other hand, predicts developments in a wholly different direction; the seaside will become more and more popular rather than Select (with a capital), and the diversions of the holiday will follow the same course. New sports will be invented; this, after all, is an easy prediction, for each new fair or exhibition brings us already new mechanical discomforts for which people gladly pay, whence we have Swooping the Swoop (if that is the right name), Flimping the Flump, Bashing the Bang, and Winging the Wang. (As a fact, these names are quite new, and inventors may fit them with appropriate sports on a royalty basis.)

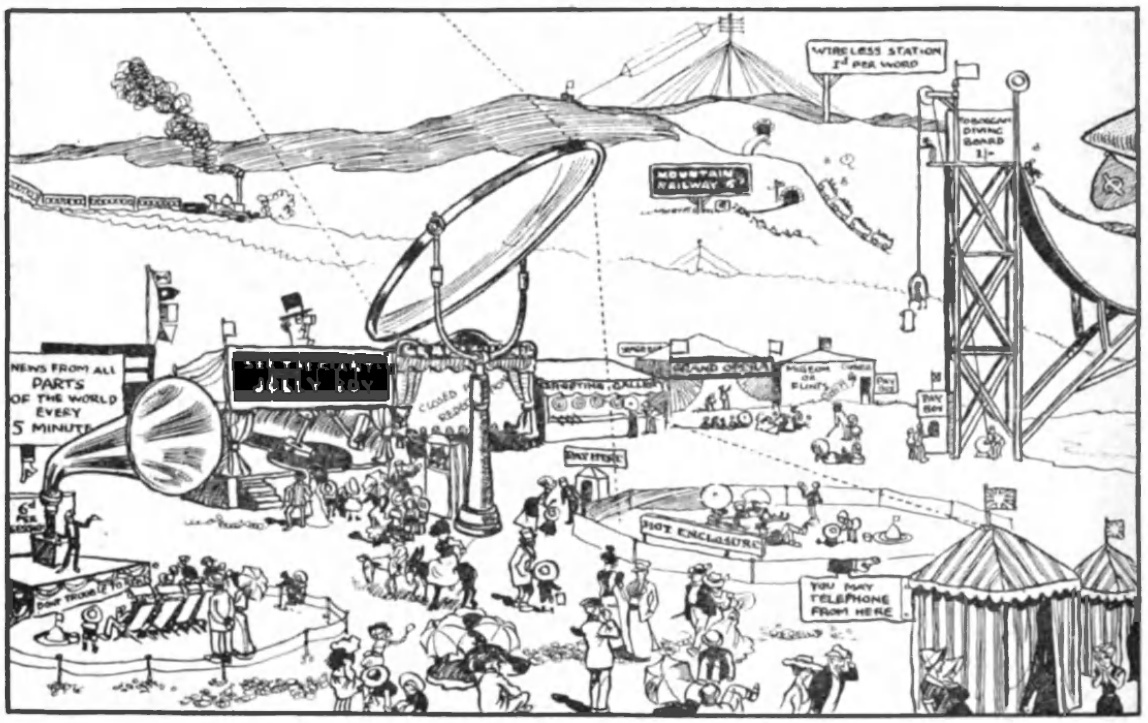
Mr. Brock forbodes Splashing the Splosh and Walking the Waves, the latter a sport wherein at last the human biped achieves the triumph of travelling in two boats at once, "having a pair on" in the time-honoured manner of skates at the Serpentine—without, let us hope, the aid of the gimlet. And yet there may be a difference of opinion, even about that, for one remembers well the thoroughgoing chair-and-gimlet merchant at that same Serpentine who, to the agonized howl of his victim, "Hi! hi! you're driving it into my foot!" cheerily answered, "Never mind, sir—better 'ave 'em on firm!" And there is no disputing that the wave-walker of the future *must* "'ave 'em on firm" if he is ever to come back and restore his boots as an honest sportsman should. He will also have to be careful of many other things; he must keep scrupulously on the topside of his boats and he must avoid walking his waves on any spot where a splosh-splasher is likely to splash his splosh. With his airship trip round the lightship Mr. Brock is careful to prophesy what he knows; and, as for the rest, it is comforting to observe that the general stripiness of things at the seaside—tents, bathing-costumes, blinds, and pavilion-roofs—is to be maintained as bravely in the future as in the past.

Mr. Hassall is more mysterious and less definite. Everything on shore will be so inordinately "improved" that the discreet

holiday-maker will demand facilities for staying in the sea as long as possible, away from it all. Extraordinary and elaborate long-distance swimming costumes will affright the ocean and its denizens, and even at the cost of such an appearance as Mr. Hassall depicts the nerve-racked toiler will endeavour to shut from his ears and eyes the blessings of civilization as they will exist in the future.

Mr. John Hassall's peep into the future.

Indeed, only those who wish to swim away for days together out of sight and hearing of things as they will be will need to go to the seaside at all; for all the advantages now sought in a coast holiday will be brought to one's house by "pipe-lines," like petroleum. All the tubular pier-supports will be utilized for commercial purposes. Sea-water will be "laid on" through one, so that the dweller in the Midlands may paddle at home and build castles with the sand driven by hydraulic pressure through another. Ozone will blow furiously through still another tube, as some sort of air of a totally different smell already blows furiously through the Tube which is called Tuppeny. Through still another pipe the resistless power of the immemorial sea will send electric force to light our houses, ring our bells, grow our potatoes, cure our rheumatisms, and kill any absent-minded, person who catches hold of the wrong wire; and through still one more such pipe, baited all the way along with patent indestructible rubber worms, a constant supply of fresh fish will pour into our kitchens, either alive, or, by a simple attachment of a wire from the electric supply, cooked to a turn and



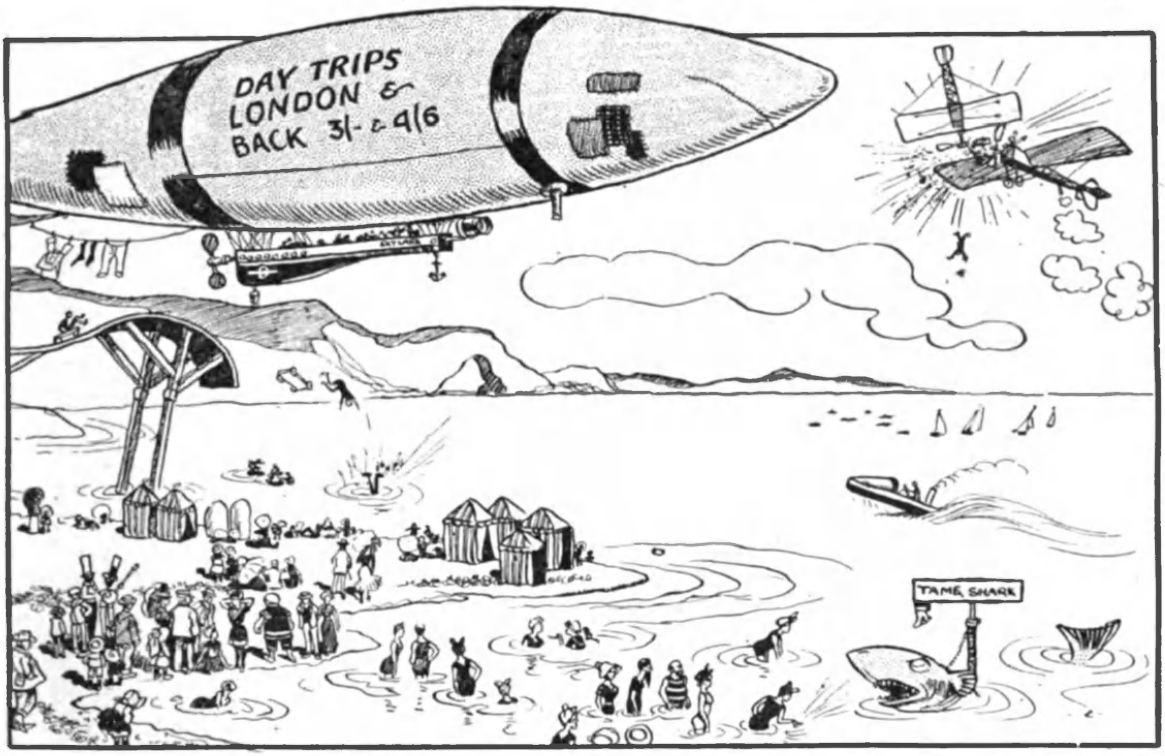
Mr. René Bull's forecast of the manner in which

swimming still, but now in oyster sauce. Periwinkles and whelks will be distributed throughout the East-end from one pipe, and the empty shells will be returned through another, to be refilled with "forced" inhabitants grown under electric stimulus and returned to the East-end once more, doubtless, by aid of careful breeding, with pins attached for extraction. Thus the whelks and periwinkles will be humanely saved the labour of growing fresh shells, and the toiling millions of London will be provided with an inexhaustible supply of the aliment dearest to their palates, whereby the humblest will speedily achieve an indigestion equal to the severest now monopolized by the exclusive rich.

Mr. René Bull refreshes us vastly. He prophesies new things, as any sage must, but he gives us comforting assurance of the survival of many old friends. An airship will take day-trippers to London and back at a very reasonable fare; but niggers will still wear exaggerated hats and play banjos on the beach. A variant of Splashing the Splosh, in the form of a Toboggan Diving-board, will make perilous some small area of the near ocean; but the common donkey-ride of the seashore will flourish unchecked as in the ancient days of the early twentieth century and eke the later days of the nineteenth. A bold attempt will be made to grapple with the uncertainties of the British climate by the formation of a "Hot Enclosure," warmed through an immense burning-glass. Of course we *do* have summers (now and again in the course of a century), when the last thing any holiday-maker desires is to sit in a "Hot Enclosure"; doubtless by the time such another summer arrives there will have been ample time to think out an invention to deal with that. To the many inventions already ministering to the popular virtue of laziness is to be added yet another; you are to be saved the trouble of reading your newspaper by sitting at your ease before the trumpet of an immense phonograph, which gathers and delivers news from all parts of the world as fast as things happen. The advertisements will need to be very skilfully wrapped up, or they will be howled down as soon as they begin; and here is another advantage. You *can't* howl down a page advertisement of Chilblain Pills in your paper to-day; some day you will not be so helpless.

The attractions of bathing will be enhanced by the presence of a tame shark, reduced so low as to endure unceasing insult without snapping at as much as a finger, and kept fed, it would seem, by stray fragments of disintegrated aviator falling casually from the heavens above. For the rest, the usual side-shows will persist, and the pay-box will be as prominent a feature of each as it is even now.

Mr. Starr Wood looks also to mechanical



we shall spend our holidays in the days to come.

invention to achieve most of the changes of the future, and these he offers in full measure. He has his airship, of course—the atmosphere looks uncomfortably empty to-day without one. But it flies not for a trip round a light-ship but for the convenience of divers, who may splash the splosh without Mr. Brock's preliminary slide. The trippers trip in aeroplanes, and a last decaying longshoreman makes a last desperate attempt to sell the last derelict boat for which there remains no market, all the museums presumably being fully supplied with such antiquities.

The advance of political benevolence financed by the tax-gatherer enables everybody to spend his money in amusements, the vulgar requirement of food being provided free from so many centres that they are driven to compete with each other to justify their continuance. Thus the Free Public Luncheon Tent on the beach, taking a hint from the concave and convex mirrors of earlier establishments, in capital letters invites the beneficiary to go in thin and come out stout.

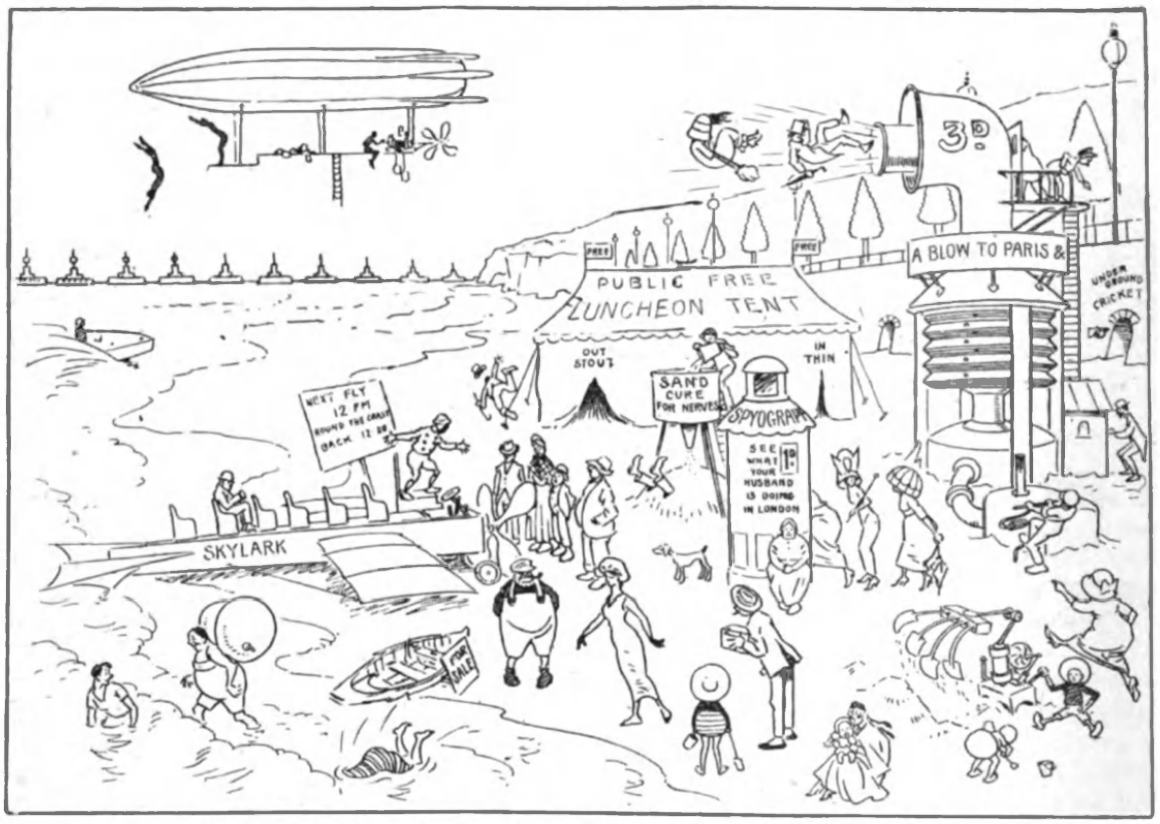
The Sand Cure for Nerves, hard by, is no new thing, but is systematized and made thorough; the haphazard shovellings of small nephews and nieces being replaced by a properly-supported reservoir with a correctly-graduated outlet. And the unscientific clairvoyance of the Bond Street seers gives place to a truly valuable instrument, the Spyograph, whereby an overseeing eye may be kept on an absent spouse at the much-reduced fee of one penny. Even the aeroplane has become a commonplace, and somewhat *vieux jeu;* only the commonalty patronize its "trips round the coast," and the truly up-to-date take a Blow to Paris at the extremely moderate fee of threepence. The mechanism is an incredibly advanced and enlarged application of the common pea-shooter of other days, and among its many advantages over the common aeroplane a vastly-increased degree of danger is to be counted, together with something very like a certainty of a most monumental cropper at the end of the journey. There are economic advantages, too; you pay your threepence and off you go, with no possibility of further expenditure on the journey, unless you chance to turn over in your flight and squander your coin from your inverted pockets; whereas, once you are on an aeroplane and at a giddy height, as is well known, the aviator who has charged you a shilling to go up is apt to demand ten to bring you down again.

Even the children, Mr. Starr Wood assures us, will insist on extraordinary mechanical improvements in their toys, and a patent internal-combustion eccentric-action slide-valve quadruple spade, geared up to five sand-castles an hour, will be demanded by every small boy of real spirit.

Something significant, yet dubious of interpretation, as is the way of Old Moore himself,

is visible in the unbroken row of battleships lying in the offing. Is this so joyful an increase in *Dreadnoughts* that the whole coast is impassably surrounded, or are they merely a row of obsolete curiosities lined up for the amusement of the tripper? As even Old Moore is sometimes driven to say, time alone can tell.

But Mr. Rountree looks farther ahead than the rest. It must have been noticed by everybody already that the mere surface of the earth has become of late years somewhat unfashionable; to fly over it and to tunnel under it is the tendency of the age, and no doubt as the air grows thicker with aviators the rest of humanity will all the more eagerly tend to burrow underground, if only from sheer terror for their heads. Mr. Rountree foresees the time when the actual ground surface shall be abandoned totally by all but the birds, who shall have been driven out of the air by overcrowding. The Barnum of the coming day, the showman-genius of the future, will seize on the fact to astonish the world by the novel and striking enterprise of opening his show positively on the uninhabited surface of the earth, and his audacity will be rewarded by the advent of paying crowds anxious for new sensations. Fathers enjoying their seaside holiday in the air over the seashore will bring their families to inspect caged specimens of curious human creatures of a bygone age—poets, artists, somewhat truthful politicians and such out-of-date creatures, doctors (and perhaps bishops) who did not advertise. The New Barnum's own advertisements will be arranged in suitably upside-down methods. Whereas in our day exceptionally enterprising advertisers employ aviators to drop handbills from aloft, the New Barnum will send up his handbills from below, attached to toy balloons. And, as contrasted with past showmen who floated their announcements against the sky, he will spread his wide off the abandoned earth. Greater airships, more enormous aeroplanes than ever will crowd the air for the accommodation of cargoes and crowds, but the individual flyer will just wear his personal flying suit, fitted with small and natty wings, with a neat little electric coil on his head, and a curly wire or two for some purpose that doubtless Mr. Rountree knows all about, but doesn't explain.



Mr. Starr Wood's conception of the health resort of the future.

Mr. Harry Rountree's vision of the days when the earth is forsaken for the sky.

In those stirring days many among the quieter of us will take to the Tubes, and stop there. Mr. Starr Wood has already given us a hint of some such expedient when he announces his underground cricket. We will go down to the sea in tubes, and we will stay underground, with glass walls through which we can gaze on the sea below the surface without being distracted and maddened (not to say pole-axed) by flying things above; and there we will sit in bathing-machines of antique pattern, surrounded by patent silent niggers and stuffed boatmen, and perhaps we may get a little sleep.

The Lacquer Cabinet.

By HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL.

Illustrated by C. H. Taffs.

QUINNEY chuckled as he reread the letter which offered him a thousand pounds for his cherished lacquer cabinet, and he kept on rubbing his yellow, wrinkled hands and muttering: "Like to have it, wouldn't you? But you won't, my man. No, by gum, not if you offered double the money!"

He was alone in the sanctuary of his best things. The heavy shutters were up, a wood fire glowed as if with pleasure upon a steel fender of the best Adam's period. The electric lights in amber-coloured globes shone softly, caressing the Chippendale furniture and throwing delicate shadows upon the Aubusson carpet. Only the elect entered this famous room, and every article in it was known and beloved by the great collectors who dealt with Quinney. The passion for beautiful things was in his blood. His father had started a small curiosity shop in Salisbury, and Quinney himself, as a boy of ten, used to gloat over the Ming figures, and touch them furtively in flagrant disobedience of rules. After his father's death he had moved to London and bought a fine Georgian house in Soho, which he had gradually filled with masterpieces. He was never tired of gazing at them with enraptured eyes. And he refused, as he grew older and richer, to part with the gems of his collection. Nobody, not even Quinney, knew what the contents of this particular room were worth. Beside himself, only two persons entered it—his daughter, Posy, and his principal assistant, James Migott, a young man with a nose almost as keen as Quinney's for beauty, and a fine pair of eyes which, in contrast to Quinney's, dwelt lovingly upon what was animate as well as inanimate.

Quinney, from being much by himself, had acquired the habit of thinking aloud; and, although his surroundings were Attic, his speech remained rudely Doric. As he tore up the millionaire's letter he muttered: "Wonderful man I am! To think that I should live to refuse an offer of a thousand pounds for that cabinet! Sometimes I'm surprised at myself. By gum, I am!"

He approached the lacquer cabinet, a superb example of the best Japanese art of the eighteenth century, black and gold, with gold storks exquisitely delineated flying amongst golden flowers. The petals of the flowers were made of thin sheets of pure gold let into the lacquer. The stand upon which it stood was English, with curved ball and claw legs, also a miracle of craftsmanship. Nothing stood upon the cabinet except a large jar of the rare Kang-shi *famille noire* porcelain. The inside of the cabinet was as lavishly decorated as the outside, and it was signed with the name of the greatest of Japanese artists. The American millionaire had asked for a copy of this signature.

Quinney gloated over the decoration for at least five minutes; and then he noticed that the key was missing. Nothing was kept in the cabinet, and the lock, possibly, was the only part of it which could be criticized, for a child could have picked it with a hairpin. Quinney's eyes wandered to the Kang-shi jar, and presently he took it lovingly into his hands. stroking it, enjoying voluptuously the texture of the paste. He put his tongue to it, an infallible test; and from long practice he could have told you, had he been blind, that the temperature of the porcelain and its texture were confirmation stronger than any marks of quality and date. Then he thrust his hand into the interior to satisfy himself for the thousandth time of its amazing finish.

Inside the jar was the key of the cabinet!

This astonished him, because he was living in a world from which the surprising had been rigorously eliminated. Why was the key of the cabinet hidden in the jar? Who had placed it there? Posy—or James Migott?

He sat down upon the finest Chippendale settee in the world to reflect upon this incident. Oddly enough, it disturbed him, although it was reasonable to suppose that his daughter

"INSIDE THE JAR WAS THE KEY OF THE CABINET!"

intended to tell him where she had put the key, which certainly fitted the lock too loosely and had been known to fall out of it.

Finally, he decided that Posy, good girl, had chosen an excellent place for the key; but she ought to have told him. He would speak to her on the morrow.

He put the key back into the jar, and as he did so a clock began to chime the hour of midnight. Quinney listened to the silvery bells with the same enraptured expression which the gold petals upon the cabinet evoked. He reflected that time passed too nimbly when a man was perfectly happy. As a rule, he went to bed at half-past eleven, but the American's letter had engrossed his attention unduly. The man wanted the cabinet so tremendously, and this lust for another's possession was well understood by Quinney, for he suffered cruelly from it himself. There were bits in the Museums which he would have stolen without compunction, could he have "lifted" them without fear of detection.

He switched off the electric light, and by the faint glow of the fire turned to mount the stairs leading to his bedroom. But he paused on the threshold of his room, for a last glance at the sanctuary. Some of the things he would have liked to kiss, and this sentiment seemed to wax stronger with advancing years. He never left his wonderful room without reflecting sadly that the day would inevitably come when he would have to leave it for ever

At this moment he heard approaching footsteps—soft, stealthy footsteps, which might be those of a midnight robber!

Quinney was no coward, and he was comfortably aware that his precious things would not be likely to tempt the ordinary burglar, because of the difficulty in disposing of them. Noiselessly he withdrew to the outer room,

"SOFT, STEALTHY FOOTSTEPS."

which held the furniture and china that could be bought. From the darkness of this outer room he could see without being seen.

He nearly betrayed his presence when Posy entered the sanctuary, clothed in a silk dressing-gown, with her pretty hair in two long plaits. What on earth was the girl up to? She glided across the Aubusson carpet, upon which great ladies of the French pre-Revolution period had stood, and approached the lacquer cabinet. She thrust a white, slender arm into the great jar, took from it the key, unlocked the cabinet, opened it, waited a moment, with her back to her father, who was not able to see what she was doing, closed and locked the cabinet, replaced the key in the jar, and flitted away as silently as she had come!

Quinney wiped the dew of bewilderment from his high but narrow brow.

The girl must be crazy!

He waited till he heard the closing of her door upstairs; then he turned on the light and went to the cabinet. In the second drawer he found a letter, which he read.

MY OWN BLUE BIRD!

Quinney paused. He had not seen Maeterlinck's famous play, but Posy had raved about it—with absurd enthusiasm, so he had thought at the time — and he remembered that the Blue Bird represented happiness.

MY OWN BLUE BIRD, — It was splendidly clever of you to think of using that stupid old cabinet as a pillar-box, and the fact that we are corresponding under the very nose of father makes the whole affair deliriously exciting and romantic. I should like to see his funny old face, if he could read this. . . .

"You shall, my girl," thought Quinney, grimly, He knew that the "Blue Bird" must be James Migott, drat him! It could be nobody else. Quinney had guarded Posy very jealously. James was not permitted to speak to her except in his presence. And no letter to her, coming in the ordinary way, would have escaped his notice. So! this young man, whom he had trained to be a faithful servant, was carrying on a clandestine love affair with his only child and using the lacquer cabinet as a pillar-box? He wiped his mouth with the silk handkerchief which he used to remove dust from his china, and his fingers trembled, for he was quivering with rage. Then he finished the letter:—

We have got to be most awfully careful, because if he saw me talking to you, except about his ridiculous

business, he would simply chatter with rage. And, make no mistake, my feelings wouldn't count. I'm not nearly so dear to him as that Chelsea figure by Roubiliac. He only cares for things, not a brass farthing for persons. But, oh, Jim, I care more for you than all the things in the world, and I have had no love since mother died. Think of what I have to make up!

I shall get your answer to this when father is having his cigar after lunch.—Your loving POSY.

Quinney put the billet back in the drawer, muttering to himself, "I shall get the dog's answer *before* lunch. He shan't complain that I gave him no opportunity." Grinding his teeth, he consigned James Migott to the nethermost Hades; and at the same moment he decided that the Yankee—confound him also!—should have the cabinet. For evermore he would hate the sight of it. As for James Migott, the Blue Bird, he'd be blue indeed within twenty-four hours. Blue Bird, indeed! A serpent! A crawling snake!

He went to bed, but sleep refused to soothe him, although he dismissed James Migott from his thoughts, which dwelt with concentration upon Posy. Had he not given the best of everything to the ungrateful baggage? And in return—*this!* She dared to speak of his business as "ridiculous." The adjective bit deep into his mind. *Ridiculous?* What the devil did she mean? When his father died the business was worth at most eight thousand pounds. To-day the contents of the sanctuary alone would fetch at Christie's a round fifty thousand, if the right people were bidding. And they would be bidding. From the four quarters of the earth they would come, to bid against each other for the famous Quinney collection. *Ridiculous!* Suppose he left everything to the nation, thereby immortalizing himself? The Quinney Gallery! That sounded well. Suppose he offered the gift during his lifetime? Would his gracious Sovereign speak of his business as ridiculous? All right. If this idiot of a girl cared for James Migott more than for his collections, she might have him—and be hanged to her! Would the dog want her without the collections? He smiled grimly at the thought.

Next day he rose at the usual time and breakfasted alone with Posy, who smiled deceitfully, as if she were the best daughter in the kingdom. He looked at her sourly, contrasting her with the Chelsea shepherdess, modelled by the illustrious Frenchman. She was nearly as pretty, but common pottery, not porcelain, not the *pâte tendre* beloved by connoisseurs. He remarked a melting, luscious glaze about her eyes. She was thinking of her Blue Bird, the shameless baggage. At nine James Migott appeared, punctual to the minute. Quinney said to him, curtly:—

"I am going out. You had better overhaul those Chippendale chairs in my room. I am thinking of having that old needlework cleaned. Get it off the chairs very carefully."

"Right you are!" exclaimed James.

There was the same shining glaze in his blue eyes as he met frankly the gaze of his employer. It would not be easy to replace James. He could be trusted with things, but not with persons. His exclamation, "Right you are!" tickled agreeably Quinney's vanity. He was nearly always right, everybody admitted that. No big dealer had made fewer mistakes. That German fellow, who had made such an ass of himself about that wax figure, he was ridiculous, if you like. How Quinney had laughed at his egregious blunder!

At half-past twelve he returned. James Migott had removed the precious needlework without breaking a thread. His employer grunted approval. "You love this business?" he asked.

"I like it," said James.

He left the house to get his midday meal at a neighbouring restaurant in Dean Street. Upstairs Posy was playing Thalberg's "Home, Sweet Home" with a firmness of touch and brilliancy of technique which indicated that the money lavished upon her musical education had not been wasted. With the *arpeggios* rippling through his mind, Quinney opened the lacquer cabinet. Yes; James had taken Posy's letter, and another—written upon the business note-paper—lay in its place. The lovers had not troubled to close the envelopes, so secure did they fancy themselves in their fool's paradise.

Quinney read as follows:—

MY SWEETEST POSY,—I believe that your father does really love you, although he may not show it. He's a true lover of beauty in any form, and it's hardly possible that he doesn't prize you as the most beautiful of all his beautiful possessions. I am doing my best to please him and to win his confidence. As you say, we must be very careful and very patient, but he's taught me how to wait for the things worth having. I know that I must wait and work for you. —Your faithful JIM.

Quinney read the letter twice and then replaced it in the cabinet. Throughout luncheon he said little, but stared furtively at his daughter, wondering whether James Migott—no mean judge—was right in affirming that of all his possessions she was the most beautiful. He had intended to speak

to Posy and James after luncheon; he had planned a little dramatic scene, during which he would appear at the moment when Posy was taking the letter from the cabinet. Then, before she had time to collect her wits, he would summon the Blue Bird and deal trenchantly with the guilty pair.

Presently he said, quietly:—

"I've had an offer of a thousand pounds for the lacquer cabinet from Dupont Jordan."

She answered, composedly, "Are you going to sell it?"

"Perhaps."

Lord! What an actress she was! And not yet twenty! When and where and how did she learn to wear this mask? He eyed her with wrinkled interrogation, asking himself dozens of questions. Had she always pretended with him? What was she really like—inside? As a collector of precious things, he had acquired the habit of examining meticulously every article of *vertu*, searching for the inimitable marks, the *patine*, not to be reproduced by the most cunning craftsman, the indelible handwriting of genius and time. But he had never searched for such marks in his daughter. When he lit his cigar, she went out of the room and he sat silent, not enjoying his cigar, wondering what her face looked like as she read the letter from her own Blue Bird. What James Migott had written gave him pause. He decided to read more of the correspondence before he pronounced judgment.

That afternoon he made a list of the "gems" which might be offered to the nation or left to it as the Quinney bequest. At midnight Posy would descend from her room and place another billet in the pillar-box. The pillar-box! To what base uses might a gold lacquer cabinet degenerate!

He left the door of his bedroom ajar, and at midnight he heard the faint rustling of her dressing-gown as she stole downstairs and up again. At one, when he made certain that she was asleep, he descended to his room and read the second letter:—

DARLING JIM,—Father never cared for me. If I died to-morrow he would forget me in a week. Luckily I have you, but he will expect me to choose between him and you. The great overwhelming surprise of his life will be when he discovers that I have chosen you, because, incredible as it may seem, he believes that he has done his duty by me just as he believed that he did his duty by my dear mother. He will never, *never* know how he appears to others.—Your ever loving POSY.

Quinney replaced the letter, went into the dining-room, and drank a glass of brown sherry. He preferred brown sherry because it exhibited the exact tint of faded mahogany, the tint so baffling to fakers of old furniture. As he sipped his wine he told himself that the girl was a liar. He had done his duty by her and by his dead wife. He had denied them nothing, gratified their whims, exalted each high above the station in which they had been born. Then he went to bed, to pass another wretched night, comparing himself to Lear and other fathers who had begotten thankless children.

Posy expressed concern at his appearance next morning. He was yellow as a guinea, and his eyes were congested.

"There's nothing the matter with *me*," he growled.

His emphasis on the personal pronoun reminded Posy that her father had made no claims upon her as ministering angel. He had never been ill, never "sorry for himself," to use that familiar expression in a new and significant sense. To-day he looked very sorry for himself. She said so, tentatively.

"I *am* sorry for myself," he declared.

He went out and walked in the Park, smoking his pipe and muttering to himself: "I'll dish the dog. Before sunset he'll be wishing he'd never been born. Good as I've been to both of 'em! Best father as ever lived, I do believe." Half an hour passed in computing what Posy had cost him. Fifteen hundred pounds in hard cash. The same sum invested, say, in old Irish glass would have trebled itself. Yes, by gum! Posy represented a snug five thousand, the baggage!

When he returned to his house he was ripe for battle, thirsting for it. Three clients were waiting impatiently. He "socked" it to them. Asked big prices and got them, a salve to abraded pride. James Migott was much impressed.

"Nobody like you, sir, to sell stuff," he ventured to remark.

Quinney snarled back:—

"Yes, my lad, even if I do say it, there ain't my equal in London—that means the world. Best o' fathers I been, ain't I?"

James nodded.

"Done my duty. That's a thought to stick to one's ribs—hay?"

"Yes, sir."

"Never can remember the day when I couldn't say that. Square, too, I've been within reasonable bounds, though I have made ignorance—as just now—pay for my knowledge. I know a lot, my lad—more'n you think for."

"Yes, sir," said James.

That morning the staff had a sultry time

"'THERE'S NOTHING THE MATTER WITH ME,' HE GROWLED."

of it. Everybody agreed that the governor's tongue had an edge to it keener than the east wind, which happened to be blowing bitterly. Posy, at the piano, was surprised to find her sire standing beside her, with a malicious grin upon his thin face.

"Can you cook?" he asked.

"Cook? Me? You know I can't cook, father."

"Not much of a hand with your needle either, are ye?"

"No."

"Um! They tell me that our Royal Princesses have to learn such things, willy-nilly, because revolutions do happen—sometimes."

Posy stared at him, thinking to herself: "His liver is out of whack, and no mistake."

Quinney returned to his sanctuary, feeling that he was in form. The affair should be handled to rights.

"I'll fix 'em," he growled. "I'll sweep the cobwebs out o' their silly noddles, by gum I will!"

At lunch he harped back to the primitive duties of women, rubbing in his words and salting them properly.

"Look ye here, my girl. It's just struck me that I've been to blame in makin' you so bloomin' ornamental"

"Come, father, I didn't get my good looks from you."

"Handsome is as handsome does. Ever heard that?"

"Once or twice."

Quinney grinned as he drank his second

glass of brown sherry. Very rarely did he exceed one glass of wine in the middle of the day. Then he lit his cigar and settled himself in an easy-chair near the fire. Posy went upstairs, singing softly as she went.

"Chock-full o' deceit that girl is! Oozin' from every pore. Stamps upstairs singin' like a lark, crawls down like a viper. Oh, my Lord!"

He looked at his watch. By his reckoning Posy was nearly due in the sanctuary. James was whistling in the basement.

"Whistle away, you dog!" he muttered. "I'm agoing to call the next tune."

He had not long to wait. Posy came downstairs, entered the sanctuary, opened the lacquer cabinet, and was grasping Jim's letter, when Quinney, who had approached noiselessly from behind, tapped her on the shoulder.

"What are you up to, my girl?"

"I was just having a look at the inside of the cabinet. Thought of rubbing it over."

"Did you? What you got in your hand there? Paper?"

"It's something b-belonging to m-me," stammered the unhappy maid.

"What's in that cabinet belongs to me, my girl. Hand it over."

Posy slipped the letter into the bosom of her gown, and stared defiantly at her father.

"Sure it's yours?" he asked.

"Quite sure; a private affair."

"Keep your private papers in my cabinet—hay?"

"Sometimes."

Posy was now more at her ease, much to Quinney's delight. The higher the baggage mounted the farther she would have to fall.

"Wait a moment, my girl."

He walked to the foot of the staircase and called out: "James Migott!"

A distant voice replied:—

"Yes, sir."

"Come you up here, my lad. Quick!"

James appeared, rather flushed. His colour deepened when he saw Posy standing close to the pillar-box.

"Like to take it sittin' or standin'?" inquired Quinney, with marked politeness.

"Take what?" inquired Posy.

"The dose I'm goin' to give ye. I prefer to stand. You ain't fit, not by a long chalk, to sit on such chairs, but I've always been a considerate man."

James and Posy stood where they were. Posy was very pale, and her pretty fingers trembled.

Quinney glared at them, and the peroration he had prepared vanished to the limbo of unspoken speeches. He said, savagely:—

"Fallen in love with each other—hay?"

"Yes," replied Posy, without a moment's hesitation. James said, with commendable promptness: "Same here."

"A pretty couple you make, by gum! Intentions honorable?" he hissed at James.

Posy tossed her head. James answered, politely:—

"Quite."

"Arranged the happy day yet?" sneered the enraged Quinney.

"Not yet, sir."

"Ah! Waitin', maybe, for my blessing?"

Posy burst out impetuously:—

"Father, I love him."

"That dog!"

"Easy, sir. I've served you like a dog because I love her."

At this the brazen pair smiled at each other. Quinney's rage, so long restrained, rose to boiling point.

"Ain't I been a good father to you?" he asked Posy. "No quibblin'; let's have the God's truth! Ain't I been a good father to you?"

"No," said Posy.

"What you say?"

"I said 'No.'"

"Well, I'm blest! Ain't I given you everything a girl wants?"

"No."

"That puts the lid on. Of all the shameless, ungrateful hussies! Five thousand pounds you've cost me, miss. Not a penny less, by gum! Now, you answer straight. It'd take you a month o' Sundays to tell what I have given you; but you tell me what I've *not* given you?"

"Love."

"Eh?"

"You don't love me; you never have loved me. You love things." She waved an all-embracing arm. "Old chairs, faded tapestries, cracked china. You don't love, you can't love, persons."

"Say that again. I want it to soak in."

She said it again, with amazing calmness. Quinney, too confounded to deal adequately with her, turned to James.

"Do you love persons too?"

"That's right."

"Things worth their weight in gold don't interest you—hay?"

"They interest me, but I don't love them."

"Never occurred to you, did it, that these *things* would belong to my girl some day?"

"It may have occurred to me, but I didn't

fall in love with Posy because she was your daughter."

"Oh, really? You'd take her as she stands —hay?'

"Yes."

acute valuer of his generation, had never appraised these two. He had always considered that James was overpaid. Old Cohen must be mad. Trembling and perspiring, he played his trump card.

"'YOU CAN HAVE HER,' HE SHOUTED. 'TAKE HER NOW—AND GO!'"

"How do you propose to support her?"

"That's easy answered. Old Cohen wants me. You pay me three pounds a week. I'm worth ten pounds, and Cohen is willing to give six pounds, not to mention a small commission on sales and purchases."

Quinney sat down, gasping. He, the most

"You can have her," he shouted. "Take her now—and go!"

Posy faltered: "Father, you don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do. Let him take you away if he wants you as you are."

He was certain that James would "back

down," and that a great victory was impending. But James replied, without hesitation :—

"Come, Posy! My mother will be delighted to see you. I'll get a special licence this afternoon."

The girl held up her head proudly. It is barely possible that till this moment she had never been absolutely sure of James. She beamed upon him.

"Oh, Jim," she exclaimed, fervently, "you are a darling!"

She flung herself into his outstretched arms, and they kissed each other, quite regardless of Mr. Quinney. He stared about him, bewildered. Then he said, gaspingly :—

"What would your pore mother have said?"

Posy released herself and approached her father. Pity shone softly in her eyes as she asked, gently :—

"Do you want to know what mother would have said?"

"I'm glad she was spared this, pore soul!" ejaculated the bereaved man. "God, in His mercy, took her in time."

Do you want to know what mother would have said?"

She repeated the question in a deeper, more impressive tone.

"What do you mean?"

"Wait!"

She fled upstairs. During her absence Quinney wondered how he would replace James Migott, whom he had trained so diligently from tender years. The dog knew so much that only time and patience and experience could impart. He had always intended to offer James a very small share in the business.

Posy appeared breathless, and carrying a sheet of paper in her hand.

"Read that, father." As he fumbled for his spectacles, she said, softly, "May I read it aloud?"

"I don't care what you do."

But in his heart he knew that this was a lie. He did care. The conviction stole upon him that they had "bested" him. He wanted Posy with something of the hunger which seized him when he went to the Gold Room of the British Museum and beheld the incomparable Portland Vase, priceless though broken. Then he heard Posy's voice, and it struck him for the first time that it was like her mother's. The similarity of form and feature also was startling. He grew pale and tremulous, for it seemed as if his wife had come back from the dead. When he closed his eyes he could imagine that she was speaking.

MY DARLING LITTLE GIRL,—When you read this I shall be dead. I want to tell you before I go something about your father, which may save you much unhappiness. He loved me dearly once, and he used to tell me so. And then he grew more and more absorbed in his business, and now he is so wrapped up in it that I greatly fear he may infect you, and that, like him, you may come to believe that the beauty of the world is to be found in sticks and stones. To me they are just that—sticks and stones. And so, when the time comes for you to marry, be sure that you choose a man who loves you for yourself and whom you love for himself. I was so happy with your father when we lived in a cottage in Salisbury; I have been so unhappy in this great house filled with the things that have come between him and me.

My old servant will deliver this letter to you when you are seventeen. Read it sometimes, and keep it safe, for it is all that I have to leave you.—Your loving MOTHER.

Before she had reached the end Quinney had covered his face with his hands. When Posy's soft voice died away he made no sign. She believed then that his heart was dead indeed. James signed to her to come with him, but she gazed sorrowfully at her father, with the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Good-bye," she faltered. "You don't want me, and James does."

Quinney lifted his head and sprang to his feet. The force of character which had made him pre-eminent in his business thrilled in his voice as he said, authoritatively :—

"I do want you. And I want James. I—I—I've always held on tight to the best, and I shall hold on to you." Then his voice failed as they stared at him, hardly realizing what he meant.

"Give me your mother's letter and leave me."

They went out, closing the door. Quinney read the letter through and gazed at the things which had come between him and the writer. Then he placed the letter in the lacquer cabinet, locked it, and slipped the key into his pocket. His face worked strangely as he tried to keep back the tears which were softening his heart.

He muttered brokenly :—

"I wonder whether the pore dear soul knows?"

"CHEEK."

INSTANCES BY "STRAND" READERS.

Illustrated by W. E. Wigfull.

IN a recent issue of THE STRAND we gave a number of instances of impudent audacity, and suggested that our readers might be able and willing to supply further ones out of their own knowledge or experience. With this suggestion hundreds have complied, and we have pleasure this month in giving a selection from the anecdotes received. It is curious how the same story will turn up in different places, related of different times and persons. More than one has been sent to us by at least half-a-dozen correspondents, widely separated. This is the case with the following, of which we choose the version forwarded by Mr. F. H. Ursell, of Abbey Wood, Kent.

"A traveller in books," he writes, "who had been working Auckland, New Zealand, for all it was worth, called one morning on a grocer and introduced to his notice a medical work at the price of one sovereign. The grocer said he was too busy to attend to him, but if he cared to show the work to his wife he could do so. If she was satisfied with it he would purchase a copy.

"The American immediately proceeded to the grocer's private residence, where he informed the wife that the grocer had sent him with the book, for which she was to pay. The good lady, without demur, did so. The traveller then returned to the store, where the grocer was informed that his wife was very pleased with the work and would like her husband to purchase a copy. This the grocer did, whilst the traveller casually informed him that he wished to catch the boat for Wellington that morning.

"A short time after his departure a messenger came from the house who informed the grocer that his wife had purchased the book at his desire and was very pleased with it. The grocer's thoughts, on receiving this message, can easily be imagined.

"Just at this time a carrier called who did most of the collecting of goods from the various wharves. Acting on the spur of the moment, and not wishing to explain too fully the manner in which he had been done, the grocer asked him to go down to the wharf and request the Yankee to come back, as he wished to speak to him. The carrier drove down to the waterside with as little delay as possible, and, seeing the object of his journey on the deck of the steamer, gave the grocer's message to him. 'Oh, yes,' was the reply, 'I know what he wants. I was showing him a book this morning. I expect he wants to buy one. There isn't time for me to go back, or I shall lose this boat. You can pay me for the book, and he will pay you again when you take it to him.'

"The carrier, being ignorant of the trick already played on the grocer, readily produced the sovereign and returned with the book to his employer. What was said when the third copy of the medical book was laid on the grocer's counter history does not say, but it is certain that American travellers never received a kindly reception at that store again."

Here is another example of audacious and ingenious resourcefulness, sent in by Mr. Thomas Russell, 3, Fleet Road, Hampstead, N.W. :—

"A baker's barrow was standing unattended in a side street when a shabby man, by his appearance hard up and evidently out of work, looking round and seeing no one about, lifted the lid and quickly abstracted two loaves. He had one in each hand, just as the baker came out of a gateway close by.

"The baker rushed up and, in a loud voice, demanded what he was doing there.

"The man calmly commenced weighing the loaves one against the other; then, turning to the baker, said :—

"'I was just wondering whether your loaf was heavier than mine, as my baker gives short weight!'

"'You put my loaf down and clear out of it.'

"The man immediately dropped one back into the barrow, and with the exclamation, 'All right, old chap, don't get nasty,' made a rapid retreat with the other loaf."

"I WAS JUST WONDERING WHETHER YOUR LOAF WAS HEAVIER THAN MINE, AS MY BAKER GIVES SHORT WEIGHT!"

But there is brazen audacity of all sorts and degrees of ingenuity. The next, though not new, is unique.

"A wealthy gentleman," writes Mr. John F. Walls, of New London, Connecticut, U.S.A., "died leaving his property to the three leading religious sects, stipulating, however, that the representatives of each should attend his funeral and deposit one thousand dollars each in his coffin. The deceased was known to be highly eccentric, and all three of the destined beneficiaries complied. The priest stepped forward and deposited his thousand dollars in paper money; the clergyman put in a like sum in gold, and was followed by a devout Hebrew, who laid in his required contribution and, after fumbling about the coffin, retired. A week later, when the property had realized a considerable sum, the trio met, and, after some conversation, the first two mentioned their buried sums in gold and banknotes. 'What sort of money did you put in?' they asked the Jew. The latter smiled. 'Oh, gentlemen, I put in a cheque for three thousand dollars and *took out the change!*'"

To Mr. A. Garnett, 4, Redan Street, Ipswich, we are indebted for the following:—

"Mrs. R—— lives in a semi-detached villa with a neat little garden back and front. She has a particular fancy for primroses, although last year, on a certain date, she had fewer than she desired. There were enough for the front garden, but none in the back. One morning a man brought round to the back door a quantity of healthy-looking roots, and Mrs. R—— was glad to buy his whole stock

"An hour later, on going to the front door, she discovered that the hawker had merely dug up the roots from the front garden, and, with colossal impudence, had carried them round the house to sell again to their owner for the back."

Here is a case of cold-blooded effrontery, related by Mr. T. Robinson, 59, Hazlewell Road, Putney:—

"One day a thief went into a small commercial hotel, where there was no porter, and took all the top-hats which he could lay his hands upon. Just as he was going out a commercial traveller entered and asked him what he was doing there. Without the slightest hesitation the thief promptly replied: 'I'm taking them round to be ironed, sir. Absolutely no charge," and continued, with the utmost coolness, 'And can I oblige you by taking yours as well, sir?'

"To this the traveller readily assented.

"'Well, as it's free and there's no charge, you might as well take mine, though it's nearly new and doesn't really want doing.'

"Thereupon the thief quickly walked out

leaving the other to awaken to his loss, a sadder but a wiser man."

From hats we turn to beds, which are naturally far more rarely the object of the swindler's attentions. The story is sent by Mr. A. J. Romeril, Beaumont, Jersey:—

"The proprietor of a shop, hearing an unusual noise upstairs, went to investigate, and found a man on the landing with a huge bundle of bedding, and of course asked what business he had there.

"'I've come with the bed,' said the man.

"'What bed? I've ordered none.'

"'Aren't you Mr. ——?'

"'No, certainly not; so just clear out at once. And another time you ring at the side entrance.'

"The man apologized for his mistake, and then got the bundle on his back, the proprietor helping him, as it was so unwieldy, and seeing him out of the house.

"His disgust may be better imagined than described when he discovered some hours later that he had assisted in the removal of his own feather bed, pillows, and bedding!"

The following case of colossal impudence is said by Mr. Thomas McGrath, 2, Cross Avenue, Dublin, to be well authenticated. But the same story is related as having taken place in Hong-Kong and in an American town:—

"The Four Courts, Dublin, are a massive pile of buildings situated on the bank of the River Liffey. Within these walls takes place all the principal law business of the City of Dublin. One day during the hearing of a celebrated law-suit, within the great hall of justice, a slight interruption was caused by the appearance at the entrance to the hall of a man carrying on his shoulder a long ladder who 'came to take away the big clock to mend it.' The man's errand was notified to the judge, who sent round word that the man should 'take down the clock and be smart about it.' The man obeyed his lordship's order to the letter, but from that day to this nobody has seen either the man with the ladder or the fine clock which for so long had told the time of day to the law in Dublin."

Frequently a brazen impudence supplies the omission of a card of invitation to private parties. It is occasionally useful at public demonstrations. Miss E. Newton, 2, St. John's Terrace, King's Lynn, sends us the following:—

"Two gentlemen of the writer's acquaintance travelled some years ago from King's Lynn to Manchester, to hear the late Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone address a political meeting. Reaching their destination somewhat

"THE MAN GOT THE BUNDLE ON HIS BACK, THE PROPRIETOR HELPING HIM AND SEEING HIM OUT OF THE HOUSE."

late, they were dismayed to find the meeting so crowded that all hope of hearing the great orator seemed at an end. Mr. R——, however, was of a resourceful nature; moreover, he possessed a remarkably powerful voice. Raising the latter to its utmost capacity and gently urging his friend forward, he commanded the audience to 'make way for his lordship.' Immediately a pathway opened, and a repetition of this 'Open Sesame' admitted the impostors to the best position the hall afforded, where they sat and enjoyed Mr. Gladstone's speech in comfort."

"OH, IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER. I DON'T REQUIRE BLANKETS, BUT I WAS JUST WAITING FOR MY DAUGHTER, AND CAME IN TO REST FOR A MOMENT."

The cool cheek, not to say the intolerable presumption, of some shoppers has passed into a proverb.

"A stout old lady," writes Mr. James B. Thomson, 26, Grosvenor Place, Aberdeen, "entered a drapery establishment on a very warm day and, dropping heavily on a chair, asked to be shown a pair of blankets. The assistant quickly produced a light pair, and these the lady abruptly dismissed and called for better quality. The shopman returned with a heavy parcel, and the would-be customer was soon engaged making a cursory examination of the midnight covering.

"Another refusal made it necessary for the assistant to descend to the cellar, whence he returned with a huge package. The perspiration was dropping from his brow as he unfolded the goods for his client's inspection. With a patronizing air, the lady inquired if this was all the stock, and the assistant was about to ascend to a shelf near the ceiling when the lady continued: 'Oh, it really doesn't matter. I don't require blankets meantime, but I was just waiting for my daughter, who is making some purchases next door, and I merely came in to rest for a moment. Thanks.'"

A Case of Witchcraft.

By C. C. ANDREWS.

Illustrated by Steven Spurrier.

RANDAL PRESCOTT, erect and square-shouldered in his saddle, sat for a moment considering, a thoughtful frown upon his handsome, dark-skinned young face. Without doubt his proper course was to follow the road. At the hostelry where he had lain last night, making his only halt in his ride south from Oxford, he had received full directions as to his way, and the weather-warped, moss-grown finger-post which he had consulted a mile back had fully confirmed them—the road, it declared, would bring him in due course into Lexborough town. But the road was execrable, the sun's heat pitiless, and the leafy quiet of the forest beckoned. He turned his horse's head and rode in among the trees.

The way followed very nearly the curve of the road; surely, he decided, it would bring him almost as well to Lexborough. But, being a prudent youth, he presently loosed the loaded pistol in his holster-case. Any of the huge tree-boles might hide one of the lurking ruffians who infested both highway and by-way. Once there was a scurry in the bracken, and a splendid tawny dog-fox flashed across the track; once again came a little glade alive with white and grey rabbits; so he rode through the heart of the forest, and saw no trace of a human creature. The trees were thinning when on a sudden he uttered a sharp ejaculation and half drew rein, staring before him at a certain spot among them where the sun-shafts struck down like golden spears. Was that vague shape a moss-grown stump, or what he had fancied it—the cloaked and stooping figure of an ancient woman, hastily shrinking and cowering away?

"Sure 'twas a woman," he muttered, puzzled, "or my eyes play me odd pranks on a sudden. It seemed that she started from the path at sight of me, and—eh—what's this? What's to do now?'

Had he been a less skilled rider he must have been unseated. His horse, trotting soberly over a stretch of sward as level as a table and as soft as velvet, had suddenly stumbled forward, almost coming to his knees. Out of the saddle in a moment, he bent to examine the near fore-foot, led the animal forward a pace or two, stopped, and turned his face with a laugh.

"Hast bewitched my horse, dame?" he cried. "The beast is dead-lame. Surely an evil eye hath overlooked him that he stumbles for no cause! Come and unwork your charm, or I shall scarce reach the town by nightfall."

They were bold words for a time when in many country places the terror of witchcraft ran in the blood of gentle and simple alike; but young Randal Prescott was a student, and, moreover, of a gay and fearless spirit. He waited, his eyes upon the crouching shape which he had heard rustle and seen stir. It moved again, rising erect, advanced, approached, stepped out from the woodland tangle, and—he doffed his hat in eager flurry and stared amazed.

For he had fancied a decrepit beldame, a very crone, bleached and bent, withered and tottering, hidden beneath that hooded cloak of hodden grey. There stood before him a slim girl as pink as a roseleaf and straight as a lily. Master Prescott for the moment forgot his college breeding; he stared at her russet skirts and her buckled shoes, her snowy apron and folded kerchief, at the little cap which covered, but did not hide, her golden hair. Then he looked at her brown eyes, and, dazzled, thought them golden too. But he found his tongue.

"I crave your pardon, mistress," he began hastily and stammering. "Indeed, I knew not to whom I spoke. I—I thought when I called—I—I believed——"

"That you saw a grand-dame, sir?" She followed his perplexed glance to the huddle of grey folds that lay across her arm.

"It is the cloak—only the cloak. And 'twas a most natural mistake, since wearing it 'tis true I look no less. Sure, that is natural, too—it was my grandmother's." She spoke in the sweetest little candid voice, as simply as a child; young Prescott, looking and listening, found it and her equally entrancing. Now her brown eyes shifted seriously from his face to his horse. "Your horse is lame on a sudden, sir? That is strange."

"Most strange, madam, since I saw nothing to cause him to stumble as he did, near throwing me. He is dead-lame. I know not how far from Lexborough this may be, but, much or little, I must needs walk it, since I can scarce ride the poor beast."

"'Tis a mile to the edge of the forest, sir, and by the road near another into the town." She paused, wrinkling her pretty forehead in perplexity. "It may be that he hath but hurt himself in stumbling, and will recover in a little, or mayhap a pebble or some sharp thing is slipped into the shoe." She hesitated again. "If it would please you to come with me and rest awhile and look to it, you are kindly welcome, sir. 'Tis but a short way."

With a little beckoning gesture she stepped back among the trees; young Randal Prescott found himself following with his head in a whirl. Had she her dwelling in the forest? Not all his study of ancient classic tomes—of which he was a dear lover—had furnished him with a precedent for wood-nymph or dryad in cap and kirtle and russet gown. Was ever such golden hair and dimpled chin—such brown eyes and little tripping feet, he thought, in a boyish trance of delight and wonder. She glanced up with the brown eyes, and stammering, yet bold, he plunged into a question. Might he know how she was called?

"I am Margery Wilmot, sir," she answered, briefly. Her voice was odd, cold—she looked away. As he repeated it, wondering whether he might have offended her, she glanced at him again, and he saw her pink cheeks pale. "You have not heard the name, sir?"

"It has not been my happiness, madam." He was recovering himself. They were the days of stilted phrases, and he had brought a gallant manner from his Oxford college. He swept her a bow. "I rejoice now in my better fortune, and beg leave in turn to tell you my name—Randal Prescott, and your humble servant."

"Prescott! Ah—then you go to Justice Prescott's house, sir?" she cried.

"Surely, madam. I am his nephew; my father—dead, alas!—was his brother." He hesitated. "You know my uncle, doubtless, and Madam Elinor, his sister?"

"I have seen his Worship riding to the Court-house, and the lady in her coach. The path narrows, sir, and winds—'tis better I go first, so please you."

She went first, swiftly. Following, he wondered whether, when he told his name, she had really started aside with eyes frightened wide and a gesture as though she would dart away. Vastly unwilling to believe so, he decided that it was not so. When presently the widening of the track suffered him to walk at her side again, he did so in silence. It widened still more, opening out into a little glade snowed thick with daisies, and she pointed across.

"'Tis there, sir," she said.

Young Prescott looked across the glade at a tiny thatched cottage set in a garden-patch, whose latticed windows, catching the sunrays, glowed goldenly.

"You are watched for, it seems, madam."

"Watched for?" She turned with a start, her eyes wondering.

"Surely. The child is at the door."

"The child?" she cried. "There is no child, sir."

"No child?" young Prescott echoed. "Sure, 'twas not my fancy that I saw a little maid at the door?"

"A little maid?" She looked bewildered. "Indeed, 'twas your fancy, sir. I see nothing at the door."

"Truly, nor I, now. But I thought a moment since that a child stood there—a little maid in a white smock with dark curls hanging down. It seemed that, seeing you, she darted away into the house. 'Twas but a moment, but I surely thought I saw her."

"'Tis your fancy, sir," Margery repeated. "There is no one there."

"No one?" The words diverted him instantly. "Sure, madam, you do not live——" he began, and stopped, stammering.

With her sweet little artless air of candour she answered the unasked question.

"Alone? Yes, sir. My grandmother died last Candlemas, and I have no kindred else, or know of none such." Her tone changed. "Sure, your horse doth not walk lame!" she exclaimed. "He hath recovered of his hurt already."

It was so. No sign of the lameness remained, nor did an examination of the foot show any reason why it had ever been. In his heart it may be that young Randal Prescott somewhat resented this swift recovery, since it left him with no excuse for

"STANDING BY THE GATE WITH THE GREY GRAND-DAME'S CLOAK LYING IN A HUDDLED HEAP AT HER FEET, AND THE GREAT PURRING CAT UPON HER SHOULDER."

passing the cottage-gate or even for lingering. But he did his best gallantly, begging a drink of water for his beast, and then there was nothing to do but thank her, and listen bare-headed to the directions she gave him for reaching the road. A great cat, striped with a tigerish splendour of yellow and black, had come sidling out of the cottage, and leaped, purring, to her shoulder, where it sat rubbing its sleek head against her little ear and pink cheek as he made her his farewell bow.

"A thousand thanks, Mistress Margery, and, since I must say it, farewell."

She made a little curtsy, very pretty and demure.

"You are most kindly welcome, Master Prescott—farewell," she answered sedately.

Then there was nothing for it but to ride away. Turning to doff his hat again as he passed out of the glade, he carried away like a picture his last sight of her standing by the gate with the grey grand-dame's cloak lying in a huddled heap at her feet, and the great purring cat upon her shoulder. It was a picture that he still carried with him when in due course, and with no further let or hindrance, he rode into Lexborough town.

Or, to be precise, when he stopped short of the town, for Justice Prescott's house lay outside it, standing back from the dusty road, and with a broad sweep of greensward before its tall iron gates. The Justice himself sat in the deep, ivy-hung porch before the chief entrance, dozing over his great pipe and tankard of spiced wine, and beside him his sister, Madam Elinor, a lady who had been in her youth a rare beauty, and who now, in her autumn, was still so graceful, gracious, and lovely that her spinsterhood was a marvel to all save herself. But among the many who had been her suitors, and the more who would fain have become so, she had found for her heart no mate and for her head no master, and so was Elinor Prescott still. She rose with a little cry of pleasure as her nephew, riding in, doffed his hat to her, and came hurrying to meet him with a whispering sweep and rustle of silk. She wore always the rich brocades and fine velvets which harmonized best with her stately stature and noble beauty, and carried their splendours like a queen.

"Sure, you are late, child!" she cried. "We looked for you at dinner, and now 'tis almost dusk. I had near persuaded myself into a tremor, fearing some mishap upon the road."

"There was naught, dear madam; but the heat went ill with fast riding," the young man answered. He bent to kiss her white hand, and she, bending too, fondly kissed his cheek. "But indeed I grieve if I gave you disquiet."

"Nay—a woman hath always fears when her men folk are abroad; 'tis our sex's way," said Madam Elinor. She laid her hand upon his shoulder, scanning his straight, sunburnt comeliness and bright dark eyes. "Indeed, you grow a man apace, Randal," she said, smiling. "But that is as it should be. Sure, 'tis two years and more since last we met in London before your father's death?"

"Seeing you, madam, I should say 'twas but yesterday," he returned, gallantly; "but, truly, the calendar would rate it at two years and over. I trust that I also find my uncle in good health?"

"Indeed—yes. Richard hath his health as always," said Madam Elinor, quietly.

Following the lady as she turned in the walk, her nephew glanced at her curiously, finding the change in her voice matched by a change in her face. But he asked no question, lacking, indeed, the time to put one. The Justice had been aroused from his doze by the sounds of the arrival, and advanced from the porch, moving slowly as was his wont, for he was a big man, both tall and bulky. His greeting hand-clasp to his nephew was warm enough, but no smile went with it, and his words were blunt and few. Young Randal Prescott, recalling a memory of him that was two years old, could ill conceal his trouble, surprise, and wonder. Answering pain shone from Madam Elinor's soft eyes when between the pauses of their halting talk he glanced at her with a question in his own. The Justice was stretching his great arms and yawning.

"Wilt be tired, lad," he said, curtly, "and hungry too, I make no doubt? Wilt look to the boy's wants, Elinor? I have business in my study." Moving away, he turned back again, and for a moment laid his large hand on the young man's shoulder. "Didst take thy time in coming, nephew; but I like thee none the worse for that. 'Twas well not to remind me too soon of what's lost and whose place stands empty for your filling."

He strode into the house, calling to a servant to follow with pipe and tankard. His voice was harsh and his step heavy. Young Prescott looked into the troubled face of Madam Elinor.

"My uncle is indeed changed, madam. I hoped that in part, at least, he had recovered of his grief for the death of my cousin."

"Most sorely changed," Madam Elinor assented. She sighed, laying a hand upon

his arm. "You must not take it ill that he was not warmer in his greeting of you, Randal," she urged, gently. "His wound rankles cruelly yet, and I fear 'twill be long before 'tis healed, if ever. It irks him to his heart to see you here, his heir, in the place of his golden Margaret. Never was man more changed than he hath been since he lost her. He is harsh, who was so kindly; he is morose and silent, who had cheerful words and looks for all; in the last year I have scarce seen him smile." She sighed again. "Indeed, the loss of our sweet maid hath left the house a sad and empty place, my dear, and her father a stricken man."

"I see it with grief, believe me, madam." He hesitated, thinking of the dead girl whom, it chanced, he had never seen, whose budding beauty had made her a toast of the country-side, and whom her adoring father had always called fondly his golden Margaret. "If, as it seems, my coming but renews his sorrow, it may be better that I go."

"No, no," the lady protested quickly. "'Twas not my meaning—I trust that your presence may rouse him when the first sting of seeing you is past—he hath always loved you, as you know—I wished only that you should not take his manner amiss, my dear. You are his heir—naught can alter it—it is well you should be here." She paused, regarding him with a smile, and spoke more cheerfully. "I have thought of late that someone fair and young about the house, and about his chair—someone who mayhap by good luck could show him something of our

"MR. JUSTICE PRESCOTT."

Margaret's face and ways—would go far to comfort and cheer him. And so I have pleased myself with a fancy, Randal."

"It may well be that you are right, madam. But I fear I do not guess your fancy."

"No?" She laughed gently. "And yet 'tis of you also, child. Sure, I am like near all women, half jealous of books, and indeed I think a young man may ponder them too much. 'Twould please me well to hear that you were minded to make an end of your studies and love a wife in their place."

Young Prescott laughed and coloured boyishly.

"A wife? 'Tis a fancy indeed, madam!"

"Why not?" asked Madam Elinor. She sighed and smiled. "I have not wedded, and for me it has been well, but 'tis not so for most. One is not young always—the grey hairs will come, and the loneliness, mayhap—who can tell?—a man sits but cold upon a solitary hearth. And so I would have you marry, my dear." She paused; her tone brightened. "Sure, I think you blush, Randal! And I have heard whispers of a certain Mistress Sarah Pilgrim, have I not?"

"On my honour 'tis nothing, madam, or so little it may be called nothing." He laughed again, whole-heartedly enough. "And Mistress Pilgrim hath eyes and hair as black as sloes. She would remind my uncle but ill of his golden Margaret."

Madam Elinor said nothing. The twilight silence was suddenly broken by a sound of approaching feet upon the road, hurrying, almost running; they crossed the sweep of turf beyond the iron gates, and a confused group of perhaps a dozen people came crowding through. In advance was a woman, dragging a scared boy some ten years old by the hand; her cap and gown all disordered, and her young, comely face swollen and reddened with weeping.

"'Tis Joan Arkwright, the blacksmith's wife!" cried Madam Elinor, advancing. "What ails you, child?"

People might shrink from the stern face and great voice of the Justice, but all the poorer folk for miles around brought their troubles to her as to a friend who never failed them. The woman flung up her arms with a cry.

"'Tis my little Nan," she sobbed wildly. "He hath lost her, madam!"

"Lost her? The child?"

"Aye, the little knave, the dolt!" cried the woman—she shook the blubbering captive fiercely. "I went at noon to tend my mother, madam—she hath a turn of the falling sickness, as you know—and left him, bidding him mind the little maid when she woke. 'Twas but an hour since I returned, and, the house seeming empty, thought them in play together at a neighbour's. But anon I found him hidden and crying, and he can tell me naught of the little one but that he went out and left her sleeping and came back to find her gone!"

She released the urchin with a swing and a cuff that made him stagger; he burst into a roaring wail. Madam Elinor sought to quiet and question him, but, scared of her, worse scared of his mother, inarticulate with abject sobs and snufflings, the luckless little wretch could tell no more than had been told already. Releasing him, the lady glanced at a figure in the front rank of the group, a long-limbed, shambling lad.

"What is it you say, Barnaby Jenkin? You saw the child?"

"If it please you, madam, yes," he stammered. "I saw a little maid alone in the lane behind the church—I think the blacksmith's Nan—it had the look of her. 'Twas at three o'clock—the hour struck as I stood to watch her, madam."

"Three o'clock! And now 'tis near nine!" Madam Elinor ejaculated; she checked herself, smoothing her involuntary expression of alarm. "Hush, hush, Joan; the child is doubtless safe enough—she hath but wandered away as children left alone will do. The lane behind the church? That leads to the Datchet Road and your sister's house, where she hath often been. 'Twill be best that you send there. Hath any search been made?"

She addressed the group at large, eliciting a dozen confused and contradictory responses. No systematic search had been made, it seemed, although some zealous spirits were already dragging the horsepond on the green. The tumult was at its loudest when the Justice came striding out into the midst; the clamour had disturbed him in his study. Grasping its import in a moment or two, he turned frowning upon the wildly-sobbing mother, who distractedly made as though she would fling herself at his knees.

"Wilt deafen me, woman?" he demanded, harshly. "What wouldst have? Have I thy child?"

"Dear Richard, nay—'tis her youngest child," Madam Elinor remonstrated, gently. "She did but come to ask me what is best to do. The little one, it seems, was seen in the lane behind the church, which leads, as you know, to the Datchet Road. 'Tis best that search be made that way, and that——"

She stopped. A figure suddenly thrust itself forward out of the group—an old woman, tall and gaunt, a pair of glittering black eyes lighting up the fierce, peaked, wrinkled face within the puckers of her hood.

"The lane behind the church!" she mocked, shrilly. "'Tis the way to more than Datchet, that lane, as well your Worship knows. It leads also to the forest, sir, doth it not? Yes—yes! And ye know well, good neighbours all, what evil lurks in its dark places, and what black mischief hath been wrought there. Hadst best seek the little one quickly, Joan Arkwright, an' ye would find her free of spells and witchcraft. 'Tis well known that old Dame Wilmot was a witch of witches and in league with Satan's self—couldst name as many as there are fingers on this hand her evil eye hath overlooked who pined into the graveyard like snow before the sun, and when she died last Candlemas, wast not in a storm that shook the very heavens? And is there one among ye doubts that as she was so is the jade her granddaughter? What doth she, dwelling alone in the forest? Alone, quotha! She hath black company there, I warrant ye! 'Tis a strange cloak that can hide at once grey hag and young maid, as there are tales hers doth! If the hussy be not a witch and fit for stocks and whipping-post, never trust me!"

"MADAM ELINOR PRESCOTT."

A confirmatory mutter ran through the group. Young Randal Prescott started forward, flushed and angry.

"Sure they are mad, sir!" he cried, indignantly. "'Tis shameful that foul tongues

should so belie the innocent! I met with Mistress Wilmot in the forest as I came—my horse had fallen lame—she would most kindly have had me follow her that I might rest and tend the beast, and——"

He stopped, for Madam Elinor at his side had plucked his sleeve. The Justice, for a moment fixing him with a frown and stare, the next turned about and thrust the woman back among her fellows.

"Hold thy prate, beldame," he commanded, harshly, "unless wouldst have me find my own way to stop thy tongue! And you, mistress, go seek your child where, as madam tells ye, 'tis most like that she hath wandered. Get ye gone, one and all, and give me no more babble of forests and witches! Out of the gates, I say!"

His stamp and large, imperious arm-swing sent the little crowd huddling through the gates like so many fluttered fowls. As he followed, to shut them with a clang, his nephew spoke hastily.

"Sure, madam, what I said was no harm of Mistress Wilmot, and could have done none? You, so wise, so kind, you cannot think——"

"No, no," Madam Elinor interrupted, quickly. "Indeed, I think no ill of the girl, Randal—I have scarce seen her—nor did I so of her grandmother, who was a woman of good repute as far as I know, strange only in that it pleased her to live alone and mix with none. But there were strange tales whispered of her among our foolish folk, as there are now of her granddaughter, and for that reason 'twas well I checked you when you spoke of your horse falling lame—'twould have wanted little to make them cry that the girl had bewitched both the beast and you. Poor souls, they are ignorant, terrified of they know not what, and never shall you find such cruelty as that of ignorance and fear. Did they in their present temper go to the forest——"

"Sure, madam, you cannot mean the dolts would harm her?" cried the young man, aghast. "You cannot think it, sir?"

The Justice had come striding back. His frown was black still.

"I think naught," he answered, gruffly, "but that there are those would say thou art fortunate if no ill follows meeting with the wench. There is overmuch talk of her and her ways—'tis in my mind to have her haled before me to answer for her tricks—a spell of jail might quiet the jade. More than one hath sworn to me that her cloak hides a crone when she will, and that there is sure witchcraft in it." He laughed harshly, turning away. "If wilt take my counsel, nephew, wilt go no more to the forest for old hag or young maid." . . .

Young Randal Prescott, lying in the huge four-poster of Madam Elinor's guest-chamber, tossed restless from dream to dream. Wearied of the hot discomfort of the tumbled bed, he rose as the dawn came, dressed, stole down the staircase, found hat and riding-coat, and cautiously unbarred the great door. Neither groom nor scullion would be stirring in the stables; he would saddle a horse himself, and by means of a gallop in the crisp fresh morning air be rid of the languor and lassitude of his sleepless night. He did so, choosing the big powerful grey which the Justice always rode, and leading the animal out beyond the gates before he mounted. Pausing there, and glancing back at the silent quietude of the sleeping house, he involuntarily recalled the scene which had disturbed its peace last night. Was the child found? he wondered. Was it possible that, if the child were not found, they might, as Madam Elinor had hinted, go to the forest in search, mayhap to Margery Wilmot's cottage itself, and——

Young Randal Prescott gave a great cry, his dark face turning white. Had he not, as he crossed the glade beside her, seen a little maid at the door? He had thought so, but she had denied, and he believed her—but—what if it were true? In a moment he was astride the great grey and riding hard for the forest—never perhaps in his life had he ridden so. Far on in a deep shadowy way among the trees he reined in, heart and pulses racing, and was down upon his feet, seeing her rise up before him like a very wood-nymph indeed.

"Master Prescott!" It was her second soft scared cry of his name. "Sure, 'tis not you abroad so early? 'Tis scarce day."

"Mistress Margery!" young Prescott said. He saw her pink cheeks white in the leafy gloom, her startled brown eyes heavy, and felt the trembling of the little cold hand that, strangely, was close in his. "'Tis stranger still that you should be abroad—sure 'tis not safe. Has aught chanced to hurt—alarm you? I came to see—to seek—I feared——" He broke off, blundering, breathless. "Ah, your pardon—I speak in riddles—but—but—there is a child missing, a little maid. She hath strayed from her home, and—ah!"

His exclamation was because, with a cry and a backward step that pulled away her hand, she glanced down at a bundle lying

within the shelter of the little woodland cave whence she had risen—a bundle that, as he looked, stirred with a fretful whimper. She bent down and pulled aside the wrapping, showing a flushed dimpled face; the child stirred more, and flung out an arm, swathed from elbow to finger-tips in white bandages.

"'Tis Arkwright the blacksmith's Nan," she whispered. "I know not how she came to wander alone in the forest; she is so little I can scarce follow her talk. Indeed, sir, I thought I said truly when you spoke of the little maid at the door; I could scarce believe when I went within and found her, all frightened and crying, the baby thing. She was hurt as well as frightened—she had fallen and cut her little arm and hand—see! The cuts bled so sorely, I knew not how to stanch them—in good truth I was frightened too. Then, when the bleeding ceased, she was so wearied that she slept. I would have brought her home straightway when she waked but for the storm—she screamed and cried with fright, and would not walk. And when I got thus far on the way the rain began—I durst not take her through it—I could but stay and keep her warm and dry as best I could till 'twas light." She stood erect again. "You — you came to seek her, sir?"

"I came thinking 'twas possible she might be with you, remembering I had, as I thought, seen her," young Prescott stammered, "and and—fearing that if 'twas so——" He broke off. "Last night the mother came with a crowd of dolts, clamouring to my aunt, Madam Elinor, and—sure, 'tis infamous—for sheer shame I can scarce say it—but they—the fools!—dared say——"

"Sure, I know. 'Tis not new that they call me witch, sir, as they did my grandmother! 'Tis that you would say."

"I think they are mad, madam," said young Prescott simply.

"Mayhap." She shook her head. "Most truly I do hurt to none, sir, and I am sure my grandmother did not. 'Twas but, I think, that she was old and bent and grey. They say I am the same when I will, and wear her cloak, and 'tis true I sometimes strive to look so." She paused. "But, indeed, there are times when a woman alone, with none to guard her, had needs wish to seem unsightly and run and hide herself away."

"You did not run from me, Mistress Margery," said young Prescott, softly.

"No." She smiled with her sweet candour, like a child. "I saw your face through the trees, Master Prescott, before I came—I knew you would do me no hurt. Ah, see—she is waking, the little maid!"

The young man stooped and lifted the child; he would himself take her to her mother, but first must see Mistress Margery in safety to her cottage, he said, and paid no heed to her gentle little protest. Margery advanced, then suddenly stopped, started back, and caught his sleeve.

"Ah!" she cried, in a frightened whisper. "Listen! Listen, sir!"

Her gesture was towards the belt of trees that fenced the glen. From beyond it came a rustling movement, a tread of feet, and a murmur, ominous, muttering, threatening, angry. Then above it a voice cried aloud, shrill, cracked, and fierce. Young Prescott, starting, knew it, and Margery gave a cry.

"'Tis Dame Proudfoot!" she gasped. "Oh, I fear her, sir—I fear her! She is crueller than all—she would have had my poor grandmother put into prison an she had had her way—'twas she, I think, first called her a witch. And 'twas but last market-day she cried out across the market-place for all the town to hear that his Worship should have me whipped. They think to find me at the cottage, and—ah! Listen! Listen!"

The mutter swelled and burst suddenly into clamour, with a heavy battering of blows on door and window; there followed a pause of silence, and then such an uproar, so fierce, so savage, threatening, and merciless, that he threw his arm round her. She caught a word or two of the outcry, and turned a face of terror.

"'Tis the little maid's smock—they have found it! 'Twas all so covered with the blood from her cuts that I took it off and left it. They will think I have killed her. Ah, do not let them harm me, Master Prescott!"

"No, no—they shall do you no hurt, dear." He clasped her, feeling himself a very giant because she was so tender and weak. "Hush—wait! What do the fools say?" For a minute both stood strained and motionless. "By Heaven, they are firing the place!" he cried.

It was true. The tumult, breaking out again in a yell of exultation, was mingled with the sharp crackle and acrid smell of burning thatch. Young Prescott set the child down.

"Go to your mother, little one—look—see—through the trees—she is there—run to her." He pointed, and then caught Margery by the hand. "Quick!" he whispered. "The dolts are sheer mad, and if they see you here—you must come with me!"

"To the Justice? No, no—I dare not!"

She shrank back, trembling. "Sure, he will put me in prison—he will have me whipped!" she gasped. "Ah, see—see!"

She screamed and clung to him, pointing. The leaves had parted, and the grey, strained face of Joan Arkwright peered through. She saw the child, and with a wild cry sprang upon and clutched her. In a trice she dragged the wrapping from the bandaged arm, and at sight of the cuts shrieked anew; shouts answered, and a score of figures, men and women, poured into the glen. Dame Proudfoot, in advance, the hood thrust back from her white hair and cruel old face, pointed a lean finger at the shrinking girl.

"Didst tell ye true, good neighbours?" she piped, shrilly. "Wast right that the witch-jade had stolen the little maid? See her, all wounded and bleeding, the little one! And what doth his Worship's kinsman here but that she hath cast her evil spells upon him? Sure, we have borne too long with witchcraft and black doings in the forest—drag her to the Justice, friends!"

"She is no witch!" young Prescott shouted fiercely.

"She is a most sure witch," screamed the mother. "See—see my little Nan!"

"She is no witch!" young Prescott shouted again. "The child is all unharmed save for the hurts she gave herself. Ye are mad, dolts!"

"Sure, she hath bewitched the gentleman! Drag her before his Worship—wilt see babes' blood drained for the brewing of foul charms?" Dame Proudfoot raved.

A threatening murmur rose; the little crowd surged nearer; there was murder in the twitching fingers and menacing eyes. Young Randal Prescott glanced across the stream to where the Justice's horse stood waiting, and an inspiration came to him. He unfastened the desperate clutch of the girl's fingers, and bent to her ear.

"Let me go, dear," he whispered, rapidly; "let me go, and follow me. I am unarmed, and can do naught against the fools—'tis the only way to get you hence unhurt." Then he turned about. "Wait!" he cried again; "stand back and listen, madmen that you are! I say she is no witch, and she shall prove it—if she doth not I myself will take her to the Justice. Didst ever hear of witch that dared cross running water? See if she hath fear of it!" With a spring he was across the rivulet. "Margery, come, dear—quickly!" he cried.

The girl ran, the water splashing round her; he caught and swung her up on the grey's broad neck. For a moment held silent, the next a cry burst from the watchers—the cry of the hunter who sees his prey escape. As he sprang into the saddle, a dozen were across the stream and upon them. One, clutching at the girl, dragged off her little cap; her golden hair fell streaming; a second, aiming a furious blow at her, struck the horse, and the great beast, snorting, sprang away. The young burden he carried was scarce heavier than his master's burly weight. The cries of the pursuers died away behind him as he galloped down the track and into the broad ride that led to the road.

The pace had hardly slackened when he stopped before the deep porch. Madam Elinor appeared in the doorway with an alarmed, questioning face, and the Justice, seated at his breakfast, started up as the young man staggered in. For a moment he stared with mouth agape, then, with a great stride, caught the insensible girl away and laid her on a couch, where the lady and a scared maid, who ran in, bent over her. Breathless, Randal dropped into a chair, and panted out incoherent sentences of explanation.

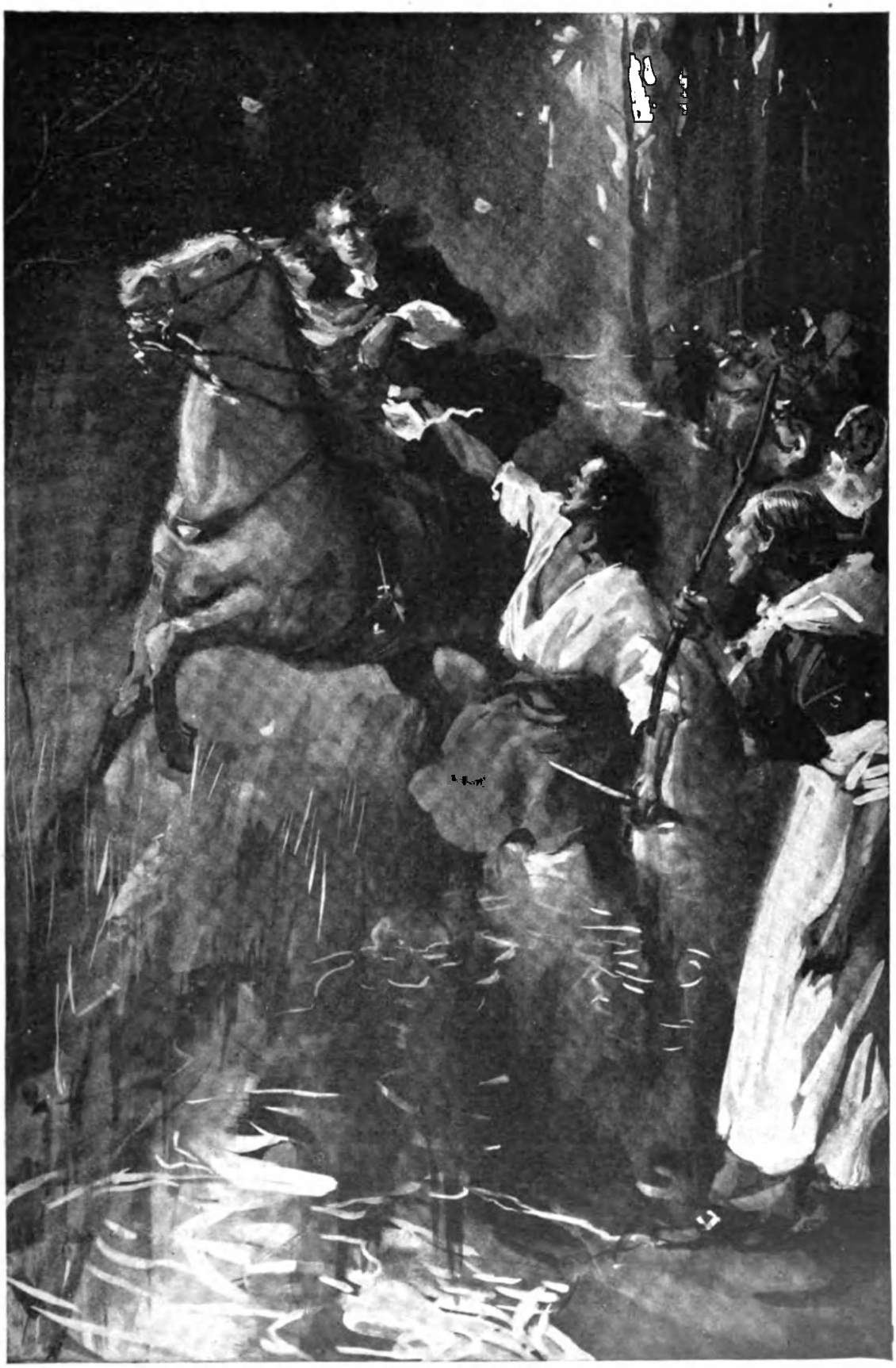
"The dolts were mad, sir—ripe for murder," he finished. "One fool near dragged her from me; another struck at her, the brute—I think 'twas in sheer terror that she swooned. I could but bring her here—even at the risk of your anger, I——"

"Who talks of anger?" the Justice snapped. "Couldst leave the maid to be mishandled by a pack o' madmen? Hadst done so wouldst have been no blood of mine, lad! Sure, Elinor, the fools have done her no hurt? Canst see aught of a wound? Your salts again. And go fetch the Nantes brandy from the closet in my chamber, girl—it may revive her."

He bent over the couch and the swooning girl, gently putting back a tress of the fallen golden hair, and when the brandy came held it himself to her lips. The pungent strength of the spirit stung her into consciousness; she stirred, her eyes opening dark and wide. She saw the face leaning over her, recognized it, and, with a gasp of fear, sprang up, shrinking back and trembling.

"Sure, sir, I have done no harm!" she cried, terrified.

"Harm? What harm shouldst do?" the Justice demanded. "Art safe here, lass—there's naught to harm thee. Come, come!" His voice was oddly soft; still looking at her—it seemed that he could not look away from her—he patted her shoulder. "What is thy name, my dear?"



"ONE, CLUTCHING AT THE GIRL, DRAGGED OFF HER LITTLE CAP."

"'Tis Margery, sir," she faltered.

"Margery? Why, 'tis Margaret!" cried the Justice.

She did not understand; half frightened, she shrank still.

"No, sir—Margery, an it please you."

"Ay, but 'tis Margaret—near Margaret," said the Justice. He patted her shoulder again. "Why, art a child," he said, gently and smiling—"a very baby, no more. How old, little one?"

She made her little curtsy.

"I am near nineteen, sir."

"Near nineteen!" The Justice turned about quickly; his broad face flushed red to his crisp grizzle of hair. "Dost hear, Elinor? 'Twould have been my Margaret's age come Martinmas! And—and—sister—sure you see the likeness, do you not?"

"The likeness?" Madam Elinor echoed. She glanced at the girl; not then or ever did she say that never had his lost Margaret borne so fair a face. "Sure, there is likeness always in youth and beauty and sweet innocence, dear Richard," she said, gently. "And, indeed, I think that here is something of our Margaret's looks."

"Something?" the Justice echoed. "Near everything—'tis marvellous—I seem to see my golden maid again. Something!" He stroked the golden hair, his great hand shaking. "'Tis of the very shade!" he muttered.

Randal, watching, wondering, started suddenly forward. "What is that? Sure, 'tis as I thought, sir—the fools have followed!" he cried.

The words were half drowned in the tumult of the crowd which surged through the tall iron gates; the clamour in the forest had been no more furious or merciless, and the voice of Dame Proudfoot shrilled wildly over all. "The witch—the witch! Let them bring out the witch!" she shrieked, fiercely. Madam Elinor started aside; Margery screamed, and Randal with a cry threw his arm about her. A flint, hurled crashing through the window, flew by, shattering the tankard that had held his Worship's breakfast ale. With a snort of rage the Justice strode across. He dashed the lattice clattering open; his great voice boomed out above the uproar as the space was filled by his burly figure and wrathful face.

"Whose was that stone?" he thundered. "By Heaven, he who flings the next shall go cool his zeal in the stocks in the market-place! Art mad, knaves?—wouldst kill the maid? What evil hath she done? Hast not the child unharmed? She a witch? A baby, rather! Did I know which rogue among ye fired yonder hut it should go ill with him, I warrant ye! What dost say, lad?" He turned to his nephew's whisper.

"She ran to me through the running water, sir—remind the dolts—they saw it," young Randal said, all flushed and eager; he had sprung and caught the girl away from the stone so swiftly that it had grazed his cheek.

"Fools!" the Justice stormed again; "didst ever know a witch cross running water scatheless as she did before your eyes? To your homes, an ye would not all be haled before me in the Court-house for the breaking of Her Majesty's peace. The girl bides here in safety, and let him who durst wag tongue against her. Begone, I say!" He flung-to the casement, shutting out the clamour, and swung about with a great laugh such as he had not given since his golden Margaret left him. "Canst hear what they say, little one? Dost hide a hag under thy cloak? Art a witch—baby?"

"No, no!" cried Margery. She stared wide-eyed, all bewildered still. Here was the terrible Justice smiling, rallying, kindly; the dreaded lion's den, marvellously, was a very haven of protection and shelter from the cruel madness without. "No, no," she cried; "indeed, sir, I am none such. I do not fear the running water, or aught that witches fear, if such poor souls there be at all. I have done no evil in the forest, and seen none, ever—what evil should be there? The people call me ill names and point at me, but I am no witch, sir. In all my life I have done no hurt to any, nor wished it. Oh, madam, most truly I am no witch!"

"No?" asked Madam Elinor. She glanced at her brother's face and read it; read, too, her nephew's ardent eyes; as in a picture she saw the future—not again would the chamber of the fair dead Margaret lack a tenant, or the black orbs of Mistress Sarah Pilgrim haunt the young student's dreams. It was with the gesture and tenderness of a mother that she took the girl into her embrace—for it seemed that this sweet lady whom Love had missed carried a heart of love for all the world. "Indeed," she said, and laughed softly above the golden head, "I think our foolish folk say right, and that most truly you are a very witch, sweetheart!"

How I Lived in Paris Without Money.

The Story of a Modern Bohemian.

By FREDERIC LEES.

Illustrations from Photographs by Paul Géniaux, Paris.

"La Bohème n'existe et n'est possible qu'à Paris."—HENRY MURGER.

SOMEBODY told me, in speaking of the rapid modernization which Paris has undergone of recent years, that Bohemianism was dead; that the Latin Quarter, alas! was no longer what it was; that I might search there in vain for such heroes as are described in "Scènes de la Vie de Bohème." But I find (as I suspected) that I was misinformed. Murgerism—at any rate, in some of its forms—still exists. Student life in Paris is not yet wholly without romance. There are still many chapters to be added to the "History of the Bohemians of Paris" before the word "Finis" is written. Indeed, I cannot help asking myself if that fascinating book will ever be completed.

I made this reassuring discovery at the Café d'Harcourt, on the Boul' Mich'. There are two *cafés* on that world-famed thoroughfare where students of the "Quarter" congregate—the Source and the d'Harcourt. In my salad age the latter used to be my favourite; so, on setting out to revisit one of my old haunts, I naturally gave it the preference. With what misgivings did I cross the threshold! Should I find things changed beyond recognition? Would there be nothing to remind me of former days—those joyous days of youth? But a glance, on entering in company with a friend, sufficed to tell me that my fears were groundless. The pleasant-faced old waiter who used to welcome me and find me a seat well out of the way of draughts was, of course, no longer there; the furniture and the ornamentation were up-to-date and strangely unfamiliar; here and there were slight changes in the staging of the scene. But the actors were the same. There were the same long-haired youths, gravely diluting their absinthe, noisily chattering; the same Musettes and Mimis, coquettish and provocative, passing in and out between the rows of tables, with a word or a nod to their friends.

"Halloa, Marcel! What are you doing here?" cried a close-shaven young man to my friend as we were wandering about looking for a convenient place to view the company.

"Revisiting Bohemia."

And, as we squeezed into the rather out-of-the-way corner where the student was sitting, my friend explained the situation to him.

"False! *La Bohème ne meure jamais!*"

"If you say so, Rodolphe, it must be true. You speak with authority, for your experiences are innumerable. You are, I am afraid, incorrigible. Anything new since I last saw you?"

"*Naturellement!* There is always something new cropping up in the life of a Bohemian Do you think that your friend, the *Anglais*, now that he has become accustomed to the ways of the bourgeois, could live in Paris for a fortnight without money? No, of course he couldn't. He must have his *chic* apartments at the Grand Hotel, his meals at a boulevard restaurant, his auto-taxi, etc. But I—as I will tell you, if you will listen—can do without all these things. We Bohemians are a superior race of beings!"

We smiled at this outburst, in the true vein of Murger, but kept our own counsel, lest the flow of reminiscences was stemmed.

"I am proud of many things that I have done since I came to the 'Quartier,'" continued the irrepressible Rodolphe, "but proudest of having lived in this city of luxury for a whole fortnight absolutely without *galette*. We were getting near the time for the examinations, too; and yet, in spite of all my difficulties, I managed to emerge from them—a full-fledged *avocat*. But let me begin at the beginning."

And, having taken another sip at his *apéritif*, Rodolphe, with the eternal cigarette between his finger and thumb and a smile on his careless face, entered on his story.

"It all arose through a mistake on the part

"The only roof I had to my head during that fortnight was one of the hospitable bridges which cross our noble river."

of the *sacré* postman. My father, you know, is an official out in Indo-China, and every month, as regular as clockwork, he sends me my allowance—a very liberal one, I must say, though somehow I never seem to find it enough towards the end of the four weeks. Well, three months ago, on the day my cheque ought to have arrived, judge of my dismay when the post brought me nothing. As I had promised on my word of honour to pay my hotel bill that very morning, I could not help realizing that I was face to face with a very serious situation. But I buoyed myself up with the hope that the letter would come by a later delivery, and, fearing to meet the hotel-keeper, issued swiftly from my *garni* into the street. My hopes, however, were destined to be dashed to the ground; the remittance came not, and the landlord, on the following morning, had to be faced. I found him (as I expected) inexorable. Nothing would satisfy him but current coin of the realm. It is true that I was already a month behindhand with the rent, and had already made him two—or was it three?—promises to pay. He replied, in answer to my statement that my father was an important functionary, and that his monthly cheque had gone astray, that he had heard 'that tale' before. I must go—seek a lodging elsewhere, and, until the two months' rent was paid, he would keep my trunk as security!

"I sallied forth, a sad but determined man. The only money I had in my pocket was twenty-five centimes, for I had run terribly short that month; the only worldly possessions I had, apart from my clothes, were the papers and books in the portfolio under my arm. Spending the money on a final coffee and rolls, I went to my lectures at the Sorbonne—and tried to forget.

"I date my fortnight without money from the noon of that day, for it was then that I began to feel the pangs of hunger. Whilst my fellow-students went off in joyous bands to their usual restaurants, I made an excuse for not joining them and sought a secluded corner in the Luxembourg Gardens. Why didn't I unfold my troubles to one of them and borrow a louis? you ask. Because, messieurs, I was proud and had not, like the impecunious Schaunard of Murger's immortal work, raised the act of borrowing to the height of an art. Moreover, as I have said before, I was a determined man—determined to see the adventure to its end, come what might.

"My reflections, as I sat on a cold stone seat in those celebrated gardens, were multitudinous and disconcerting. Homeless and with an empty stomach, I realized that I had set out in earnest in search, as Balzac says, 'of that which the inhabitants of Bohemia are ever looking for, *la pâtée et la niche*.' Like my illustrious namesake in 'Scènes de la Vie de Bohème,' I was probably destined to live for some weeks to come in a more vagabond state than the clouds—to learn the art of going to sleep without supper and of supping

"The first thing I did in the morning was to have a free wash in the Seine."

without going to sleep. My cook was to be M. Hasard and I was to lodge at the Auberge de la Belle-Etoile.

"I tried to recollect the names of all the men of genius who had once been in the same position as I was, and found the occupation wonderfully uplifting. Forain, the great black-and-white artist, was one of them. He often slept in the open in his Bohemian days, and I decided to go to his old hotel. Thus, when night came, I dragged myself, weak and famished, in the direction of the banks of the Seine.

"The only roof I had to my head during that fortnight was one of the hospitable bridges which cross our noble river. The first night was somewhat of a failure as regards slumber, but I gradually got quite used to my stony couch and can now sleep on anything, however hard.

"The first thing I did on getting up in the morning was to walk into my commodious *cabinet de toilette*—the open air—and have a free wash in the Seine. Soap? What did I do for soap? That, *mes chers amis*, is a wholly unnecessary luxury of modern life. There is nothing like sand—fine sand—for washing yourself with, and there are always plenty of heaps to be found along the quays.*

"I must confess that, on the first morning, I wandered forth from the banks of the river in a decidedly sad state of mind. Like another famous Bohemian, Maitre Pierre Gringoire, I tramped, a thin and famished mortal, along the streets of the city, wondering where I should get my *petit déjeuner* before going to my studies, and fearing that I should have to tighten my waistbelt another inch. With my nose in the air like a dog that has roused game, I marched along, sniffing at the delicious odour of coffee that rose from basement kitchens and feasting my eyes on the heaps of crisp, brown *croissants* in the bakers' shops. But these were not for me! 'I must tighten my belt and dispense

"Outside a barracks I came across some pieces of bread."

with breakfast,' said I to myself. But the thought had no sooner passed through my brain than, lo and behold! outside a barracks I came across some pieces of bread. I can assure you I did not criticize their quality. They were a veritable godsend, for they kept me going until luncheon-time and enabled me to turn up at the University with a fairly smiling face.

"The luncheon problem had, alas! to be solved only too soon; and I began to see that I must enter on a definite campaign with the object of getting two meals a day. I decided to do without the first breakfast and concentrate all my attention on obtaining food for my so-called luncheon and dinner. One thing I was determined not to do—namely, beg. If anyone offered me bread and meat, which I considered very unlikely, I would accept. But I realized that I must depend upon finding; and with this principle well before me I set out

"I cooked my meals in an old tin can."

* Senhouse, the hero of Mr. Maurice Hewlett's "Open Country," is of the same opinion. —F. L.

"I sometimes ate my luncheon on a bench in the Bois."

on my quest. Now, provident though the Parisians generally are, it is surprising how much goes to waste in this city. If you would see for yourself, make an early morning excursion to the neighbourhood of the Central Markets and you will find that, figuratively speaking, a regiment could be fed on what is thrown away. The Halles were one of my most profitable hunting-grounds. There are many others which are frequented by the Bohemians of Paris, but the mention of the principal one will suffice.

"It is curious how soon one adapts oneself to a new situation! After the first two days things seemed to fall into their proper order. I had perfect confidence that Providence would look after me. Wherever I went I was certain to have a stroke of good luck. Wandering in the Bois de Boulogne, in the neighbourhood of the fashionable Pré Catelin Restaurant, I was fortunate enough, in the early days of my experience, to come across a hen's nest. How I blessed that fowl for laying away from home! She was a veritable mother to me. I encouraged her laudable instinct by daily abstracting her offerings, and, chuckling over my find, retired to the *fortifs* to cook my meals *à la* Robinson Crusoe.

"I generally had my dinner on the *fortifs*, those obsolete fortifications around Paris which the authorities apparently retain for the special benefit of the Apache. Frequented by the hooligans of our city, and often the scene of their private quarrels, you can always count on being undisturbed there either by the police or the bourgeois. I lit my fire (I possessed a box of matches which were left over from the days of my prosperity) without anybody calling me to account, and cooked my meals in an old tin can I had found somewhere, as tranquil and as happy as though I had been on a desert island.

"To have a little variation, I sometimes ate my luncheon on a bench in one of the shady avenues which intersect the Bois. And, to cite another instance of how well the gods looked after me, I frequently came across a morning newspaper, left by a heedless *promeneur*. So, you see, I had intellectual as well as bodily food free of charge, and had the satisfaction of being able to show my fellow-students that I was *au courant* with the political, social, and artistic events of the day.

"As regards wood for firing, this can always be picked up in our streets. There is nothing like worn-out wooden paving-blocks, either for cooking or warming; and I knew where a good supply of this invaluable fuel could be had for nothing. It was the same with drink. Thanks to your Sir Richard Wallace," and Rodolphe addressed these words principally to me, "thanks to the noble benefactor who presented the City of Paris with its very artistic drinking-fountains, pure water is ever at the disposal of the thirsty *sans le sou*.

"As regards wood for firing, this can always be picked up in our streets."

"Amusement? I could always attend the Punch and Judy show in the Avenue des Champs Elysees."

"So much for food and drink—the two great things which the Bohemian is most anxious about. Now let us turn to the minor necessities of life, and see how all of them can likewise be had for nothing.

"There is never any difficulty for the penniless man in Paris to find a warm, luxurious resting-place during the day. If he be of a bookish nature he can count on getting as comfortable an arm-chair and as convenient a desk at the Bibliothèque Nationale as anywhere; if his tastes are artistic, the doors of the Louvre are open to him. Without having the worry and expense which the rich man with a private picture gallery imposes upon himself, he can study the works of the great masters in our national museum to his heart's content. The Louvre, I noted, is greatly patronized in winter by impecunious connoisseurs, who are almost invariably to be seen standing over the hot-air gratings — with their thoughts, I imagine, centred rather on warmth than on art.

"As I was working hard for my examination, I was usually at the Bibliothèque Nationale at nine o'clock, on the opening of the doors, and there, when I was not taking luncheon in the Bois, I remained until four, the hour for closing. What did I do for food on library days? Why, take a couple of hard-boiled eggs with me, cooked the night before, and, with a hunch of bread which I smuggled into the *salle de travail*, ate surreptitiously behind my pile of books. Then, when the hour for closing came and I was once more

"Before turning in for the night I had a good warm at a workman's brasier."

a homeless man, I spent the time until dinner walking or sitting in the Tuileries, learning the notes which I had culled during the day.

"Amusement? How did I get that without payment? Simply enough. I could always attend a theatrical performance for nothing. I was one of the loudest applauders in front of the Punch and Judy show in the Avenue des Champs Elysées. To tell you the truth, I prefer the Guignol, with its simple comedy and tragedy, to some of our Parisian

"One day I even had an auto-taxi ride 'pour rien.'"

theatres, where, so complicated and painful are the themes represented, one is anything but amused. Really, now, is it any longer a distraction to listen to the *pièces à clef* — veritable lectures they are, some of them—of certain Parisian dramatists?

"One day, when I was feeling very tired, I even had an auto-taxi ride *pour rien*. But it was at the back of the car, which happened to be empty, and, though the chauffeur was off his guard, a decidedly dangerous thing to do, for, as we passed through the streets in the direction of the Sorbonne, the incident naturally created some amount of hilarity among passers-by, and this might easily have led to unpleasant consequences. So I decided never to repeat the experiment.

"*Voilà!* I think I have given you a fairly full account of how I managed to get through that fortnight without money. No; one thing I have forgotten. Before turning in for the night (and after the first two days I was lucky enough to find a bridge which was provided with a wooden erection that protected me from the cold north wind) I had a good warm at a workman's brasier at a spot where the street was up through work connected with the underground railway. It has been a bitterly cold winter, as you know, and I appreciated that street fire."

"After the first two days I was lucky enough to find a bridge which was provided with a wooden erection that protected me from the cold north wind at night."

"And what did you do when you wanted a smoke? That, at any rate, you could not get without money," I remarked to Rodolphe, who was in the act of rolling his fourth cigarette.

"*Erreur, mon cher!* You can get even tobacco for nothing in Paris if you know the ropes. Inveterate smoker that I am, I couldn't do without the weed, so, like a real *mégottier*—though I blush to confess it—I picked up the ends of cigars and cigarettes outside the *cafés* on the boulevards. But you have yet to hear the sequel of my story. At the end of my fortnight *sans argent* I happened to meet one of my old hotel acquaintances on the Boul' Mich'. '*Tiens!* there you are at last!' he exclaimed. 'Rodolphe M——'—a science student with the same Christian name as myself and a similar family name—'has been looking for you for the past week. He had a letter for you, but as he could never find you he left it at the hotel. It was delivered by mistake at No. 32, Rue des Ecoles, instead of No. 22, and the stupid ass put it in his pocket and forgot it for seven days. Whatever have you been doing with yourself lately? Cramming for the exam.?'

"But I didn't wait to give him any explanations. Off I rushed to my late hotel, and there, sure enough, I found the letter and the remittance waiting for me.

"I picked up the ends of cigars and cigarettes outside the cafés on the boulevards."

"I returned, there and then, to my old life, but I assure you it was without regret that I looked back to my experiences as a true Bohemian. Those two weeks taught me many a lesson—perhaps a greater lesson than ever I learnt at the venerable, learned Sorbonne. They taught me to be simple in my tastes, to do without some of the luxuries to which we have used ourselves—in brief, to make life a little less complicated than it is."

"As Far as They Had Got"

A "FOLLOW-MY-LEADER" STORY.

By E. Phillips Oppenheim, W. Pett Ridge, Arthur Morrison, H. A. Vachell, Barry Pain, Charles Garvice, and Richard Marsh.

[In our June number we published an article entitled "A 'Follow-My-Leader' Picture," and in the following pages the same method is applied to the writing of a story, with an extremely interesting result. The story was opened by Mr. E. Phillips Oppenheim, who alone of the contributors was not required to have a complete story outlined in his mind. This opening was then sent to Mr. Pett Ridge, who wrote the next chapter, and also sent a brief statement of the manner in which he thought the whole story might have been completed. These two chapters were then sent on to Mr. Arthur Morrison, who, in the same manner, added his instalment and his idea of the whole story; and so on, chapter by chapter, till the whole was completed. It should, of course, be remembered that each writer had before him merely the preceding chapters of the story, and knew nothing whatever of his predecessors' proposed methods of ending it. These explanations are given as footnotes to each chapter, and will be found most interesting as throwing light upon the methods of work of the various eminent fiction-writers, and the way in which a story evolves itself in such widely divergent manners in different minds.]

CHAPTER I.

By E. Phillips Oppenheim.

THE two young men, complete strangers to one another, exchanged during those few moments a gaze whose intentness seemed to possess some hidden and mysterious quality. Spencer, in flannels and canvas shoes, bare-headed, his sunburnt face streaming with perspiration, paused for a moment, still gripping the pole with which he was propelling his somewhat clumsy craft. The man, a few yards away, who had attracted his attention seemed to have very different ideas of pleasure. Dressed in a spotless suit of white flannels, he was lounging in a wicker chair on the smooth-shaven lawn of a bungalow hung with flowers, whose garden, with its little stone terrace, fronted the stream. He, too, was young and good-looking, but of another type. His lips parted in a faint, good-humoured smile, as Spencer once more raised his pole.

"Hot work, isn't it?" he remarked, lazily.

"Beastly," Spencer replied.

The young man on the lawn touched a glass jug by his side, a jug whose frozen sides suggested ice, and in which green leaves were floating about.

"Care for a drink?" he asked.

Spencer shook his head.

"We've sworn off, my pal and I, till we get her into the broad," he answered. "You haven't a cigarette to spare, I suppose?"

The young man rose from his seat and strolled gracefully down the lawn to the river's edge.

"Catch," he said, and threw the box which had been standing by his side into Spencer's outstretched hands.

"Awfully good of you," the latter declared. "Sure you can spare them?"

The young man nodded.

"Plenty more here," he said. "Good day."

Spencer sighed a little enviously as he settled down once more to his task.

"I never, in the whole of my existence," he exclaimed, "saw a fellow who seemed so jolly well satisfied with life!"

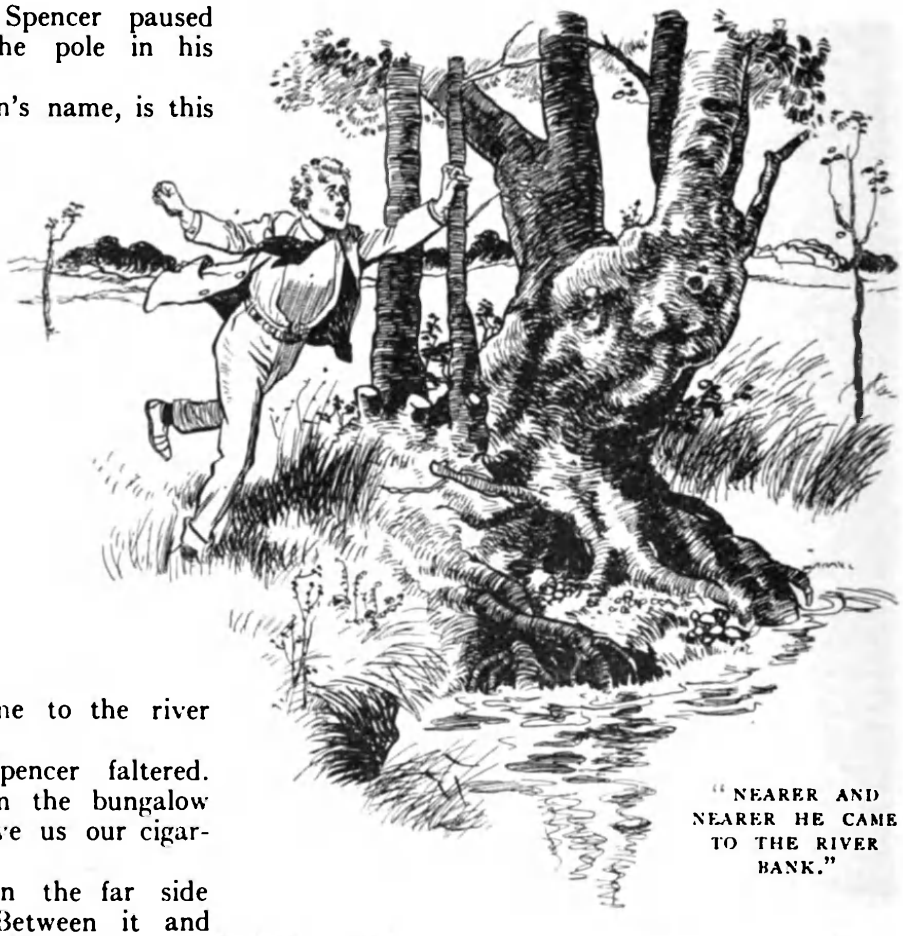
Across the cowslip and buttercup-starred meadows, now knee-deep in the mowing grass, now forcing his reckless way through a clump of bushes, a man was running as one might run behind whom came hot-footed all the strange and terrible shapes begotten of a Dantesque nightmare. Terror, livid and appalling, was in his face. Not all the burning heat could bring a spot of colour to his cheeks. Even his parted lips, through which his breath came in gasps and groans, were white. Once he fell, but rose without pausing, heedless of the blood which dripped from his

hand and knee. Spencer paused once more with the pole in his hand.

"What, in Heaven's name, is this coming across the meadow?" he exclaimed.

"It's a madman!" his companion cried. "Look! look!"

The man who approached was running now in circles. His hands were raised to the skies, his head thrust forward. Once more he fell, but picked himself up without a moment's hesitation. Nearer and nearer he came to the river bank.



"NEARER AND NEARER HE CAME TO THE RIVER BANK."

"My God!" Spencer faltered. "It's the man from the bungalow—the man who gave us our cigarettes!"

The yawl was on the far side of the stream. Between it and the opposite bank the stream, which had widened considerably, was now about fifteen yards wide. The man who had been running paused for the first time as he reached the brink, but only for a second. Without any attempt at diving he simply threw himself in, face downwards. With a dull splash he disappeared under the green weeds. Spencer, who had been stupefied with amazement, hauled up his pole and stepped on to the side of the boat, prepared to dive. His companion stopped him.

"It's all right, Spencer!" he cried. "He's here."

They dragged him on board—a dripping, wild-looking object. They thrust him into their only seat. He cowered there, gripping its sides, and in his face were the unutterable things. Spencer and his companion, who stood staring at him, felt suddenly that the sun had left the heavens. The pleasant warmth was gone, the humming of insects and the singing of birds had ceased. It was another world from which this creature had come. They both shivered.

"What, in Heaven's name, has happened?" Spencer demanded. "What is the matter with you, man?"

There was no answer. Spencer caught up his pole.

"Let's have her round," he cried. "We'll get back to the bungalow."

Then the stranger broke his silence. He shrank back in his place like some stricken animal. In his eyes the terror blazed forth, a live and awful thing.

"No!"

CHAPTER II.

By W. Pett Ridge.

"Very well, then; we'll take you in to the bank."

"Not there!" he screamed, piteously. "Anywhere else, but not there." He seemed to make a determined effort to pull himself together. "Give me something to smoke." "It will compose what I call my brain."

"One of your own cigarettes?"

He seized the box eagerly, and, turning aside, made a scoop through the contents. They found a clumsy suit of overalls and, landing farther down, he changed rapidly, throwing the damp suit of flannels into the hollow of an old tree.

"Fix up here," he urged, "and let's stroll across to the town, and you give me an opportunity of repaying your kindness by standing

you both tea. My story is in many respects a strange one."

They exchanged a perplexed look as he washed his hands in the stream. The three strolled along the path, that went by the side of a field.

"You think I'm a gentleman," he went on, volubly, "and, of course, I want people to think so. I dress well, and I aspirate my aitches to such an extent that I deceive a lot of people. As a matter of fact, before I came into my fortune I was a clerk. That was why," he beamed, excusingly, "why I was so upset when you talked about taking me in to bank."

"How did you come by your money?" inquired Spencer, interestedly.

"It was at Folkestone I met her," he went on, mopping his forehead, "whilst I was on my holidays."

"Met who?"

"House property she'd got, so far as I could gather, Brondesbury way. The agent was making up to her, but she said she believed in love at first sight, or else not at all. The next morning I had the letter from the lawyers, and, believe me or believe me not"—he raised his bandaged hand impressively—"but since that time she'd gone clean out of my head, until a chance remark of yours brought her back again. 'Awfully good of you,' you said to me, and those were the very words she passed when I paid for her to go down the lift. And now," he shouldered open a gate for them, "now I'd give every shilling of my twenty thousand pounds to see her again. Every penny."

"Braddell," remarked Spencer, excitedly, to his friend, "this is something in your line."

"Tell me," said Braddell, "do you know her name and address?"

"You're cold."

"Do you know the agent's name and address?"

"Very warm," he commented, approvingly. "I made a note of that at the time, and placed it in the cigarette-box I gave you. Having secured possession of it, our task now is an easy one."

"Your task, you mean."

"You can understand my excitement, at any rate. If I'd lost sight of you, my last chance of finding her would have gone. And if you've suffered, as I have, from mothers with daughters who only want a chap because he's come in for a bit of cash, you'll realize, first, why I came down here for quiet; second, why I'm so anxious to find her. If she did love me, undoubtedly she loved me for myself alone. I'll make it worth your while to assist me," he promised. "I sha'n't begrudge a thousand or two."

The two gave a gasp in duet.

"Here we are!" as a lane took them into the main street. "You go on to the Unicorn and order tea and toast for three, whilst I pop in here and buy a hat."

Spencer and Braddell obeyed, consulting eagerly as they went. Coming a few minutes later from the outfitter's shop in a sou'-wester that went well with his suit, the tenant of the bungalow crossed to the clematis-covered house which bore the words: "POLICE-STATION."

He spoke sharply.

"We've met before, perhaps. I am Inspector Wilmerson, of the C.I.D. Very well, then!" without waiting for an answer. "Two sunburnt young men in flannels and canvas shoes are wanted for the Moorgate Street bank robbery. They're about here somewhere. Keep a sharp look-out for them. Good day!"

"Why," cried the young constable, "dang my eyes if I ain't just seen two answering to that yer description making their way 'long to the hotel. And ain't yours a clever disguise too, sir? I reckon I sh'd do pretty well at the Yard myself."

"Go and arrest them," he ordered, "and bring them here. Take handcuffs!" *

CHAPTER III.

By Arthur Morrison.

MEANTIME, left together, Braddell stared at Spencer, and Spencer lifted his eyebrows and laughed.

"What have we found now?" Spencer remarked. "A madman, an actor, or what? First, on the lawn by his bungalow, a particularly easy-going man of good manners—a gentleman, in two words; then a wild, dancing dervish; and now a very common sort of bounder, who talks about 'repaying' us for hauling him out of the water and putting him into dry clothes by 'standing' us tea—like a beanfeaster!"

"Odd enough," replied Braddell; "but, actor or lunatic, I should say he was a pretty genuinely frightened man when he came bolting across the field. Why, he might have been bitten by the what d'ye call—the Italian spider."

"Tarantula?"

"Yes. It's a nuisance to be stuck here

* The man of the bungalow kept a small map in the cigarette-case, giving the exact place of the buried money belonging to the Moorgate Street bank. The local police lock up the two young men, and their efforts, when released, to secure the vanished bungalow man are aided by a renewed acquaintance, in strange surroundings, with the cigarette-case.—W. Pett Ridge.

like this, but I'm rather interested, and there may be fun in seeing it through. We must, in fact, if we want those overalls back—he's pitched his flannels away!"

The coffee-room of the Unicorn had a small window looking over a corner of garden, and a bagatelle-table stood in the light of this window. Spencer took a cue and drove a ball or two idly up the board, while Braddell watched him.

"He's slow in his choice of a hat," said Braddell, presently. "I'll stroll out and look for him."

By the door of the tap-room the landlord stood in whispered consultation with a policeman. Braddell unsuspectingly sought to pass between them, and instantly felt himself seized from both sides—and handcuffed!

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded, with some difficulty, in his blank astonishment.

"All right, all right," replied the young policeman, grinning and winking; "sort of thing they allus say. You ain't obliged to say nothin', but what you do say'll be took down an' used in evidence. Come along!"

By the time that Braddell had gathered his faculties he was alone in a converted scullery of the little clematis-covered police-station, with bars across the window and a locked door. But in five minutes more the door opened before him and revealed his friend Spencer, handcuffed as he had been and accompanied by the Unicorn landlord and the same constable, reinforced now by a flustered sergeant, with crumbs on his whiskers, relics of a rudely-disturbed meal.

It took a full half-hour of vehement protest ere the sergeant was persuaded to seek confirmation of the prisoners' *bona fides* in the search of the yawl; and it took a little longer still, and it needed telegrams, before the sergeant grew possessed of a suspicion that his subordinate had made the biggest blunder of a somewhat blundersome career. The official information as to the Moorgate Street bank robbery, too, could not, however stretched, be made wholly to agree with the appearance of the young men in custody; while the utter disappearance of the alleged Inspector Wilmerson lent a certain weight to one angry protest of Braddell.

"If there's a man wanted about here," Braddell had repeated again and again, "it is that man in the overalls. Go and get his flannels out of the hollow tree half-way along to the bungalow; and, above all, go to the bungalow itself, man, and don't waste more time. It may be the Moorgate Street robbery, or it may be something else; but, whatever it is, get there quick and find out!"

The sergeant was something less of a fool than his man. He hedged and made apologies. Of course, if his man had been misled, it was only from an excess of zeal; and in any case the gentlemen would understand that he, the sergeant, must keep them in sight till the matter had been cleared up. Had they any objection to going with him and the constable as far as the bungalow they spoke of?

"Objection? Certainly not! We want to go. Let's get along at once. There's an hour gone, and nobody can tell what you've missed. Come along at once. You've seen our letters and card-cases and the things in the yawl—you know we sha'n't run away. Come along, and we'll see it through with you."

A few minutes later the two friends, with the sergeant, his helmet in place and the crumbs gone from his whiskers, and the young constable, his hopes of promotion gone by the board, were hurrying across the meadows toward the bungalow that had seemed so peaceful and innocent a retreat when they had last seen it. They came in view of the place from the back, and they spread wide as they approached, the better to intercept any retreat. Not a sound came from the bungalow, and nobody was in sight. They drew nearer, passed the flower-beds, and emerged on the sloping lawn. There stood the small garden-table, with the glass jug still on it, the wicker chair overturned by its side. The white-painted door of the bungalow was open wide, and as they approached the porch something on that white-painted door caused Spencer, who was ahead, to stop and point, turning with wide eyes to the others. There, in the middle of the upper panel, was the print of a human hand—in blood! *

* The two perpetrators of the bank robbery have been lying in retreat at the bungalow. The chase is hot, and the cleverer thief, never yet convicted and wholly unsuspected, fears detection through his companion, an old convict. He resolves to murder him, thus to get rid of an inconvenient and dangerous partner and monopolize the plunder. Having attacked him from behind in the bungalow and left him for dead, he is disturbed by the approach of the boat. Fearing someone may land, he stations himself on the lawn and behaves as calmly as is described in the opening. The boat passes on. The man in the house revives, seizes a poker, and, covered with blood, staggers out, leaving the print of his hand on the door as he passes. He strikes the cool thief on the head, and the latter, suddenly confronted with the ghastly figure of his associate—a bigger man and a far more desperate character than himself—runs wildly and erratically (because of the blow on the head). The other fellow, badly hurt and seeing strangers, fears to follow far. The thief given refuge in the boat invents a muddled yarn, and realizing that it *is* muddled plays up to the character of a crazy Cockney, and gets the two witnesses in the boat held up by the police while he bolts. After this, the story may take any one of a dozen courses or more.—ARTHUR MORRISON.

CHAPTER IV.

By Horace Annesley Vachell

Spencer exclaimed loudly: "I can swear that wasn't there when he gave me the cigarettes."

Braddell laughed.

"My dear fellow, the door was open. The hand is painted on it, excellently painted too, and recognizable from the river."

"Things seem quiet enough here," growled the sergeant, as he entered the bungalow. Braddell glanced for a moment at the iced drink on the wicker table, the overturned chair, and a newspaper lying upon the grass. He picked up the newspaper and followed the others into the bungalow. Two rooms in perfect order met his eyes. Behind these was a cooking-shed containing a gasolene stove. Everything inside the bungalow and the shed indicated exquisite neatness and cleanliness, not merely the neatness of the bachelor accustomed to camping-out, but the meticulous daintiness which expresses subtly a woman's love of her habitat.

"Nothing here," said the sergeant.

"Nobody," amended Braddell. "Did you expect to find somebody, sergeant?"

"I thought it possible."

"Consider the facts. Hardly had my friend and I come to the conclusion that the tenant of this bungalow was seemingly the happiest and most contented of mortals, when we see him tearing across that field like a dervish."

"Genuinely frightened too," added Spencer. "He'd turned from a pretty shade of pink to the colour of skilly!"

"Exactly. What could have frightened him so badly? He was not acting then, although he acted afterwards, and badly, too. His cock-and-bull story about being a clerk and in love with a nameless woman was quite unconvincing. We left him sitting in front of an iced drink, which I notice to be untouched—odd that!—and reading this paper."

"Ah!" said the sergeant. "You mean, sir, that something he read in the paper must have scared him."

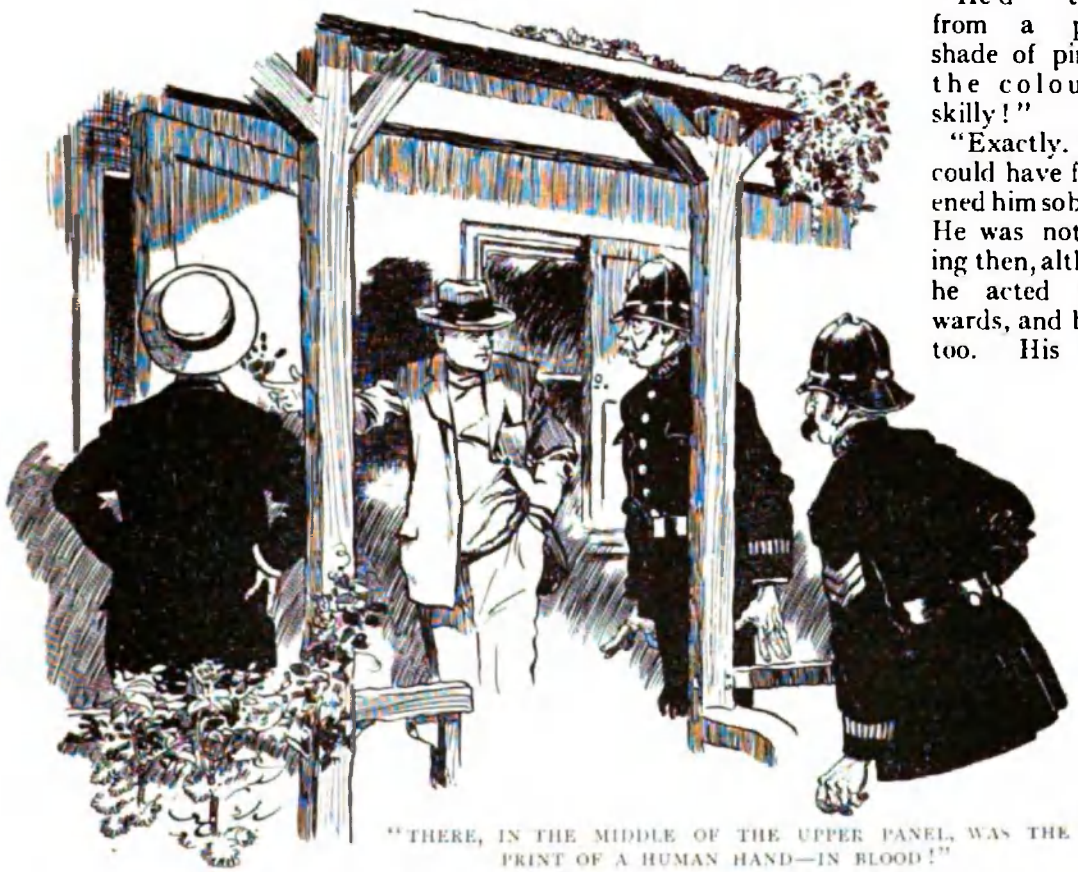
"*I* have found the item, I think," said Braddell, as he handed the paper to the professional.

Spencer said with pride:—

"My friend, Mr. Braddell, is not altogether an amateur. He belongs to the *Criminologists*, a dining-club made up of men interested in crime. Several K.C.'s are members."

"There's a column about the Moorgate Street bank robbery," said the sergeant.

"Which accounts for his mentioning it later. Look through the 'Agony' column, sergeant."



"THERE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE UPPER PANEL, WAS THE PRINT OF A HUMAN HAND—IN BLOOD!"

"I have it, sir." He read aloud: "'Red Hand. Your hiding-place is discovered. Bolt at once.'"

"By Jove, he did!" exclaimed Spencer.

"We are wasting our time here," said the sergeant, irritably.

"Not altogether," replied Braddell. "May I suggest that you leave your man here to see if anybody comes, rather thirsty, to enjoy that drink?"

"Remain here," said the sergeant, addressing the constable.

"Before we leave," murmured Braddell, suavely, "I should like to open that trunk, which I perceive to be locked. No doubt, sergeant, it has not escaped your eye that there is neither shaving-brush nor shaving-soap on the washing-stand."

The sergeant coloured.

"I don't mention all I see," he remarked, in an injured tone. He bent down and wrenched open the trunk. Spencer, peeping over his shoulder, whistled. The trunk was full of a woman's clothing.

"I thought there was a woman in this," said the sergeant. "The sooner we lay hands on the man the better."

"A bungalow built for two," murmured Braddell, absently.

Leaving the constable in charge, the three men hastened back to the town, taking the tow-path as being the shortest way. At the first bend in the river Braddell halted and laughed.

"We now know," he affirmed, with conviction, "where the young gentleman really is." He smiled genially at the sergeant and pointed down the long reach ahead.

"Where?" asked the sergeant.

"On board our yawl."

Spencer laughed also.

"I don't see the joke," said the sergeant.

"I don't see the yawl," added Spencer.

"The yawl," replied Braddell, "is running down the estuary on an ebb tide, and the joke is on—us."

"The beggar got us arrested so as to commandeer our boat," said Spencer. "Clever chap, eh, sergeant?"

"Tub like that can't have gone far," said the sergeant, hopefully. Obviously, the young gentleman was no ordinary criminal.

"Tub yourself!" thought Spencer, with a scornful glance at the sergeant's rotundities. Then he heard Braddell's pleasant voice saying:—

"I suggest, sergeant, that we examine the young gentleman's flannels. They may be marked."

"He changed behind those willows," said Spencer, "and stuffed the wet clothes into that old pollard."

A moment later Braddell was thrusting his hand into the hollow of the tree. He flung upon the grass the sodden flannels and a bundle of wet linen. With a smile he held up an unmistakable garment.

"I am sure, sergeant, that this is no surprise for you. The young gentleman who was too modest to change before us is a young—lady!" *

CHAPTER V.

By Barry Pain.

"This," said the sergeant, frankly, "is getting a bit beyond me."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Spencer.

"Get back to the station and get on the 'phone. I can have our men on the look-out for that yawl all the way along. By the time we get the yawl we get the young lady, don't we, sir?"

"I presume so," said Spencer.

"I don't," said Braddell. "Well, get on to the station, sergeant, and we'll go back to the bungalow. What about your man there?"

The sergeant caressed his whiskers thoughtfully. "Well," he said, "we're short-handed."

"Very well," said Braddell. "We'll send him back and remain there ourselves until this evening. Did you say that you meant to have a constable sleeping at the bungalow to-night?"

"If I did not, it was in my mind."

"Good. You might engage bedrooms for us to-night at the Unicorn. It will be all on your way."

They went back to the bungalow and dismissed the constable, who was rapidly developing into a young man with a grievance.

Spencer stretched himself at full length on the lawn. "And what do we do now?" he asked.

* The young woman is not a criminal of sanguine hue, but a modern miss who has bolted from an irascible guardian to escape a marriage of convenience, and has donned trousers so as to avoid attracting attention as a pretty girl alone in a bungalow. Upon the morning when the story opens she is expecting her lover, who will recognize the bungalow as he punts down the river by the red hand painted on the door, a happy symbol, inasmuch as the lover is a baronet, albeit rather impecunious. They have corresponded—since the young lady left home—by means of the Agony column in the *Daily Mail*. The young lady, not quite of age, is a ward in Chancery, and the moment she is of age she hopes to marry her baronet, enjoying the while a quiet life in the bungalow, punctuated by visits from her beloved. The constable left in charge arrests the guardian and complications follow, including the capture of the runaway, who finds herself at the mercy of wind and tide. Braddell plays the familiar part of Deus ex machina, and true love triumphs. —H. A. Vachell.

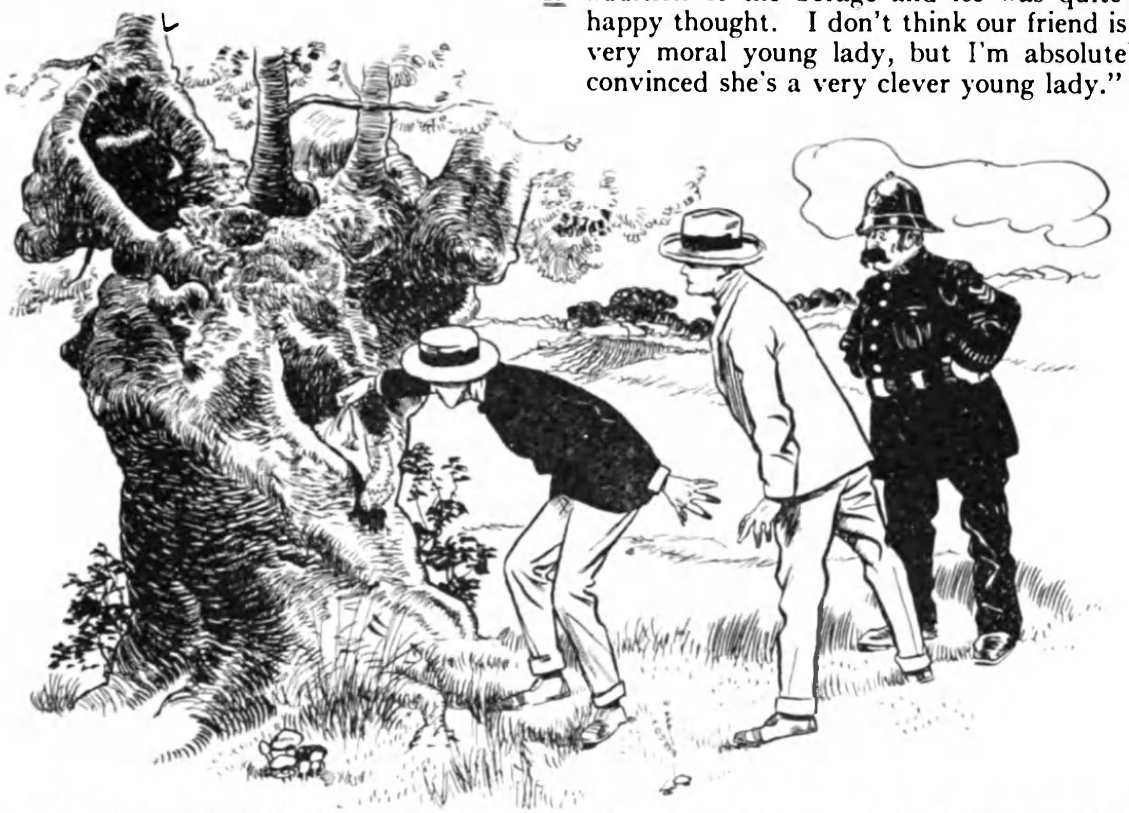
"I'm going to feed the dicky-birds," said Braddell.

Spencer sat up. "Have you gone mad?" he said.

"Wait and see, as they say in another place."

"Great Scot!" said Spencer. "And that was the stuff the young lady wanted me to drink!"

"Quite so," said Braddell. "Prussic acid smells very much like Kirschwasser. The addition of the borage and ice was quite a happy thought. I don't think our friend is a very moral young lady, but I'm absolutely convinced she's a very clever young lady."



"A MOMENT LATER BRADDELL WAS THRUSTING HIS HAND INTO THE HOLLOW OF THE TREE."

Braddell went laughing into the house, and returned with a piece of bread in his hand. He picked up the glass jug.

"Smell that," he said to Spencer, "and tell me what you make of it."

Spencer smelt it diligently.

"Cup of sorts, I suppose, and the young lady's rather overdone the Kirschwasser. The thing reeks of it. I'll just taste it and——"

Braddell took the jug out of his hand. "Half a minute," he said. He poured some of the contents of the jug on to the piece of bread and then broke it up and scattered it at the far end of the lawn.

"Bet you the birds don't touch it," said Spencer. "They've plenty of better grub this weather."

"Oh, you can depend on the sparrows," said Braddell.

And presently a couple of sparrows fluttered down on to the lawn and tackled the crumbs vigorously. In a few seconds they rolled over dead.

"Well, now, Braddell," said Spencer, "what do you make of it so far?"

"I can only see what is perfectly obvious. She was in hiding—from whom I do not know. She wanted her hiding-place to be easily distinguished by someone coming up the water. For whom she was waiting I do not know. There you have it. There was some person from whom she wished to hide, and there was some person by whom she wished to be found—hence the red hand painted on the door. But there is a further complication that I have not yet reached. When we saw her running across the meadow she was mad with terror. There is no doubt about it. Why? And what was it she took out from that box of cigarettes she had given us? The game of hide and seek is obvious, but there must be a second complication. It is quite possible, by the way, that when she offered you that drink she mistook you for somebody else."

"But what's the key to the second complication?"

"Can't say. But this is the key to the bureau in the drawing-room. At any rate, it fits it. Quite a common lock. I tried it when I went in for the bread. Come and investigate."

"I say," said Spencer, "what business have we got with her bureau?"

"Hang it all!" said Braddell. "What business has she got with our boat?

"By the way," went on Braddell, as they walked back into the house together, "she did not fling herself into the water because she was terrified nor because she wished to commit suicide. People who want to drown themselves don't do it where there are two lusty young men waiting to fish them out again. She wanted to be fished out. You can bet on that, at any rate. I wish I had her lightning rapidity in plan and execution. I should be a great man, Spencer." *

CHAPTER VI.

By Charles Garvice.

With not unreasonable nervousness Braddell unlocked the bureau, Spencer looking over his shoulder with feverish curiosity. The thing unlocked quite easily. Braddell threw up the lid, and Spencer exclaimed with amazement, for, quite uncovered, were a number of bags such as are used by banks for gold. There could be no doubt about the contents, for one of the bags was open, revealing a mass of sovereigns. Beside the bags was a quantity of bank-notes, and tucked away in the corner was an old stable cap, with one end of a crape mask still attached to it.

The two men fell back and stared at each other.

"Great heavens!" gasped Spencer. "There must be thousands of pounds there! We've come upon the loot of a gang of thieves."

He looked round the neatly-furnished room, through the door at the beautiful and peaceful scene. The whole place in its loveliness and serenity was absolutely incongruous with so mean and sordid a crime as bank-cribbing.

"It's — it's a mystery!" exclaimed Spencer, dropping on to a chair and wiping his brow.

"Nothing of the kind," said Braddell, quietly. "It's all perfectly plain and simple. Some of the gang, two of them, perhaps—the clever young lady and a man, probably—have been using this bungalow as a kind of screen and blind. No doubt they've been living here for months, leading the kind of simple life which would mislead anyone. For who would suspect a young girl—and her husband, probably—dawdling through existence in such circumstances as these, of being concerned in a conspiracy to rob a bank? And, still more, who would think of searching for the stolen money in such a place as this? It was a very pretty plant, and I can't for the life of me understand why it failed. One would have thought it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have got the loot away by boat. I think I could have done it."

"Something must have disturbed them," said Spencer. "Something evidently did upset *her*, for she was mad with terror when we saw her tearing down the lawn. What was it?"

"Something she saw, something she heard," said Braddell. "It may have been the red hand on the door. It may have been a warning signal, the imitated note of a bird, a faint cooee, which we didn't notice, but which she heard immediately after we had gone."

"What's to be done?" asked Spencer, staring at the precious contents of the bureau.

"I'll go and fetch the police to take this stuff away. You stay here and mount guard over it," said Braddell.

"No; I'll go," said Spencer, a little paler than he had been before, "and you mount guard. No; you sha'n't run any risk, old man. We'll both go. No one is likely to interfere with this stuff for the short time we shall be absent. To be quite frank, I couldn't leave you alone here. This place, the whole thing, is getting on my nerves."

Braddell re-locked the bureau, and they set out at a sharp trot for the station.

"What I can't understand," said Spencer, "is that poisoned cup. Whom was it meant for, and why did she offer it to us? No object in killing a couple of chaps she'd never seen before."

"I don't know," said Braddell, musingly. "If she'd done for both of us it would have been easy to have pushed us overboard, seized the yawl, and escaped."

"Ingenious, but a trifle risky," commented Spencer, with a shake of the head. "One may go in for bank-cribbing, but draw the line at murder. Here we are. They seem

* The lady on the lawn was the head and brains of a gang of thieves. The bungalow in which she was taking refuge was haunted. Her terror was in consequence of this and genuine. Others of her gang were to have joined her at the bungalow, and she was waiting for them when she received the warning that the detectives were on her track. The poisoned drink was intended for the detectives.—Barry Pain.

in a state of excitement. I'll bet they'll lose their heads altogether when we show them what we've found."

The sergeant stared when Braddell curtly requested him to accompany them back to the bungalow and to bring a small sack; but Braddell refused any explanation, and the sergeant and a constable—the latter with the sack over his arm—returned with the two young men to the bungalow. With a gesture that was instinctively dramatic Braddell unlocked the bureau, threw up the lid, and, with his eyes fixed on the sergeant, said:—

"Put it in the sack."

"Put what, sir?" demanded the sergeant, staring amazedly.

Braddell turned his eyes swiftly to the open bureau and saw that it was empty. He was too thunderstruck to utter a word, and it was Spencer who gasped out:—

"That thing was full of notes and gold when we left a quarter of an hour ago."

The sergeant looked from Braddell to Spencer with a surprise which gradually gave place to a mixture of suspicion and pity.

"There's nothing there now, sir," he said, as he swept his hand round the inside of the bureau. "It's quite empty; not even a scrap of paper or a—hairpin. Sure you saw it, sir?"

"Sure!" exclaimed Spencer, indignantly. "Do you think we've taken leave of our senses?"

"Well, sir, you've 'ad an upsetting time," responded the sergeant, apologetically.

"Someone has been here," said Braddell, suddenly; "someone strong enough to carry off the money. They can't have gone far; there must be some traces."

He sprang to the door and, bending down, examined the gravel path; but it had been closely rolled and neatly swept, and there were no traces of footsteps. But a little farther on he found, on the edge of the grass, the impress of a man's shoe, a boating shoe which had been recently whitened, for there was a speck or two of pipeclay on the edge of the footprint.

"Come along," he cried, in a voice trembling with excitement.

They followed him as he tracked the footprints. They went straight for the shrubbery at a little distance from the bungalow. Braddell stopped here and pointed to the bush in front of him. Some of the twigs had been broken, as if a person had rushed through the bush, heedless of where he was going.

"Better go round," he said. "We won't disturb this."

They found an opening a little lower down in the shrubbery, and Braddell cautiously entered, signing to the others to keep back. They waited almost breathlessly; then suddenly they heard a sharp, low cry from Braddell, and the next moment he came out, clutching the branches on each side of him as if for support. His face was deathly white, and he gazed over their heads as if he were obsessed by some horrible sight.*

CHAPTER VII.

By Richard Marsh.

"Pardon me." A man had stepped out from among the bushes who was regarding them with a smile. "Excuse me, gentlemen, this is all right as far as it goes, but the point is how far does it go? That's the point."

"There's a dead body lying on the ground where that man's just come from," Braddell stammered to the sergeant. "I saw it with my own eyes."

"Of course you did, and a very nice one it is."

"What fiend in human shape," cried Braddell, facing the grinning stranger, "have we got here?"

"That's the point, as I was about to remark. "How far have we got? I killed him——"

"You killed him? You killed the man who is lying there? You admit it?"

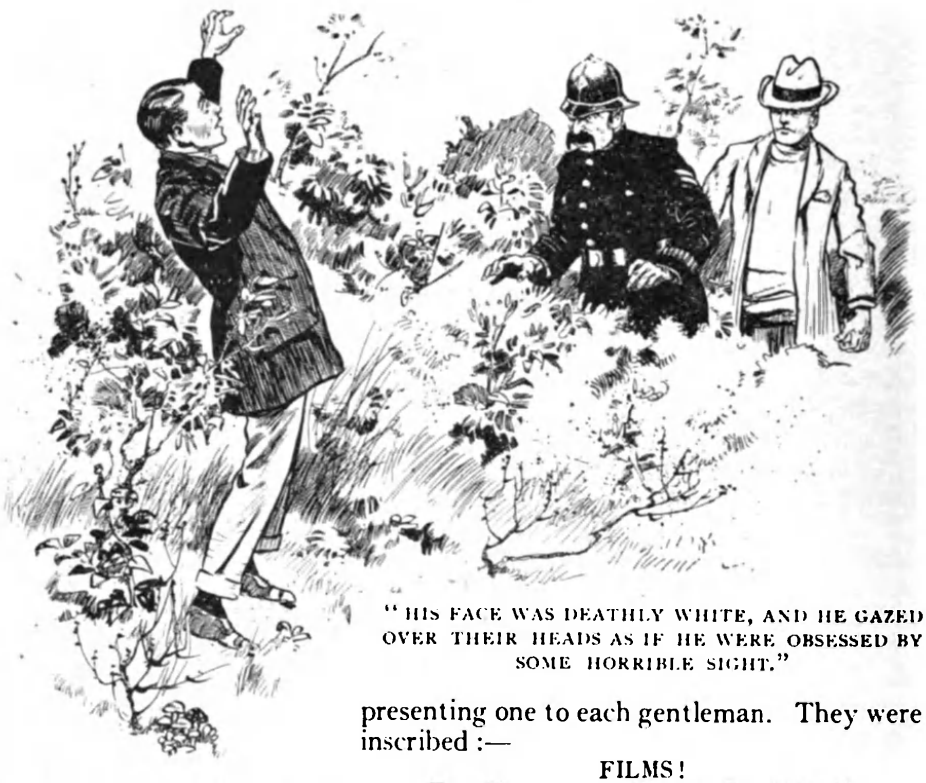
"Certainly I killed him; that's the idea. I gave him five blows with a hatchet. While he was struggling for life he caught hold of whatever he could, and that's his bloody hand which you see upon the door-post. She saw it, the young lady who was dressed as a gent, and she did a bunk. Half mad wth terror she was; we'd got her just right—we wanted to get her like that, you know; into the water she goes, then you come on the scene, and that's as far as we've got."

"It seems to me that you've got some

* The girl, a member of a good family, had fallen into the hands of a professional thief, a handsome, fascinating scoundrel. The two had been concerned in the bank robbery, the proceeds of which they had secreted in the bungalow, where they had been living for some time. They had arranged to meet at the bungalow, whence they were to escape in disguise. The girl had put on a man's flannel boating suit and was awaiting her accomplice when Spencer and Braddell's yawl came up. After they had gone she went to the house, and saw the red hand, a warning sign, on the door. She was about to take flight when she came upon the body of her accomplice lying in the shrubbery behind the bungalow. He had committed suicide by drinking the cup, which she did not know contained poison when she offered it to Spencer. A third accomplice who had been watching had made off with the contents of the bureau while Spencer and Braddell had gone for the police. The girl and the rest of the gang were captured and sent to penal servitude.—Charles Garvice.

distance." Spencer was surveying the stranger with a glance which, perhaps, insufficiently showed, his bewilderment. "Are you a murderer, or merely a criminal lunatic, or what are you, sir?"

"Yes, what am I? That's another point. We haven't got so far as that." Taking off his straw hat, the stranger passed a blue silk handkerchief across his brow. "Of course, the idea was that I was to cut her throat, drag her out of the water by the hair of her head, and, as she lay gasping for breath on the bank, slit it from ear to ear; but, as I was about to remark, that's what we haven't quite got to."



"HIS FACE WAS DEATHLY WHITE, AND HE GAZED OVER THEIR HEADS AS IF HE WERE OBSESSED BY SOME HORRIBLE SIGHT."

"Haven't you? You may thank your lucky stars that your carnival of crime was not played out." Spencer's tones were portentous. "Sergeant, do you happen to have a pair of handcuffs in your pocket? If ever there was an occasion on which they were required, surely this is one."

"I'm thinking I've met this chap before," the sergeant remarked.

"You have, sergeant, when I gave you half a crown to smash my friend's head open with your truncheon; then we had a hand-to-hand fight, after I'd thrown my wife out of the window."

"I remember," agreed the constable; "I remember very well. You made that half a crown five shillings."

"It was worth it; you put up something like a fight; you'd have killed me if my friend hadn't thrown you out of the window after my wife. Excuse me, gentlemen, but it occurs to me"—the stranger turned to Braddell and Spencer with the friendliest possible gesture—"that this may require a little explanation; something in your attitude suggests it. Perhaps you will find it here."

From a letter-case he took two cards, presenting one to each gentleman. They were inscribed:—

FILMS!
THE FINEST THE WORLD PRODUCES!!
Startlers!!!
Screamers!!!!
Scorchers!!!!!
Screechers!!!!!!
More Terror, Tears and Laughter to the square inch than those of any other firm in the Universe!
The Very Latest Cinematograph Company, 3, 5 & 7, Corkcutter Alley, St. Martin's Lane. Representative, JACK THOMPSON.

"That's me, gentlemen. I'm Jack Thompson, very much at your service. We were rehearsing a little idea in which the intention was to cram more varieties of bloodshed and crime than have ever been crammed into twelve hundred feet before—a film full of human interest, with a heart-to-heart ending. And when you came upon the scene that was as far as we'd got."

"And why," exclaimed a voice behind them, "you wish to waste good Kirschwasser on making two sparrows dead drunk is beyond me altogether."

The speaker picked up two sparrows which were making some rather singular attempts to walk across the lawn.

"Drunk?" murmured Spencer. "I thought they were dead."

"Of course you did; you'd think anything – you're such a nice young man." The speaker plunged a pair of hands into his two trouser pockets. "You thought I was a man. Well, I'm not, I'm a girl; and that's as far as I've got."

How the Debt Was Paid.

By WILLIAM FREEMAN.

Illustrated by Dudley Hardy, R.I.

I.

CHRIS HASTINGS came from the North. He was a young man with a clear skin, a perceptible accent, and a keen eye to business, and when he opened the old-fashioned shop at the corner of the High Street with miscellaneous grocery, drapery, and general goods, most of the villagers, including the proprietor of the rival establishment, wondered at his temerity.

Old Bowater—Henry Morton Bowater, licensed to deal in tobacco and methylated spirits—had stood behind his crowded counter longer than most of the inhabitants of Crutton could remember. His good-humoured face, with its fringe of grey whiskers, peering from behind ramparts of cheese and biscuit-tins and penny bottles of sauce, was familiar to every man, woman, and child in the place. He was a widower with one dark-eyed girl, Margaret.

It speedily became evident that the stranger did not believe in sitting still and waiting for custom, and that the duel between himself and old Bowater would be to the death.

The latter, reading his rival's advertisement in the local paper, first frowned, then laughed boisterously. On the following Wednesday he closed early and made a furtive pilgrimage to the new establishment.

He opened his eyes rather widely at the display in the window, and gave a surly nod as Hastings appeared in the doorway.

"Good afternoon," said the latter.

"Arternoon," responded the old man, shortly. "See you don't believe in early closing."

"Can't afford to. I've got my way to make," said Mr. Hastings, amiably. "Not like some of you old-established folk, with a business that doesn't need pushing."

Old Bowater's manner became a shade more friendly.

"See here, young feller," he said, impressively. "You take an older man's advice before it's too late, and go where there's room."

"That's precisely why I came here," said Mr. Hastings, quite unruffled, hurrying into the shop to attend to a customer. The other recognized her as Mrs. Grimson, the doctor's wife, and saw that she paid for her purchases in gold. He returned moodily to his own shop. A sudden realization of its old-fashioned, happy-go-lucky arrangement of stock fell for the first time like a shadow on his pride.

His patrons had never been very many, but the business was so steady that he had been almost in the position of a man with an independent income—a position which the failure of all previous rivals had served to strengthen.

But the newer residents in the village appeared to demand cheapness and novelty, and Bowater's sale of the more ephemeral and profitable goods — belated echoes of London fashions—seemed likely to sink to vanishing point. Young Hastings, he discovered, went to the City at least once a fortnight, leaving Walsh, a strenuous assistant, in charge for the day, the result being an up-to-dateness with which it was utterly beyond the power of the old man to compete. He did, indeed, attempt one or two similar excursions, but they were such conspicucus failures that he fell back on his reserves in the shape of brilliantly-polished windows and the distribution of circulars in which stock phrases and bad grammar struggled pathetically.

His rival, reading one of these, smiled, and flung it across to his assistant.

"We're making the old man sit up," he said.

Circumstances had taught him to regard business as a warfare, though in private life he was a kindly, healthy-minded youth, with a code of honesty so rigid that he had been warned that it would lead to his ruin.

Every penny beyond his immediate needs went in advertising, steadily and systematically, and brought its sure reward in the shape of trade which might have gone to his rival.

Crutton watched with amusement and interest. But to one of the actors it was sheer tragedy.

Old Bowater saw his business begin to crumble. One by one, first the chance customers, then the fairly regular ones, and finally those whom he had served over that battered counter for years, deserted him for the corner shop, where the bigger, brazen-voiced business

"'SEE HERE, YOUNG FELLER,' HE SAID, IMPRESSIVELY. 'YOU TAKE AN OLDER MAN'S ADVICE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE, AND GO WHERE THERE'S ROOM.'"

was for ever shouting its own virtues. At last there came a day when the old man, after spending a solitary afternoon poring over his ledger and a file of bills, went in to his evening meal with a face so white that his daughter was frightened.

"What is it, dad? What has happened?"

"Nothin' — nothin' but what I've a right to expect. Expenses for the last year—ninety-eight, ten, seven. Profits on goods sold—forty-five, eight, nine. Money in 'and, after payin' all bills—seventeen pounds. An' two years ago I 'ad over a 'undered in the bank!"

Margaret looked at him with troubled eyes.

"Forty years I've been here," the old man went on, half to himself, "and now——"

He broke off in a short, tired sob so heart-breaking that the girl put her arms about him, laying her head on his breast to conceal her own tears.

"Don't, dad—don't! Things will get better."

"I'm no match for the young man, my lass—that's what it is. He's young, an' strong, an' crool, and I can't stand up agin him. We'd best get out of it before it's too late."

"But what can we do—where can we go?" she asked, her heart aching for him.

Old Bowater sighed heavily.

"I don't know. There is your Uncle Jeff in Canada. They say it's a good climate, and that shopkeepers and so on are wanted, and I don't doubt but that he would help me to make a start there. You shouldn't cry like that, dearie. It's no one's fault, and I'm an old fool to trouble you about the business at all."

But a deep, illogical anger against the man who had brought them to this pass seethed in the girl's heart. It did not diminish when, at the end of another six months, their remaining stock was sold off by auction, and Walsh, acting as deputy for Hastings, bought the greater portion of it at a mere fraction of the original cost.

But Hastings himself seemed to find little satisfaction in his bargains.

"I wish it hadn't come to this," he said. "There should have been room enough for us both in the place."

As it was, Bowater's heart was broken. An old man leaving for a strange land in such circumstances is hardly fitted to begin life anew. When Margaret reached her destination she was alone!

II.

DURING the five years that followed, Chris Hastings's business achieved a prosperity that no subsequent rivals seemed able to shake. Crutton itself was spreading in every direction, and the High Street, humming with tram-cars and brilliant with electric light, had changed almost beyond recognition. Bowater's old premises, with those adjoining, had been pulled down, and a row of handsome shops had taken their place.

Hastings one day was surprised to find that three of them had been taken by one firm—"The Competitive Stores." He smiled, for the prospect of further opposition had lost its terrors.

The new firm possessed, at any rate, sufficient capital to advertise effectively and audaciously. "All our goods are sold at less than cost," said the circulars, and Crutton, incredulous but interested, awaited the fulfilment of the promise.

"They're laying out a deuce of a lot of money," Mr. Walsh informed his chief, confidentially. "I half wish we'd bought the whole block when it was on the market."

"I don't. I've enough to look after as it is," said Hastings, with a slight accent on the pronoun. "I've seen too many firms go up like a rocket to be afraid of the stick when it comes down."

Nevertheless, he found himself wondering vaguely how long it would be before this new enemy was beaten. When, a week later, the shining mahogany doors of the Stores were flung open, he sent for Walsh again.

"Have you seen the new show?"

"Yes; of course, it's merely an advertising dodge. We shall hear in a day or so that 'Owing to the increase in the cost of raw materials, we are reluctantly compelled——' and so on. Still——"

"Still?" echoed Hastings, after a pause.

"The prices at present are literally under cost."

"They are."

"If we reduced our own——"

"My good man, until we know a little more about them it would be suicidal."

"Exactly. I suppose you'll make inquiries through the usual channels?"

"Yes. And send Tompkins to me. I'm not satisfied with that last batch of advertisements he got out."

That day was August 17th—Chris remembered it because his own business was just seven years old.

His inquiries led to nothing reassuring. The Stores were good for credit to a startlingly large amount, which the manager, Mr. Dawson, appeared to have *carte blanche* in using to build up a connection.

Weeks passed, and Mr. Walsh proved a false prophet. The prices at the Stores still stood at a fraction under what Hastings himself had to pay at the best wholesale houses, and, had his pride permitted, it would have suited him to buy direct from his rival.

He decided to concentrate his whole attention in beating his rival in the race for novelties. Here again he suffered defeat. Dawson had a season-ticket to the City, and his previous training and connection there was immensely in his favour. The customers at the Stores, frankly sceptical at first, continued to increase in number, travelling miles to visit a shop that offered such unexampled and inexplicable bargains. Dawson doubled his staff. Hastings put an entire year's profits on the hoardings, and was rewarded by seeing the tide of trade ebb steadily. Realizing that the smallest confession of failure would be fatal, he drew heavily on his reserve capital, and for a month sold his goods at cost price.

At the end of that time Walsh asked for a private interview. During the crisis the two men had been less together than usual, and when the manager stepped up to the big paper-littered desk he was obviously ill at ease.

"What is it?" Hastings asked, sharply.

An increasing irritability was not the only evidence of the strain on his nerves. He had lost his healthy colour, and there were tired lines about his eyes.

"My agreement with you terminates in a few days," said Walsh, shuffling with his feet.

"And you want an increase of salary? If you've seen last month's returns, the request shows a fine sense of humour!"

"Not at all. I did not come to ask for a rise, but merely to say that I did not wish to renew the agreement."

Hastings swung round on his revolving chair and looked his subordinate squarely in the face.

"I see," he said, slowly. "What have they offered you?"

Walsh did not answer.

"I do not think I need detain you until the end of your time. In fact, I should take it as a personal favour if you could arrange to leave by this evening. Here is a cheque for your salary in full."

Walsh took it with fingers that shook a little.

When he had gone the master sat staring blindly at the white-faced calendar on his desk. It told him, as pitilessly as the voice of Fate, that, unless a miracle intervened, within three months his ruin would be absolute and irretrievable.

III.

MR. DAWSON smiled faintly when the clerk brought him the message. His manner was cordial to the point of effusiveness as he rose to greet his visitor.

"Pleased to see you, Mr. Hastings. Seasonable weather we're having, aren't we?"

"How long is this going on?" said Hastings hoarsely, without prelude.

"Ah-h—I rather think that must depend upon how long the—er—opposition is sustained."

Hastings gripped the back of a chair. For an instant the devil of murder leaped in his heart—leaped, and was conquered. When he spoke again, it was like a man physically exhausted.

"I don't know your object, and I'm not afraid of fair competition. But this under-cost-price insanity——"

"My dear sir," said Mr. Dawson, indulgently, "you must allow my company to know their own business best. The Stores will be conducted on its present lines so long as we have opposition to face—and our capital lasts."

"Is that final?"

"Absolutely. I don't mind confessing in confidence that up to the present we have spent some four thousand pounds. On the other hand, we have still rather more than a quarter of a million behind us. So, as you see——"

Hastings saw—saw clearly the annihilation that faced him. For a moment he stood fumbling with the carved edge of the desk, without speaking. Then, with a bow, he went quietly out and down the thickly-carpeted stairs into the street.

The days that followed were filled with a weariness, a sense of almost childish helplessness, that played havoc with his already overstrained nerves. At the end of December he went again to the Stores. The change in the man was so marked that even Dawson's sympathy was stirred.

"You're not looking very fit," he remarked.

"Can I see the head of your firm?" demanded Hastings abruptly, ignoring the outstretched hand.

"I am empowered to make all arrangements, and to submit any proposals to him," said Dawson, stiffly.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake let me get in touch with the man that is ruining me!" cried Hastings, hysterically, for he was utterly unstrung.

"It's not the usual thing, but——"

"Is he in the building?"

"By a coincidence, he is. And he may possibly be willing to see you for a few moments."

He went into an inner room, and presently, returning, beckoned Hastings forward, and closed the door behind him.

There was, apparently, another visitor waiting—a slim girl, with big, dark eyes. Hastings had met her in the village several times, and had been struck by her beauty and her air of deep sorrow.

He bowed, and stood waiting.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Hastings?" she asked, after a pause, during which he was conscious of her quiet scrutiny.

"I—I have called to see the chief," he stammered.

The girl laughed—a hard little laugh that grated on his ear.

"I am the chief. I own the Competitive Stores."

"Good God!" said Hastings. He stepped back a pace, and as he gazed at her the blood slowly ebbed from his face, leaving it the colour of parchment.

"I have been expecting you for several days," went on the level, passionless voice.

He caught at the last remnants of his self-control.

"Why—why have you done this?"

"Why? Because I can afford to, and because I am Henry Bowater's daughter."

The man shrank back against the wall, and it seemed to him that the floor rose and fell, and the room was lost in a black mist through which the girlish face with its terrible eyes alone shone clearly.

"You ruined my father," she continued. "You killed him. I went to my uncle in Canada. He was the only living relative I had. When he died and left me his money—and he was very rich—I came to England again, for I had a debt to pay. And—I am paying it!"

Hastings said nothing. The face was wavering, melting into the surrounding blackness. He groped at the wall, lurched blindly against it, and slid limply sideways to the floor.

A period of oblivion followed—oblivion broken by brief periods of semi-consciousness. Then there came a day when he was able to realize that he was in his own room, and that a quiet-footed stranger in nurse's costume was tending him unobtrusively. His brain grew troubled with a sense of overwhelming disaster, until old Dr. Grimson appeared and warned him in a whisper that he must on no account distress himself, for he had had a very narrow escape. Also, his business was in good hands.

So Hastings shut his eyes again and slipped back into the region of cool grey shadows. It was a month before he received permission to open his first business letter. It ran:—

"DEAR SIR,—Acting under instructions, I have placed Mr. Walsh in charge of the business carried on by you in the High Street, and he is conducting it as heretofore. This step, irregular as it may seem, was rendered necessary by the action of certain creditors, whose claims I have—also acting under instructions—duly settled.

"You may, however, rest assured that no further steps of importance will be taken without your full knowledge and sanction.

"Yours faithfully, A. DAWSON."

The thing was inexplicable, but he wrote a short acknowledgment. He also sent a note to the owner of the Stores:—

"Will you grant me the honour of a few minutes' interview?"

Her answer came by return:—

"If you still wish it, I will come in a few days, when you are stronger."

Their second meeting, with the watchful nurse in the background, was wholly unemotional and commonplace. Afterwards Hastings wondered why he had expected it to be otherwise. He held out his hand, and she took it passively.

"I am glad to learn that you are better."

"Thanks! Won't you sit down and loosen your wraps—the room is very warm."

The girl did so, smiling, and he realized what a child she still was.

"I have received a note from your manager," he began, with painfully flushed cheeks. "I do not understand it, but I realize that you have been very generous to a fallen enemy."

"It was nothing—the smallest reparation I could make. Walsh, by my instructions, is holding the reins until you are able to take them again—that is all."

"But—the Stores?"

"The Stores are closed," she said, with averted head. "I took upon myself to collect a debt, and I found that my rate of interest was too high. All I ask now is that it may be forgotten."

She rose and drew her cloak about her.

"Good-bye."

"You will come again?" he begged. "I have many other things to ask you. And I have no other visitors."

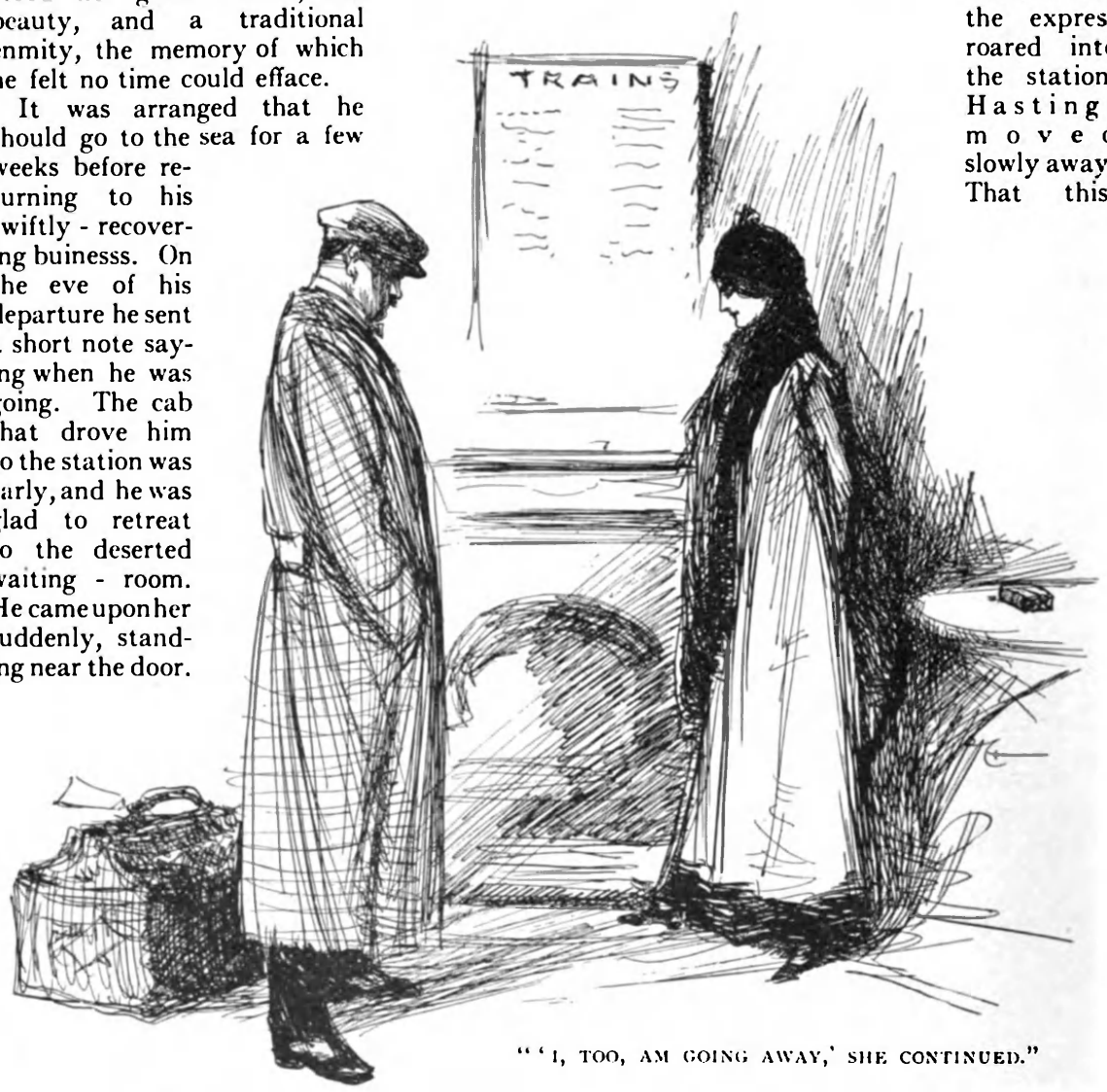
She hesitated, a warm colour in her own cheeks.

"If the doctor gives permission, and you are sure——"

He was sure, and she came again. The maternal instinct was stirred by his weakness and loneliness, and, as she had told him, the debt was paid.

On Hastings's side there grew, swiftly and insidiously, a passion so hopeless that he did not even attempt to check it. Between them stood her great wealth, her beauty, and a traditional enmity, the memory of which he felt no time could efface.

It was arranged that he should go to the sea for a few weeks before returning to his swiftly-recovering buinesss. On the eve of his departure he sent a short note saying when he was going. The cab that drove him to the station was early, and he was glad to retreat to the deserted waiting-room. He came upon her suddenly, standing near the door.



"'I, TOO, AM GOING AWAY,' SHE CONTINUED."

"I am afraid I have done a very officious and foolish thing," she said, cheerfully. "But it suddenly struck me that your housekeeper might not have remembered to pack you any refreshments, and I have ventured to bring these."

She laid a neatly-tied package on the table.

Hastings, indescribably touched, stammered incoherently.

"I, too, am going away," she continued. "I don't suppose we shall ever meet again. But I should like to feel sure before I left that—that the account was squared."

"The account can never be squared," said Hastings, softly.

"I have done my best," she said.

He laid his hand very gently on her shoulder.

"I know," he said. "But—I do not think you understand. And I dare not explain."

The platform was filled with clatter and steam as the express roared into the station. Hastings moved slowly away. That this, their final parting, should end in bleak misunderstanding weighed heavily on his soul. At the door he turned and glanced backwards. She was leaning against the mantelpiece, sobbing quietly.

He found himself at her side again.

"Margaret—Margaret!"

"You — you've forgotten your sandwiches!" she said, dabbing her eyes furiously, "and—and——"

When the Bournemouth express slid out of the station with gathering speed Hastings was still comforting her.

Behind the Footlights.

MISS KITTY GORDON.
Photo. by White, N.Y.

MISS
MARGARET FITCH.
Photo. by White, N.Y.

MISS JULIET DAY

Photo by White, N.Y.

MISS WILDA BENNETT.

Photo, by White, N.Y.

MISS MARY GARDEN.

Photo., Copyright, by Mishkin, N.Y.

MISS FRANCES RING.

Photo. by White, N.Y.

MISS
ETHEL EDNA
WALLACE.
Photo. by White, N.Y.

MISS
GERALDINE FARRAR.
From a Photograph.

MISS LAURA NELSON HALL.
Photo. by White, N.Y.

MISS
DOROTHY FOLLIS.
Photo. by White, N.Y.

MISS RUTH H. LANG.
Photo. by Campbell Studio, N.Y.

MISS ELSIE FERGUSON.
Photo. by Mishkin, N.Y.

MISS STELLA HOBIN.
Photo. by White, N.Y.

MISS ALICE RUSSON.
Photo. by Bushnell, San Francisco.

MISS MARGARET ANGLIN.

Photo. by Savony, Fifth Avenue, N.Y.

MISS EDNA PORTER.

Photo. by White, N.Y.

Judith Lee: Pages from Her Life.

By RICHARD MARSH.

Illustrated by W. R. S. Stott.

[A new detective method is such a rare thing that it is with unusual pleasure we introduce our readers to Judith Lee, the fortunate possessor of a gift which gives her a place apart in detective fiction. Mr. Marsh's heroine is one whose fortunes, we predict with confidence, will be followed with the greatest interest from month to month.]

I.—The Man Who Cut Off My Hair.

MY name is Judith Lee. I am a teacher of the deaf and dumb. I teach them by what is called the oral system—that is, the lip-reading system. When people pronounce a word correctly they all make exactly the same movements with their lips, so that, without hearing a sound, you only have to watch them very closely to know what they are saying. Of course, this needs practice, and some people do it better and quicker than others. I suppose I must have a special sort of knack in that direction, because I do not remember a time when, by merely watching people speaking at a distance, no matter at what distance if I could see them clearly, I did not know what they were saying. In my case the gift, or knack, or whatever it is, is hereditary. My father was a teacher of the deaf and dumb—a very successful one. His father was, I believe, one of the originators of the oral system. My mother, when she was first married, had an impediment in her speech which practically made her dumb; though she was stone deaf, she became so expert at lip-reading that she could not only tell what others were saying, but she could speak herself—audibly, although she could not hear her own voice.

So, you see, I have lived in the atmosphere of lip-reading all my life. When people, as they often do, think my skill at it borders on the marvellous, I always explain to them that it is nothing of the kind, that mine is simply a case of "practice makes perfect." This knack of mine, in a way, is almost equivalent to another sense. It has led me into the most singular situations, and it has been the cause of many really extraordinary adventures. I will tell you of one which happened to me when I was quite a child, the details of which have never faded from my memory.

My father and mother were abroad, and I was staying, with some old and trusted servants, in a little cottage which we had in the country. I suppose I must have been between twelve and thirteen years of age. I was returning by train to the cottage from a short visit which I had been paying to some friends. In my compartment there were two persons besides myself—an elderly woman who sat in front of me, and a man who was at the other end of her seat. At a station not very far from my home the woman got out; a man got in and placed himself beside the one who was already there. I could see they were acquaintances—they began to talk to each other.

They had been talking together for some minutes in such low tones that you could not only not hear their words, you could scarcely tell that they were speaking. But that made no difference to me; though they spoke in the tiniest whisper I had only to look at their faces to know exactly what they were saying. As a matter of fact, happening to glance up from the magazine I was reading, I saw the man who had been there first say to the other something which gave me quite a start. What he said was this (I only saw the fag-end of the sentence):—

"... Myrtle Cottage; it's got a great, old myrtle in the front garden."

The other man said something, but as his face was turned from me I could not see what; the tone in which he spoke was so subdued that hearing was out of the question. The first man replied (whose face was to me):—

"His name is Colegate. He's an old bachelor, who uses the place as a summer cottage. I know him well—all the dealers know him. He's got some of the finest old silver in England. There's a Charles II. salt-cellar in the place which would fetch twenty pounds an ounce anywhere."

The other man sat up erect and shook his head, looking straight in front of him, so

that I could see what he said, though he spoke only in a whisper.

"Old silver is no better than new; you can only melt it."

The other man seemed to grow quite warm.

"Only melt it! Don't be a fool; you don't know what you're talking about. I can get rid of old silver at good prices to collectors all over the world; they don't ask too many questions when they think they're getting a bargain. That stuff at Myrtle Cottage is worth to us well over a thousand; I shall be surprised if I don't get more for it."

The other man must have glanced at me while I was watching his companion speak. He was a fair-haired man, with a pair of light-blue eyes, and quite a nice complexion. He whispered to his friend:—

"That infernal kid is watching us as if she were all eyes."

The other said: "Let her watch. Much good may it do her; she can't hear a word—goggle-eyed brat!"

What he meant by "goggle-eyed" I didn't know, and it was true that I could not hear; but, as it happened, it was not necessary that I should. I think the other must have been suspicious, because he replied, if possible in a smaller whisper than ever:—

"I should like to twist her skinny neck and throw her out on to the line."

He looked as if he could do it too; such an unpleasant look came into his eyes that it quite frightened me. After all, I was alone with them; I was quite small; it would have been perfectly easy for him to have done what he said he would like to. So I glanced back at my magazine, and left the rest of their conversation unwatched.

But I had heard, or rather seen, enough to set me thinking. I knew Myrtle Cottage quite well, and the big myrtle tree; it was not very far from our own cottage. And I knew Mr. Colegate and his collection of old silver—particularly that Charles II. salt-cellar of which he was so proud. What interest had it for these two men? Had Mr. Colegate come to the cottage? He was not there when I left. Or had Mr. and Mrs. Baines, who kept house for him—had they come? I was so young and so simple that it never occurred to me that there could be anything sinister about these two whispering gentlemen.

They both of them got out at the station before ours. Ours was a little village station, with a platform on only one side of the line; the one at which they got out served for quite an important place—our local market town. I thought no more about them, but I did think of Mr. Colegate and of Myrtle Cottage. Dickson, our housekeeper, said that she did not believe that anyone was at the cottage, but she owned that she was not sure. So after tea I went for a stroll, without saying a word to anyone—Dickson had such a troublesome habit of wanting to know exactly where you were going. My stroll took me to Myrtle Cottage.

It stood all by itself in a most secluded situation on the other side of Woodbarrow Common. You could scarcely see the house from the road—it was quite a little house. When I got into the garden and saw that the front-room window was open I jumped to the very natural conclusion that someone must be there. I went quickly to the window—I was on the most intimate terms with everyone about the place; I should never have dreamt of announcing my presence in any formal manner—and looked in. What I saw did surprise me.

In the room was the man of the train—the man who had been in my compartment first. He had what seemed to me to be Mr. Colegate's entire collection of old silver spread out on the table in front of him, and that very moment he was holding up that gem of the collection—the Charles II. salt-cellar. I had moved very quietly, meaning to take Mr. Colegate—if it was he—by surprise; but I doubt if I had made a noise that that man would have heard me, he was so wrapped up in that apple of Mr. Colegate's eye.

I did not know what to make of it at all. I did not know what to think. What was that man doing there? What was I to do? Should I speak to him? I was just trying to make up my mind when someone from behind lifted me right off my feet and, putting a hand to my throat, squeezed it so tightly that it hurt me.

"If you make a sound I'll choke the life right out of you. Don't you make any mistake about it—I will!"

He said that out loudly enough, though it was not so very loud either—he spoke so close to my ear. I could scarcely breathe, but I could still see, and I could see that the man who held me so horribly by the throat was the second man of the train. The recognition seemed to be mutual.

"If it isn't that infernal brat! She seemed to be all eyes in the railway carriage, and, my word, she seems to have been all ears-too."

The first man had come to the window.

"What's up?" he asked. "Who's that kid you've got hold of there?"

My captor twisted my face round for the other to look at.

"Can't you see for yourself? I felt, somehow, that she was listening."

"She couldn't have heard, even if she was; no one could have heard what we were saying. Hand her in here." I was passed through the window to the other, who kept as tight a grip on my throat as his friend had done.

"Who are you?" he asked. "I'll give you a chance to answer, but if you try to scream I'll twist your head right off you."

He loosed his grip just enough to enable me to answer if I wished. But I did not wish. I kept perfectly still. His companion said:—

"What's the use of wasting time? Slit her throat and get done with it."

He took from the table a dreadful-looking knife, with a blade eighteen inches long, which I knew very well. Mr. Colegate had it in his collection because of its beautifully-chased, massive silver handle. It had belonged to one of the old Scottish chieftains; Mr. Colegate would sometimes make me go all over goose-flesh by telling me of some of the awful things for which, in the old, lawless, blood-thirsty days in Scotland, it was supposed to have been used. I knew that he kept it in beautiful condition, with the edge as sharp as a razor. So you can fancy what my feelings were when that man drew the blade across my throat, so close to the skin that it all but grazed me.

"Before you cut her throat," observed his companion, "we'll tie her up. We'll make short work of her. This bit of rope will about do the dodge."

He had what looked to me like a length of clothes-line in his hand. With it, between them, they tied me to a great oak chair, so tight that it seemed to cut right into me, and, lest I should scream with the pain, the man

"HE CAUGHT HOLD OF MY HAIR, AND WITH THAT DREADFUL KNIFE SAWED THE WHOLE OF IT FROM MY HEAD."

with the blue eyes tied something across my mouth in a way which made it impossible for me to utter a sound. Then he threatened me with that knife again, and just as I made sure he was going to cut my throat he caught hold of my hair, which, of course, was hanging down my back, and with that dreadful knife sawed the whole of it from my head.

If I could have got within reach of him at that moment I believe that I should have stuck that knife into him. Rage made me half beside myself. He had destroyed what was almost the dearest thing in the world to me—not because of my own love of it, but on account of my mother's. My mother had often quoted to me, "The glory of a woman is her hair," and she would add that mine was very beautiful. There certainly was a great deal of it. She was so proud of my hair that she had made me proud of it too—for her sake. And to think that this man could have robbed me of it in so hideous a way! I do believe that at the moment I could have killed him.

I suppose he saw the fury which possessed me, because he laughed and struck me across the face with my own hair.

"I've half a mind to cram it down your throat," he said. "It didn't take me long to cut it off, but I'll cut your throat even quicker—if you so much as try to move, my little dear."

The other man said to him:—

"She can't move and she can't make a sound either. You leave her alone. Come over here and attend to business."

"I'll learn her," replied the other man, and he lifted my hair above my head and let it fall all over me.

They proceeded to wrap up each piece of Mr. Colegate's collection in tissue paper, and then to pack the whole into two queer-shaped bags—pretty heavy they must have been. It was only then that I realized what they were doing—they were stealing Mr. Colegate's collection; they were going to take it away. The fury which possessed me as I sat there, helpless, and watched them! The pain was bad enough, but my rage was worse. When the man who had cut off my hair moved to the window with one of the bags held in both his hands—it was as much as he could carry—he said to his companion with a glance towards me: "Hadn't I better cut her throat before I go?"

"You can come and do that presently," replied the other; "you'll find her waiting." Then he dropped his voice and I saw him say: "Now you quite understand?" The other nodded. "What is it?"

The face of the man who had cut my hair was turned towards me. He put his lips very close to the other, speaking in the tiniest whisper, which he never dreamed could reach my ears: "Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway."

The other whispered, "That's right. You'd better make a note of it; we don't want any bungling."

"No fear, I'm not likely to forget. Then he repeated his previous words, "Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway."

He whispered this so very earnestly that I felt sure there was something about the words which was most important; by the time he had said them a second time they were printed on my brain quite as indelibly as they were on his. He got out of the window and his bag was passed to him; then he spoke a parting word to me.

"Sorry I can't take a lock of your hair with me; perhaps I'll come back for one presently."

Then he went. If he had known the passion which was blazing in my heart! That allusion to my desecrated locks only made it burn still fiercer. His companion, left alone, paid no attention to me whatever. He continued to secure his bag, searched the room, as if for anything which might have been overlooked, then, bearing the bag with the other half of Mr. Colegate's collection with him, he went through the door, ignoring my presence as if I had never existed. What he did afterwards I cannot say; I saw no more of him; I was left alone—all through the night.

What a night it was. I was not afraid; I can honestly say that I have seldom been afraid of anything—I suppose it is a matter of temperament—but I was most uncomfortable, very unhappy, and each moment the pain caused me by my bonds seemed to be growing greater. I do believe that the one thing which enabled me to keep my senses all through the night was the constant repetition of those mystic words: Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway. In the midst of my trouble I was glad that what some people call my curious gift had enabled me to see what I was quite sure they had never meant should reach my understanding. What the words meant I had no notion; in themselves they seemed to be silly words. But that they had some hidden, weighty meaning I was so sure that I kept saying them over and over again lest they should slip through my memory.

I do not know if I ever closed my eyes; I certainly never slept. I saw the first gleams of light usher in the dawn of another morning, and I knew the sun had risen. I wondered what they were doing at home—between the repetitions of that cryptic phrase. Was Dickson looking for me? I rather wished I had let her know where I was going, then she might have had some idea of where to look. As it was she had none. I had some acquaintances three or four miles off, with whom I would sometimes go to tea and, without warning to anyone at home, stay the night. I am afraid that, even as a child, my habits were erratic. Dickson might think I was staying with them, and, if so, she would not even trouble to look for me. In that case I might have to stay where I was for days.

I do not know what time it was, but it seemed to me that it had been light for weeks, and that the day must be nearly gone, when I heard steps outside the open window. I was very nearly in a state of stupor but I had still sense enough to wonder if it was that man who had cut my hair come back again to cut my throat. As I watched the open sash my heart began to beat more vigorously than it had for a very long time. What then was my relief when there presently appeared, on the other side of it, the face of Mr. Colegate, the owner of Myrtle Cottage. I tried to scream—with joy, but that cloth across my mouth prevented my uttering a sound.

I never shall forget the look which came on Mr. Colegate's face when he saw me. He rested his hands on the sill as if he wondered how the window came to be open, then when he looked in and saw me, what a jump he gave.

"Judith!" he exclaimed. "Judith Lee! Surely it is Judith Lee!"

He was a pretty old man, or he seemed so to me, but I doubt if a boy could have got through that window quicker than he did. He was by my side in less than no time; with a knife which he took from his pocket was severing my bonds. The agony which came

"I SAT UP IN BED, PUT UP MY HANDS—THEN IT ALL CAME BACK TO ME."

over me as they were loosed! It was worse than anything which had gone before. The moment my mouth was free I exclaimed—even then I was struck by the funny, hoarse voice in which I seemed to be speaking:—

"Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway."

So soon as I had got those mysterious words out of my poor, parched throat I fainted; the agony I was suffering, the strain which I had gone through, proved too much for me. I knew dimly that I was tumbling into Mr. Colegate's arms, and then I knew no more.

When I came back to life I was in bed. Dickson was at my bedside, and Dr. Scott, and Mr. Colegate, and Pierce, the village policeman, and a man who I afterwards knew was a detective, who had been sent over post-haste from a neighbouring town. I wondered where I was, and then I saw I was in a room in Myrtle Cottage. I sat up in bed, put up my hands—then it all came back to me.

"He cut off my hair with MacGregor's knife!" MacGregor was the name of the Highland chieftain to whom, according to Mr. Colegate, that dreadful knife had belonged.

When it did all come back to me and I realized what had happened, and felt how strange my head seemed without its accustomed covering, nothing would satisfy me but that they should bring me a looking-glass. When I saw what I looked like the rage which had possessed me when the outrage first took place surged through me with greater force than ever. Before they could stop me, or even guess what I was going to do, I was out of bed and facing them. That cryptic utterance came back to me as if of its own initiative; it burst from my lips.

"Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway! Where are my clothes? That's where the man is who cut off my hair."

They stared at me. I believe that for a moment they thought that what I had endured had turned my brain, and that I was mad. But I soon made it perfectly clear that I was nothing of the kind. I told them my story as fast as I could speak; I fancy I brought it home to their understanding. Then I told them of the words which I had seen spoken in such a solemn whisper, and how sure I was that they were pregnant with weighty meaning.

"Cotterill, Cloak-room, Victoria Station, Brighton Railway—that's where the man is who cut my hair off—that's where I'm going to catch him."

The detective was pleased to admit that there might be something in my theory, and that it would be worth while to go up to Victoria Station to see what the words might mean. Nothing would satisfy me but that we should go at once. I was quite convinced that every moment was of importance, and that if we were not quick we should be too late. I won Mr. Colegate over—of course, he was almost as anxious to get his collection back as I was to be quits with the miscreant who had shorn me of my locks. So we went up to town by the first train we could catch—Mr. Colegate, the detective, and an excited and practically hairless child.

When we got to Victoria Station we marched straight up to the cloak-room, and the detective said to one of the persons on the other side of the counter:—

"Is there a parcel here for the name of Cotterill?"

The person to whom he had spoken did not reply, but another man who was standing by his side.

"Cotterill? A parcel for the name of Cotterill has just been taken out—a hand-bag, scarcely more than half a minute ago. You must have seen him walking off with it as you came up. He can hardly be out of sight now." Leaning over the counter, he looked along the platform. "There he is—someone is just going to speak to him."

I saw the person to whom he referred—a shortish man in a light grey suit, carrying a brown leather hand-bag. I also saw the person who was going to speak to him; and thereupon I ceased to have eyes for the man with the bag. I broke into exclamation.

"There's the man who cut my hair!" I cried. I went rushing along the platform as hard as I could go. Whether the man had heard me or not I cannot say; I dare say I had spoken loudly enough; but he gave one glance in my direction, and when he saw me I have no doubt that he remembered. He whispered to the man with the bag. I was near enough to see, though not to hear, what he said. In spite of the rapidity with which his lips were moving, I saw quite distinctly.

"Bantock, 13, Harwood Street, Oxford Street." That was what he said, and no sooner had he said it than he turned and fled—from me; I knew he was flying from me, and it gave me huge satisfaction to know that the mere sight of me had made him run. I was conscious that Mr. Colegate and the detective were coming at a pretty smart pace behind me.

The man with the bag, seeing his companion dart off without the slightest warning, glanced round to see what had caused his hasty flight.

I suppose he saw me and the detective and Mr. Colegate, and he drew his own conclusions. He dropped that hand-bag as if it had been red-hot, and off he ran. He ran to such purpose that we never caught him—neither him nor the man who had cut my hair. The station was full of people—a train had just come in. The crowd streaming out covered the platform with a swarm of moving figures. They acted as cover to those two eager gentlemen—they got clean off. But we got the bag; and, one of the station officials coming on the scene, we were shown to an apartment where, afterexplanations had been made, the bag and its contents were examined.

"IN NEARLY EVERY GARMENT JEWELS WERE WRAPPED, WHICH FELL OUT OF THEM AS THEY WERE WITHDRAWN FROM THE BAG."

Of course, we had realized from the very first moment that Mr. Colegate's collection could not possibly be in that bag, because it was not nearly large enough. When it was seen what was in it, something like a sensation was created. It was crammed with small articles of feminine clothing. In nearly every garment jewels were wrapped, which fell out of them as they were withdrawn from the bag. Such jewels! You should have seen the display they made when they were spread out upon the leather-covered table—and our faces as we stared at them.

"This does not look like my collection of old silver," observed Mr. Colegate.

"No," remarked a big, broad-shouldered man, who I afterwards learned was a well-known London detective, who had been induced by our detective to join our party. "This does not look like your collection of old silver, sir; it looks, if you'll excuse my saying so, like something very much more worth finding. Unless I am mistaken, these are the Duchess of Datchet's jewels, some of which she wore at the last Drawing Room, and which were taken from her Grace's bedroom after her return. The police all over Europe have been looking for them for more than a month."

"That bag has been with us nearly a month. The party who took it out paid four-and-sixpence for cloak-room charges—twopence a day for twenty-seven days."

The person from the cloak-room had come with us to that apartment; it was he who said this. The London detective replied:—

"Paid four-and-sixpence, did he? Well, it was worth it—to us. Now, if I could lay my hand on the party who put that bag in the cloak-room, I might have a word of a kind to say to him."

I had been staring, wide-eyed, as piece by piece the contents of the bag had been disclosed; I had been listening, open-eared, to what the detective said; when he made that remark about laying his hands on the party who had deposited that bag in the cloak-room, there came into my mind the words which I had seen the man who had cut my hair whisper as he fled to the man with the bag. The cryptic sentence which I had seen him whisper as I sat tied to the chair had indeed proved to be full of meaning; the words which, even in the moment of flight, he had felt bound to utter might be just as full. I ventured on an observation, the first which I had made, speaking with a good deal of diffidence.

"I think I know where he might be found—I am not sure, but I think."

All eyes were turned to me. The detective exclaimed:—

"You think you know? As we haven't got so far as thinking, if you were to tell us, little lady, what you think, it might be as well, mightn't it?"

I considered—I wanted to get the words exactly right.

"Suppose you were to try"—I paused so as to make quite sure—"Bantock, 13, Harwood Street, Oxford Street."

"And who is Bantock?" the detective asked. "And what do you know about him, anyhow?"

"I don't know anything at all about him, but I saw the man who cut my hair whisper to the other man just before he ran away, 'Bantock, 13, Harwood Street, Oxford Street'—I saw him quite distinctly."

"You saw him whisper? What does the girl mean by saying she saw him whisper? Why, young lady, you must have been quite fifty feet away. How, at that distance, and with all the noise of the traffic, could you hear a whisper?"

"I didn't say I heard him; I said I saw him. I don't need to hear to know what a person is saying. I just saw you whisper to the other man, 'The young lady seems to be by way of being a curiosity.'"

The London detective stared at our detective. He seemed to be bewildered.

"But I—I don't know how you heard that; I scarcely breathed the words."

Mr. Colegate explained. When they heard they all seemed to be bewildered, and they looked at me, as people do look at the present day, as if I were some strange and amazing thing. The London detective said:—

"I never heard the like to that. It seems to me very much like what old-fashioned people called 'black magic.'"

Although he was a detective, he could not have been a very intelligent person after all, or he would not have talked such nonsense. Then he added, with an accent on the "saw":—

"What was it you said you *saw* him whisper?"

I bargained before I told him.

"I will tell you if you let me come with you."

"Let you come with me?" He stared still more. "What does the girl mean?"

"Her presence," struck in Mr. Colegate, "may be useful for purposes of recognition. She won't be m the way; you can do no harm by letting her come."

"If you don't promise to let me come I sha'n't tell you."

The big man laughed. He seemed to find me amusing; I do not know why. If he had only understood my feeling on the subject of my hair, and how I yearned to be even with the man who had wrought me what seemed to me such an irreparable injury. I daresay it sounds as if I were very revengeful. I do not think it was a question of vengeance only; I wanted justice. The detective took out a fat note-book.

"Very well; it's a bargain. Tell me what you saw him whisper, and you shall come." So I told him again, and he wrote it down. "'Bantock, 13, Harwood Street, Oxford Street.' I know Harwood Street, though I don't know Mr. Bantock. But he seems to be residing at what is generally understood to be an unlucky number. Let me get a message through to the Yard—we may want assistance. Then we'll pay a visit to Mr. Bantock—if there is such a person. It sounds like a very tall story to me."

I believe that even then he doubted if I had seen what I said I saw. When we did start I was feeling pretty nervous, because I realized that if we were going on a fool's errand, and there did turn out to be no Bantock, that London detective would doubt me more than ever. And, of course, I could not be sure that there was such a person, though it was some comfort to know that there was a Harwood Street. We went four in a cab—the two detectives, Mr. Colegate and I. We had gone some distance before

the cab stopped. The London detective said :—

"This is Harwood Street ; I told the driver to stop at the corner—we will walk the rest of the way. A cab might arouse suspicion ; you never know."

It was a street full of shops. No. 13 proved to be a sort of curiosity shop and jeweller's combined ; quite a respectable-looking place, and sure enough over the top of the window was the name "Bantock."

"That looks as if, at any rate, there were a Bantock," the big man said ; it was quite a weight off my own mind when I saw the name.

Just as we reached the shop a cab drew up and five men got out, whom the London detective seemed to recognize with mingled feelings.

"That's queered the show," he exclaimed. I did not know what he meant. "They rouse suspicion, if they do nothing else—so in we go."

And in we went—the detective first, and I close on his heels. There were two young men standing close together behind the counter. The instant we appeared I saw one whisper to the other :—

"Give them the office—ring the alarm-bell—they're 'tecs !"

I did not quite know what he meant either, but I guessed enough to make me cry out :—

"Don't let him move—he's going to ring the alarm-bell and give them the office."

Those young men were so startled—they must have been quite sure that I could not have heard—that they both stood still and stared ; before they had got over their surprise a detective—they were detectives who had come in the second cab—had each by the shoulder.

There was a door at the end of the shop which the London detective opened.

"There's a staircase here ; we'd better go up and see who's above. You chaps keep yourselves handy, you may be wanted—when I call you come."

He mounted the stairs—as before, I was as close to him as I could very well get. On the top of the staircase was a landing, on to which two doors opened. We paused to listen ; I could distinctly hear voices coming through one of them.

"I think this is ours," the London detective said.

He opened the one through which the voices were coming. He marched in—I was still as close to him as I could get. In it were several men, I did not know how many, and I did not care ; I had eyes for only one. I walked right past the detective up to the table round which some of them were sitting, some standing, and stretching out an accusatory arm I pointed at one.

"That's the man who cut off my hair !"

It was, and well he knew it. His conscience must have smitten him ; I should not have thought that a grown man could be so frightened at the sight of a child. He caught hold, with both hands, of the side of the table ; he glared at me as if I were some dreadful apparition—and no doubt to him I was. It was only with an effort that he seemed able to use his voice.

"Good night !" he exclaimed, "it's that infernal kid !"

On the table, right in front of me, I saw something with which I was only too familiar. I snatched it up.

"And this is the knife," I cried, "with which he did it !"

It was ; the historical blade, which had once belonged to the sanguinary and, I sincerely trust, more or less apocryphal MacGregor. I held it out towards the gaping man.

"You know that this is the knife with which you cut off my hair," I said. "You know it is."

I dare say I looked a nice young termagant with my short hair, rage in my eyes, and that frightful weapon in my hand. Apparently I did not impress him quite as I had intended—at least, his demeanour did not suggest it.

"By the living Jingo !" he shouted. "I wish I had cut her throat with it as well !"

It was fortunate for him that he did not. Probably, in the long run, he would have suffered for it more than he did—though he suffered pretty badly as it was. It was his cutting my hair that did it. Had he not done that I have little doubt that I should have been too conscious of the pains caused me by my bonds—the marks caused by the cord were on my skin for weeks after—to pay such close attention to their proceedings as I did under the spur of anger. Quite possibly that tell-tale whisper would have gone unnoticed. Absorbed by my own suffering, I should have paid very little heed to the cryptic sentence which really proved to be their undoing. It was the outrage to my locks which caused me to strain every faculty of observation I had. He had much better have left them alone.

That was the greatest capture the police had made for years. In one haul they

captured practically every member of a gang of cosmopolitan thieves who were wanted by the police all over the world. The robbery of Mr. Colegate's collection of old silver shrank into insignificance before the rest of their misdeeds. And not only were the thieves taken themselves, but the proceeds of no end of robberies.

It seemed that they had met there for a sort of annual division of the common spoil. There was an immense quantity of valuable property before them on the table, and lots more about the house. Those jewels which were in the bag which had been deposited at the cloak-room at Victoria Station were to have been added to the common fund—to say nothing of Mr. Colegate's collection of old silver.

The man who called himself Bantock, and who owned the premises at 13, Harwood Street, proved to be a well-known dealer in precious stones and jewellery and *bric-à-brac* and all sorts of valuables. He was immensely rich; it was shown that a great deal of his money had been made by buying and selling valuable stolen property of every sort and kind. Before the police had done with him it was made abundantly clear that, under various *aliases*, in half the countries of the world, he had been a wholesale dealer in stolen goods. He was sentenced to a long term of penal servitude. I am not quite sure, but I believe that he died in jail.

All the men who were in that room were sent to prison for different terms, including the man who cut my hair—to say nothing of his companion. So far as the proceedings at the court were concerned, I never appeared at all. Compared to some of the crimes of which they had been guilty, the robbery of Mr. Colegate's silver was held to be a mere nothing. They were not charged with it at all, so my evidence was not required. But every time I looked at my scanty locks, which took years to grow to anything like a decent length—they had reached to my knees, but they never did that again—each time I stood before a looking-glass and saw what a curious spectacle I presented with my closely-clipped poll, something of that old rage came back to me which had been during that first moment in my heart, and I felt—what I felt when I was tied to that chair in Myrtle Cottage. I endeavoured to console myself, in the spirit of the Old World rather than the New, that, owing to the gift which was mine. I had been able to cry something like quits with the man who, in a moment of mere wanton savagery, had deprived me of what ought to be the glory of a woman.

"THAT'S THE MAN WHO CUT OFF MY HAIR!"






The "S.P.B."

(Society for the Propagation of the Beard.)

By J. WILLSHER, Secretary.
















In the pairs of photographs of each personage reproduced in this article the larger portrait is identically the same as the smaller one, except for the addition of a beard.

WHAT a lamentable sacrifice of time, money, energy, and temper is involved in the shaving of the chins of the British nation! In its monetary aspect alone last year it is estimated that twelve million pounds sterling was expended in daily recurrent efforts to efface the beard — "Nature's glorious insignia of manhood." A scientist has calculated that a man shaving until he is eighty has mowed down twenty-seven feet of hirsute stubble. Think of the waste!

"Why is it," inquired a distinguished foreign Ambassador, "that you English generally shave your beards, when both your present monarch and his predecessor set an example by letting them grow?"

There was a time when the chins of the male portion of the nation assumed the appearance of that of the reigning King. As one historian remarks, "The Royal portrait reflects a general fashion from which only the disloyal or the indifferent departed."

In the time of Elizabeth beards were of the most varied and fantastic cut.

Charles II. was the last British monarch, until Edward VII., to wear any hair on the face, and that only a moustache of the tiniest proportions. About 1848 it was regarded by some of the Continental Governments as a badge significant of democratic sentiments, and as such was interfered with by police regulations. But the fashion grew, and in the "'sixties" and "'seventies," and even the "'eighties," every other gentleman you met wore a beard. Why did the fashion change? Why is everyone now clean-shaven as to the chin—all except a million or so, including His Majesty King George, several dukes, many members of Parliament, the leading financiers of the day, the leading artists, the leading merchants, Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, and Mr. A. B. Walkley?

Only the other day one individual, indignant that the Royal example was not more widely followed, wrote a letter to the newspapers calling upon all loyal subjects who were able to do so forthwith to grow beards. Since then a Society for the








THE DRAWINGS ON THIS PAGE REPRESENT ACTUAL BEARD-FASHIONS ONCE PREVAILING.

Society for the Propagation of the Beard.

19, TAVISTOCK ST.
LONDON, W.C.

31st May, 1911

Dear Sir:

In spite of the example set by many of the most illustrious and notable men of the day, we observe with regret that you continue to have recourse to the unnatural practice of razing the hair from your face.

Do you not think from the enclosed that this practice is in your case at the expense of far greater dignity and comeliness?

Will you not permit me to enrol you as a member of this society?

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

J. Willsher
Secretary.

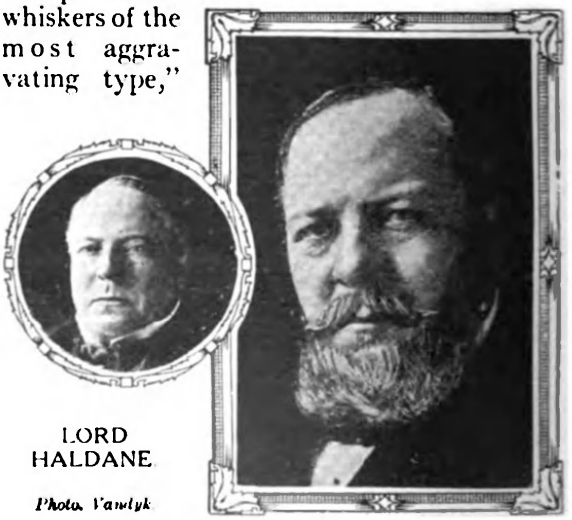
COPY OF THE LETTER SENT OUT BY THE "S.P.B."

Propagation of the Beard has been formed, with a view to promote the practice of beard-wearing. In order to convert numerous clean-shaven members of the community, photographs have been specially prepared, showing how greatly beards would improve the personal appearance, and these photographs, which have been sent to each of their originals, we are now able to publish.

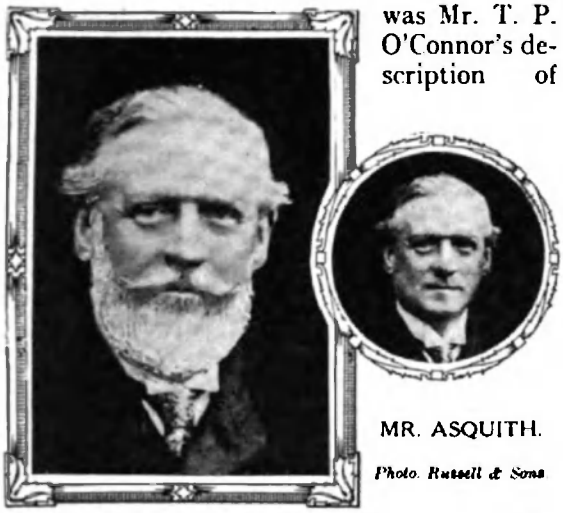
The correspondence which the accompanying letter has elicited is, of course, private, and we are not, therefore, able to gratify our readers by reproducing the comments of some of our most celebrated public personages who have been thus generously presented with beards; nor are we able to delineate the expressions of delight—nay, of rapture—on the countenances of their wives, mothers, and sisters who thus behold the objects of their reverence and devotion adorned by "face-fittings" luxuriant beyond their wildest dreams.

The point for the public to consider is whether their public men would not frequently cut a more imposing figure if they eschewed a razor. Opinions may vary in Mr. Asquith's case, although it is not to be denied that the slight recession of chin which marks the Prime Minister's physiognomy might be effectually diminished if not entirely concealed by a hirsute growth; but Mr. Balfour would undoubtedly gain in majesty by the addition of a beard. It is not as though criticism were being directed for the first time to the facial adornments (or the lack of them) of the Leader of the Opposition. "Mutton-chop side-whiskers of the most aggravating type,"

LORD ROSEBERY.
Photo. Heath.

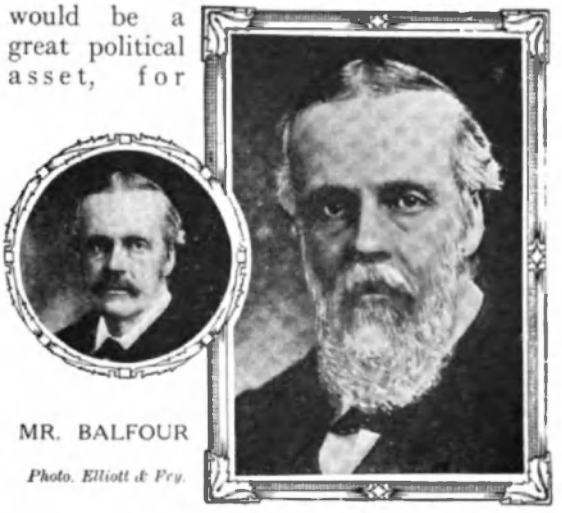


LORD HALDANE
Photo. Vandyk



MR. ASQUITH.

Photo. Russell & Sons.



MR. BALFOUR

Photo. Elliott & Fry.

was Mr. T. P. O'Connor's description of Mr. Balfour's growth twenty years ago. He has shaved them since then, but there is nothing to take their place. In succeeding some years ago to his noble uncle's place as Prime Minister, should he not also have had Lord Salisbury's noble beard in reversion?

The case of Lord Rosebery is more difficult. Perhaps he is one of those few men who appear to better advantage clean-shaven, although the patriarchal note which has lately appeared in his lordship's writings and speeches is hardly in keeping with a visage still juvenile in spite of its crown of white hair.

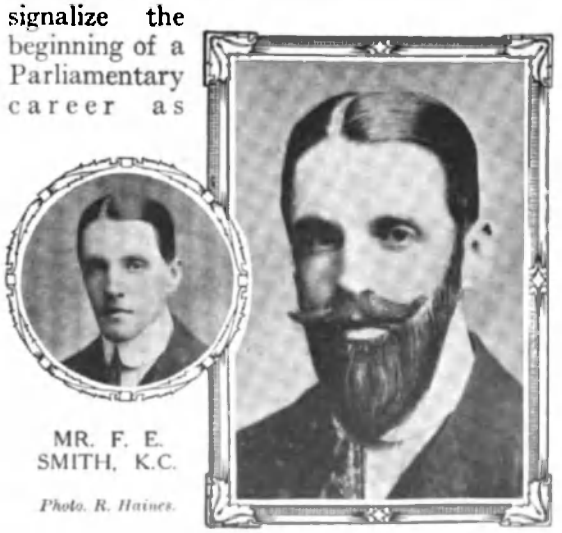
But with a bearded Viscount Haldane, who shall say that the caricaturist has not been robbed of some of his more salient advantages? Take Mr. F. E. Smith; is not his extremely juvenile appearance a drawback? Would not Mr. Winston Churchill, in a flowing beard, command greater reverence on both sides of the House?

Beards are not popular in Wales, otherwise it is difficult to account for the absence of one on the chin of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It would be a great political asset, for beards are no longer associated with revolution, as they were in the middle of the last century, but with virtue and benignity. Mr. Birrell bears some likeness to the late Anthony Trollope in his beard. The fact that we already have one bearded Conservative statesman of fashion in the person of Sir Gilbert Parker might tend to dissuade Mr. Austen Chamberlain from growing one. Could not Sir Arthur Conan Doyle be induced to grow a beard, and so complete his physical unlikeness to his immortal Sherlock? Again, would Mr. Anthony Hope's admirers be fewer if he ceased to shave?

The same query might be asked of two such divines as the Bishop of London and the Rev. R. J. Campbell. Would Sir Arthur Pinero's plays be more closely linked with those of Mr. Bernard Shaw if he should grow a beard? The present Admiral of the Fleet is a bearded man, and a beard becomes most sailors. Why, then, should Lord Charles Beresford hesitate even at so late an hour? A beard would signalize the beginning of a Parliamentary career as

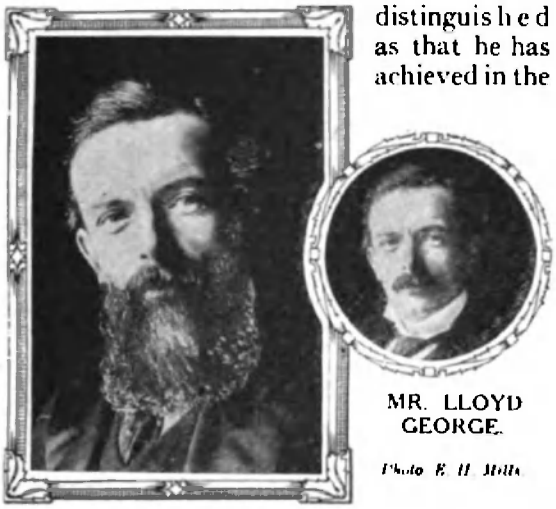
MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL.

Photo Russell & Sons.



MR. F. E. SMITH, K.C.

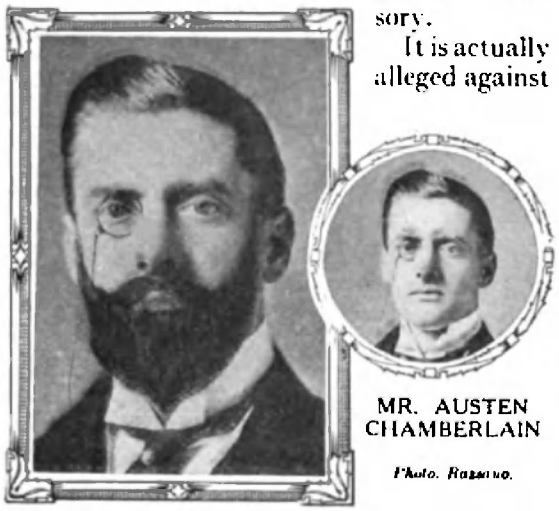
Photo. R. Haines.



MR. LLOYD GEORGE.

Photo E. H. Mills.

distinguished as that he has achieved in the Navy. And Mr. Seymour Lucas would be no less successful an artist if he cultivated a barbal accessory.



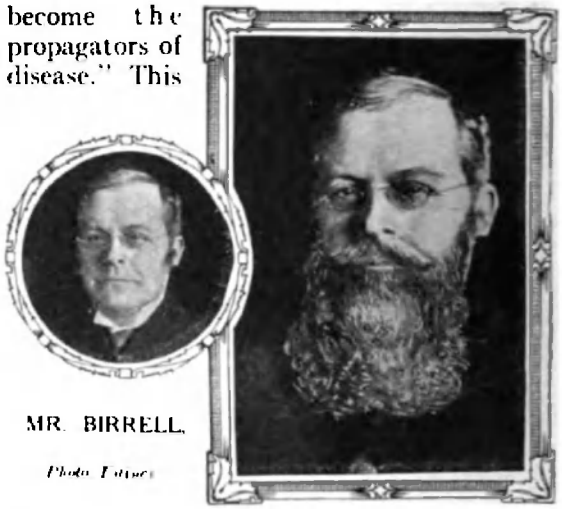
MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN

Photo. Russell.

It is actually alleged against beards that they are unhygienic. "Beards collect germs, which are thus readily conveyed to the thoracic mucous membrane, to become the propagators of disease." This statement, penned by a person who perhaps has tried to grow a beard and failed, is often quoted as an argument for shaving.

SIR A. CONAN DOYLE.

Photo. Elliott & Fry

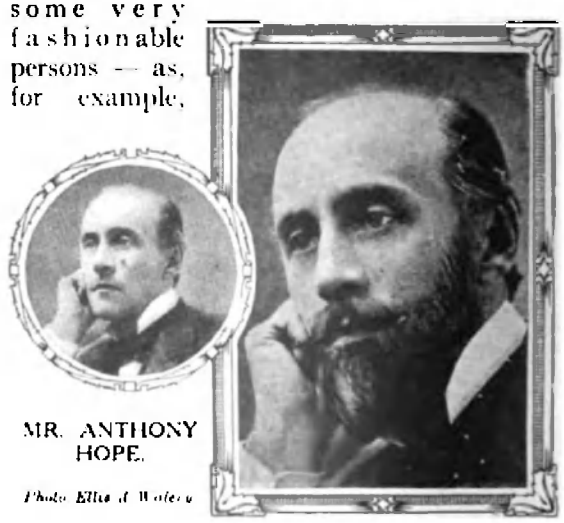


MR. BIRRELL.

Photo. Lafayette

Is there any truth in all this? "If I thought," writes Mr. Lowther, the Speaker of the House of Commons, to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Beard, "it was uncomfortable or unhealthy to wear a beard I should have shaved mine off twenty-six years ago." As a matter of fact, there is no truth in the sanitary argument — it is just the other way. Beards serve as both internal and external protectors of the throat, as Nature intended they should. Physicians often recommend that the beard should be allowed to grow on the chin and throat in cases of liability to inflammation of the larynx or of the bronchia; and moustaches and whiskers are reckoned useful for prevention of toothache and nervous diseases of the face.

The real enemy to beards is fashion. And yet this requires some explanation, because some very fashionable persons — as, for example,



MR. ANTHONY HOPE.

Photo. Ellis & Walery

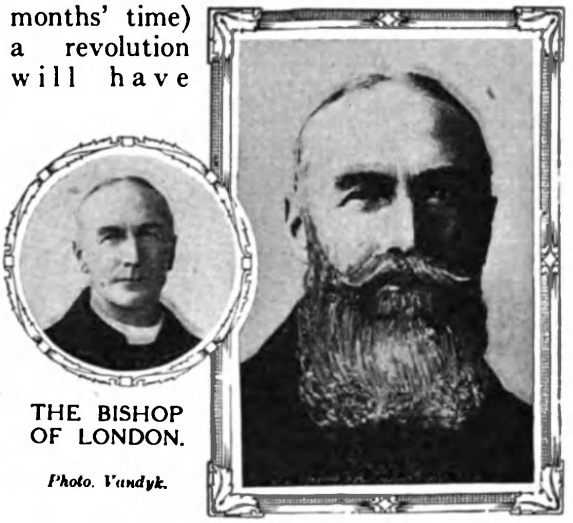
REV. R. J. CAMPBELL.

Photo. Elliott & Fry.

the founder of the Bachelors' Club—wear beards. Of course, the explanation is that it is the fashion to look young, and beards are supposed to tend to make one look old. Beards confer dignity, and this is not a dignified age. Beards are formal, and this is not an age of formality.

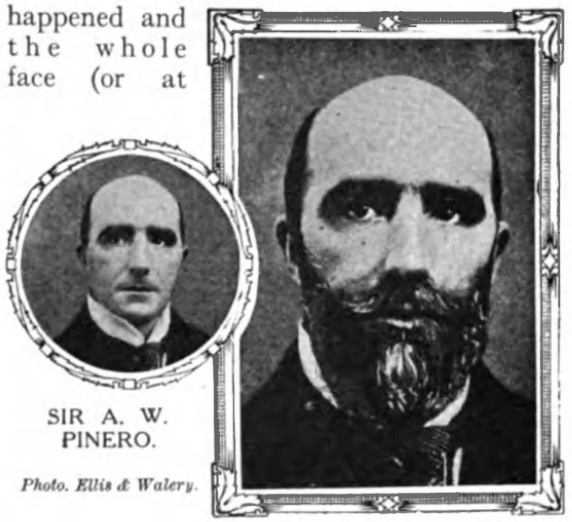
But another attack on beards by the redoubtable Mr. Frank Richardson is more serious. He calls them "face-fittings." In one respect General Ulysses Grant and Mr. Arthur Bourchier join hands and hearts, for while the former averred, "I shaved off my beard to please my family, and never was so uncomfortable in my life," the latter states: "I grew a beard to please the public, and for six months I was never so happy."

Let but His Royal Highness Prince Arthur of Connaught, Lord Spencer, Lord Howard de Walden, Mr. Cyril Maude, and Mr. Seymour Hicks grow beards, and to-morrow (or say in six months' time) a revolution will have happened and the whole face (or at least half the face) of England will be altered.



THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

Photo. Vandyk.

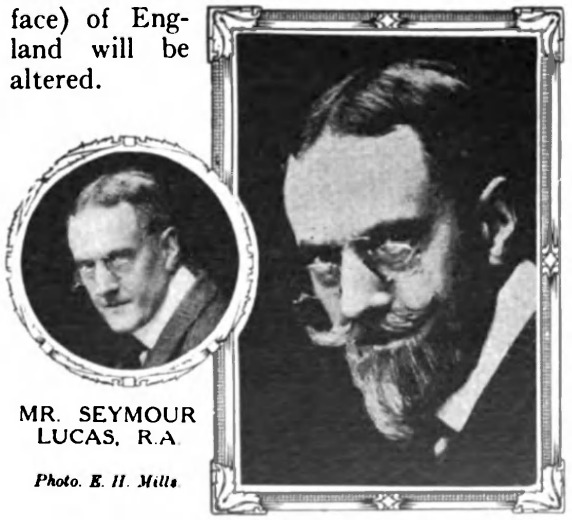


SIR A. W. PINERO.

Photo. Ellis & Walery.

LORD CHAS. BERESFORD.

Photo. Dinham.



MR. SEYMOUR LUCAS, R.A.

Photo. E. H. Mills.

Boaz Tucker's Miracle.

A TRUE EPISODE OF EARLY MORMON DAYS.

By WINIFRED GRAHAM,

Author of "Ezra the Mormon."

Illustrated by Sydney Seymour Lucas.

[The attention of the reader is invited to the fact that the writer of this story, who is a well-known authority on Mormon history and customs, vouches for its accuracy. The events described, which actually took place, throw a strange light on a question which has recently been brought so prominently before the public eye.]

I.

"THE Mormons told me this was heaven," said the Gentile boy, pushing his hat to the back of his head and ruffling the curly hair over his perplexed forehead. "It strikes me, Awilda, Mormonism can make Utah somewhat like the other place at times."

The girl looked at her young admirer with eyes of reproof.

"Perhaps you are unhappy," she whispered softly, "because you have not joined our community. What could be more like Paradise than this lovely scene?"

She stretched her arms as if to embrace the country landscape. They were seated on a bank thick with the stems of ballooning dandelions. Above their heads hummingbirds whirled among the white tops of blossoming locust trees. In the distance the blue Salt Lake gleamed like an azure mirror.

"Your community!" cried the hot-blooded youth, with indignation. "Do you know that the servant in my little house is one of your Bishop's sixty-three children, and his mother one of seven wives? Under the sway of Brigham Young you and your people are only slaves. It maddens me to think your parents are scheming to marry you to that polygamous old 'saint,' Boaz Tucker. His father was convicted as a ringleader in the Mountain Meadow Massacre, and a bounty was offered for his head; so the son comes of a cruel and scheming family. Perhaps you don't know his mother was seared with a hot iron cattle-brand by her better-half, for the terrible crime of declining to keep his saddle in her parlour."

Walter Harrison's voice shook with scorn, for he loved Awilda madly. Already he had breathed many heresies into the ears of the Mormon maiden, whispering that if she would fly with him to Gentile lands he could save her from the shame and degradation of her faith. She lived in a rambling old farmhouse, which looked so peaceful it was hard to believe it had reared a horde of polygamous families.

Awilda's eyes were full of mystery as she spoke to him in the low, musical voice which set his pulses beating.

"If Boaz Tucker were not a great saint, I should dread the thought of marriage with him. I can't help loving you, Walter, but Boaz is chosen of the Lord. He is a Seer and Revelator; all his wives will receive exaltation in the future life. I know you don't believe in his miracles. Is it because you are a little jealous? To-morrow a great proof will be given to show he is superhuman. He proposes to walk on the face of the waters, as our Lord did on the Sea of Galilee, before hundreds of spectators."

An expression of celestial rapture added a fresh beauty to Awilda's face. She was so young and trustful that Walter sickened as he listened to her praise of the arch-hypocrite and trickster, who was scheming to ruin her life. The Gentile knew well enough that Elder Tucker would treat his fresh plural bride no better than the cows lying in the shade near a flowering stretch of marsh at the head of the broad, sunny meadow. There the redwings fed their young, while the bobolinks sang merrily. Walter had heard with disgust Elder Tucker essaying to speak in unknown tongues, describing the vehement nonsense which issued from his lips as "the

language of the ancient people of Zarahemlah." Boaz was the equal of Joseph Smith in his willingness to descend to jugglery, exciting large congregations by boastful pretence of false revelations.

"If I could prove to you, Awilda, that Elder Tucker is not what he represents himself to be, but a man capable of infamous deception, would you throw off the shackles of this creed and come with me to the old country, where one wife is the queen of one man's home? I have made all necessary preparations for our escape, and I have a strong body of friends ready to help me. Let the walking on the water be the test. If Tucker succeeds, I will go away and never see you again. Should he fail, will that decide you to break away from Mormon impostures and put your trust in me?"

Awilda's secret lover had done much to break down the priestly control and Church superstitions which surrounded her young life. Deep down in her heart a doubt had sprung into life, though outwardly she still protested that the Elders were saints of God. Half in terror at her daring, she bowed her head in assent.

"You Englishmen," she whispered, "marry for love; we Mormons marry for religion, and bear much for the sake of our creed. Though all deny that polygamy causes suffering, they know it well enough. My uncle's two wives, who dress alike and profess to be as sisters, are really broken-hearted creatures. One has spells of being possessed by the Evil Spirit. Between ourselves, it is really jealousy. She suffers the agony of martyrdom when Uncle Sidney showers presents on his younger wife."

A desperate longing to escape the awful fate in store for herself made Awilda powerless to resist the sudden fond embrace of her unaccepted Gentile lover.

"Show me exactly where the miracle is to take place," whispered Walter, as he released her rosy lips. "I shall be there with your concourse of godly people; only my fate, as well as Tucker's, will hang in the balance."

Awilda rose stealthily, glancing round to make sure they were unobserved. Then she led him to the selected spot for the Prophet's manifestation of power. A stretch of still water just below the breast of a dam was chosen as the holy site, where Mormon eyes must behold the Divine completeness of Elder Boaz.

"'MANY OF OUR WOMEN ENVY ME THE CHANCE OF MARRYING SUCH AN EXALTED MAN,' AWILDA TOLD WALTER."

"Many of our women envy me the chance of marrying such an exalted man," Awilda told Walter, her fingers still pressed in his

burning palm. "Fancy the honour of being chosen by one who tells us on oath he was caught up like Moses into an exceeding high mountain, and saw God face to face! Oh, you smile; you are destroying my faith with your smile."

"Thank Heaven for that!" exclaimed the young man, warmly. They were standing among the fragrant sage-bushes, and the magpies screamed as if in derision, while a rock-squirrel peeped at them furtively, the only witness to Walter's heresy.

"Boaz will walk on the water," added the girl, "at nine o'clock to-morrow morning. People are coming from great distances, and will start at daybreak. They will have to be up with the meadow-lark."

Her listener appeared suddenly absent-minded; his brain was working quickly. The time was short in which to circumvent this blasphemous display. The moments snatched with Awilda were always fraught with danger. That morning her parents were absent, but even now some hidden spy might be watching the Gentile in the Mormon camp. Awilda read in his eyes the unspoken apprehension.

"I must be getting back to the farm," she said. "It is terribly rash of us to meet by broad daylight."

"The opportunity was too good to miss, sweetheart," he answered, the spice of danger adding colour to a romance so real and earnest that he would have given his life for the loved one.

A last word of good-bye, and Awilda crept back to the home of rigid discipline. Her thoughts strayed far from the menial tasks which lay to hand. Mechanically she dusted the big rocking-chairs, the Book of Mormon which lay on the central table, and Brigham Young's bust above the mantelpiece. When her mother returned, she kissed the bright face as she imparted a piece of news.

"You are to be sealed to Boaz Tucker early this fall, my child. He tells me that in return you will be permitted hereafter to pass by the gods and angels who guard the gates of eternity. You will not only be a glory to your husband and offspring, but a priestess-queen unto your Heavenly Father."

Awilda was silent, and her mother thought she was struck dumb with awe.

"I wish," said the girl at last, "that he looked more like my idea of a saint. I should like to see some spiritual light in his eyes. It is unfortunate they are so small and foxy. He is old, too. I can't help disliking his shiny, bald head, pimply face, and fat, well-fed figure. He talks so much of himself in his addresses. Somehow his wives never look happy, and his children are puny little rats."

Mrs. Vance flung up her hands in horror at her daughter's rebellious tone.

"I am grieved you should speak such foolish infidel words," she exclaimed, shaking Awilda by the shoulder. "You must be in an awful state of blindness. It is terrible to think your mind is so honeycombed with error. If you give way to such ideas, Satan will get great power over you. Outward appearance matters little, and to-morrow you will see his face shine with exceeding lustre like Abinadi's. The faith of Boaz is as a live coal from off the altar. Your father's wives are happy enough, but we none of us walk about grinning from ear to ear. We are conscious of our hidden crown of glory; that is all-sufficient."

Refusing to discuss the matter further, Mrs. Vance set Awilda a heavy task of ironing, by the kitchen window bright with house-plants. As the slender young figure swayed backwards and forwards over the board, the girl looked as fresh as the clean white linen under her hand.

All that day the love scene of the morning dwelt uppermost in her mind. It was of Walter she thought when the rich glow of sunset cast its crimson reflection over the distant lake into which the golden orb sank, leaving the sky a sea of rainbow hues. Awilda breathed the Gentile's name as her eyes rested on the great evening star, which dimmed the lesser lights above the strong outline of mountain slope.

Her father, smoking his pipe after the evening meal in the bosom of his plural family, bade all rise early to attend the great ceremonial of the water-walking miracle.

"Boaz Tucker will spend the whole night in prayer, and anoint himself with sacred oil before treading in the blessed steps of the Most High," said Joseph Vance. "He deserves a generous outfit of wives, enough to ensure him the very highest rank among the gods."

Joseph looked as he spoke at the wondrously-fair, flower-like face which had excited the much-married Elder's admiration.

That night there was little sleep for Awilda. Her mind was confused as to the truth or falsity of her parents' religion. Walter's words appeared so sane compared with the fulsome rhetoric of Mormon teachers. She had been told to don her smartest attire, but

it was for Walter's eyes that she made herself especially beautiful.

"It may be the last time the poor boy will ever see me," she thought, sorrowfully. "Elder Tucker would never bring all these people to witness a miracle he could not perform. Walter will be convinced, and he will leave me to my fate."

From her bedroom window she could see lines of people streaming to the spot on the outskirts of the meadows. Even the old hens and their young ones were making their way to the stretch of water, as if in curiosity.

Vance, with his large following of women and children, started in procession from the farmhouse through rosy hedges of pink weeds, scaring noisy flocks of blackbirds from the cat-tails.

Boaz Tucker had certainly selected a picturesque spot. The exquisitely-tinted grasses waved like spirit-forms around his massive figure as he approached the scene of his coming exploit. The chewink's cheerful voice greeted him without a note of doubt, while no cynicism reigned in the hearts of his earnest spectators. Two pairs of eyes alone regarded him with unfriendly gaze. The girl he had marked down for his property thought she had never seen him look so gross and malignant, while Walter, whose love for her was pure and strong, glared at the portly form from a respectful distance.

"Come to be converted, Gentile boy?" queried a satirical Elder, noting the young man's pale face.

Walter looked as if he had passed the night out of doors. His clothes were dishevelled, his eyes weary. He was too engrossed in watching the water to heed the passing jeer.

Before addressing this open-air congregation, Boaz moved towards the Vance family. In one large, soft hand he crushed Awilda's little fingers; the other he lay heavily on her shoulder, while he gazed hungrily at the fairness of her skin.

"You know," he whispered, "what I have planned for your salvation, my little one. I have become a god, and have a world of my own, peopled with my offspring. I shall rule over my wives and children during the eternal

"SHE COULD SEE LINES OF PEOPLE STREAMING TO THE SPOT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE MEADOWS."

"BOAZ TUCKER WALKED FORTH UPON THE WATER."

ages, possessed of everlasting prerogatives and power."

Awilda caught her breath. She was confused and torn. Possibly her parents were right, this was a man of mysterious holiness.

She felt in a dream as she listened to the singing, while Boaz stood at the water's edge with hands outstretched in blessing. He beckoned the great multitude to gather round, that none might lose sight of this marvellous manifestation. Raising his voice, which was lusty as the bellowing of an ox, he spoke to the multitude:—

"Once again, my beloved brothers and

sisters, the heavens have been opened, and angels have come down to bring a dispensation to man. Demons are cast out, for the Latter Day Glory has dawned upon the earth. This morning we have not come to this calm pool for baptismal purposes, though we are under the influence of the Spirit. I have reaped a great harvest. To-day I will prove that I am a chosen vessel. The corrupting theories of the Gentiles " (here he shot a look of disdain in Walter's direction) " will be for ever silenced. They cannot reach the celestial rapture of Mormon miracle-workers. Recently I had a revelation. A voice from heaven bade me walk upon the breast of the waters. When none have been near to see, I have traversed lakes and rivers in this miraculous manner. Now I have come to prove, in the open, the truth of my words. These waters are deep and I cannot swim, therefore I entrust myself wholly to the hosts above. I pray that absolute silence may reign as I pass from shore to shore."

A terrible hush of breathless expectation fell upon the crowd. Then, with the greatest assurance, Boaz Tucker walked forth upon the water, reaching in safety the centre of the pool. Suddenly, to the confusion and amazement of his disciples, he disappeared with a loud splash, as if some gigantic crustacean had pulled him under. In the general agitation which followed it was believed he would have a narrow escape from drowning, but the Prophet, who had protested he could not swim, now struck out boldly for land. Everyone was talking at once and running about, which enabled Walter to edge up and whisper in Awilda's ear.

" My work," he gasped. " Remember your promise, Awilda—your promise of yesterday."

II.

Boaz had many excuses to make for his lamentable failure, but did not offer to repeat the experiment. He protested that some unbeliever in the ranks of spectators had ill-wished him, but the power to swim had been miraculously granted, thereby saving a consecrated life.

On returning to the farmhouse, Mr. Vance forbade his family to mention the distressing circumstances of the morning. Elder Tucker had promised a large consignment of cattle to Awilda's father on the day of the sealing.

When twilight fell, the girl crept to a secret receptacle hidden in the bank where the dandelions grew, under an old wagon-wheel, rusted with age. There she found an expected letter from Walter Harrison.

" My Own Little Saint " (ran the words), —" I knew well enough that sly dodger had something up his sleeve, so, when darkness fell last night, I stripped and swam every inch of the pool. I soon discovered some invisible means of support just beneath the muddy surface of the stagnant pool. At intervals of a little less than a yard tripods of wood were firmly fixed in the bottom, the tops of which formed a safe foothold within two inches of the surface. These tops were skilfully coloured to match the turbid water, further ensuring their invisibility. I surreptitiously removed one of the tripods from the centre, where the pool was deepest. I did not mean Tucker to drown, and had a rope, hidden by the shore, in case of emergency. I have since discovered that he was known in his youth as a most expert swimmer, before he settled in these parts.

" Meet me to-night, if you can escape, at the gate beyond the orchard. I shall be waiting under the apple trees with a couple of swift horses. We will gallop away like the fastest ranchmen to the outside life of the world. So far, you have only known it by the distant whistle of an express train on its way from New York to San Francisco. Love and marriage, as we English know them, await you far from the harems of Mormon Elders. I shall watch all night on the chance of your coming.—Yours for all time, Walter."

The family at the farm were wonderfully silent that night, and retired early. No bolts and bars modernized this rural homestead. It would be the easiest possible matter to steal out to the green orchard, and pass under the fruit trees to the quiet lane where Walter had proposed to wait. Awilda gave no second thought to Elder Tucker; her mind was made up—she would shake the dust of Utah from her feet. She felt little regret at leaving the parents who had brought her up in so hard a faith. Her secret farewells to the chickens and cows were the only tender episodes of this home-leaving. To the hen-roost and barn-yard she blew a kiss as she crept out at midnight. It was strange to feel this was good-bye for ever to the tame old rooster who fed from her hand and the downy balls of fluff constituting his family. Like a shadow she passed to the trysting-place, where Walter caught her in his arms and, kissing her passionately, lifted her to the saddle. A whiff of strong salt air came from the distant lake; the warm, dreamy night was full of magic, and the lovers' spirits were buoyant as the smooth surface of the waters they would never view again.

"I STRIPPED AND SWAM EVERY INCH OF THE POOL."

Beyond, a world of enchantment awaited the coming of this youthful pair. Hazy mountains rose ghost-like over the visionary scene, their secret fastnesses mysterious as the doors of love. Awilda whispered that she felt as one of the white gulls spreading their wings and flying away, only she was leaving behind the dark shadows of polygamy. With rapture in their hearts as the shy light of dawn silted through the silent trees, they passed to their "Holy of holies," far from the border-line of danger.

A PACK OF CARDS.

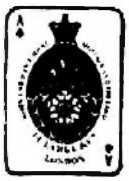
Its Stories, Legends, and Romances.

Wherever possible, the cards reproduced belong to the period of the story attached.

II.

THE ACE OF SPADES.

TO many the ace of spades and not another is head of the pack, and in proof of this they point out that it is upon the ace of spades, as representing the whole pack, that His Majesty's playing-card tax is levied. The maker used to engrave a plate for twenty aces of spades; the printing was done by the Government at Somerset House, and one pound was paid by the maker for every sheet of aces so printed. The tax has now been reduced to threepence. Spadille, as this card is called at ombre and quadrille, still bears the maker's name. In the wonderful card-game described in Pope's "Rape of the Lock," when the antagonists sit down



At ombre singly to decide their doom!

. . . . . .

"Let spades be trumps," she said, and trumps they were

. . . . . .

Spadillio first, unconquerable lord!
Led off two captive trumps and swept the board.

But spadille, for all his conquests and all his pride, will probably best be known as the card of the Corsican Witch's cauldron, the ace of spades being one of the ingredients, together with two adders, twenty-four spiders, seven toads, and a ewe lamb's heart, of the appetizing stew which Alexandre Dumas imagined as assisting to foretell the wondrous career of the infant Napoleon. By what is probably a coincidence, the ace of spades also figures as a chief card in the so-called Napoleon's Book of Fate.

THE KING OF SPADES.

With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,
The hoary majesty of spades appears;
Puts forth one manly leg, to sight revealed,
The rest his many-coloured robe concealed.
The rebel knave who dares his prince engage
Proves the just victim of his royal rage.

But in France at one time the "hoary majesty of spades" was represented by the

"fretful irritability" of Jean Jacques Rousseau, while in America the same card threatened to be "Lafayette" for all time to come. Indeed, the four kings, like their flesh-and-blood originals, seemed likely to lose all prestige in the New World, and in 1848 Republican packs began to be manufactured in New York, having neither kings nor queens. The president of hearts was George Washington; of diamonds, John Adams; of clubs, Franklin; and of spades, Lafayette. In this pack one of the queens is Venus, modestly concealing her charms; and the others are respectively Fortune, Ceres, and Minerva. This was only following the principle of the French, who, at the time of the Revolution, filled the places of the card-kings by four philosophers—Molière, La Fontaine, Voltaire, and Rousseau; and those of the four queens by four virtues—Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude. Thus in France the player would cry: "Je joue le grand philosophe de pique!" while in America the lucky player would win a rubber by his possession of the patriot of spades. Occasionally, however, it may not be doubted, habit got the better of him, and the king would creep into his conversation almost as often as the martyred king's head crept into the Memorial of Mr. Dick.

THE QUEEN OF SPADES.

As for "the Imperial consort of the Crown of Spades," the "Minerva" of the Republican pack, she is famous as having led to the conviction of the murderer of Captain Roger South in 1823. A pack of cards with which he had been playing with his victim, and known to have been purchased by him, was found in the pocket of South's shooting-coat. They were exhibited in evidence with the bloody print of the murderer's thumb across the face of the queen of spades. It com-

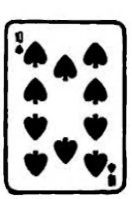
pletely destroyed the prisoner's *alibi*, and, although the Bertillon system was then unborn, the bloody thumb-mark was accepted as damning testimony, and the man was hanged.

THE KNAVE OF SPADES.

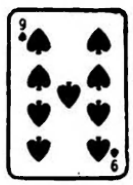
The "rebel knave"—he of spades—will be eternally associated with one of the most dramatic incidents of the reign of Elizabeth—the discovery of the Throgmorton plot and the expulsion of the Spanish Ambassador. For a long time the jack of spades was always popularly associated with the conspiracy to place Mary Queen of Scots on the English throne. "Throgmorton," says Froude, "had a house in London at Paul's Wharf, to which he returned and became the medium through which Morgan communicated with the Queen of Scots, and the Queen of Scots with Mendoza. The secret police observed him frequently leaving the Spanish Ambassador's house. He was watched. Other suspicious circumstances were noted, and an order was issued to seize his person and search his rooms. When the constables entered he was in the act of ciphering a letter to Mary Stuart. He darted up a staircase, destroying the paper on his way. He had time to entrust a casket of compromising letters to a maid-servant, who carried them to Mendoza, and also to cipher a few hasty words on the back of the knave of spades and to fling it into the casket by way of explanation." Froude summarizes the message, which ran: "I have sworn I know naught of anything found here, that they must have been left by someone who seeks my deadly hurt. Be not afraid of my constancy. They shall kill me a thousand times ere I betray. . . ." But for this fateful message, Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador, would not have been apprised of the arrest and would not have been on his guard. He was able to warn the other conspirators, and, as a consequence, "there was a flight of Catholics over the Channel thick as autumn swallows." Throgmorton succumbed to the rack, confessed all, and was executed. Mendoza was banished from the kingdom.

THE TEN OF SPADES.

The ten of spades is "Buffalo Bill's card." On one occasion the celebrated Colonel Cody ("Buffalo Bill") laid a wager of a thousand dollars that he would pierce every pip on the ten of spades with a revolver-bullet at twelve yards. This feat he is actually said to have accomplished; the card so pierced was put up for auction, and sold to one of Buffalo Bill's admirers for a hundred and fifty dollars. It eventually found its way into a "dime museum" of curiosities in Chicago.

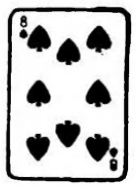


THE NINE OF SPADES.



It was on the nine of spades that the great Italian statesman, Cavour, wrote, "Ayez de respect pour les petites cartes," and gave it back as a souvenir and a motto to an Englishman from whom he won ten thousand francs in an evening, at a time when this card was his highest trump. Cavour always spoke of the nine of spades as his "lucky card." We are told that he was consumed by a passion for whist. "It dominated his whole being, and he could not live unless it formed a part of his daily food. His skill in the game was undoubted; if he had a fault, he was too venturous, perhaps—too dashing." During the sittings of the Paris Congress he never missed a night's attendance at the Jockey Club. His gains were enormous; they were computed at more than twenty thousand pounds. How much of his good luck was due to the nine of spades is not recorded.

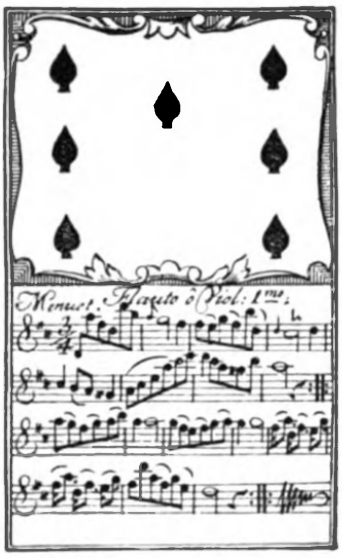
THE EIGHT OF SPADES.



In July, 1866, Lord Lansdowne, father of the present peer, was enjoying a game of whist in the drawing-room of White's Club, his partner being Colonel Taylour, Conservative Party Whip. Spades were trumps, and one was called for. Lord Lansdowne began fumbling with his cards, and at length, as if unable to follow suit, played a heart. His partner suspected a revoke, but at that instant the cards fell from his lordship's hand to the floor, luckily face downwards. Colonel Taylour picked them up. Lord Lansdowne thanked him, nervously rearranged them, and resumed play. Again the cards fell from his hand. "I feel very ill," he murmured; "have the goodness to summon me a cab." With difficulty he was carried into the vehicle. On alighting, a card slipped out from his clothing on to the pavement, and was picked up by a friend. "Ah," faintly whispered the peer, "there is that card that distracted me so." It was the eight of spades. Lord Lansdowne was borne upstairs to his bed to die, and the friend returned with the fatal souvenir to the club.

THE SEVEN OF SPADES.

The seven of spades enjoys a melancholy celebrity as being the only known survivor of the pack of cards used by the ill-fated Marie Antoinette, and given by her to her little son the Dauphin. They were for a long time his only playthings, but they were taken away by his jailer, the brutal Simon, and sold to a deputy who, for this very purchase, is said to have incurred the suspicions of the authorities as a Jacobin. The cards were seized and destroyed, all but two — one of which afterwards came into the possession of the Comte d'Artois (Charles X.), and the other, the seven of spades, was given to an Englishman of rank, who in turn presented it to Lady Schreiber.



THE SIX OF SPADES.

Why is this card called "Poor Dick"? Here is the story:—

There was once a club in St. James's Square called the Roxburgh, where high stakes were the order of the day and night. On one celebrated occasion, we are told, a quartette of players, Harvey Combe, "Tippoo" Smith, Ward (the member for London), and Sir John Malcolm, sat down to play on Monday evening, and continued with scarce a break through two nights and a day, separating at last at eleven o'clock on Wednesday morning. They had only been playing two hours when word was brought to Combe that his partner in business had just died, tidings which caused him so much emotion that he trumped his partner's trick with the six of spades. "Poor Dick," he said, as he drew the trick, and gazed at the card absently. His luck now suddenly turned, and he began winning, until ultimately he had won from Sir John Malcolm the almost incredible sum of thirty thousand pounds. The protracted play probably induced hallucinations, and at last Combe arose and cried out: "This is the fourth time running I have been dealt the six of spades, and I feel nervous. Why should it suggest Dick Reade?" "Because you heard of his death when you were playing it, perhaps," suggested his partner. "Zounds!" cried Combe. "When is Dick to be buried?" "At noon to-day," said someone. He had just time to dart out to a barber's and a haberdasher's, and drive off in a hackney coach to his partner's funeral. Combe afterwards declared that he saw the dead man's face distinctly in the card. It is related of him that as he rose he declared to Sir John Malcolm, "I must go now, but you shall have your revenge to-morrow." "Thank you," was the reply; "another sitting of this sort and I shall be forced to return to India."

THE FIVE OF SPADES.

More than one whist enthusiast has literally died in harness with the cards in his hands. Such was the "glorious fate" of the great Bath player, Lookup, who expired at "double dummy" ere he could play his last card, which happened to be the five of spades. In this case, as in another already related, the card was "reverently" (or otherwise) buried with him.

THE FOUR OF SPADES.

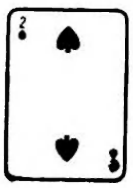
"Crockford's Last Card." That was the inscription on a four of spades that once reposed behind a small glass case in what is now the Devonshire Club. Yet Crockford was not a card-player, although his patrons reported that he occasionally played halfpenny nap with the chef and head-waiter; but on the day that he retired a pack of cards was found in his pocket. He drew them out solemnly, saying, "After to-day I have done with these for ever. Would you oblige me, gentlemen, by sitting down with me at a rubber?" The persons addressed complied, and in some fifty minutes Crockford and his partner had won fourteen pounds at a modest shilling a point. Crockford threw the last card on the table. It was a four of spades. As proprietor of the chief gaming-club in the world, he had amassed a million of money.

THE THREE OF SPADES.

"There's no luck in the tray" is an old gambler's motto, mentioned by most of the standard writers on card-games, but there is at least one instance on record where the tray or three of clubs brought a bride to a

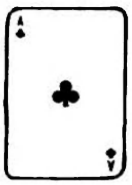
Fitzgerald, one of the ancestors of the present Duke of Leinster. He was in love with a certain heiress and beauty of the house of Ormonde, who, however, the story goes, was by no means in love with him, at least not in the beginning. The young lady, who was being wooed by another suitor, professed to be very superstitious, and resolved to leave her matrimonial choice to the cards, premising that her decision would be final. A certain gipsy of renown, Blind Kate as she was called, who was, notwithstanding, no blinder than many other folks, was summoned, and the young lady's fortune publicly told. After being shuffled and sorted in the usual manner, the cards were then laid face downwards on the table, and the two rivals were asked by the enchantress to draw their emblems, show them to each other and to none beside, and to return them to the table. Fitzgerald drew the three of spades and uttered an audible groan. His rival drew a lucky card, the seven of hearts. They then retired and the gipsy shuffled the cards and separated them into seven heaps, three in a row and one in the middle. In the midst of profound silence the lady was asked to draw the distant shadow of her husband from the centre pack. She promptly drew, and the card was the three of spades. She turned pale and the hag asked, "Will you now draw his shadow grown nearer?" Again the cards were shuffled and again she drew a three of spades. "There is still a chance that it is another," croaked the old woman. And once more the cards were arranged, and yet again she drew the three of spades. They carried the young lady out in a fainting condition, and all agreed it was a most extraordinary and mysterious affair, until it occurred to the father of the damsel to follow Blind Kate and extort from her a confession. Her story was that the unsuccessful lover had attempted to bribe her into using a pack containing all sevens of hearts, which she, disliking his character, had effectually frustrated by employing one containing nothing but threes of spades. It only remains to be said that the lady held to her promise and that her married life proved, despite her first predilections, to be of unbounded felicity.

THE TWO OF SPADES.



All card-players know that when turned up as the trump-card the deuce of spades is to be tapped for luck. "There's luck," saith the proverb, "under a black deuce." One possible exception there is to this proverb: the player must in no circumstances touch the card with his elbow. Whence was this superstition derived?

THE ACE OF CLUBS.



If the Duke of Cumberland had only had the ace of clubs on a memorable occasion at the public rooms at Bath, he was wont to say that he would have been twenty thousand pounds richer. "That card cost me a fortune." He was playing whist with three of the wealthiest men of the day, and was dealt such a splendid hand that he unhesitatingly made a bet of twenty thousand pounds on the game. The cards he held were king, knave, nine, and seven of trumps (clubs); ace and king of diamonds; ace, king, queen, and knave of hearts; ace, king, and queen of spades. His partner did not hold a single card of any value. Yet the Duke was easily beaten; he did not win one trick. The Duke's right-hand adversary held five small trumps, and the other eight cards in his hand consisted entirely of hearts and spades. To his left-hand opponent there was dealt ace, queen, ten, and eight of trumps, and queen, knave, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four in diamonds. The Duke led a small trump, which his left-hand antagonist won and returned by a lead in diamonds.

"What a 'Jeroboam' hand the Duke of Cumberland must have held at Bath!" exclaims the author of "English Whist." He explains that in the early part of the last century, when fortune blessed any player with cards of overwhelming strength, he was said to be possessed of a "Jeroboam" hand. The phrase is derived through the "Jeroboam" of claret at Oxford, a measure of magnitude, from the division of the tribes when Jeroboam obtained "ten of the tribes of Israel and his rival was left with only two."

It was on an ace of clubs that Oliver Goldsmith inscribed an I O U to Sir Joshua Reynolds, the intimation being additionally expressed by the three balls of Lombardy in silhouette, which has already been made familiar as a squiggle from another quarter in the pages of this magazine.

THE KING OF CLUBS.

"The King of Clubs" is familiar as the title bestowed by Johnson on the Club or the Literary Club, but the card itself is not without its special fame in literature, for has it not been sung by Pope in deathless verse?

> The club's black tyrant first her victim died,
> Spite of his haughty mien and barbarous pride;
> What boots the regal circle on his head,
> His giant limbs in state unwieldy spread;
> That long behind he trails his pompous robe
> And, of all monarchs, only grasps the globe?

Which reminds us that these last two lines were amusingly but somewhat invidiously quoted by an American caricaturist who was portraying for the benefit of his countrymen the Coronation of King Edward VII.

THE QUEEN OF CLUBS.

"Black Bess" is the common nickname of the queen of clubs, although in Lincolnshire, we are told, the card is known as "Queen Bess." One reason given strikes us as extremely unsound—"because the Virgin Queen was of a swarthy complexion." Now, if we know anything of the Virgin Queen it is that she was nothing of the kind. Another is that this was Elizabeth's favourite card, but so far we have been unable to come across any satisfactory explanation of the epithet. Perhaps some learned reader of THE STRAND may be able to elucidate the history of this card.

THE KNAVE OF CLUBS.

Of the knave of clubs—

> . . . mighty Pam, that Kings and Queens o'erthrew,
> And mowed down armies in the flights of loo,

there is both comedy and tragedy to be written.

On the 13th of July, 1793, Jean Paul Marat, one of the blood-thirsty triumvirate which ruled France, was seated in a bath in his house, surrounded by papers and various reminders of the Reign of Terror. Amongst these was a pack of Republican cards which had recently appeared, the publisher of which had dedicated them to Marat. One of these, the knave of clubs, he had removed to use as a book-mark. He was suffering from a skin disease contracted in the sewers, which made constant immersion in warm water necessary. Suddenly the door opened to admit a stranger. The stranger was Charlotte Corday, carrying concealed her fatal dagger. After the assassination all the relics of the tragedy were carefully guarded, and are preserved to this day, including Marat's pen and the valet de bâton, who for some time afterwards gave the name of Marat to his race in all parts of Europe.

But long before Marat's day the knave of clubs had a sinister reputation. George Coleman, in his essay on "Cursing and Swearing," suggests that in place of oaths used at the card-table the gamester might be permitted to swear by the knave of clubs or the "Curse of Scotland." At the game of loo Pam is the best card in the pack, as the right bower is at euchre, and when the holder of the ace plays it he always says, "Pam, be civil." The holder of the knave then plays another club if he has one, and allows the ace to make the trick. On one occasion, at a card-party, Lord Palmerston was indulging in some rather violent abuse in the hearing of the Baron de Bunsen, who called out humorously, "This is whist, not loo, but—Pam, be civil!" which sally, we are told, the somewhat acrimonious Foreign Minister took in good part.

THE TEN OF CLUBS.

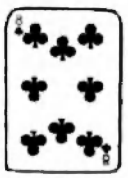
A ten of clubs of curious pattern, here reproduced, is preserved in Paris as being the first card ever played by Le Grand Monarque, Louis XIV. It is one of a pack especially printed in his honour in 1647, when he was but nine years of age, and the tradition is that

when he cut the pack and turned up "King Pepin," Cardinal Mazarin took this for an omen. When, therefore, the game was over, he drew the card from the pack and preserved it. At his death it was given to the King, and always found a place amongst Royal mementoes until 1789. It was framed in a little gilt frame, and was lately in the possession of the Comtesse d'Eu.

THE NINE OF CLUBS.

Upon the back of a pictorial nine of clubs long preserved at Strawberry Hill the poet Gay scribbled a couplet from his "Beggar's Opera," added his signature, and gave it to a lady. Many poets have done the same thing before and since: it seems a favourite mode of enshrining couplets and even stanzas for preservation, although nowadays writing on the backs of cards is a far more difficult process than it apparently used to be with our ancestors.

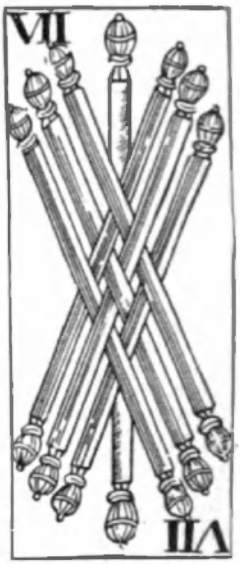
THE EIGHT OF CLUBS.



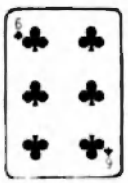
The only card which is a relic intact of the Spanish Armada—perhaps the only card ever to survive over three centuries of immersion under the ocean—is the eight of clubs. This card was stated, a few years ago, to have been found in a small water-tight box or casket embedded in the shores of Tobermory Bay, together with several coins, a string of beads, and some metal buttons. One cannot but wonder at its history, especially when it is stated that it probably represented a sum of money—perhaps nine doubloons—which its possessor had won from the loser at a game of cards on board ship, it being the custom to give a gauge—what we should call an IOU—in this manner.

THE SEVEN OF CLUBS.

A German named Leuben laid a wager that he would turn up a pack of cards in a certain order, beginning with the seven of clubs. Whether he was weak-minded or only intoxicated at the outset is not known, but he very shortly became insane, and was incarcerated in an asylum with his pack of cards. Here for twenty years he laboured to bring about the combination, devoting ten hours a day to the task. Once, in the seventh year, he had almost succeeded; but not until the four million two hundred and forty-six thousand and twenty-fifth time did complete success crown the poor wretch's efforts.

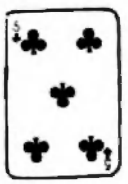


THE SIX OF CLUBS.



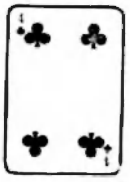
A playing-card collector in New York has a six of clubs which was shot out of a cannon by a Federal gunner into the rebel lines at Richmond. It was not, however, the only card dispatched in this violent and unconventional manner — an entire pack was bound up in wire and cotton wadding and seriously wounded a picket on its arrival. "It struck a stone, and the cards were, in full view of a squad of men dining, broken into two heaps, only the six of clubs uppermost. A cry broke forth, "Clubs are trumps!" the pack was seized and dealt, and Johnny Reb was thanked for one of the most extraordinary and unexpected games of euchre ever played by soldiers or civilians."

THE FIVE OF CLUBS.



The five of clubs is known as "Watson's Card," but considerations of chronology preclude the idea that the name has anything to do with the confidant of the illustrious Sherlock Holmes. Exactly how it came to be bestowed is another of the mysteries of card history, but the eponymous hero is said to be one Watson who, seventy or eighty years ago, won ten thousand pounds at faro through his choice of this card.

THE FOUR OF CLUBS.



By the nickname of the "Devil's Bed-post" the four of clubs is universally known. "It is an unlucky card," writes Mr. W. P. Courtney, "and the dealer who turns it up is always considered as cut off from all chance of winning the game." The four of clubs is also known as "Ned Stokes," and the following explanation of this name is furnished by the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1798. A certain person, the Rev. Edward Stokes, of Blaby, in Leicestershire, had four sons, two of whom, he was in the habit of saying, he had given to God and two to the devil, by which elegant expression he meant that two were clergymen and two were attorneys. One of the latter, Edward Stokes, of Melton Mowbray, was a good whist-player, and known throughout the country as a desirable partner in the game; but he had conceived a ridiculous aversion to the four of clubs, which never failed to show itself on the appearance of that card. Hence it came to be known by the playful title of "Ned Stokes."

On one occasion the four of clubs underwent an extraordinary transformation, according to a once popular legend. It concerns the lawfulness of playing cards on the Sabbath, about which a great deal of discussion has raged for centuries. "I have never played cards on Sunday," declared the narrator, "since this card"—drawing a four of clubs from his pocket—"well, I will tell you the story." It is probably the same story related by Robert Southey and others.

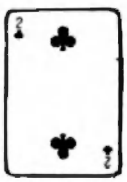
A coterie of "respectable persons" quitted the opera-house late one Saturday night to play faro at a Mrs. Sturt's. The game proceeded for a short time, when a thunder-clap and a slight shock of earthquake disconcerted them. Still they played on, when all at once a player, laying down a club, cried out that it was the colour of blood. The others looked and declared that it was so. A heart was played, and it was black. Under such conditions play was impossible, and Sunday play, which had been visited with such awful portents, was abandoned.

There is another legend noted in one of the novels of Harrison Ainsworth, where the clubs and hearts change colour, but the crime involved in this case was far graver, being no less than murder, to the perpetrator of which everything black seemed crimson, and *vice versa*.

THE THREE OF CLUBS.

For ever linked with the name of the late James Payn is the three of clubs. Payn always called it his lucky card. An ancient card preserved with writing on the back is a three of clubs. The pack of which it formed a part was presented by Lord Dunblane to the Prince of Orange, and played by him on the eve of crossing to England in the memorable year of 1788. After the game was over the Prince returned the pack to the donor, with his autograph on what Tom Hood used playfully to call the "Old Dog Tray."

THE TWO OF CLUBS.



The only notable thing about the deuce of clubs is that it is always considered a sign of five trumps in the dealer's hand. Some few years ago an attempt was made to shatter this superstition, and a large number of Reform Club players were asked for their opinion. Strange to relate, almost without exception they supported it out of their own experience, although not one could offer even a shadow of reason for the fact, which is one of the oddest, as well as the longest-lived, superstitions on record.

MERCERJUSTUS.

By C. B. REDFERN.

Illustrated by H. A. Hogg.

THE gas-lamps were being lighted in the Tottenham Court Road one dull evening towards the end of November, when an elderly woman emerged from Goodge Street and made her way up the main thoroughfare. She walked at a good pace with a determined tread, holding up her skirt with both hands, and displaying serviceable, thick-soled boots of the kind known as hygienic. There was no attempt at adornment in her person, and no one could by the largest stretch of imagination have described her as anything but English. She wore a black cloth coat, straight and shapeless, and a hard-brimmed felt hat, under which her grey hair was neatly brushed on either side of her face.

She paused at a crowded part, looked to right and left, and finally accomplished the crossing of the road with a somewhat undignified run. On the other side was a small draper's shop of the kind frequently found in cheap and busy thoroughfares. In front of this she took up her stand carefully, examining the contents of a window, while a slight smile played round the corners of her shrewd yet kindly mouth. Guarding the entrance of this emporium were the usual rolls of flannelette towering to giddy heights, and marked with prices in large figures from twopence-three-farthings upwards. In the centre window daintier articles of feminine apparel depended from minute slips of gummed paper, and behind this firmament of fixed stars shone the sun of the system in the shape of a bust attired in a silk blouse of surpassing beauty. On its bosom was pinned a placard bearing the following inscription :—

IF YOU DO NOT SEE WHAT YOU REQUIRE, INQUIRE WITHIN.

Having satisfied herself that this was the kind of shop she was seeking, the lady walked inside, and was greeted on the threshold by the alert proprietor, who was evidently his own shop-walker.

"What can I do for you, madam?" said he, rubbing his hands.

"Do ye keep mercerjustus?" inquired the new customer.

Her voice was clear, rather loud, and had a strong North Country accent. This, together with her recent nervousness in crossing the road, would have conveyed to an observant person the fact that she was not altogether at home in large towns.

"I beg your pardon, madam; what did you say you required?"

"Ah'm wantin' mercerjustus."

"Ah, just so, madam; pray be seated. We are showing all the new season's goods. Miss Simpson, forward."

An anæmic young woman emerged from the inner darkness.

"Madam requires skirt-adjusters. Wet weather we are having for the time of year."

The lady rose and took up her umbrella.

"Ah doan't think ye caught the word reetly. Ah said 'mercerjustus.'"

"Oh, I beg pardon, madam. Mercerjustus? I regret that we are just sold out of the article. May we——"

But the customer had already left the premises.

At the next emporium a young shop-walker

greeted the lady at the door, and politely asked her pleasure.

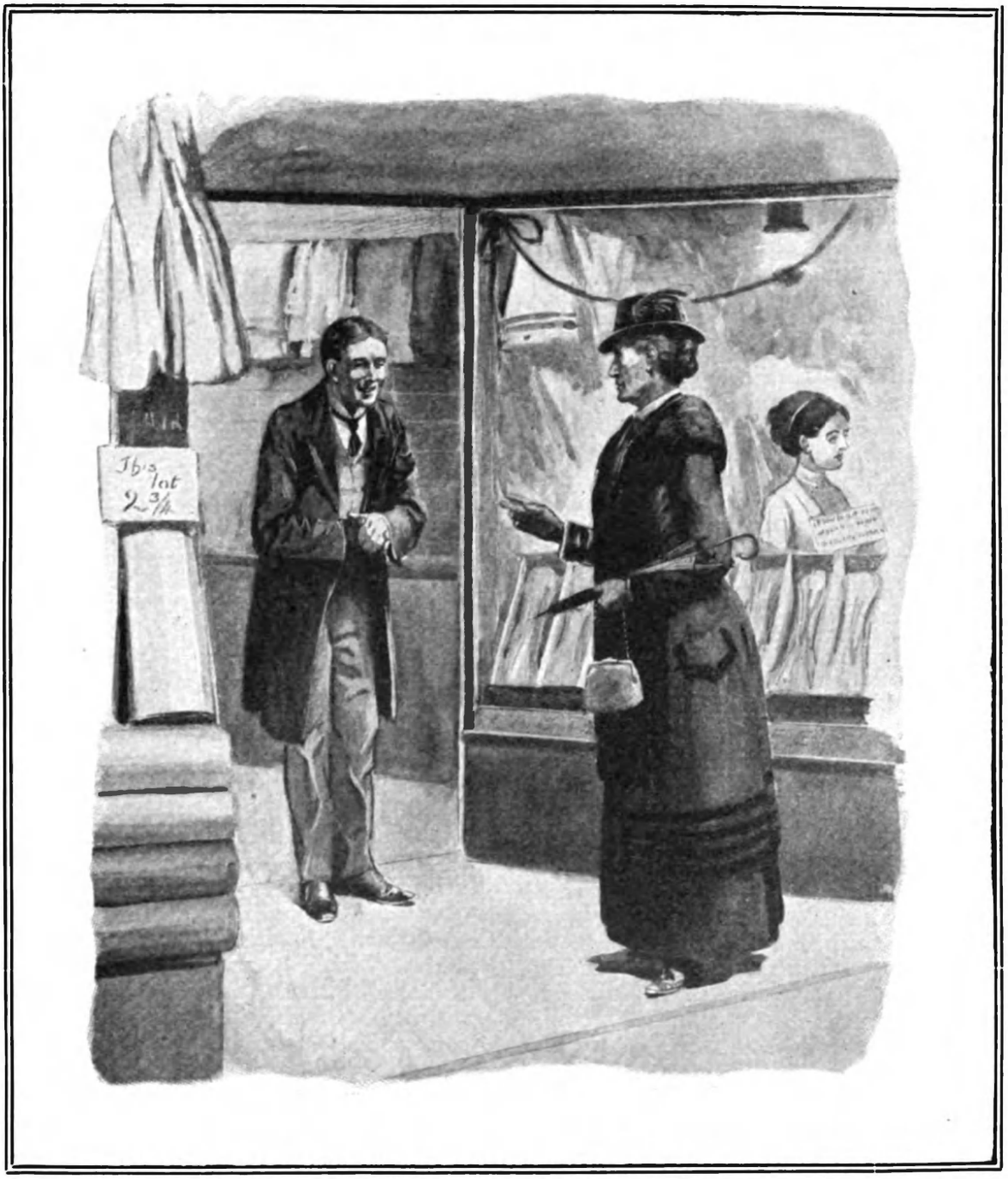
She passed down the line of pale-faced assistants until she reached the cash-desk. Here she paused and looked round.

"Ah should like to see your maaster. Is he within?"

"Er—er—certainly, madam."

Out of the recesses at the back came a stout, middle-aged man with pendulous cheeks and shifty eyes. His frock-coat sagged beneath the arms, his collar was of doubtful freshness.

"Do ye keep mercerjustus?" inquired the new-comer, fixing him meanwhile with a searching gaze.



"'DO YE KEEP MERCERJUSTUS?' INQUIRED THE NEW CUSTOMER."

For a moment the unexpected demand nonplussed this gentleman. He quickly recovered himself, however.

"This way, madam, if you please."

They walked in single file, as with easy dignity and swaying coat-tails this ponderous being led the way into an inner apartment, where, seen through the semi-gloom, radiant figures of azure and palest pink tenderly gazed at piles of snowy underlinen, bibs, and babies' shoes.

"Outfitting, forward." Then, confidentially, leaning towards his customer: "We are doing a very special line in—ah—hum—ladies' underwear, positively only three-and-eleven-three, run through with baby-ribbon. Miss Tompkins, show our Meroverus corsets to madam."

"Ah'm obleeged to ye," glancing somewhat contemptuously at the nearest Venus in pink satin. "Ah'll not trouble ye for stays; Ah asked for mercerjustus."

"My fault, madam; I did not quite catch the word. This way for the mercerized goods, *if* you please."

Again the customer left the establishment with a curt "good day" to the proprietor, who looked after her retreating figure in great perplexity.

She had no better fortune in the half-dozen and odd shops visited by her that day. She professed herself content with any size, colour, or texture in the article desired; she was indifferent, she asserted, as to the price. Under these conditions her wants ought to have been easily satisfied; but although mercerjustus was apparently always in stock, for some occult reason it was not forthcoming at the moment. She was taken solemnly from counter to counter. Upstairs and downstairs, from millinery, costumes, furs, and umbrellas, to those ulterior regions in which fancy stationery, soaps, boot-blacking, perambulators, and trunks find a lodging, from mourning outfits and babies' rattles to haberdashery and handkerchiefs, her perseverance met with no reward.

It was disheartening work. During the following week she might have been seen pursuing her quest in outlying regions, even penetrating so far as Hackney, Camberwell, and Peckham. It was always the smaller and possibly the less prosperous shops she chose in which to seek the desired article, though it might have been supposed that the larger West-end establishments would have offered a wider range of goods for sale; but these for some reason she did not visit. She was often very weary, the endless pavements being peculiarly trying to the country-bred woman, and her search having to be conducted on foot. Once her sharp ears caught the sound of a girl crying—a little, white-faced shopgirl frightened by a harsh word from the manager. When at last he came smiling towards his customer, she turned and left the shop with a short "Ah'll not trouble ye."

The day came, however, which was to see the end of her search. The neighbourhood of Wandsworth had been selected by her on this occasion, and as the shadows began to fall she came down the busy High Street, and in due time passed before the establishment of Alfred Goodacre, draper and haberdasher.

Mr. Goodacre had been suffering all day from a somewhat unusual depression of spirits. He was naturally a cheerful little man, with honest, pathetic brown eyes, reminding one of a trustful but apologetic spaniel anxious to wag its tail upon receiving the slightest encouragement.

Mr. Goodacre was beginning to realize that the world was not, to continue the simile, the kindly, good-natured human being he had taken it for when, on that fine spring morning a year and a half ago, he had alighted with his newly-made wife at the door of the little shop rented and stocked out of the legacy which had enabled them to marry. He remembered now with a pang their delight when, carefully avoiding the house door, he had led his Annie proudly through the shop, the long lines of brown counters smelling of varnish, decked on either side with trim boxes in tiers in which the stock, fresh and tempting, awaited their twin souls, the tickets. He remembered as if it were yesterday the dressing of the windows, aided thereby by the two smart young lady assistants who had been engaged to live in and serve through for incredibly small salaries. These salaries now, like St. Christopher's load, seemed heavier and heavier as each pay-day came round. The stock, from which at first he could hardly take his eyes, had remained so long on his hands that he could hardly bear the sight of it when taking down the shutters in the morning. The hollow wooden legs which they had been persuaded to buy in a moment of delirious extravagance, and which, clothed in the daintiest of stockings, ribbed and striped, had given such a tone to the window, now crushed him underfoot, as it were, with their burden of unsold goods.

The first year's turnover had been slender and had left a margin on the wrong side; but then no one expected to make a profit the

first year, as sympathetic travellers, leaning over the counter with hats pushed back and rainbow-hued goods displayed, had not failed to point out. The second year, they said, was bound to pull things together. But the second year, so far, had failed him also. The summer had been an exceptionally bad one, rain, continual rain and cloudy skies, alternating with cold grey days, when muslins and laces looked hopelessly out of place. Why, everyone knew that the West-end was losing thousands and thousands a day. Smart ladies were buying furs—actually furs, and the scent of naphtha instead of roses filled the air.

Then Annie, the best little wife in the world, who had taken over the cash-desk to save him an additional "young lady," had been ailing this last month or so with the approach of the expected baby. The last of their capital now in the bank would go in the doctor's and nurse's fees, and then—but it would not bear thinking of; the shop *must* be made to pay.

Alfred had just taken his wife a cup of tea and kissed her as she sat by the fire packing away the muslin blouses and cotton goods left over from the ill-fated summer stock. The shop-bell had rung as he sat on the arm of her chair, and, pulling down his cuffs and smoothing his somewhat shabby frock-coat, Alfred hastily ran downstairs and entered the shop.

Seated at the counter, while the young lady assistants plied her unsuccessfully with the contents of various baskets, sat a rather stern-featured customer. Her face looked weary, but the glance she darted at him as he entered was remarkably piercing. The events of the bygone week had evidently not had a soothing effect upon her nerves, for it was in a voice of unaccustomed sharpness that she propounded to the astonished Alfred the usual question:—

"Yoong mon, do ye keep mercerjustus?"

Alfred hesitated. He tried to think over his stock, for a customer was a customer, and must not be sent lightly away.

"Ah'll be obleeged if ye'll tell me quickly, for Ah've had a long tramp and am sorely needin' a cup of tay."

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I'm afraid I'm not able to supply you with the article you require. *I don't know what it is!*"

"Ah!" The lady rose, but this time there was a smile on her rugged face. "Well, sir, you know your own stock best, but Ah'm thinkin' all the same that ye've got the thing Ah'm lookin' for."

The assistants listened with growing astonishment as the customer opened a small black bag and, with clumsy, cotton-clad fingers, fumbled inside.

"This is where Ah'm lodgin', Mr. Goodacre, and Ah'll be glad if you'll give me a call tomorrow afternoon. Ah've a little matter of business to talk over wi' you, so you'll be sure and come?"

Alfred took the card and bowed his strange visitor out of the shop door, watching till her stalwart figure had passed out of sight round the corner of the road.

What could it possibly mean? There was subdued excitement among the staff for the remainder of the day, their imaginations running riot between female detectives and large fortunes unexpectedly bequeathed.

When he related the strange interview to his wife that evening she was greatly interested and fired with curiosity.

"Some traveller advertising new goods," said the cautious Alfred. "They're up to all sorts of tricks in these days."

"But you'll go, won't you?—you'll go to please me. I'm just dying to know what it is all about. Promise me, Alfred."

So Alfred went.

He was shown into a small lodging-house sitting-room in a street off the Euston Road. He had asked for Mrs. Wigmore, and that lady did not keep him waiting long.

She looked much pleasanter than the day before when, weary and footsore, she had sat in his little shop. He judged her to be a woman of about fifty, largely but sparely built. He noticed that she wore a widow's collar and cuffs.

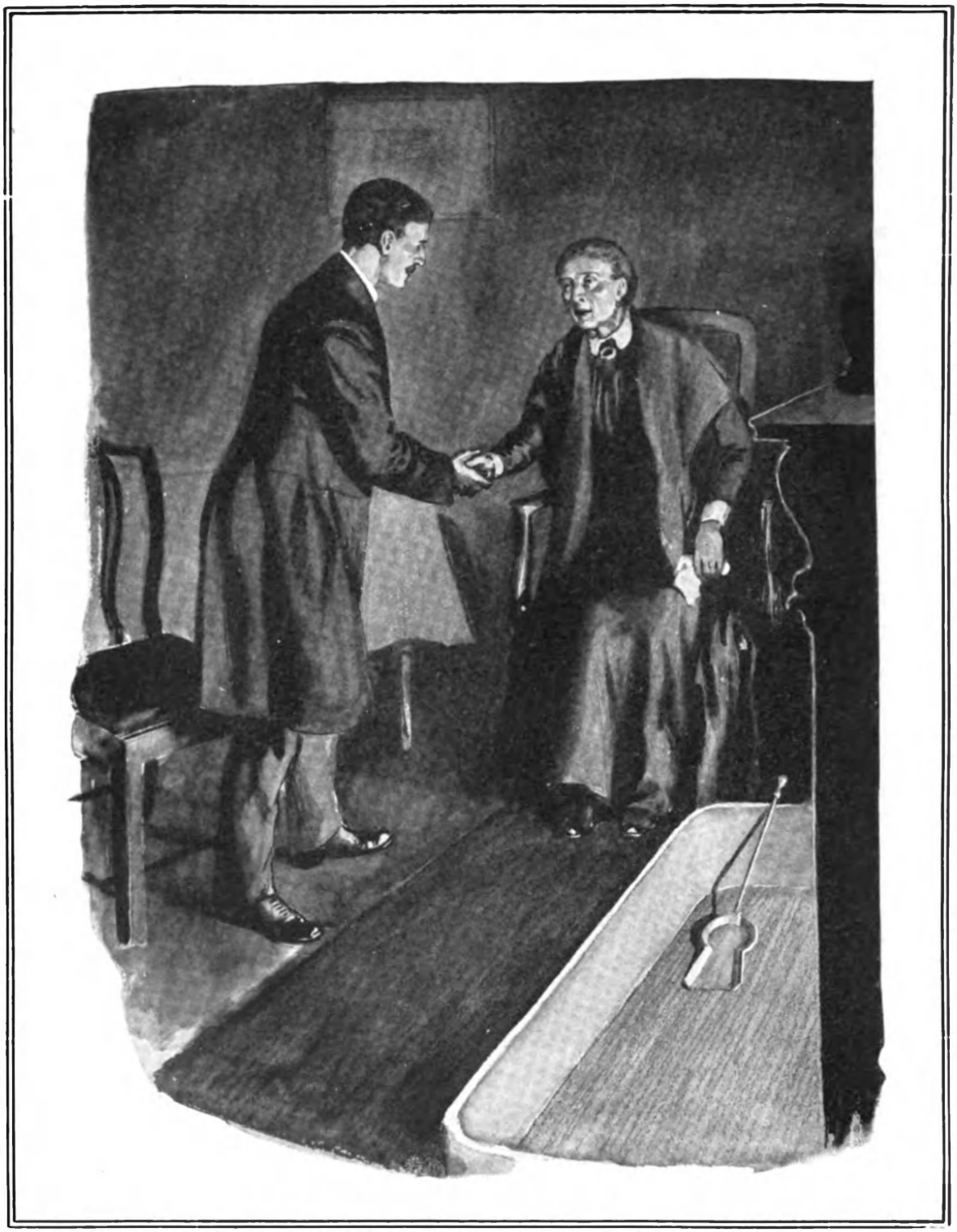
"Sit ye down, Mr. Goodacre, and we'll just have a cup of tay together. Ye'll be wonderin', no doubt, what Ah've asked ye to coom for, and Ah'll soon let ye know."

They drank their tea in silence, his hostess pressing large slices of home-made cake upon him.

"Ah've brought me own cakes oop wi' me, Mr. Goodacre, for Ah can't abide the town stuff; might as well eat bran, by ma way of thinkin'."

When the last crumb had been cleared away by the little London servant under the lodger's sharp eye, Mrs. Wigmore drew a chair up to the fire, and bade her visitor do likewise. He was beginning to feel wonderfully at home with the old woman.

The story she unfolded took some time in the telling. She came, as she said, from a country town, "oop North i' Yarkshire." There her married life had been spent, and



"SHE HELD OUT A LARGE AND CAPABLE HAND, WHICH ALFRED GRASPED."

there, until a year ago, she had lived with her only son. Mr. Wigmore had died recently, leaving her a comfortable fortune, and, together with her son, she had determined to start a drapery business on a large scale. She had chosen this particular business because in the years before her marriage she had seen her father, a draper in a small country village, fail disastrously through being, as she termed it, "main and honest, but not pushin' enough." It had been her dream for years, and as soon as possible after

the money had come to her the site had been taken and the large building set in progress. Then suddenly, that very spring, after an illness of three days, her son had been taken from her. It had been a fearful blow, but with splendid courage the old woman had determined to go on with the scheme.

" He would ha' wished it, ye see. He just thought same as me about things. ' Mother,' he'd say, ' we'll ha' no shams in oor business. Prices shall be marked plain, and none o' your eleven-three tacked on to shillings and such-like. If folks ask for silk let 'em have it, and not cotton wi' a silk finish ; if they ask for flannel to pit roun' their necks, maybe winters, let 'em have it and not cotton fluff.' Aye, he'd talk by the hour as how there should be no sweatin' and no hoombug. The wenches in the shop should have fair waages, and should learn to speak their honest minds to customers. Why, they'll tell you anything to sell the stuff. Ah've no patience wi' the nonsense that gooes on. Well, as Ah say, we had it all made up for the business to oppen at New Year, when he gets the pneumonia, as they call it, and all was over in three days." Here she turned her head, and a tear glinted in the firelight.

There was silence for a few minutes.

" So, ye see, it's like this. If Ah was to goo on wi' the business, Ah must have a yoong mon to manage it, same as my Harry would ha' done. Ah had to look for an honest draper—Mercerjustus, as ma son used to ca' it ; he was a fine Latin scholar, was Harry. Well, Ah wasn't gooin' to advertise, so round Ah gooes to all the small shops as Ah could see, and in Ah gooes and asks for what Ah wanted. Ah wanted a mercerjustus, and so Ah jest asks for one. See ? Ah knew the moment Ah set eyes on moast of 'em they would not do ; not one in ten looked me in the faace to begin wi'. But when Ah saw you, Ah says to mysel', ' That's the feller for me ! ' You looked worried, but honest-like. Yoong mon, will ye coom and manage ma business for me oop i' Yarkshire ? "

She held out a large and capable hand, which Alfred grasped. He was too much overcome to speak. Coming at such a time, the offer meant financial salvation to him, and probably wealth.

In a few words he poured forth his whole story to this kindly, honest old woman, showing how the disasters had come upon him since his marriage through sheer bad luck and want of capital. He drew a picture of Annie, her sweet patience when the bad times came, their unfailing love for one another.

Mrs. Wigmore listened in silence, and as he rose to take his leave she placed her hand on his shoulder.

" There, there, lad. Things will a' coom reet, ye'll see. Goo home to your wife now and bring her to see me soon ; Ah'll lay she's wonderin' what's coom of ye."

And thus were laid the foundations of the great and successful firm of Wigmore and Goodacre, mercers and general outfitters, branches of which have since sprung up in all parts of Yorkshire.

Does it Pay to Back Horses?

THE OPINIONS OF EXPERTS.

[The experts whose opinions have been asked on this subject have been chosen as representative of the various classes whose experience carries weight—the mathematician, the owner of horses, the trainer, the jockey, the professional backer, the bookmaker, and the racing journalist. These opinions are most varied and interesting, and it will be noticed that they all agree on one point, namely, that the ordinary backer is the support of the ring, and is, therefore, more or less of a "mug."]

SIR HIRAM MAXIM (Mathematical Expert).

IT depends altogether upon the standpoint from which it is viewed. There must of necessity be more than one party to a bet. The bookie bets that a horse will not win and makes money by it, and the common or garden gambler bets that the horse will win and loses money by it. Many bookmakers have become immensely rich by betting, and this is proof that money can be made by betting, providing that the business is conducted in a skilful manner. It is impossible for anyone to make money on a bet unless someone else loses it. Betting does not increase the amount of wealth in the country, but rather diminishes it. The bookmakers of England must make several millions a year out of their business, and every penny of this is won from the unthinking public, who are quite satisfied to play at a losing game, providing that they have the remote chance of winning more than their stake. If it were possible to discover a system that would beat the bookmakers, then the bookmakers would very soon alter their rules of the game so as to meet the new state of affairs.

THE EARL OF CLARENDON.

I DO not suppose that from any point of view betting pays. It can hardly be supposed that either the *auri sacra fames*, or the determination of either the one or the other of the "contracting parties" to get a little the best of the bargain, can be of any benefit to character, while I have never heard of any *backer of horses*, at any rate, ever having amassed wealth. Although it may be for a short time his speculations have been successful, yet in the long run his losses outbalance his gains. Indeed, if they did not do so, how would the betting ring exist?

Mr. DANNY MAHER (the Famous Jockey).

SINCE jockeys are not allowed to bet, it is difficult for me to express an opinion. As a mere looker-on, so far as betting is concerned, I see no reason why betting should not pay. In a country like this, where racing is strictly and fairly carried out and where everything possible is done to ensure the best horse winning, to win at betting becomes a matter of judgment. But to be able to judge the comparative merits of various horses in a

given race, at given weights, is not always easy, for the reason that horses, like human beings, do not run with a machine-like evenness. Horses have their good and bad days. Every racing season many examples occur, especially among young horses, of animals that beat each other under apparently even conditions, one winning one day and being beaten by another, perhaps the very next week, which was "down the course" before. This may be accounted for either by the "mood" of a horse or the improvement from training—different horses improving at different rates according to the training and according to their temperament—or even by the mood or condition of the jockey. For jockeys have their good and bad days too, and are seldom right at the top of their form every time. It is these variations that lend uncertainty to betting and give the bookmaker his chance, in my opinion.

The Views of a Professional Backer.

SPEAKING from the point of view, purely and simply, of the punter—that is to say, the general run of punters—it must be obvious that betting does not pay. Otherwise the supply of bookmakers would speedily run short! If I were asked to answer the question "*Can* betting pay?" I should give a very different answer. Betting is a business on the punter's side just as much as it is on the layer's side. It requires experience, discrimination, self-control, and keen observation. Almost anyone who is prepared to treat betting on horses as a business, and devotes as much time and thought to it as is devoted to achieving success in any other profession, can make money. However hard they work, men sometimes fail in business. It is so with the professional backers. They are not infallible. But most of them make a living, and many of them make a good income.

The crowd that throngs the racecourse is, for the most part, out for a day's sport, with the exciting prospect of "making a bit"—with luck. They bet on every race without any knowledge or previous observation to guide them, or follow the advice of a tipster who is forced to give selections whether he knows anything or not, simply because the public demand it of him. To win for any length of time, when betting in this indiscriminate way, is impossible. Men often have a run of luck, it is true. I have known a man win week after week for six weeks on end, although he hardly knew a horse from a mule, and was guided simply by his own "fancy." The last state of such a man is always worse than the first. Money won so easily is easily spent, and when the tide turns, as turn it must, wild plunges to recover lead to loss, and sometimes to ruin. Human nature is what puts money in the bookmakers' pockets. The punter cannot wait to bet on some horse which has an obviously good chance, or about which he really has information. The moment the horses assemble for a race a wild desire to gamble comes over him. He cannot bear to see them run unless he has something on. The result is that by the time the race arrives in which the horse he came to back is engaged he has nothing left.

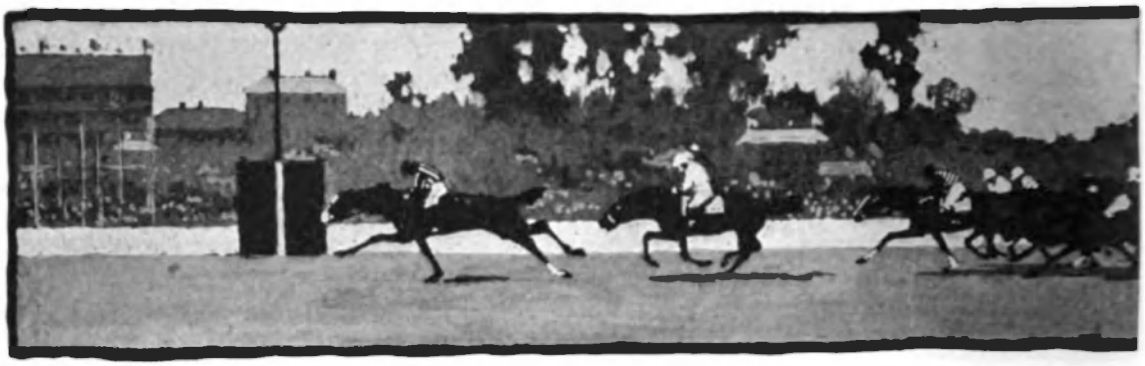
The man who makes punting pay is he with an iron control over himself. He is content to wait for days, and often for weeks, without a bet at all, although all that time he is attending meetings and keeping his eyes open for likely winners in the future. Then, when his chance comes, he has not frittered away his money, but is able to put it down. If the ordinary punter put on all the money in one race that he fritters away in six he would stand to win a goodly sum at no greater risk. It is hard enough to find one winner, let alone half-a-dozen!

"CAPTAIN COE," of the "Star."

THE greatest charm about betting on horse-racing lies in the bed-rock fact that it is possible to win on every race if you manage to pick the right one. I remember well the case of one racecourse tout who, some years ago, went right through the card on a certain day and ran ten shillings into three hundred and fifty pounds! On another day I gave every winner at York and Salisbury but one, and the loser was, unfortunately, the "nap." Scores of little punters had the "nap" in doubles, trebles, and accumulators, not one of which synchronized, to the great joy of the bookies.

Backing, as carried on by *professional* punters, pays well; indeed, the late R. H. Fry once told me the professional backer had a better chance than the bookies, and I may add that during my experience I have only known one big professional backer who disappeared. He lost eighteen thousand pounds at one Epsom meeting, and had the money to pay with; but he preferred to retire into private life to paying up, and I believe he purchased an annuity with his capital.

I do not bet myself; but once when I ran horses I put five pounds on one of them at the instigation of one of the biggest legal luminants of that day, who witnessed the trial. My horse was beaten in the race by



a head, but, as it was a selling event, I got a share of a big surplus.

I feel it right to add, in conclusion, that I am not qualified to properly answer the question.

Mr. D. M. GANT (the Well-Known Starting-Price Bookmaker).

AT the present time it would be difficult to say which of the two—the layer or the backer—has the advantage. Telephones and telegrams, together with the extraordinary competition among newspapers in the purveyance of racing information, have rendered bookmaking profits a matter of slight percentage, and if the bookmaker is to keep going it must be on the strength of almost unlimited resources and a huge connection.

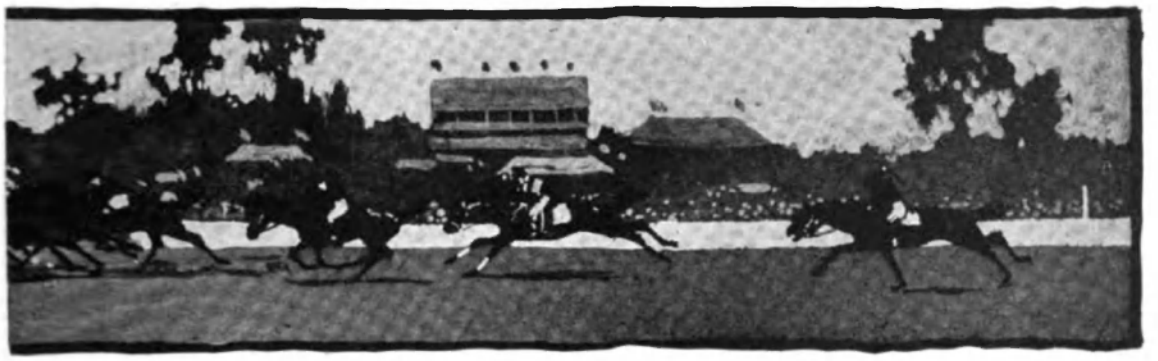
It has certainly paid me, but the profits I have made from starting-price bookmaking cannot be termed extravagant considering the amount of capital that has from time to time been requisitioned to develop the business—and maintain it—on a sound footing. I am confident that if I had speculated a similar amount in judiciously advertising such articles as soap, pickles, or mustard I should have received a far better return for my money, and, as I am fortunate enough to possess very considerable interests now in certain well-known commercial undertakings, I am not speaking without experience.

Some twenty years ago I expended a very large amount of money in advertising certain bookmaking innovations which were then quite original, but have since become almost general. The "No limit, no commission" system of betting was among these. I commenced to pay the full starting-price, no matter at what odds the horse started, although most bookmakers had at that time a limit of ten to one on small races, and they deducted anything from two and a half to five per cent. from clients' winnings. This move resulted to me in an enormous increase of business, but it must not be thought that a large clientele necessarily means big profits. You may hear and read of people who back horses in a sublime spirit of indifference as to whether they win or lose—just for the sport of the thing, in fact—and if any amount of advertising could secure for the bookmaker a large number of these as clients his fortune would be assured. As far as my experience goes, however, such people do not exist!

Speaking from the starting-price bookmaker's point of view I must point out that this is a very different thing to betting on the course, where a book can be made on each race to ensure a profit, and commissions can be refused if there is too much money for a particular horse. The starting-price bookmaker is in quite a different position. He must accept bets right up to the time of the start in perfect ignorance as to the state of the market, or whether any horse or horses are being backed at the last moment. He is, therefore, prevented from covering himself against loss. I have myself been through periods of great stress and strain through the victory of certain horses which, while popular with the "stay-at-home" punter, have been little supported on the course, and have consequently started at a long price. These and similar trials can only be supported by having a large enough cash balance available to meet all contingencies, and it is only under these conditions and by careful attention to business that starting-price bookmaking can be made to pay.

Mr. JAMES H. SMITH ("Vigilant," of the "Sportsman").

THE question is one I should be chary of treating from a journalistic point of view. "Does betting pay?" It depends on the speculator and his ability to beat the market. In a word, as in everything else, cleverness prevails, but to anyone not thoroughly *au fait* with racing in all its intricacies on the one hand and the various and rapid changes in the market, my direct advice would be "*Don't!*"



Colonel W. HALL WALKER, M.P.

YOU ask me for my opinion, "Does betting pay?" I presume you mean, does it pay that portion of the public who back horses?

The bookmakers' profits I know nothing of beyond that I share the almost universal opinion that they do win, and that largely, as the odds are so much in their favour. As regards the backers of horses, probably a small proportion do win money regularly; but these are professional backers, who go to the meetings regularly and work in a businesslike way. Apart from the before-mentioned, I have no doubt that the vast majority of backers of horses lose money at the game; but the same can be said about the participators in every other kind of amusement or sport, as none of these can be carried on without cost.

I have previously publicly expressed my approval of the pari-mutuel system of betting, as giving the ordinary backer a much fairer chance than he at present enjoys, and at the same time securing substantial financial aid to the horse supply of this country.

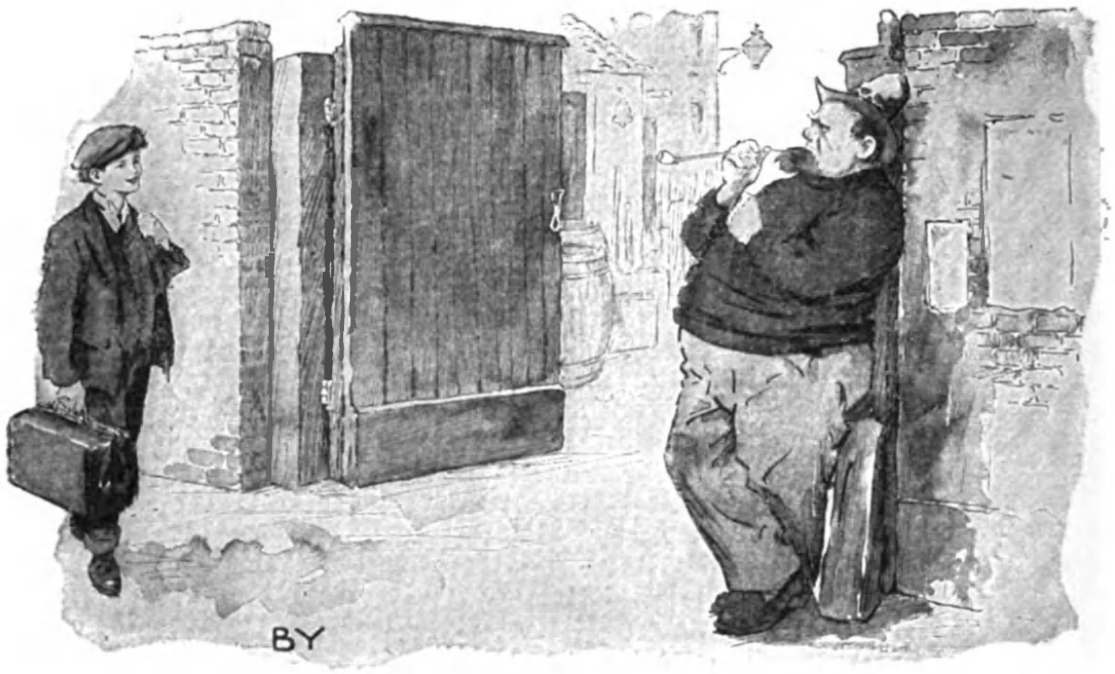
Mr. ROBERT S. SIEVIER (whose famous mare, Sceptre, was such a popular idol).

You have put before me a proposition, "Does betting pay?" The obvious answer is, "Yes—it pays the bookmaker." There are also many backers who make it pay, but it is clear that several must lose, or bookmakers would not exist. One might say, "Does speculation on the Stock Exchange pay?" But against this there is a very large amount annually to be set aside for the stockbrokers and jobbers. To my mind, betting is the fairest mode of speculation, and certainly the most honourable. One's liabilities are described as debts of honour, and this arises from the fact that bets are made by word of mouth, without witnesses, and no documents are signed by either party. Yet there are fewer disputes brought before Tattersall's Committee, which is the tribunal for hearing such cases, than there are perhaps in connection with any other transactions where money passes. The man who loses by backing horses is invariably the one who goes after his money. Temperament is the qualification that is required, with a fair quantum of philosophy thrown in. The majority of men fail to blend the two, and are too eager to regain their losses when they are out of touch with Dame Fortune. I am ready to admit that temptation to liquidate a lost bet by winning another is great, but the man who bets should be prepared to lose and pay instead of speculating with only hope for a foundation.

Mr. LEOPOLD DE ROTHSCHILD.

I CAN only say that I should be very sorry to encourage anyone to bet with a view to making money. Nay, more, I would discourage everyone from betting in any way, except as a pastime.

"MANNERS MAKYTH MAN"



W. W. JACOBS

Illustrated by Will Owen.

THE night-watchman appeared to be out of sorts. His movements were even slower than usual, and, when he sat, the soap-box seemed to be unable to give satisfaction. His face bore an expression of deep melancholy, but a smouldering gleam in his eye betokened feelings deeply moved.

"Play-acting I don't hold with," he burst out, with sudden ferocity. "Never did. I don't say I ain't been to a theayter once or twice in my life, but I always come away with the idea that anybody could act if they liked to try. It's a kid's game, a silly kid's game, dressing up and pretending to be somebody else."

He cut off a piece of tobacco and, stowing it in his left cheek, sat chewing, with his lack-lustre eyes fixed on the wharves across the river. The offensive antics of a lighterman in mid-stream, who nearly fell overboard in his efforts to attract his attention, he ignored.

I might ha' known it, too, he said, after a long silence. If I'd only stopped to think, instead o' being in such a hurry to do good to others, I should ha' been all right, and the pack o' monkey-faced swabs on the *Lizzie and Annie* wot calls themselves sailormen would 'ave had to 'ave got something else to laugh about. They've told it in every pub for 'arf a mile round, and last night, when I went into the Town of Margate to get a drink, three chaps climbed over the partition to 'ave a look at me.

It all began with young Ted Sawyer, the mate o' the *Lizzie and Annie*. He calls himself a mate, but if it wasn't for 'aving the skipper for a brother-in-law 'e'd be called something else, very quick. Two or three times we've 'ad words over one thing and

another, and the last time I called 'im something that I can see now was a mistake. It was one o' these 'ere clever things that a man don't forget, let alone a lop-sided monkey like 'im.

That was when they was up time afore last, and when they made fast 'ere last week I could see as he 'adn't forgotten it. For one thing he pretended not to see me, and, arter I 'ad told him wot I'd do to him if 'e ran into me agin, he said 'e thought I was a sack o' potatoes taking a airing on a pair of legs wot somebody 'ad throwed away. Nasty tongue 'e's got; not clever, but nasty.

Arter that I took no notice of 'im, and, o' course, that annoyed 'im more than anything. All I could do I done, and 'e was ringing the gate-bell that night from five minutes to twelve till ha'-past afore I heard it. Many a night-watchman gets a name for going to sleep when 'e's only getting a bit of 'is own back.

We stood there talking for over 'arf an hour arter I 'ad let 'im in. Leastways, he did. And whenever I see as he was getting tired I just said, "*H'sh!*" and 'e'd start agin as fresh as ever. He tumbled to it at last, and went aboard shaking 'is little fist at me and telling me wot he'd do to me if it wasn't for the lor.

I kept by the gate as soon as I came on dooty next evening, just to give 'im a little smile as 'e went out. There is nothing more aggravating than a smile when it is properly done; but there was no signs o' my lord, and, arter practising it on a carman by mistake, I 'ad to go inside for a bit and wait till he 'ad gorn.

The coast was clear by the time I went back, and I 'ad just stepped outside with my back up agin the gate-post to 'ave a pipe, when I see a boy coming along with a bag. Good-looking lad of about fifteen 'e was, nicely dressed in a serge suit, and he no sooner gets up to me than 'e puts down the bag and looks up at me with a timid sort o' little smile.

"Good evening, cap'n," he ses.

He wasn't the fust that 'ad made that mistake; older people than 'im have done it.

"Good evening, my lad," I ses.

"I s'pose," he ses, in a trembling voice, "I suppose you ain't looking out for a cabin-boy, sir?"

"Cabin-boy?" I ses. "No, I ain't."

"I've run away from 'ome to go to sea," he ses, "and I'm afraid of being pursued. Can I come inside?"

Afore I could say "No" he 'ad come, bag and all, and afore I could say anything else he 'ad nipped into the office and stood there with his 'and on his chest, panting.

"I know I can trust you," he ses; "I can see it by your face."

"Wot 'ave you run away from 'ome for?" I ses. "Have they been ill-treating of you?"

"Ill-treating me?" he ses, with a laugh. "Not much. Why, I expect my father is running about all over the place offering rewards for me. He wouldn't lose me for a thousand pounds."

I pricked up my ears at that; I don't deny it. Anybody would. Besides, I knew it would be doing 'im a kindness to hand 'im back to 'is father. And then I did a bit o' thinking to see 'ow it was to be done.

"Sit down," I ses, putting three or four ledgers on the floor behind one of the desks. "Sit down, and let's talk it over."

We talked away for ever so long, but, do all I would, I couldn't persuade 'im. His 'ead was stuffed full of coral islands and smugglers and pirates and foreign ports. He said 'e wanted to see the world, and flying-fish.

"I love the blue billers," he ses; "the heaving blue billers is wot I want."

I tried to explain to 'im who would be doing the heaving, but 'e wouldn't listen to me. He sat on them ledgers like a little wooden image, looking up at me and shaking his 'ead, and when I told 'im of storms and shipwrecks he just smacked 'is lips and his blue eyes shone with joy. Arter a time I saw it was no good trying to persuade 'im, and I pretended to give way.

"I think I can get you a ship with a friend o' mine," I ses; "but, mind, I've got to relieve your pore father's mind—I must let 'im know wot's become of you."

"Not before I've sailed," he ses, very quick.

"Certingly not," I ses. "But you must give me 'is name and address, and, arter the *Blue Shark*—that's the name of your ship—is clear of the land, I'll send 'im a letter with no name to it, saying where you 'ave gorn."

He didn't seem to like it at fust, and said 'e would write 'imself, but arter I 'ad pointed out that 'e might forget and that I was responsible, 'e gave way and told me that 'is father was named Mr. Watson, and he kept a big draper's shop in the Commercial Road.

We talked a bit arter that, just to stop 'is suspicions, and then I told 'im to stay where 'e was on the floor, out of sight of the window, while I went to see my friend the captin.

I stood outside for a moment trying to make up my mind wot to do. O' course, I 'ad no business, strictly speaking, to leave the wharf, but, on the other 'and, there was a

father's 'eart to relieve. I edged along bit by bit while I was thinking, and then, arter looking back once or twice to make sure that the boy wasn't watching me, I set off for the Commercial Road as hard as I could go.

I'm not so young as I was. It was a warm evening, and I 'adn't got even a bus fare on me. I 'ad to walk all the way, and, by the time I got there, I was 'arf melted. It was a tidy-sized shop, with three or four nice-looking gals behind the counter, and things like babies' high chairs for the customers to sit on—long in the leg and ridikerlously small in the seat. I went up to one of the gals and told 'er I wanted to see Mr. Watson.

"On private business," I ses. "Very important."

She looked at me for a moment, and then she went away and fetched a tall, bald-headed man with grey side-whiskers and a large nose.

"Wot d'you want?" he ses, coming up o me.

"I want a word with you in private," I ses.

"This is private enough for me," he ses. "Say wot you 'ave to say, and be quick about it."

I drawed myself up a bit and looked at him. "P'r'aps you ain't missed 'im yet," I ses.

"Missed 'im?" he ses, with a growl. "Missed who?"

"Your—son. Your blue-eyed son," I ses, looking 'im straight in the eye.

"Look here!" he ses, spluttering. "You be off. 'Ow dare you come here with your games? Wot d'ye mean by it?"

"I mean," I ses, getting a bit out o' temper, "that your boy has run away to go to sea, and I've come to take you to 'im."

He seemed so upset that I thought 'e was going to 'ave a fit at fust, and it seemed only natural, too. Then I see that the best-looking gal and another *was* 'aving a fit, although trying 'ard not to.

"If you don't get out o' my shop," he ses at last, "I'll 'ave you locked up."

"Very good!" I ses, in a quiet way. "Very good; but, mark my words, if he's drownded you'll never forgive yourself as long as you live for letting your temper get the better of you—you'll never know a good night's rest agin. Besides, wot about 'is mother?"

One o' them silly gals went off agin just like a damp firework, and Mr. Watson, arter nearly choking 'imself with temper, shoved me out o' the way and marched out o' the shop. I didn't know wot to make of 'im at fust, and then one o' the gals told me that 'e was a bachelor and 'adn't got no son, and that somebody 'ad been taking advantage of what she called my innercence to pull my leg.

"You toddle off 'ome," she ses, "before Mr. Watson comes back."

"It's a shame to let 'im come out alone," ses one o' the other gals. "Where do you live, gran'pa?"

I see then that I 'ad been done, and I was just walking out o' the shop, pretending to be deaf, when Mr. Watson come back with a silly young policeman wot asked me wot I meant by it. He told me to get off 'ome quick, and actooally put his 'and on my shoulder, but it 'ud take more than a thing like that to push me, and, arter trying his 'ardest, he could only rock me a bit.

I went at last because I wanted to see that boy agin, and the young policeman follered me quite a long way, shaking his silly 'ead at me and telling me to be careful.

I got a ride part o' the way from Commercial Road to Aldgate by getting on the wrong bus, but it wasn't much good, and I was quite tired by the time I got back to the wharf. I waited outside for a minute or two to get my wind back agin, and then I went in—boiling.

You might ha' knocked me down with a feather, as the saying is, and I just stood inside the office speechless. The boy 'ad disappeared, and sitting on the floor where I 'ad left 'im was a very nice-looking gal of about eighteen, with short 'air and a white blouse.

"Good evening, sir," she ses, jumping up and giving me a pretty little frightened look. "I'm so sorry that my brother has been deceiving you. He's a bad, wicked, ungrateful boy. The idea of telling you that Mr. Watson was 'is father! Have you been there? I do 'ope you're not tired."

"Where is he?" I ses.

"He's gorn," she ses, shaking her 'ead. "I begged and prayed of 'im to stop, but 'e wouldn't. He said 'e thought you might be offended with 'im. 'Give my love to old Roley-Poley, and tell 'im I don't trust 'im,' he ses."

She stood there looking so scared that I didn't know wot to say. By and by she took out 'er little pocket-ankercher and began to cry.

"Oh, get 'im back," she ses. "Don't let it be said I follered 'im 'ere all the way for nothing. Have another try. For my sake!"

"'Ow can I get 'im back when I don't know where he's gorn?" I ses.

"He—he's gorn to 'is godfather," she ses,

"ARTER TRYING HIS 'ARDEST, HE COULD ONLY ROCK ME A BIT."

dabbing her eyes. "I promised 'im not to tell anybody; but I don't know wot to do for the best."

"Well, p'r'aps 'is godfather will 'old on to 'im," I ses.

"He won't tell 'im anything about going to sea," she ses, shaking her little 'ead. "He's just gorn to try and bo-bo-borrow some money to go away with."

She bust out sobbing, and it was all I could do to get the godfather's address out of 'er. When I think of the trouble I took to get it I come over quite faint. At last she told me, between 'er sobs, that 'is name was Mr. Kiddem, and that he lived at 27, Bridge Street.

"He's one o' the kindest-'earted and most generous men that ever lived," she ses; "that's why my brother Harry 'as gone to 'im. And you needn't mind taking anything 'e likes to give you; he's rolling in money."

I took it a bit easier going to Bridge Street, but the evening seemed 'otter than ever, and by the time I got to the 'ouse I was pretty near done up. A nice, tidy-looking woman opened the door, but she was a'most stone-deaf, and I 'ad to shout the name pretty near a dozen times afore she 'eard it.

"He don't live 'ere," she ses.

"'As he moved?" I ses. "Or wot?"

She shook her 'ead, and, arter telling me to wait, went in and fetched her 'usband.

"Never 'eard of him," he ses, "and we've been 'ere seventeen years. Are you sure it was twenty-seven?"

"Sartain," I ses.

"Well, he don't live 'ere," he ses. "Why not try thirty-seven and forty-seven?"

I tried 'em: thirty-seven was empty, and a pasty-faced chap at forty-seven nearly made 'imself ill over the name of "Kiddem." It 'adn't struck me before, but it's a hard matter to deceive me, and all in a flash it come over me that I 'ad been done agin, and that the gal was as bad as 'er brother.

I was so done up I could 'ardly crawl back, and my 'ead was all in a maze. Three or four times I stopped and tried to think, but couldn't, but at last I got back and dragged myself into the office.

As I 'arf expected, it was empty. There was no sign of either the gal or the boy; and I dropped into a chair and tried to think wot

it all meant. Then, 'appening to look out of the winder, I see somebody running up and down the jetty.

I couldn't see plain owing to the things in the way, but as soon as I got outside and saw who it was I nearly dropped. It was the boy, and he was running up and down wringing his 'ands and crying like a wild thing, and, instead o' running away as soon as 'e saw me, he rushed right up to me and threw 'is grubby little paws round my neck.

"Save her!" 'e ses. "Save 'er! *Help! Help!*"

"Look 'ere," I ses

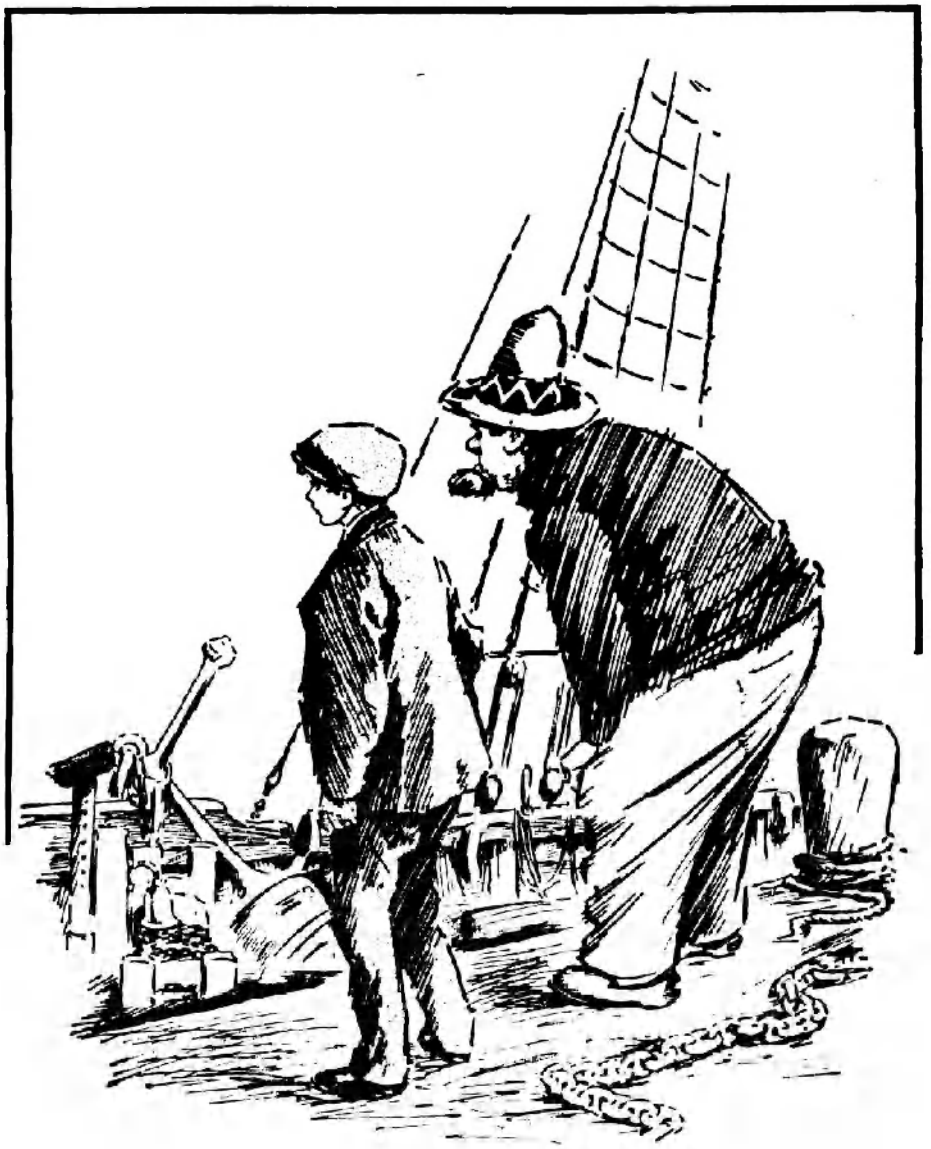
"She fell overboard," he ses, dancing about. "Oh, my pore sister! Quick! Quick! I can't swim!"

He ran to the side and pointed at the water, which was just about at 'arf-tide. Then 'e caught 'old of me agin.

"Make 'aste," he ses, giving me a shove behind. "Jump in. Wot are you waitin' for?"

I stood there for a moment 'arf dazed, looking down at the water. Then I pulled down a life-belt from the wall 'ere and threw it in, and, arter another moment's thought, ran back to the *Lizzie and Annie*, wot was in the inside berth, and gave them a hail. I've always 'ad a good voice, and in a flash the skipper and Ted Sawyer came tumbling up out of the cabin and the 'ands out of the fo'c'sle.

"Gal overboard!" I ses, shouting.



"'GAL OVERBOARD!' I SES, SHOUTING.

The skipper just asked where, and then 'im and the mate and a couple of 'ands tumbled into their boat and pulled under the jetty for all they was worth. Me and the boy ran back and stood with the others, watching.

"Point out the exact spot," ses the skipper.

The boy pointed, and the skipper stood up in the boat and felt round with a boat-hook.

"SHE CAME ALONG TOWARDS ME WITH 'ER ARMS HELD CLOSE TO 'ER SIDES."

Twice 'e said he thought 'e touched something, but it turned out as 'e was mistaken. His face got longer and longer and 'e shook his 'ead, and said he was afraid it was no good.

"Don't stand cryin' 'ere," he ses to the boy, kindly. "Jem, run round for the Thames police, and get them and the drags. Take the boy with you. It'll occupy 'is mind."

He 'ad another go with the boat-hook arter they 'ad gone; then 'e gave it up, and sat in the boat waiting.

"This'll be a bad job for you, watchman," he ses, shaking his 'ead. "Where was you when it 'appened?"

"He's been missing all the evening," ses the cook, wot was standing beside me. "If he'd been doing 'is dooty, the pore gal wouldn't 'ave been drownded. Wot was she doing on the wharf?"

"Skylarkin', I s'pose," ses the mate. "It's a wonder there ain't more drownded. "Wot can you expect when the watchman is sitting in a pub all the evening?"

The cook said I ought to be 'ung, and a young ordinary seaman wot was standing beside 'im said he would sooner I was boiled. I believe they 'ad words about it, but I was feeling too upset to take much notice.

"Looking miserable won't bring 'er back to life agin," ses the skipper, looking up at me and shaking his 'ead. "You'd better go down to my cabin and get yourself a drop o' whisky; there's a bottle on the table. You'll want all your wits about you when the police come. And wotever you do don't say nothing to criminate yourself."

"We'll do the criminating for 'im all right," ses the cook.

"If I was the pore gal I'd haunt 'im," ses the ordinary seaman; "every night of 'is life I'd stand afore 'im dripping with water and moaning."

"P'r'aps she will," ses the cook; "let's 'ope so, at any rate."

I didn't answer 'em; I was too dead-beat. Besides which, I've got a 'orror of ghosts, and the idea of being on the wharf alone of a night arter such a thing was a'most too much for me. I went on board the *Lizzie and Annie*, and down in the cabin I found a bottle o' whisky, as the skipper 'ad said. I sat down on the locker and 'ad a glass, and then I sat worrying and wondering wot was to be the end of it all.

The whisky warmed me up a bit, and I 'ad just taken up the bottle to 'elp myself agin when I 'eard a faint sort o' sound in the skipper's state-room. I put the bottle down and listened, but everything seemed deathly still. I took it up agin, and 'ad just poured out a drop o' whisky when I distinctly 'eard a hissing noise and then a little moan.

For a moment I sat turned to stone. Then I put the bottle down quiet, and 'ad just got up to go when the door of the state-room opened, and I saw the drownded gal, with 'er little face and hair all wet and dripping, standing before me.

Ted Sawyer 'as been telling everybody that I came up the companion-way like a fog-horn that 'ad lost its ma; I wonder how he'd 'ave come up if he'd 'ad the evening I had 'ad?

They were all on the jetty as I got there and tumbled into the skipper's arms, and all asking at once wot was the matter. When I got my breath back a bit and told 'em, they laughed. All except the cook, and 'e said it was only wot I might expect. Then, like a man in a dream, I see the gal come out of the companion and walk slowly to the side.

"Look!" I ses. "Look! *There she is!*"

"You're dreaming," ses the skipper; "there's nothing there."

They all said the same, even when the gal stepped on to the side and climbed on to the wharf. She came along towards me with 'er arms held close to 'er sides, and making the most 'orrible faces at me, and it took five of 'em all their time to 'old me. The wharf and everything seemed to me to spin round and round. Then she came straight up to me and patted me on the cheek.

"Pore old gentleman," she ses. "Wot a shame it is, Ted!"

They let go o' me then, and stamped up and down the jetty laughing fit to kill themselves. If they 'ad only known wot a exhibition they was making of themselves, and 'ow I pitied them, they wouldn't ha' done it. And by and by Ted wiped his eyes and put his arm round the gal's waist and ses:—

"This is my intended, Miss Florrie Price," he ses. "Ain't she a little wonder? Wot d'ye think of 'er?"

"I'll keep my own opinion," I ses. "I ain't got anything to say against gals, but if I only lay my 'ands on that young brother of 'ers——"

They went off agin then, worse than ever; and at last the cook came and put 'is skinny arm round my neck and started spluttering in my ear. I shoved 'im off hard, because I see it all then; and I should ha' seen it afore only I didn't 'ave time to think. I don't bear no malice, and all I can say is that I don't wish 'er any harder punishment than to be married to Ted Sawyer.

From Behind the Speaker's Chair.

VIEWED BY SIR HENRY LUCY.

(NEW SERIES.)

Illustrated by E. T. Reed.

MINISTERIAL SACRIFICES.

BY a self-denying ordinance His Majesty's Ministers, whilst generously making provision of £400 a year by way of salary for their fellow-members, do not share in this twentieth-century demand on the public purse. They already have their salaries, in several cases inadequate to the magnitude of their public service and the sacrifice of pecuniary gain open to them in private practice. Mr. Gladstone's official income never exceeded £5,000 a year, and was intermitted by recurrent periods of Opposition. Needless to say, he never availed himself of the pension which lightens the lot of some other statesmen when temporarily or permanently out of office. Had he obeyed his earlier impulse and sought a career in the Church, he would inevitably have reached the Primacy, with its comfortable £15,000 a year. Had he followed family footsteps and devoted himself to commerce, there would have been no reasonable limit to his income. He was content with what, spread over the years of active service, was a mere pittance.

The late Sir William Harcourt provided an example even more striking of the pecuniary sacrifice men are willing to make for the chances and changes of political life. When, in 1868, he entered Parliament as member for the City of Oxford, he necessarily relinquished practice at the Parliamentary Bar, which brought him in an increasing income that had already reached the nice rotundity of £12,000 a year. He enjoyed considerable spells of office, but he never recaptured the average of lost gains.

LAW OFFICERS OF THE CROWN.

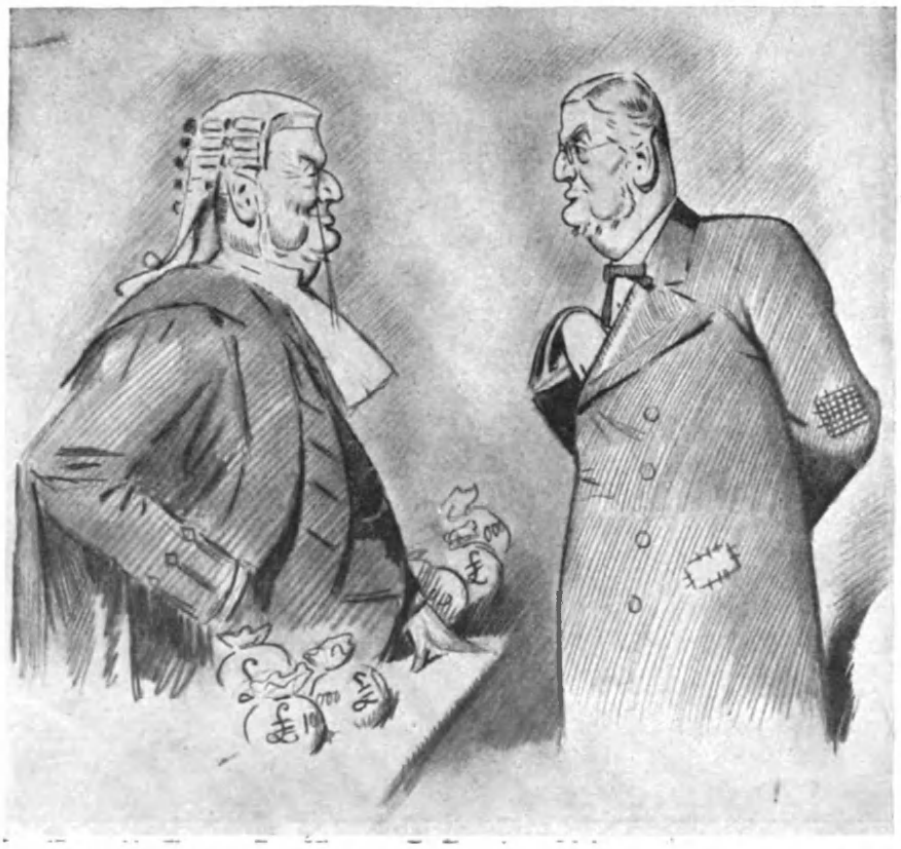
With exceptional equanimity the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General may regard the Quarterly Pay Sheet of the House of Commons with lofty indifference. Whilst the Prime Minister's salary stands at £5,000 a year, the Attorney-General draws £7,000, and Mr. Solicitor-General £1,000 a year less. But that is not all. By a Treasury Minute dated

"HAD MR. GLADSTONE FOLLOWED THE FAMILY FOOTSTEPS AND DEVOTED HIMSELF TO COMMERCE, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO REASONABLE LIMIT TO HIS INCOME."

July 5th, 1895, it is set forth that this salary is to cover all work of whatever nature done by them as Law Officers for any department of Government, "except contentious business." To the learned gentlemen concerned, more blessed than Mesopotamia is the phrase "contentious business." The Minute sets forth that the term applies to (*a*) cases in which the head of a Government Department directs a Law Officer to be instructed; (*b*) cases in which the Solicitor to the Treasury or the solicitor of a Government Department thinks it desirable that a Law Officer should appear; (*c*) cases concerning prolongation of patents in the Privy Council; (*d*) informations on the Crown side and Customs cases; (*e*) cases in the Revenue Paper; and (*f*) cases in the Court of Appeal, House of Lords, and Privy Council.

If time and money were matters of moment in Downing Street it would seem that savings would be scored if, instead of setting forth particulars of what constitutes "contentious business," it were stated what services rendered by the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General do not come within that category.

As matters are arranged, the fixed salaries of the Law Officers are mere substrata upon which are built up incomes that must shock John Burns, who is understood still to retain belief in his famous axiom that a wage of £500 a year should satisfy any man. Sir Edward Clarke in one year, by means of what may perhaps not disrespectfully be called pickings, increased his statutory salary by something more than fifty per cent. As for the Attorney-General, if he does not draw £12,000 a year he begins to think there is, after all, something in the assertion about the country going to the dogs. In the year 1892–3 Sir Charles Russell received payment for services as Attorney-General amounting to £13,000. This affluence was, however, no new experience for the great advocate. A friend who, after his death, had access to his fee-book gives me some interesting particulars. Taking silk in 1872, Russell's income of £3,000 a year speedily trebled. From 1882 to 1892 it averaged £16,000 a year. In 1893, when re-appointed Attorney-General, he within the space of twelve months earned £32,826. This far exceeds the high-water mark of his successor in the Attorney-Generalship. In the financial year ending March 31st, 1904, Sir Robert Finlay, in addition to his salary as Attorney-General, received in fees £12,921 7s. 9d., making a total of £19,921 7s. 9d. His colleague, Sir Edward Carson, Solicitor-General, drew a total income of £13,068 19s. 3d. These odd shillings and pence show how, if the Law Officers of the Crown look after them, the pounds will take care of themselves.



"SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT REGARDING HIMSELF AS HE MIGHT HAVE BEEN IF HE HAD NOT BEEN LURED FROM THE BAR."

To the four-hundred-a-yearer seated below the gangway on either side of the House these payments seem to soar beyond the dreams of avarice. But

in most cases the acceptance of the position of Law Officer to the Crown actually involves a loss of income.

THE WOOLSACK.

It certainly did so in the case of the present distinguished holder of the office. For this reason there was some doubt at the Bar whether there was prospect of Sir Rufus Isaacs' rich pastureland being, so to speak, parted out in small allotments among his professional brethren on his accepting office. When, disregarding the consequences as Lord Milner would, with greater emphasis, say, he took that step, it was explained that he was moved by ambition to succeed to the Woolsack. There is a common impression that in the case of a vacancy on that ancient settee the Attorney-General has by right the refusal of the appointment. There is, however, no such provision, either in custom or in statute. Sir Rufus Isaacs may in due course of affairs reach the haven of forensic desire; but it will not be by right of heritage as Attorney-General. As a matter of fact, the Attorney-General of to-day has no lien upon any judicial office. Up to recent date, on a vacancy occurring in the Chiefship of the Common Pleas he had the refusal. The office being abolished, the Attorney-General is left all forlorn, going back to his old work at the Bar, as did Sir Robert Finlay and Sir Edward Carson when their party crossed the floor of the House.

"SIR EDWARD CLARKE."

FEEDING THE HUNGRY.

The report of the Kitchen Committee of the House of Commons for the current Session is not out at the present time of writing. I hear from an authoritative source that it is not likely to lift the gloom that, from a financial point of view, lies low over the enterprise of feeding the House of Commons. Without special knowledge of the circumstances the Man in the Street, from whom few secrets are hid, would think the Committee had the softest job known in the business of catering. They trade rent free, pay no rates, have coal and gas gratuitously supplied, with generous allowance for breakages. They have a monopoly of custom, and the extent of their dealings appears from the fact that in a recent Session they served a total of 128,677 meals. These included 25,764 luncheons, 37,697 dinners, and 113 suppers (which last item indicates wholesome abstention from all-night sittings), 61,376 teas, and 3,727 peckings served at the bar. Their outlay, being net cost of provisions, cigars, wines, and other drinkables, was £13,202 4s. 10d. In the turnover they took a trifle over £16,000, including £414 table money.

This is good enough, but the scale is turned by the item of wages and salaries, which, together with miscellaneous expenses, bring the debtor side of the balance-sheet up to £17,584 whilst the earnings are £16,092. This looks like beggary, an undignified position averted by a subsidy of £2,000 a year, voted out of the pocket of the taxpayer.

Last Session the concern was run at a loss of £50 a week. It was in various ways an unfortunate season. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera, represented on the Kitchen Committee by its Chairman, Colonel Mark Lockwood. The so-called summer was more than usually atrocious, leading to the almost absolute discontinuance of Tea on the Terrace, a fruitful source of revenue. Then there was an outbreak of the Suffragettes, leading, as mentioned in another column, to the restriction of the attendance of ladies not only at tea-time but during the luncheon and dinner hours.

THE LIQUOR BILL.

An even more potent incidence in diminution of revenues of the Kitchen Committee is the modern tendency, whose growth is alternately deplored and extolled by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, towards diminution in the consumption of wine and spirits. Inheriting and maintaining the proud tradition of predecessors, the Kitchen Committee have a wine-cellar of which a host may well be proud. What they lament is the increasing lack of custom. Time was when the champagne bill of a Session was a dozen times larger than it is to-day. In other words, where a few years ago favourite brands were ordered for the dinner-table by the dozens, a single bottle now serves. Concurrently a change has taken place in the matter of the fashion of dining. Time was when the British legislator, in addition to staying himself with flagons, ordered a succession of meat courses. Members of the present House are, from the point of view of the Committee, too apt to content themselves with the shilling luncheon or dinner, the institution of which is the pride of the Chairman's declining years.

The outlook is at the moment black. It would be interesting to see what would happen supposing the business were transferred to the direction of one of our catering firms who, unsuccoured by subsidy, paying rent, taxes, and other items, satisfy their customers and pay their shareholders dividends at rates exceeding twenty per cent.

TEA ON THE TERRACE.

During the predominance of a Unionist majority under the Premiership of Mr. Arthur Balfour, Tea on the Terrace came to be one of the principal features of the London season. On a fine afternoon, with the westering sun glittering on the river and shining on the ancient fabric of Lambeth Palace, there was no livelier spectacle in London than the throng of brave men and fair women who peopled the Terrace of the House of Commons. The function was privily encouraged by the astute Ministerial Whip, who found in it a useful ally in the task of "keeping a House." With an overwhelming majority, a certainty of triumphing in the Division Lobby, there grew in Ministerial ranks a tendency to dangerous laxity of attendance. Members came down for questions and remained to hear any important speech promised. Also they might be depended upon for divisions following full-dress debate. But it is in the idle hours of a sitting that danger lurks for the master of Parliamentary legions. It is a snap division that occasionally places him in embarrassing position. Tea on the Terrace proved a bulwark against regrettable incidents of that character. Members tempted by desire for a lounge at their club or a drive through the Park, where they would find kith and kin, made discovery that for some hours of a summer afternoon their own Terrace was the hub of the social universe. They accordingly stayed to enjoy its attractions, and, incidentally, remained within sound of the division bell.

When *débâcle* followed on the General Election of 1906 there came to Westminster a large contingent unfamiliar with what the French call "a five o'clock." Oddly enough, the accomplishment of the doom of the once popular function was delayed by the action of the Labour members. They had heard and read much of Tea on the Terrace. Now, among other privileges pertaining to their new estate, they might share its joys. Or did the initiative come from their wives? However it be, during the earliest summer of the first Parliament of King Edward VII. the Labour members and their wives, the latter bringing neighbours dressed all in their best, like Sally on Sundays in our Alley, made up little parties at tables set in the best positions on the Terrace, drank tea, ate buttered buns, and, in due season, toyed with strawberries and cream.

Even this patronage did not suffice to save a fading fashion. Last Session the end was hastened by continuance of deplorable weather. The Terrace is not a desirable place when the east wind blows, and is impossible when south or west brings rain. Such were the prevalent weather regulations of last Session. Whiles there was a fog.

NO SUFFRAGETTES.

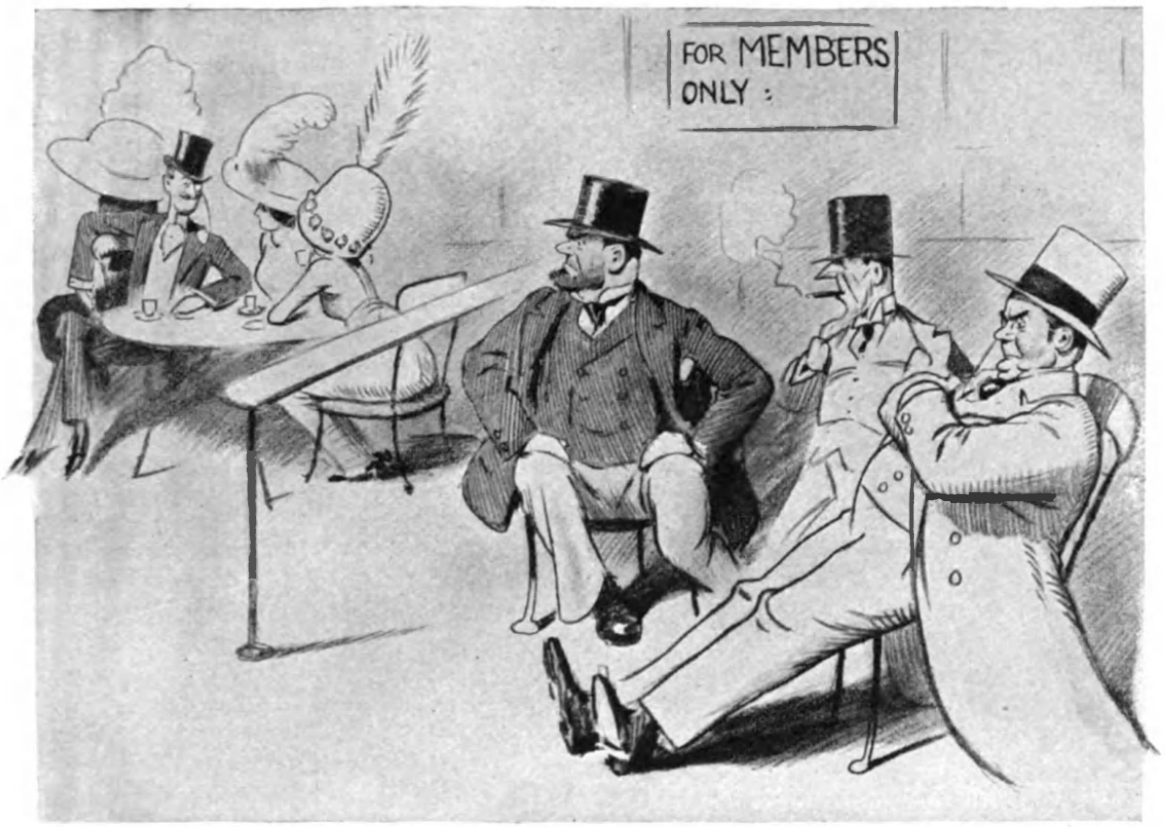
Another influence conducive to the decline and fall of Tea on the Terrace are the conditions pertaining to the admission of ladies to the precincts of Parliament. Since the Suffragettes took to denouncing mankind from the stone benches in the Central Hall, chaining themselves to the grille in the Ladies' Gallery, and making dashes on to the floor of the House past the paralyzed Serjeant-at-Arms, effectual measures have been taken to defeat their strategy. Entrance to the Lobbies from Old Palace Yard is achieved only after running the gauntlet of sentinelled police at the outer door. Save when personally conducted by

a member, progress is stopped at the farther limit of the corridor leading to the Central Lobby. The innocent suffer with the guilty. The wives and daughters of members and specially-invited guests are treated on a common footing. All may not be Suffragettes with designs on the peace of Parliament. But all are women, and as such must suffer.

LADIES IN QUARANTINE.

Inconvenience is felt even more acutely in respect of dining at the House than of taking Tea on the Terrace. Ladies bidden to the feast are kept in custody in the corridor until their host—"Sought Out" he may be named, borrowing the proud appellation bestowed upon ancient Jerusalem by the Prophet Isaiah—is hunted up. The hapless man is probably in one of the remotely-situated private dining-rooms, whither he has escorted earlier arrivals. It is necessary for him to hurry back to the corridor, rescue the new-comer, and, having escorted her to the dining-room, rush back on receipt of news that other of his guests have arrived. Before the scare the custom was for ladies invited either to tea or to dinner to assemble in the Central Hall, whence they were conducted by their host to the Inner Lobby, where they might catch glimpses of statesmen of world-wide renown. Thence they were led to the feast by private ways trodden by members, leading by a staircase to the Terrace. They, in fact, walked about as if the inevitable had arrived and they were actually members of Parliament. In these degenerate days, having escaped from quarantine in the corridor, they are ignominiously smuggled on to the level of the Terrace by a special staircase.

This was constructed a few years ago (at the expense of the nation) in order to meet the objection of crusty members who complained that their hurried passage up the old staircase on their way to save the State in the Division Lobby was obstructed by ladies passing up and down. The class of members responsible for this fresh indignity may be recognized on the Terrace by their seclusion within a space labelled "For Members Only," marked out to the left of the old doorway giving access to the Terrace. During the heyday of Tea on the Terrace there they sat —"Like tigers in a cage," as a well-known lady visitor once described them—glaring at the gay throng seated or walking, ever



"THERE THEY SAT—'LIKE TIGERS IN A CAGE'—GLARING AT THE GAY THRONG."

chattering and laughing, adown the long length of the river-girdled promenade.

QUEEN ELIZABETH AS A MATRIMONIAL AGENT.

Among the votes which appear in the Civil Service Estimates is a modest one on account of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. This is an unpaid body of gentlemen including among their number the Master of the Rolls, the Earl of Rosebery, and Lord Morley of Blackburn. Their mission is to ascertain what unpublished manuscripts calculated to throw light upon subjects connected with the Civil, Ecclesiastical, or Scientific history of the country are to be found in the collections of private persons or in public institutions. Every Session volumes are presented to Parliament containing copies or extracts from this treasure trove. The first publication took place forty years ago. In the meantime opportunity has been provided, at a trifling cost to the purchaser, of acquiring a library of rich and rare books. The pity of it is the enterprise is so little known that the circulation of the precious volumes falls far below their value.

"GOOD QUEEN BESS RUNS A LITTLE AGENCY OF HER OWN."

Hatfield House has proved a mine of wealth to the Commissioners. No fewer than twelve portly volumes have been gleaned in its archives. In the last, just issued from the press, I find a delightful story set forth in a correspondence between Queen Elizabeth and the Emperor of Russia, not at that time known as the Czar. It appears that His Majesty, having so many children he did not know what to do, resolved to invoke the assistance of the Virgin Queen to secure a wife for one of his sons. Elizabeth accepted the commission with a zest for matrimonial matters not unfamiliar with elderly maidens.

"After overlooking the estate and qualities of all those noble families fit to be engrafted into your Majesty's stock," she writes, under date October 5th, 1602, "we have found out a young lady, being a pure maiden nobly descended by father and mother, adorned with graces and extraordinary gifts of nature, of convenient years, between eleven and twelve, of whom we are resolved to make you an offer, that if God incline the hearts of the young couple to like one another the mutual bonds of friendship may so be knot close together." She purposes to "send a special Ambassador in order to deal freely in all things necessary in an affair of this importance." As Russia is not accessible by sea before May, the Queen, fearful of the enterprise falling through, beseeches the Emperor to "be pleased to suspend from embracing any other course until you have heard what our Ambassador can say."

Unfortunately the story ends where, in this fascinating fashion, it begins. Beyond a letter addressed to the British Agent at Moscovy enclosing the letter for the Emperor, the story, like that of Cambuscan Bold, is left half told. It appears from this second communication, written by Sir Robert Cecil, that a ship being unexpectedly discovered bound for Russia, and the envoy not being ready, it was determined to present the Queen's letter through the resident English Minister.

"For the contents of the same," writes the diplomatic Sir Robert, "if you be required you may pretend to be ignorant, or otherwise use it at your best discretion."

Edwin Cacroft, Comedian.

By AUSTIN PHILIPS.

Illustrated by J. Durden.

"ALL civil servants," says somebody or other, "are poets"—which, in its way, is probably less untrue than many apothegms. But there are exceptions to this and to every other truism. Cacroft helped to prove it.

If ever there was a contented bureaucrat it was Cacroft; if ever a man revelled in the narrowness of his limitations it was he. With him figures replaced the Muses, ledgers the temples where the Muses homed. The Post Office Savings Bank was a high Olympus in which he was privileged, Ganymede-like, to serve, with a hope of his own ultimate apotheosis among the tin deities of that official heaven.

Many civil servants are called efficient, but few are chosen for promotion out of their proper turn. They lack the beautiful self-effacement, the splendid abandonment of self-respect with which Cacroft was endowed. If he could lick the boots of a superior he did it *con amore*, and as efficiently as he did the rest of his work. He could draw the attention of a principal clerk to a rival's rare miscasting with an air of regret that was, quite positively, genius. "*Would* you mind looking at this, if you please, sir?" he would ask, silkily, as if he mistrusted his own calculation and desired the confirmation of a master-mind before feeling assured that he had really detected in a mistake someone who ranked a rung or two above him on the ladder of promotion.

And, though his colleagues hated and despised him for the sycophant that he was, they feared him, nevertheless, and spoke guardedly in his hearing, and hedged themselves with precautionary expedients when he followed them on a duty or shared with them the keeping of a ledger.

But all this happened before Cacroft collided with the fag-end of Mr. Wells's comet and the great change came.

It began when he went on sick leave, suffering from neurasthenia, as the doctor called it in his certificate, though several of us could have better diagnosed the ailment. When a man tries to do the work of two, and, at the same time, essays to oust ten, he is apt to pay pretty dearly for his little pleasures. So Cacroft had three months at home—and his wife had our sympathy.

One day, when he was grumbling about his ill-luck and how he was going to lose the fruits of ten years' plodding—he might have added tale-bearing—the doctor turned on him and talked straight.

"Look here, Mr. Cacroft," he said, "the office is getting along very well without you, and if you want to get back your nerves you had better give up worrying. Only a fool puts all his eggs in one basket. You must get yourself a hobby. Take to gardening or golf or some outdoor game. You'll never get better if you don't."

He looked at Mrs. Cacroft, who was in the room at the time. She was a sad-eyed woman, with handsome features and black hair that was beginning to turn grey. She had been intelligent once, but Cacroft had killed her individuality by dint of nagging and domestic meanness. The way in which he audited the household accounts would have smashed a weaker vessel altogether.

"Now, Mrs. Cacroft," said the doctor,

cheerfully, "something must be done. I rely on you. Take your husband out and buy him a spade and a trowel and a few packets of seed. He'll be his own bright self in a fortnight if only he begins to garden a bit."

The faintest suspicion of an ironical smile flickered on Mrs. Cacroft's face, the least hint of a sense of humour not wholly dead. Garden implements and packets of seed cost money; and she couldn't picture her husband working in the garden with his coat off. His smug little mind would revolt at the very idea. So she glanced at the doctor in her melancholy way and shook her head.

"I'm afraid I sha'n't be able to persuade him, Dr. Wallis," she said. "But I only wish I could."

The hopelessness of her tone carried conviction with it. The doctor looked hard at her, then at Cacroft. His eyes travelled backwards and forwards from one to the other, as if he sought to read the history of their *vie intime*, to diagnose it, and to cure. Much acquaintance with domestic tragedies had sharpened his psychological instinct.

Suddenly his glance rested upon Cacroft with a happy inspiration, and his hand slapped merrily on his thigh. He had found the medicine he wanted. It was the man's vanity to which he must appeal.

He took the astounded Cacroft by the arm and led him to the big glass in the door of his wife's wardrobe.

"Look here!" he said, and pointed at the mirror. "Look at yourself in the glass. You've the face of a Coquelin. You'd have made your fortune as a comedian."

Cacroft stared into the glass, and saw himself in a new light. There were curious, comic wrinkles on his forehead, amusing crow's-feet under and about his eyes, strange lines furrowed his cheeks and framed his mouth. A grotesque dimple in his loosely-fleshed chin crowned all. It was, quite simply, the face of a Shakespearean clown.

And the doctor, watching him, saw half-a-dozen emotions come and go in rapid succession—incredulity and belief, disgust and pleasure, then resentment, and, finally, a vanity which stayed and grew.

So, while the fish nibbled and waxed greedy, he struck and hooked.

"You're the very man the Upper Tooting Mohawks want!" he cried, and tapped Cacroft encouragingly on the shoulder. "Give me a sheet of paper at once."

Mrs. Cacroft motioned him to a gimcrack bureau in the corner of the room. He took out his fountain-pen and began to write. Cacroft stared unceasingly into the glass, glanced furtively round to see if he were unobserved, and began to grimace and posture, hand upon hip.

"There," said the doctor, fastening up the envelope. "Take this to Mr. Sharpley, the solicitor in the High Street. And when you play Touchstone at the Town Hall remember who it was that helped you to become famous."

He shook hands with Mrs. Cacroft and nodded to her gratified but bewildered husband.

"I'll let myself out," he said, and ran downstairs three steps at a time.

Mrs. Cacroft followed him as far as the landing. When the front door banged she came back into the bedroom. Her husband was strutting up and down the room, pulling faces at himself in the glass. He turned round and looked at her proudly.

"Give me my overcoat, Mary, dear," he said, in a new voice which she had never known.

And in hopeless wonderment she did as he asked. When she had helped him on with it he picked up the letter.

"I sha'n't be back till tea," he told her as he went out. "I am going up West to see about some elocution lessons."

What the doctor, who was president of the Upper Tooting Mohawks, said to their secretary never came out. Perhaps it was dearth of adequate performers, possibly it was real, if limited, merit in Cacroft, or, more likely, his comedian's face that fought for him. Anyway, for all his inexperience, they gave him a part in their next production—the clown's part in "A Winter's Tale." And because his heart was in the work he did it really well—though all the time he felt that it was a lover's part that he should play. For his vanity grew unceasingly.

He came back to the office long before the performance took place, came back well, and careless, in every sense of the word. Where he had formerly criticized he was himself found fault with; he no longer carried tales to the chiefs; official work with him had become second to play-acting. And he talked—how he talked—till the office was sick of it.

His great idea was to get Sturman to come to what he called "the show"—Sturman, who from ten to five posted dull deposits and withdrawals in the ledgers, and at night did dramatic criticisms for no less a paper than the *Monitor* itself.

Before the great change Cacroft's one idea had been to score off Sturman, who was just

"YOU'D HAVE MADE YOUR FORTUNE AS A COMEDIAN."

his senior, and posted ledgers as well as he wrote his criticisms—which is saying a good deal. He had stopped at nothing; for, apart from mere official rivalry, he hated Sturman with an intenseness equalled only by Sturman's contempt for him. There was something at the back of it; either Sturman had been in love with Mrs. Cacroft before her

marriage, or she had been in love with Sturman before she met Cacroft. But now it was all different. Cacroft courted and fawned upon the other, as formerly he had courted and fawned upon every little tin god in the department.

He felt that if only he could get the great critic to Upper Tooting his career would be assured; he would be able to leave the Post Office and to go in wholly for acting. Lack of self-confidence was not one of Cacroft's vices.

But Sturman refused to be cajoled; and when the Upper Tooting Mohawks' performance of "A Winter's Tale" took place it was not graced by the presence of the *Monitor's* dramatic critic.

Cacroft got into the papers all the same, for the *South London Sentinel* and the *Wandsworth Argus* published long reports, in which his name figured prominently. And for a full week cuttings from their columns were being handed solemnly round the branch. "It would have been impossible to better Mr. Edwin Cacroft's performance as the clown," said the *Sentinel*; though the rising comedian extracted almost as much gratification from the *Argus*, which observed that "Mr. Edwin Cacroft gave a finished study of the clown, and it would be difficult to imagine the part better done."

Officially Cacroft went from bad to worse; his work was shocking, and reprimands were frequent. Yet he seemed to care little. Acting was all he thought of. The Mohawks were doing "As You Like It" next. He was cast for Touchstone, though at heart, I believe, he had expected to be offered Orlando.

And this time Sturman, though uninvited, was moved by sheer curiosity to go and see him. I went too, and we sat together at the back of the Town Hall.

For amateurs, the thing was quite decently done. Even Sturman conceded that. And, as an amateur, Cacroft was quite good, without displaying the faintest hint of creative ability. He was just Cacroft—the real Cacroft that we had never seen. But he got a good reception, and Sturman shook his head.

"There'll be no holding the little beast to-morrow!" he said. "I shouldn't wonder if he doesn't lose his balance altogether."

Sturman was right. Next morning Cacroft swaggered into the office in tweeds and began to brag as he had never bragged before.

"I'm going to chuck the Post Office!" he told us presently. "It can go to the deuce for me. I've done with it. I've got a better job."

Sturman looked at him gravely. Everybody else grinned. It was only a bit of Cacroft's bluff, we thought.

But Cacroft got pen and foolscap and wrote out his resignation there and then, handing it round for us to see.

"My holidays begin to-day," he said. "And when I go off duty at half-past one"—it was a Saturday—"I'm going to stick this in the chief's box, and I'm not coming back any more. I've got a shop with a tip-top company, and start touring on Monday. We leave Paddington to-morrow for Pershore."

We all did our work badly that morning; the incident was altogether too devastating to resist. And when half-past one came, and the chief had gone, we gathered round to see Cacroft put in the letter of resignation.

He swaggered theatrically down the room and flung the buff envelope into the tin box.

"There!" he said, throwing out his chest. "That's a good job done. Now I can get something like a decent living. Good-bye, you fellows!"

And without saying another word he went out.

We lingered a little, discussing it, but the sun shone too brightly for us to bother much about Cacroft. Only Sturman and I stayed. We were going on leave, too, for in the Savings Bank we take our holidays in sections, a dozen of us at a time.

"What do you think of it?" I asked. "You ought to know, if anyone does."

Sturman shook his head.

"He hasn't a ghost of a chance," he answered.

I picked up my bag and began to walk to the door.

"It's rough on his wife," said I.

"Rough?" echoed Sturman, between his teeth. "He's a downright little beast!"

"Can't we——?" I began, putting down my bag.

Then I looked at the clock. I had twenty minutes in which to catch my train. I caught up my bag again and ran. After all, it was Cacroft's own look-out.

My leave lasted three weeks, and when I had been away a fortnight I got a wire from Sturman.

"Can you join me at Netherwich to-night?" it said; and, because I liked Sturman, and was rather proud to be friendly with him, I wired back to say "Certainly," and caught the first train. He met me at the station, put my bag into a cab, and told the man to drive to his hotel.

"We'll walk up if you don't mind," he said.

And on the way he told me most things. What he didn't explain then he confided to me at dinner afterwards.

"'ITS ALL RIGHT,' HE WENT ON. 'HERE'S YOUR LETTER OF RESIGNATION. IT DIDN'T GO FORWARD.'"

"When you'd gone," he said, as we sat at a little table by ourselves, "I went to see Mrs. Cacroft—I used to know her pretty well once, though I haven't gone there at all in recent years because he's such an impossible person—and I found her in no end of a state. She told me the whole story from beginning to end. It seems that in the last six months—ever since he got mixed up with amateur theatricals—Cacroft has been spending all

his savings, and what little money she had of her own, in running after fifth-rate actors that no decent member of the profession would be seen dead in a ditch with. And now he's left her without any explanation, except that he's got what he calls a 'shop,' and is earning ten pounds a week. She hasn't seen a penny of it, and the children are pretty well without a sole to any one of their boots. She's without a farthing, and likely to be, as far as I can see!"

"But what about his salary?" I asked. "Isn't he sending her some of the ten pounds a week?"

Sturman flicked viciously at a crumb, and his smile was not pleasant to see.

"That's why I'm here," he said, slowly. "I came down to make him behave less like a blackguard. But, as I thought from the first, the thing's a fraud. They're a lot of amateurs like Cacroft, got together by a rascal who calls himself Stuart-Fulton. They've all put money into the show, and he's bolted this afternoon. I saw him go myself."

"But the performance——?" I broke in.

"Man alive, there'll be no performance! No pay, no play, and they'll all be too sick at heart to act. Besides, they've played for three nights to empty benches, and there aren't enough people in the town to make a full house, even for one night!"

"Then where's Cacroft now?"

"Cacroft," said Sturman, "is probably in the hall holding an utterly useless indignation meeting." He looked at his watch and then got up. "We'd better go across and see," he went on. "The hall is only just opposite."

He led the way out of the coffee-room, and I followed him to the door of the hotel. It was raining heavily.

Across the road, at the side-entrance of the hall, a group of men and women were clamouring vainly at a locked door. A little distance away a number of boys gibed and jeered. A big man—apparently the caretaker—pushed past us.

"It's no good knocking at that door," he said, loudly. "I've orders not to let anyone in till the hire is paid. So if you haven't got the shekels you may as well clear!"

The boys in the roadway punctuated his speech with cat-calls. A man detached himself from the disconsolate group and slouched dejectedly towards us.

Sturman touched him lightly on the arm.

"Halloa, Cacroft!" he said. "What's up?"

The man staggered back and threw up his head so that the rays of the one feeble lamp before the hall lighted his face. It was haggard and white and all the conceit was gone. He looked just hopeless and hungry.

"Sturman!" he cried. Then, with a touch of his old foolishness, he asked wonderingly: "Has the *Monitor* sent you to do a criticism?"

I laughed out loud; I couldn't help it. But Sturman's face was cold and stern.

"Stuart-Fulton has bolted," he said. "I suppose you know that?"

Cacroft's lips twitched and he all but broke down.

"He—he's got fifty pounds of mine," he gasped. "It's all I had. And I've chucked the service and sent in my resignation."

"You should have thought of that before," said Sturman, unsympathetically.

"It isn't me—it's my wife," cried Cacroft. "And the kiddies. I can never face them again."

He was openly crying now.

"That's better," said Sturman, grimly.

He put his hand in his coat pocket and drew out an envelope.

"It's all right," he went on. "Here's your letter of resignation. It didn't go forward."

Cacroft tore open the envelope and pulled out the sheet of foolscap. Then he began to laugh hysterically.

"What does it mean?" he stammered.

Sturman looked at him fixedly. Cacroft's eyes fell.

"It means that I wasn't going to let you make an infernal ass of yourself; and that after you had gone I took your letter of resignation and kept it back. So that when your leave is up you can go to the office as if nothing had ever happened. But I hope it will be a lesson to you. As it is, you've nearly killed your wife—to say nothing of half-starving your children!"

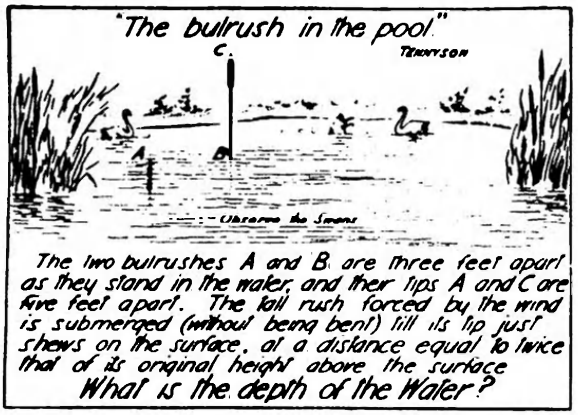
With an effort Cacroft met Sturman's eyes. His face was full of envy, hatred, and malice. But the strain was gone and he was almost himself again—his mean, despicable little self.

"I suppose I shall have to go back to the office," he said, feebly. "But it means giving up my career."

"Your career!" said Sturman, contemptuously; and, catching my arm, he turned on his heel.

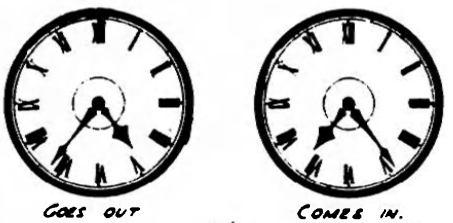
A Page of Picture Puzzles.

By SIDNEY J. MILLER.



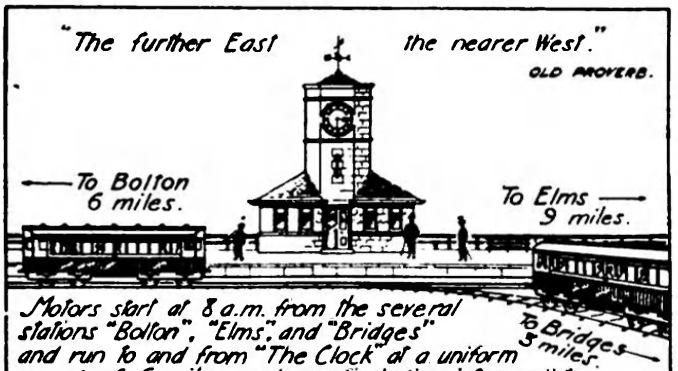
The two bulrushes A and B are three feet apart as they stand in the water, and their tips A and C are five feet apart. The tall rush forced by the wind is submerged (without being bent) till its tip just shews on the surface, at a distance equal to twice that of its original height above the surface

What is the depth of the Water?



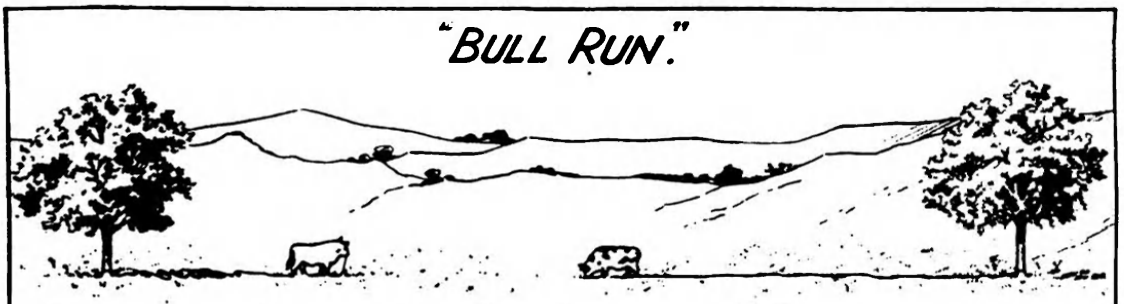
A man goes out between 4 and 5 o'clock and on returning about 3 hours after, finds that the hands have exactly changed places

At what time did he go out?



Motors start at 8 a.m. from the several stations "Bolton", "Elms", and "Bridges" and run to and from "The Clock" at a uniform speed of 6 miles an hour, (including intermediate stoppings) but with a wait of 5 minutes at each of the 4 stops named. The Conductor of the "Bolton" car has to get to "Elms" by exchanging duties with the other Conductors.

When can he arrive at "Elms"?



These aged bulls are tethered to the trees which are 50 yards apart. Each tether measures 25 yards after straining. Hooks are driven in the trees at the nearest points, and the tethers fastened to them are carried round the trees, and passed through staples at the 3-quarter girth. The other ends of the tethers are attached to the bulls' nose-rings. The girth of each tree is 22 inches. The Owner said the bulls could not reach each other, yet they often stood side by side in the direction of their taut tethers.

How closely could the bulls bring their heads together?

RIOT.

By G. M. ALEXANDER.

Illustrated by E. A. Morrow.

"I WON'T stay here to-night. Ah-fo has got hold of opium again, and here are you and I, Mauricette, two defenceless women, alone in the station."

"Well, what are we to do?"

"Run up a couple of horses and ride over to the Farquharsons. It is only forty miles. I couldn't face the night here without Smith, and with Ah-fo incapable, after those appalling murders in the district."

My sister's voice rose to an almost hysterical pitch; nervous at the best of times, she had certainly an excuse for terror now. Two hours earlier the post-boy had brought us news of another wanton, cold-blooded murder in the district—the second within a fortnight. This time the victim was a personal friend, a pretty little bride whom we had visited the week before. It was hardly wonderful that Mary should verge on hysterics. We were alone on the station, she and I, except for an old decrepit gin and Ah-fo, the Chinese cook, at present, and for at least twenty-four hours to come, hopelessly drunk with opium. We were forty miles from help of any sort, and less than forty from the scene of the latest murder.

To do my brother-in-law justice, this state of affairs was not his fault. He had left the most reliable man on the run—Bert Smith—to look after us during the week's mustering, and Bert Smith had disappeared. Since his departure to the men's hut the previous evening no one had seen him; his mare was gone from the horse paddock, his work remained undone, his food untouched.

"I can't make it out," said Mary, for the thirtieth time. "Smith has been with us two years, and nothing like this has ever occurred before; he is so trustworthy. Something must have happened to him."

The same idea was in my mind, but in a worse form. I avoided looking at Mary.

She fidgeted about the veranda for a moment or two, and then stopped suddenly, as rigid as a setting dog.

"What—what's that sound, Mauricette?" she whispered.

"A parrot screeching," said I, boldly, with my heart in my mouth.

Mary gasped.

"I know what has happened to Smith," she said, turning a grey face to me "He's been murdered! Wasn't he going up to Concord Paddock this morning?"

"Yes."

"They are there—the murderers, I mean—hiding."

"Nonsense!" I cried in a loud voice, for this was what I thought myself.

Mary sat down in a chair and began to cry quietly. I made no effort to comfort her, but stared out through the quivering heat haze at the corrugated iron roof of the store and the blue belt of gum trees behind it. A gum tree is full of sinister suggestion, even with the red-hot sunlight of Queensland shimmering on its flat, motionless grey leaves.

Mary's rather theatrical hypothesis seemed really the only one to account for Smith's disappearance. He was an excellent bushman, so that any theory of his having lost his way in Concord might be dismissed. If he had met with an accident the chances were his horse would have come back. The most likely explanation—namely, that he had, in back-block parlance, "gone on the burst"—was untenable, for his sobriety had earned him the nickname of "The Never-never"; besides which he possessed no money. No; the more I thought of it the more plain it appeared that something very unusual had befallen our model hand.

"Could you run up two horses?" asked my sister presently, drying her eyes.

"Of course," said I, with a confidence I did not feel, for I was very new to the bush in those days.

"All right. I'll help you to saddle them when they are run up. I must wake baby and dress him, and write a line to tell Dermot where we have gone."

Mary rose as she spoke, and called old Susan, the black woman, who sat huddled in the shade of the store.

"Do be quick, Mauriçette," she added, nervously.

I hauled my saddle off the floor of the veranda, took a stock-whip, which I had no idea of using, and trailed off to the horse-yard. The only animal in it was a big, bad-tempered chestnut stallion called Riot, son of a well-known Australian steeplechaser and an imported mare. I had never seen him used to run up the others, and couldn't think how he had got there. I was also aware that, like the stock-whip, he might prove more of a handful than I bargained for.

Riot, however, allowed me to catch and saddle him without demur, and my misgivings vanished. I let down the slip-rails, scrambled on to his back, and headed for the horse-paddock, kicking him along as carelessly as if he had been an old shooting pony. He moved gingerly, twitching his ears and giving his tail an occasional sullen flick. In the circumstances, it was more than idiotic of me to attempt to crack the stock-whip.

Exactly what happened next I cannot tell. I fancy the lash got under his tail. At all events, he squealed, flung a sudden buck, and shook his head viciously. The bridle came off and clattered against his chest, and then, before I at all realized the situation, he was away like a greyhound. He laid himself out to go as if he had been running in the Derby—tore past the horse-paddock and the branding-yard, shaved a group of pines which brushed my skirt, and burst straight through the wire fence below the garden, rooting up the posts and carrying the whole thing clean away. Once out on the dry-burnt plain beyond, his pace became terrific. I had no time to think where I was going or what the end would be. I could only tighten my knees desperately on the pommels, and gasp against the rush of air, with a blur of dancing colours before my eyes and the thunder of his flying hoofs drumming in my ears.

On and on he charged, head down and ears back, swerving wildly now and again. I was utterly out of breath when a silver line glinting in the haze ahead told me that we had reached the fence of Concord Paddock, which lay two miles from the station. Riot, at the last moment, rose to the wire like a towering pheasant.

Ten yards or so farther on he cannoned into a she-oak, which caught my stirrup-foot and sent me over on the off-side. Of course, my skirt hitched up in the horned pommels of my venerable saddle, and for the next five minutes I swung above the flying ground in about the most uncomfortable position known. The sudden apparition of a buzzard stopped Riot with a plunge which wrenched me free. It is almost unnecessary to add that I failed to catch him again, though in my ignorance of bush-lore I followed him cheerfully, while he trotted ahead of me, after the maddening fashion of a loose horse, straight into the heart of Concord. There he suddenly broke into a gallop and left me.

Concord was the last fenced paddock on that side of the run, ten miles square, of mallee-scrub and she-oak, but it took me an hour to realize that I was bushed, and even then in my profound folly I viewed the matter with indifference, thinking that to strike the fence or the main trail would be only a matter of time. It was not until long after sunset, when, exhausted and parched, I passed the same gum for the fourth time, that I abandoned myself to despair. All the tragic tales of that land of tragedies came back to me as I lay on the hot ground, weeping unrestrainedly.

Presently an eerie light began to glow among the mallee and long, glittering shafts of moonlight pierced the dusky undergrowth, making patches of brilliance in which one could see every infinitesimal twig.

I got up and started to wander about again in an aimless fashion, investigating every shining atom I saw, in the hope that it might be a drop of moisture, though, of course, I knew perfectly well that such a thing was physically impossible. And then—all of a sudden—I heard a murmur of voices.

At first I took it for imagination, or the outcome of hours of intent listening; but before long I realized that there really were people talking within twenty yards of me. Mary's fears recurred to my mind just in time to prevent me shouting. I crept nearer, with due precaution against noise, peering to right and left as I went.

The speakers were three men. I smelt their tobacco before I saw them, and I half-recognized a voice. They were sitting together in a little sandy clearing under a group of dead gums, with their horses knee-haltered within reach. In the white moonlight every detail of the scene showed as clearly as at high noon.

"Them two women and the babby, no more," was the first sentence I heard.

"And the Chinkie," said number two.

"The Chinkie don't count. He's blind to the world; we'll have no trouble with him," answered the voice which had puzzled me a minute earlier. I recognized it now as Bert Smith's, and it increased my bewilderment. Why, in the name of common sense, should our guardian, our model hand, be hobnobbing

in Concord with two unpleasant-looking sundowners, or ticket-of-leave men, or whatever the creatures were, at this hour of the night?

I squeezed into a black niche between the gum-stems, relying on their inky shadows to hide me from the group, who sat almost within hands' touch.

Two of them were villainous-looking scoundrels, bearded to the eyes, dirty, and ragged. "The Never-never" appeared remarkably out of place between them, with his precise and churchwardenly air and his clean pink shirt, but as he seemed quite at home I abandoned my first hasty conclusion that he was their prisoner.

"Guess he'll be blinder to it before we've done with him!" growled number one. There was a general laugh.

"S'about time we made a move, eh?" said number two, knocking the ashes out of his pipe against his boot. "What direction is Loongar?"

He garnished his speech with singular oaths, which I omit.

"Straight ahead," drawled Smith.

"Hope it pays better than Edinboro' did!" grunted number one, who had a hoarse voice and red hair. "Look 'ere!"

He pulled out of his pocket a handful of glittering things and flung them contemptuously on the sand, where, like Excalibur, they "made lightnings in the splendour of the moon." I had no difficulty in identifying them as the poor little bride's jewellery—wedding presents which she had displayed gleefully to Mary and me when we had visited their station, Edinboro', a week earlier. They were all there—a diamond ring, two brooches, an old topaz necklace. I felt as if a cold hand had seized my heart and squeezed it as I peered down at them.

"Your boss's missus has more than them, ain't she?" asked the red-haired man, jerking his thumb at Smith, who, nodding, recapitulated all Mary's possessions. "There's forty quid in the safe, too," he finished.

The trio then proceeded conjointly to discuss the late murders, their handiwork, and went on from that to a detailed account of how they meant to treat Mary and me before they "finished" us. Ah-fo was to be strangled and flung into the water-hole near the house, in order that suspicion might fall on him, as it had fallen on the Edinboro' Chinaman, who was locally supposed to have killed his mistress. They grew merry over their pleasant programme and produced a tin billy to toast its success.

I in the meantime had been trying desperately to conceive some way of escape for Mary and myself, but it is hard to think when one is sick with horror and exhausted and thirsty. Moreover, so strong is habit, I could *not* realize that our model "hand," my brother-in-law's chief prop, the invaluable, ever-reliable "Never-never," was a bloodthirsty ruffian. All kinds of silly ideas drummed in my head, mixed up with the tag-end of a nursery rhyme, which I kept repeating and repeating as if it were a charm. One thing, however, I knew—namely, that if I was to get back to the house I must keep some wits about me.

Smith had said the station lay "straight ahead," pointing as he did so along the black bar of shadow cast by the gums. I calculated that this shadow must run almost west, for the moon was right behind the trees and still fairly low in the eastern sky.

Wild thoughts of stealing one of their horses occurred to me, but the thing was so obviously impossible that I abandoned the idea, and, choosing a moment when they were noisily disputing some point, crept off through the mallee.

I skirted the little hollow until I was exactly opposite the dead gums which had sheltered me five minutes earlier.

"We'll start in half an hour," said Smith, as I took my last glance at them, sprawling on the whitened sand. "That'll give 'em time to put the babby to bed." Some witticism which I could not hear followed the remark. Their laughter echoed behind me when I turned.

By keeping my back resolutely to the moon and following my own shadow, I at last struck the fence, which proved to be a bare quarter-mile from the clearing. To me, frantic with terror, the scrub with its intense brooding stillness and its eerie shadows seemed the haunt of all things evil. I felt as one feels in a nightmare, panic-stricken, impotent, the sport of some malign power that may at any moment overwhelm one.

It was a momentary relief to stand clear of mallee and see, two miles off, the dim group of station buildings, their corrugated iron roofs gleaming like water. A light in one window, and the golden speck of a lantern out by the garden fence, told me of Mary's anxious vigil. I guessed the poor soul must be appalled at my absence. Well, I should certainly not comfort her much when I did arrive!

I started to cross the inner paddock at a run, panting, stumbling, looking over my

shoulder now and again, with dust choking me at each breath and a heart thumping like a steam-engine. Bad as Concord had been, this endless grey plain stretching away to a far-off shadowy goal now seemed worse, for with all my efforts the distance never appeared to diminish.

I was still nearly four hundred yards from the house when the jangle of taut wires came faintly to me through the still night. Instinctively I looked round. They were leading their horses out over the strapped-down fence. I could see their faces and the white stockings of Bert Smith's mare quite plainly, and I knew that I must be equally distinct to them in that cold, merciless light.

A second later one of them shouted. I looked no more after that, but rushed blindly for the garden fence. Before I reached it the thud of hoofs grew loud behind me, and but for the wires I should certainly have been caught. As it was, they had to stop to strap them down.

"'MURDERERS!—THE GARDEN FENCE!' I GASPED, INCOHERENTLY."

Mary came running on to the veranda with the baby in her arms.

"Mauricette," she cried, "what happened to you?"

"Murderers!—the garden fence!" I gasped, incoherently.

Mary stared at me wide-eyed, clutching the baby. For about a second we stood facing one another in the lamp-light. I was fighting desperately to regain breath, with a feeling as though a ton weight were on my head and chest, and my inability to speak seemed all part of the nightmare.

From the other side of the house came a clatter of hoofs.

"Hide!" I croaked at last.

"There's nowhere!" whispered Mary, looking about her like a trapped animal.

"Blow the lamp out, then!" She obeyed.

"It's the only one lit," she whispered.

I took her sleeve and led her through the sitting-room to the passage, which was in pitch darkness. There we stopped.

Feet came stamping into the veranda. Someone knocked over a chair and cursed lustily.

"Take baby!" moaned my sister, suddenly. "I feel faint."

I think I had not really despaired until then, though escape seemed quite impossible. Mary tottered against me, and in the hot darkness I could hear her giving little short sighs, a sure sign, as I knew of old, that she was nearly "off."

Mechanically, I took the baby and put him on the floor. As I did so I touched the edge of a big rough press in which blankets were kept.

"Needs must when the devil drives." I groped for the door and got it open just as Mary slithered into a heap at my feet. She was a little person and light, but even so I had the utmost difficulty in rolling her on to the bottom shelf, which was level with the floor.

Fortunately, Smith and his friends, who were engaged in acrimonious dispute on the veranda as to where I had gone, made so much noise that it occupied their whole attention.

I piled at least twenty folded blankets on my unfortunate sister, until, as far as I could judge by the feel, the shelf seemed a level, solid mass of them. There was little chance of the press being searched, for Smith knew where we kept our few valuables. Then, having pulled off my shoes and stockings, I picked up Dermot junior and crept, barefooted down the passage, meaning to play a game of hide-and-seek with our would-be assassins. The latter wasted little time in argument. Having cursed each other freely and broken the lamp, they made for Mary's bedroom, giving vent to the most horrible jokes. They had a candle apiece, which they thrust into each corner they passed, in obvious search for me.

Now, Loongar, like most bush houses, is not a place of nooks or unnecessary recesses. A long, straight passage divided the two living rooms from the bedrooms, and at both ends of it a door opened into the veranda, which ran round three sides of the house. I had retreated as far as the western door, and when the three candles came in at the opposite end and vanished into Mary's room I slipped out on to the veranda, reflecting that, as they had already examined it thoroughly, no place was less likely to be searched. Down I crouched behind a big chair that stood in one corner, with baby in my arms. As a rule, he slept like an old man and was as hard to rouse, but, even so, he increased the danger of discovery a hundredfold, and every movement of his little body sent a thrill of terror through me.

Apparently they did not at once realize that Mary was not in her room. When they did, an outburst of oaths announced the fact. After it there was silence—the hardest thing of all to bear—tense, breathless silence. I sat looking out along the white veranda floor, patterned with shadow-leaves from the native creepers on the trellis-work above, and shivering.

Sounds of riotous progress through the other rooms now arose, coupled with more loud details of how we should be treated when they found us. Presently Smith came stumping out from the sitting-room.

"Why, one of the poor fools has gone!" he cried. "There's a side-saddle missing!"

"Stow that rot!" said a voice from the house; "we saw a gal run up here!"

"The gin, most likely."

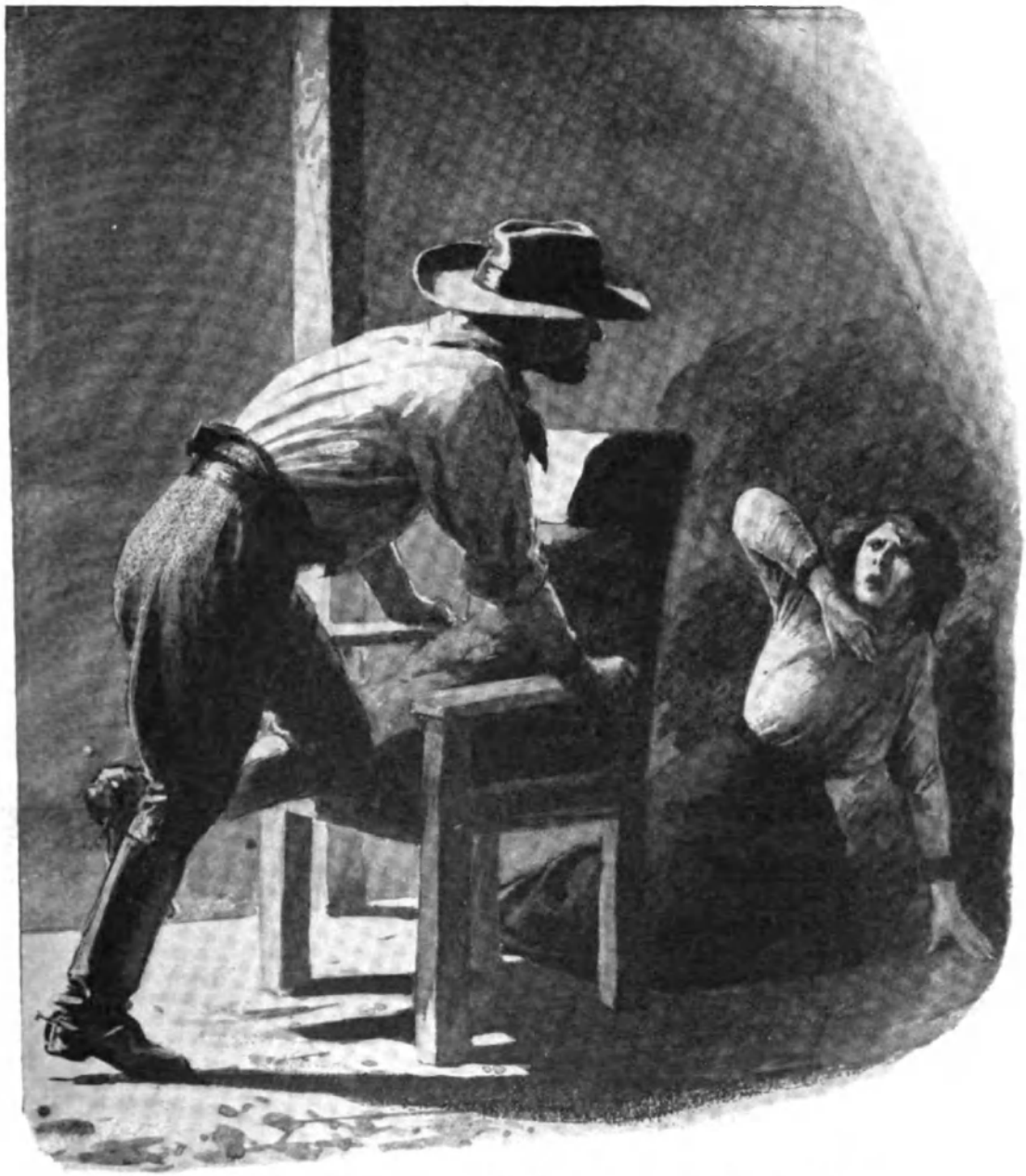
The other speaker condemned the gin to eternal perdition.

"Reeves had better settle her—and the Chinkie too," drawled Smith, carelessly; "hanged if I will!"

"Reeves don't ask no better," chuckled the red-haired man, appearing in the sitting-room doorway. He produced a bowie-knife and squinted at it like an idol.

The noise of his departing footsteps was masked by "words" between his brothers-in-arms about the safe-key, which neither could find.

A minute later, from somewhere in the kitchen regions, there arose a sound of stifled cries and heavy-running feet, and then a long-drawn ghastly shriek that made me cold and sick. The veranda seemed to sway before my eyes. I envied Mary at that moment. I even envied Ah-fo, in his opium paradise, all unconscious of the horrors of his impending passage to another world.



"'BY GUM, 'ERE'S ONE OF 'EM!' HE ANNOUNCED WITH OATHS."

Reeves came back after a time, breathing heavily and leaving dark finger-marks on the white veranda wall. He walked straight towards my covert, preceded by a gigantic shadow which slid along the moonlit floor. I watched him as a bird watches a snake, too paralyzed to move, had movement been of use. To this day I am persuaded that he heard my heart thumping, so directly did he head for the big chair. A second later he knelt heavily in the seat, and his awful face peered at me over the back.

"By gum, 'ere's one of 'em!" he announced with oaths.

"One o' what?" called Smith.

"One of the gals."

"Gal be hanged! The safe-key is what we want!" came the irate answer. "Seems to me we'll have to smash the infernal thing."

"Come out o' that, my beauty!" said Reeves, leering abominably at me, and stretching a wet, hairy hand round the side of the chair.

I laid Dermot junior down very quietly, confident that his small presence had passed unnoticed in the thick shadow.

Horror of that groping, red-stained hand

filled all my thoughts as I emerged unsteadily into the white glare.

"Where's the missus, eh?" drawled Smith, strolling up to investigate the find.

"Gone to the Farquharsons," said I, in a hoarse, weak voice.

"Where's the key of the safe?"

"In her pocket."

Smith looked me all over from head to foot as if he were going to eat me.

"Tie her to the post, Reeves," he grunted; "we'll collar the swag first and have our fun with the filly afterwards."

Reeves appeared disappointed by this verdict. He announced regretfully that he had broken the bowie-knife—otherwise——

"Hang the bowie-knife!" said Smith, fiercely. "Rope her up tight!" and he added a few plain facts about his intentions with regard to "the filly" when the business of the safe should be disposed of which made me wish fervently that the bowie-knife was still whole.

Reeves, muttering curses, proceeded to "rope" me to one of the veranda posts with a coil of whip-cord—and nothing in the whole nightmare business was as bad as the feel of those hot, sticky fingers reeking with blood.

The task completed, he shambled off to join in the assault on the safe in the sitting-room. It was a small and very strong safe, mounted on four wooden legs, and I guessed that they would find the task of opening it both tedious and difficult.

This, to judge by sounds, soon proved to be the case. Every implement in the place was requisitioned before long, to say nothing of large quantities of whisky. I followed each detail of their vehement progress through the after-dinner phases described by Curran—communicative, argumentative, altogethery, drunk!

With the third stage they had arrived at the conclusion that they must take the safe down and blow the lock open with dynamite. By this time all were ready to command and none to obey. I was therefore not surprised when an outbreak of hot words was followed by an earth-shaking crash and a horrible scream.

In a minute Smith came out into the veranda pushing Reeves, who was shedding maudlin tears.

"He's dead, I tell you, you fool!" said Smith—"dead as a door-nail. The infernal safe's on his chest, and his skull's split. Go over to the store and fetch some tow."

"G—g—go yourself!" stuttered Reeves.

They argued the matter for a few seconds, and in the end Reeves went, tacking across the yard like a derelict yacht. Anything uglier than the look on Smith's face as he stood waiting for him in the moonlight I have seldom seen. His back was turned to me, but I saw him fumbling with something, and presently a sharp "click" enlightened me as to what it was. Then he withdrew a little into the shadow, watching the store intently.

Before long Reeves reappeared, making a devious course for the house. His right arm was tight down his side. Evidently the same idea had occurred to them both.

He came slowly to the edge of the veranda, breathing heavily. Smith, in the shadow, stiffened like a setting dog. Directly the other man's foot touched the boards, his hand flew up and the sharp report of a pistol-shot echoed through the night.

Reeves staggered back nearly a dozen paces before he fell, but he made no sound. He crashed down heavily on the sand at last, and his pistol flew out of his hand and lay gleaming in the moonlight.

Smith went over to him deliberately, kicked him twice, and then knelt to turn his pockets out.

While he was appropriating the spoils of the Edinboro' raid a sudden sound of hoofs echoed from the other side of the house.

Smith straightened himself hastily, and, after listening for a second, made a dart for his mare, who stood hitched to a convenient post. He flung himself into the saddle without glancing round. If he had, he would have seen Riot, accompanied by two brumby admirers, come cantering down past the branding-yard towards the house. As it was he lay flat on his mare's neck and went off at a hard gallop for the nearest scrub.

Just at this moment Mary's white face peered miserably out at the western door of the veranda.

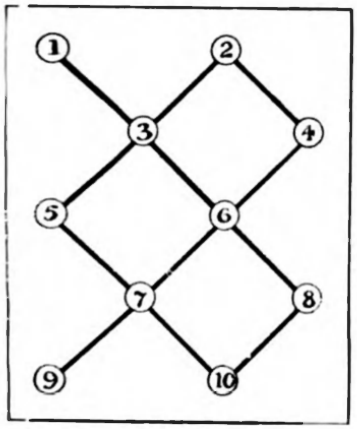
"Run and pick up that pistol!" I cried, wriggling ineffectually against my bonds. "It's loaded. Fire it after him!"

To her credit be it said Mary obeyed without delay or question, and Riot and his friends went hammering away in the track of the fugitive, who laid spurs to his mare and bolted, never looking back.

Neither Mary nor I awaited further eventualities. She cut me loose in frantic haste, and retrieved Dermot, now howling lustily. Without changing saddles, we took the two horses hitched to the branding-yard rails and rode helter-skelter for the Farquharsons' station.

PERPLEXITIES.

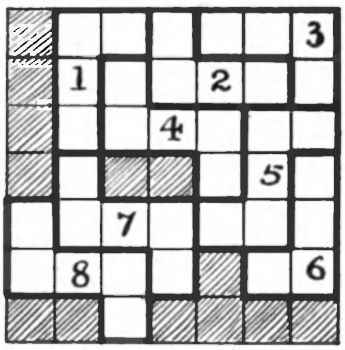
Puzzles and Solutions. By Henry E. Dudeney.



51.—A NEW COUNTER PUZZLE.

HERE is a new puzzle with moving counters, or coins, that at first glance looks as if it must be absurdly simple. But it will be found quite a little perplexity. Copy the simple diagram, enlarged, on a sheet of paper; then place two white counters on the points 1 and 2, and two red counters on 9 and 10. The puzzle is to make the red and white change places. You may move the counters one at a time in any order you like, along the lines from point to point, with the only restriction that a red and a white counter may never stand at once on the same straight line. Thus the first move can only be from 1 or 2 to 3, or from 9 or 10 to 7.

52.—A VENEER PUZZLE.



FROM a square sheet of paper or cardboard, divided into smaller squares, 7 by 7, as in the diagram, cut out the eight pieces in the manner indicated. The shaded parts are thrown away. A cabinet maker had to fit together these eight pieces of veneer to form a small square table-top, 6 by 6, and he stupidly cut that piece No. 8 into three parts. How would you form the square without cutting any one of the pieces?

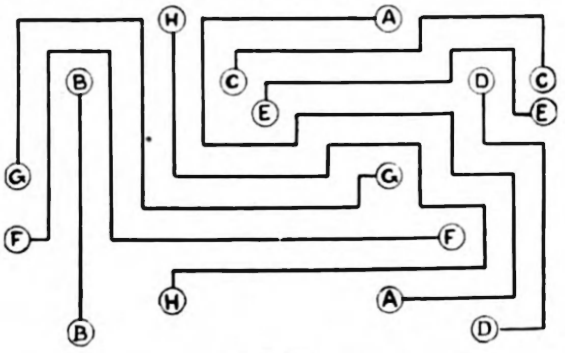
53.—THE HONEST DAIRYMAN.

AN honest dairyman in preparing his milk for public consumption employed a can marked B, containing milk, and a can marked A, containing water. From can A he poured enough to double the contents of can B. Then he poured from can B into can A enough to double its contents. Then he finally poured from can A into can B until their contents were exactly equal. After these operations he would send the can A to London, and the puzzle is to discover what are the relative proportions of milk and water that he provides for the Londoners' breakfast-tables. Do they get equal proportions of milk and water—or two parts of milk and one of water—or what? It is an interesting question, though, curiously enough, we are not told how much milk or water he puts into the two cans at the start of his operations.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

47.—A PUZZLE FOR MOTORISTS.

THE routes taken by the eight drivers are shown in the illustration, where the dotted line roads are omitted to make the paths clearer to the eye.

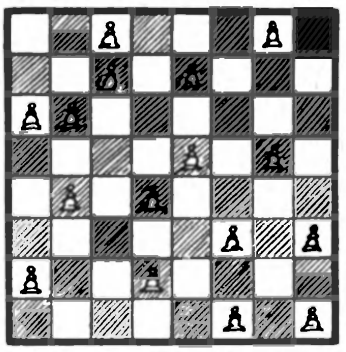


48.—THE FOUR DIGITS.

THE little jest in this puzzle lies in the fact that there is one quite simple solution that is general for not only any digit, but any number we may choose to select. Thus, four 7's may be made to express 100 in this way: $.\dot{7} \times .\dot{7} = 100$. Any number divided by the same number preceded by a decimal point equals 10. Thus, 7 divided by seven-tenths equals 70 divided by 7. Substitute any number you like for 7 and the result will always be the same.

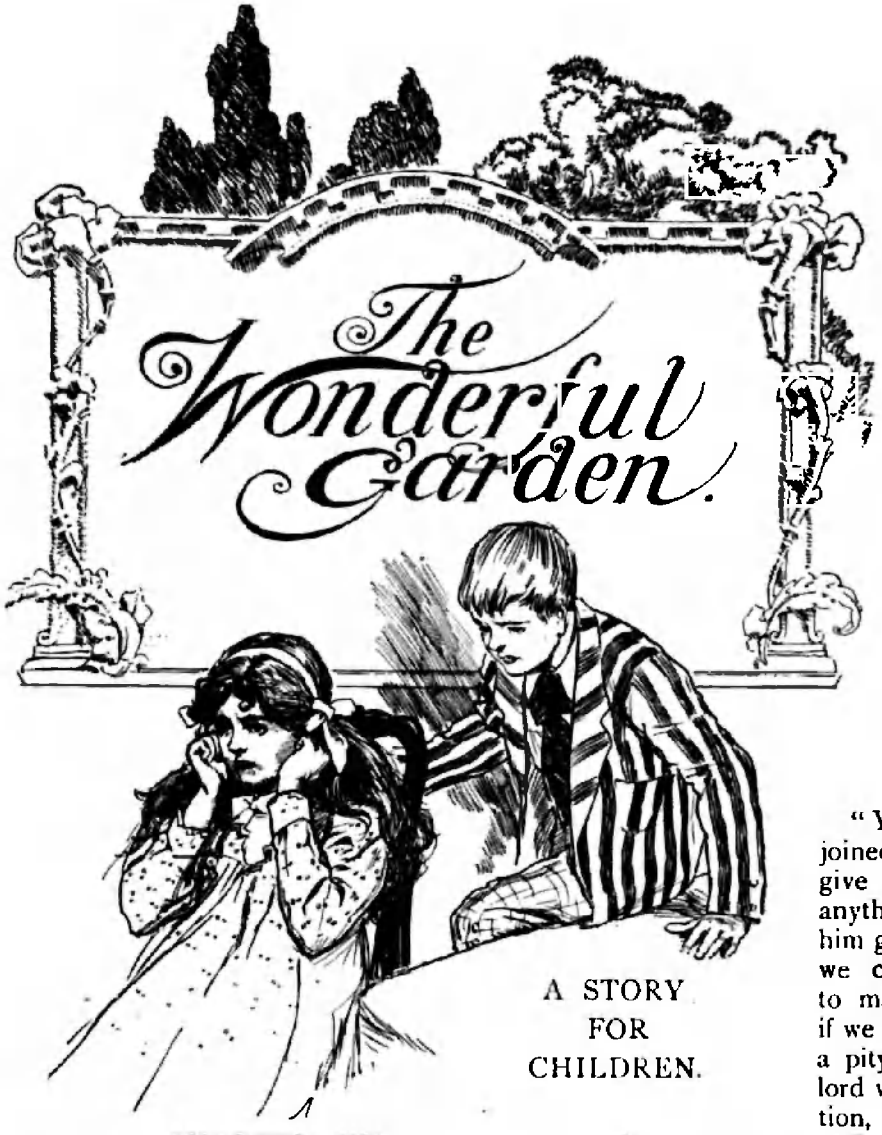
49.—A PUZZLE WITH PAWNS.

SIXTEEN pawns in all may be placed so that no three shall be in a straight line in any possible direction, as in the diagram. The words "possible direction," of course, include directions other than those taken by a rook or a bishop. We regard the pawns as mere points on an unchequered plane.



50.—A DEAL IN APPLES.

I WAS first offered sixteen apples for my shilling, which would be at the rate of ninepence a dozen. The two extra apples gave me eighteen for a shilling, which is at the rate of eightpence a dozen, or one penny a dozen less than the first price asked.



By
E. NESBIT.

Illustrated by
H. R. Millar.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER XII.

JUSTICE.

THE great discovery was Charlotte's. When they got home and found that the uncle had gone to Tonbridge for the day everyone felt that something must be done, and Rupert began to write out the telegram to his godfather. It was quite a nice telegram, very long, and explaining everything perfectly, but Mrs. Wilmington unexpectedly refused to lend more than ninepence, so it could not be sent. Caroline sat rocking herself to and fro, with her fingers in her ears to shut out Charles's comments and advice, and tried in vain to think of some way of using a spell to help the mineral woman.

"It's no use, you know," Charles said, "looking up the spells in the books until we know how we're going to use it." And Caroline had to agree that this was so.

"You see," Charlotte joined in, "we mustn't give the wicked cousin anything to eat to make him good, and most likely we couldn't get at him to make him eat it, even if we were allowed. What a pity we can't get at the lord with a foreign education, weak from a child."

She sprang up. "Let's go to the Castle, and if he's not there we'll get another take-your-lunch-with-you-cheese-and-cake-will-do day and go to London and see him there."

"You don't know where the Castle is," Rupert objected.

"Yes, I do," said Caroline. "So there! William said the day of the Rupert hunt. He said, 'I hoped the boy'd got into the Castle grounds. Milord's men 'ud have sent Poad about his business pretty sharp if he'd gone trespassing there.' So it can't be far off."

"I'll tell you what," said Charlotte. "You know uncle said, the day after we'd been Rosicurians, would we like the carriage to go and see Mr. Penfold, only we didn't because we knew he'd gone to Canterbury! Now if we could only persuade William that going to see Lord Andor is the same thing as going to see Mr. Penfold, and that to-day is the same as the other day, well, then . . .

People think so much more of you if you go in a carriage."

"And what will you do when you get there?" Rupert asked, doubtfully.

"Why, give him a bunch of magic flowers and tell him about the mineral woman."

"You'll look very silly," Rupert told her, "driving up to a lord's house with your twopenny-halfpenny flowers, when he's got acres of glass most likely."

"I don't care if he's got miles of glass and vineries and pineries and every modern inconvenience. He hasn't got flowers that grow as true and straight as the ones in the wonderful garden. Thomas told me nobody had in all the countryside. And they're magic flowers, ours are. Oh, Rupert, I wish you wouldn't be so grown up."

"I'm not," said Rupert; "it's you that's silly."

"You're always being different from what we'd made up our minds you were," said Charlotte, hotly. "There, now it's out. We were sorry for you at first. And then we liked you; you were so adventurous and splendid. And then you catch a cold and go all flat. Why do you do it?"

"*Non semper vivens arcus*," said Rupert, and Charles hung on his words. "You can't be always the same. It would be dull. Besides, I got such a beastly cold. And I'd had the adventure. You don't want to go on having one dinner after another all day. You want a change. I'm being sensible, that's all. I dare say I shall be silly again some day," he added, consolingly. "A chap has to be silly or not *moresuis*—that means 'off his own bat,' Charles."

"Yes," said Charles, "I'll remember."

"Well, look here. I'll go and try it on with William if you like," said Charlotte; "but he likes Caroline best, because of what she did on the Rupert hunt day."

"You do rub it in, don't you?" said Rupert. "I wish sometimes you *hadn't* helped me that day."

There was a silence. Then Charlotte said, "You go, Caro. And, Charles, whatever happens, you must wash your hands. Go on, like a sensible, and do it now, so as not to waste time."

Charles went, when Charlotte assured him that if he didn't they would go without him. The moment the door closed behind the others she turned to Rupert.

"Now, look here," she said; "I know what's the matter with you. You've got the black dog on your back. I don't know what dog it is or why. But you have. You haven't been a bit nice to-day; you didn't play up when you were Rupert of the Rhine. And you think you're letting yourself down by playing with us. You didn't think that the first day when we saved you. Something's got into you. Oh, I do believe you're bewitched. Rupert, *do* you think you're bewitched? Because if you are we know how to unbewitch you."

"You're a very silly little girl," was all Rupert found to say.

"Not a bit of it," said Charlotte, brightly. "You only say that because you haven't got any sisters of your own, so, of course, you don't know. We've been as nice to you as ever we could be, and you're getting nastier and nastier. If you like to be nice, *be* nice. If you don't, I shall know it's not your fault, but because you're bewitched, and I shall pity, but not despise you. So now you know."

Rupert was twisting and untwisting the fringed tassel of a sofa-cushion and looking at the floor.

"So you hate me now, I suppose?" he said.

"No, I don't. But I hate the black dog. I thought you were splendid at first. And even now I think you're splendid inside, really. Only something's happened. It *is* like bewitchment, I do think. Couldn't you do anything to stop it? I'd help you—really I would. I say; I'm sorry if I've scratched too hard."

"You don't understand," said Rupert, with what was plainly an effort. "Sometimes I'm like this. I feel as if I was someone else I can't explain. Now you can laugh if you like. I only thought I'd tell you. Don't tell the others. It's perfectly beastly. I suppose I *could* help it if I knew the way. Only I don't."

"Suppose you had a bath?" suggested Charlotte. "Aunt Emmeline says when children feel naughty you should always wash their faces; and if it's true of children it must be true of bigger people," she added, hastily, answering Rupert's frown, "because your face is made of the same sort of stuff, however old you are."

"That was part of it," said Rupert, "when I saw the river to-day. Can you swim? I can. And I promised my father I'd never go into the water to swim unless there was some man there, and—— My father's in India, you know," he said, unnecessarily. "It was he taught me to swim." He walked to the window and looked out. "I thought I was going back to India with him. And then

the doctors said some rotten rigmarole, and my father went without me, and I was all right again three months after, and I might as well have gone with him, only it was too late; and then things began to happen that I never thought could. And nothing will ever be right again.'

"Look here," said Charlotte, "don't come with us this afternoon. You go down to Mr. Penfold's. He's the clergyman. He said the other day he'd teach Charles to swim, so I know he can. If you go directly he'll take you down to the river, and you can drown dull care in the Medway."

"Do you think he'd mind?"

"Mind? He'd love it," said Charlotte. "Just go and say, 'The three C.'s said I could swim, and I can too.'"

"You're not a bad sort," said Rupert, thumping her on the back as he went out, but keeping his face carefully turned away. "I think I will."

Charlotte and Charles met in the doorway, and the meeting was rather violent, for both were in a hurry, Charlotte to find out what William had said and Charles to tell her. I am sorry to say that he had not been washing his hands, as indeed their colour plainly confessed, but helping William in the toilet of the horse, for Caroline had succeeded in persuading William that to-day was, for all practical purposes, the same as the other day, the more readily, perhaps, because Mrs. Wilmington had come out and said that she didn't think it was at all. And Caro had said she thought perhaps they'd better *all* wash and not just Charles. William said that he would drive them to Lord Andor's lodge gates, because he had to go down to the station to meet the master anyhow, and it was on the way, or next door to, but they'd have to walk back.

"And we've forgotten to decide what flowers to get, and Caro says bring up the books so that she can look at them while you're washing your hands. Because William says he must start in a quarter of an hour."

Thus Charles ended breathlessly, adding, "Where's Rupert?"

"He's not coming with us. Get down 'Pope IV.' and I'll get 'The Language of.'" And carrying the books, she went up the wide shallow stairs, three at once.

There was but little time to make a careful selection of the flowers most likely to influence a youthful peer.

"To gather the flowers will be but the work of a moment," said Caroline. "You two go in the carriage and I'll tell William to drive out by the deserted lodge and pick me up at the garden gate."

Unfortunately the flowers were not easy to find. The gardener had to be consulted, and thus the gathering of Lord Andor's presentation bouquet was the work of about a quarter of an hour, so that William was waiting and very cross indeed when Caroline came running out of the garden with the flowers, a mere bundle, and no bouquet, as Charles told her, in her held-up skirt.

"No time now to drop people at lodge gates," he said. "I'll set you down at the turning, and even that I didn't ought to do by rights, being late as it is, and I shall have to fan the horse along something cruel to get to the station in time as it is."

So the splendour of driving up to the Castle in the carriage was denied them; they could not even drive to the lodge. And all they got, after all Caroline's careful diplomatic treatment of William, was, as she said, "just a bit of a lift."

"It saves time, though," said she, "and time's everything when you've got to be home by half-past six. I do hope Lord Andor's in, don't you?"

"I don't know," said Charles. "I think it would be more noble if we had to sacrifice ourselves and go to London to see him. We should have to break open our money-boxes. I've always wanted to do that. I do wish Rupert had been here. He could have made up something to say in Latin, and then Lord Andor would have had to pay attention."

"He'll have to in English," said Caroline, quietly, "if he's there. Oh, I do hope he is. The mineral woman is most likely crying all this time. She only stopped for a minute, I'm certain, to sort the bottles because of the men coming for them with the cart at three. Won't it be glorious going and telling her that it's all right and she needn't go?"

"But suppose it all *isn't* and she *need?*" said Charles, gloomily.

"The spells have never failed us yet," said Caroline.

"I believe it's something to do with the garden and our being the ancestors of Dame Eleanour," said Charlotte. "Of course it'll be all right, Charles."

"Rupert didn't think so."

"Rupert doesn't know as much as we do, when it isn't Latin," said Charlotte. "We're going to teach Rupert a lot by and by. You see if we don't. All right, William, we're getting out as fast as we can, aren't we?" for the carriage had stopped and a voice from the box was urging them to look slippy.

The carriage rolled away, leaving them at the corner with the big bouquet which Caroline had hastily arranged as they drove along.

"If we see him, you'll let me tell him, won't you?" she said; "because the mineral woman told about it to me." And the others agreed, though Charles pointed out that the mineral woman only told her because she happened to be there.

So far all had gone well with the project of calling on Lord Andor, to tell him about his unfortunate tenant and the week-ending admirers of her cottage. But at Lord Andor's lodge gate a check occurred.

As the long gate clicked itself into place after they had passed through it an elderly person in a black cap with violet ribbons put her head out of the lodge window and said

"No, you don't!"

"Yes, we do," said Charlotte, unguardedly.

"No village children allowed in," said the black and violet cap.

"We aren't," said Charles. And then the cap disappeared, only to reappear a moment later at the lodge door on the head of a very angry old lady with a very sharp, long nose, who might have been Mrs. Wilmington's grandmother.

"Out you go, the way you came," she said; "that's the order. What do you want, anyhow?"

"We've got a bouquet for Lord Andor," said Caroline, showing it.

"Keep it till the fifteenth," said the woman—a silly thing to say, for no bouquet will keep a fortnight. "No village people admitted till the gala and *fete* when his lordship comes of age. You can come then. Out you go. I've no patience," she added. And it was quite plain that she had not.

They had to go back. I wish I could conceal from you that Charles put out his tongue at her as he passed. It is a dreadful thing to have to relate, and my only comfort is that Caroline and Charlotte did not do it. Charlotte made a face, but Caroline behaved beautifully.

When they were out in the road again, Caroline said, almost "between her set teeth," as heroes do in moments of crisis, "You know that broken paling we passed?" The others instantly understood. They went back, found the broken paling, and slipped through. It was Caroline's dress that was really badly torn. Charlotte's was only

"OUT YOU GO, THE WAY YOU CAME,' SHE SAID; 'THAT'S THE ORDER.'"

gathers which you can tuck into your waistband, and it only makes a lump and the skirt rather uneven lengths, and it was not the fence but a nail that tore Charles's stocking so badly.

The shrubbery in which they found themselves was very thorny and undergrowthy, and nearer to the lodge than they would have chosen. They could see its white walls quite plainly every now and then, and they feared that it, or the managing director of it, might be able to see them. But it makes all

the difference whether you are looking for a thing or not, doesn't it? And certainly the last thing the cap woman expected was that anyone should dare to defy her.

So, undiscovered and unsuspected, the children crept through the undergrowth. The thorns and briars scratched at the blue muslins, no longer, anyhow, in their first freshness, and Charlotte's white hat was snatched from her head by a stout chestnut stump. The bouquet, never the handsomest of its kind, was not improved by its travels. But misfortunes such as these occur to all tropical explorers, and they pressed on. They were all very warm and rather dirty when they emerged from the undergrowth into the smooth, spacious park and, beyond a belt of quiet trees, saw the pale, grey towers of the Castle rise against the sky. They looked back. The lodge was not to be seen.

"So *that's* all right," said Caroline. "Now we must walk fast, and yet not look as if we were hurrying. I think it does that best if you take very long steps. I wish we knew where the front-door was. It would be awful if we went to the back one by mistake and got turned back by Lord Andor's myrmidons."

"I expect his back-door is grander than our front," said Charlotte, "so we sha'n't really know till the myr-what's-its-names have gone for us."

"If we'd had time to disguise ourselves like grown-ups—Char, for goodness' sake tear that strip off your hat; it looks like a petticoat's tape that's coming down," said Caroline—"they'd have thought we'd come to call, with cards, and then they'd have had to show us in, unless he wasn't at home."

"He must be at home," said Charlotte, tearing a long streamer from the wretched hat, which now looked less like a hat than a fading flower that has been sat on; "it would be too much if he wasn't."

They passed through the trees and on to a very yellow gravelled drive, hot and gritty to the foot and distressing to the eye. Following this, they came suddenly round a corner on the Castle. It was much bigger than they expected, and there seemed to be no doubt which was the front entrance. Two tall, grey towers held a big arched gateway between them, and the drive led straight in to this. There seemed to be no door-bell and no knocker, nor, as far as they could see, any door.

"I feel like Jack the Giant-Killer," said Charles, "only there isn't a trumpet to blow."

His voice, though he spoke almost in a whisper, sounded loud and hollow under the echoing arch of the gateway.

Beyond its cool depths was sunshine, with grass and pink geraniums overflowing from stone vases. A fountain in the middle leapt and sank and plashed in a stone basin.

There was a door at the other side of the courtyard—an arched door with steps leading up to it. On the steps stood a footman.

"He's exactly like the one in 'Alice,'" said Caroline; "courage and dispatch."

The footman looked curiously at the three children — hot, dusty, and untidy — who advanced through the trim parterre. His glance dwelt more especially on the battered bouquet, on Charlotte's unspeakable hat, and the riven stocking of Charles.

"If you please," said Caroline, her heart beating heavily, "we want to see Lord Andor."

"'Slordship's not at heum," said the footman, looking down upon them.

"When will he be back?" Charlotte asked; while Caroline suddenly wished that they had at least brought their gloves.

"Can't say'm sheur," said the footman, doing something to his teeth with a pin; and his tone was wondrous like Mrs. Wilmington's.

"We want very much to see him," said Charles. "You see, we've brought him a bouquet."

"I see you 'ave—have," said the footman, more like Mrs. Wilmington than ever. "Would you like to leave it? It'll be a surprise for his lordship when he comes in." And the footman tittered.

"He *is* here, then," said Caroline. "I mean, he's not in London?"

"His lordship is *not* in London," said the footman. "Any other questions? Always happy to say me catechism, 'm sure."

The children turned to go. They felt the need of a private consultation.

"Any particular neem?" said the footman, and tittered again. "'Slordship'll be dying to know who it was called." And once more he tittered.

Charlotte turned suddenly and swiftly.

"You need not trouble about our names," she said; "and I don't believe Lord Andor knows how you behave when he's not there. He doesn't know *yet*, that is."

"No offence, miss," said the footman, very quickly.

"We accept your apology," said Charlotte, "and we shall wait till Lord Andor comes in."

"But, I say, look here, you know." The footman came down one step in his earnestness. "You can't wait here, you know."

"Oh, yes, we can," said Caroline, sitting down on the second step. The others also sat down. It was Charles who said, "So there!" and Caroline had to nudge him and say "Hush!"

"We never called before at a house where they didn't ask you in and give you a chair to sit on. But if this is that kind of house," said Charlotte, grandly, "it does not matter. It is a fine day, luckily."

"Look here," said the footman behind them, now thoroughly uneasy, "this won't do, you know. There's company expected. I can't have a lot of ragged children sitting on the steps like the first of May."

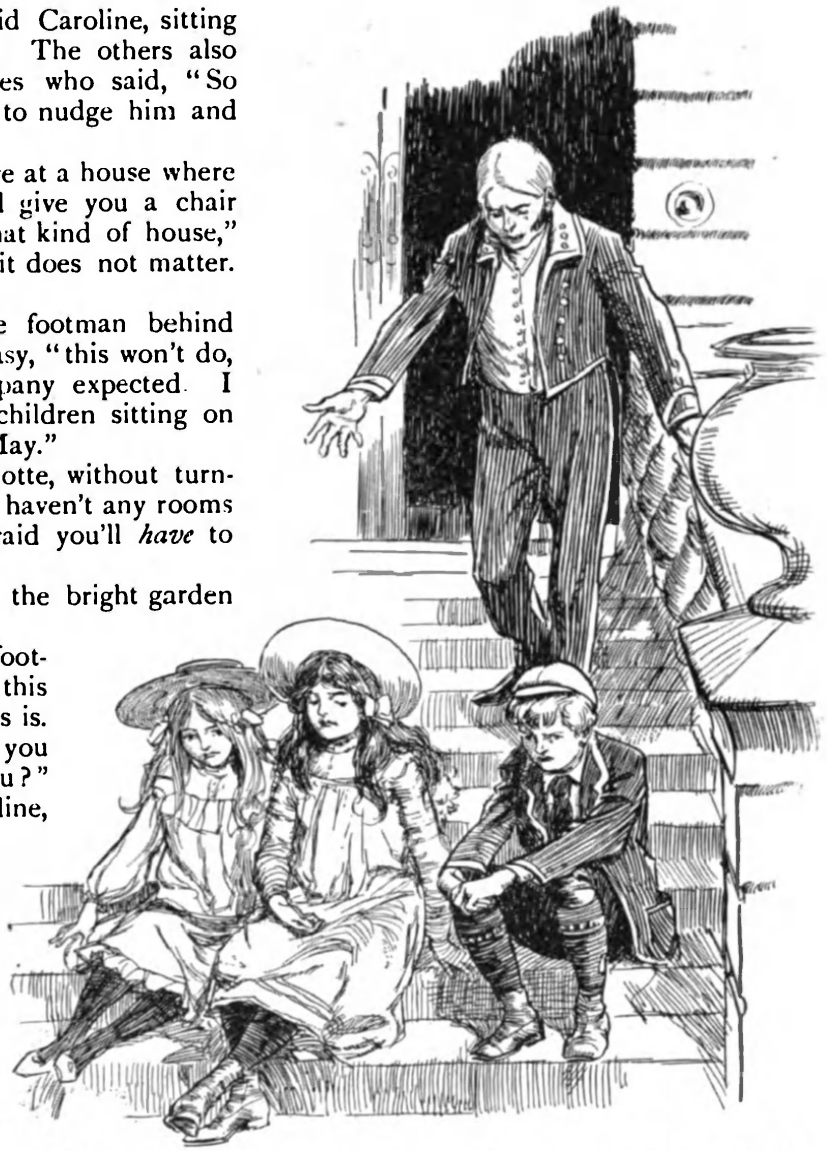
"I'm sorry," said Charlotte, without turning her head, "but if you haven't any rooms fit to ask us into, I'm afraid you'll *have* to have us sitting here."

The three sat staring at the bright garden and the dancing fountain.

"Look here," said the footman, weakly blustering, "this is cheek. That's what this is. But you go now. Do you hear? Or must I make you?"

"We hear," said Caroline, speaking as calmly as one can speak when one is almost choking with mingled rage, disappointment, fear, and uncertainty.

"And I defy you to lay a finger on your master's visitors," said Charlotte. "How do you know who we are? We haven't given you our names."



"'LOOK HERE,' SAID THE FOOTMAN BEHIND THEM, 'THIS WON'T DO, YOU KNOW.'"

The footman must have felt a sudden doubt. He hesitated a moment, and then, muttering something about seeing Mr. Checkles, he retired, leaving the children in possession of the field. And there they sat, in a row, on Lord Andor's steps, with the bouquet laid carefully on the step above them.

It was very silent there in the grey-walled courtyard.

"I say," whispered Charles. "Let's go. We've got the better of *him*, anyhow. Let's do a bunk before he comes back with someone we can't get the better of—thousands of stately butlers, perhaps."

"Never," said Charlotte, whose hands were cold and trembling with excitement. But Caroline said:—

"I wish Mr. Checkles might turn out to be a gentleman, the everyday kind that we know. Lords' servants seem more common than other people's, and I expect the lord's something like them. They say like master like man."

As if in answer to Caroline's wish, a door in the wall opened, showing a glimpse of more garden beyond, and a jolly-faced youth came towards them. He was a very big young man, and his clothes, which were of dust-coloured Harris tweed, were very loose. He looked like a sixth-form boy, and Charles at once felt that here was a man and a brother. So he got up and went towards the new-comer with the simple greeting:—

"Halloa!"

"Halloa!" said the sixth-form boy, with a friendly and cheerful grin.

"I say," said Charles, confidentially, as he nd the big boy met on the grass, "there in't really any reason why we shouldn't wait ere if we want to?"

"None in the world," said the big boy, if you're sure that what you're waiting for is kely to come and that this is the best place o wait for it in."

"We're waiting for Lord Andor," said Caroline, who had picked up the bouquet nd advanced with it. "I'm so glad you've ome, because we don't understand English ien - servants. In India they behave ifferently when you call."

"What have the servants here done?" the outh asked, frowning, with his hands in his ockets.

"Oh, nothing," said Charles, in a hurry; at least, I mean we accepted his apologies, o we can't sneak."

"I wouldn't call it sneaking to tell *you*," aid Caroline, confidingly, "because, of ourse, you'd promise on your honour not to ell Lord Andor. We don't want to get ther people's servants into trouble when 're've accepted their apologies. But the ootman *was* rather . . ."

At this moment the footman himself ppeared at the top of the steps with an lderly whiskered man in black, whom the hildren rightly judged to be the butler. The wo had come hastily out of the door, but hen they saw the children and their com-anion the footman stopped as if—as Charles aid later—he had been turned to stone, and nly the butler advanced when the youth in he Harris tweed said, rather shortly, "Come ere, Checkles!" Checkles came quickly nough, and when he was quite close he stonished the three C.'s much more than he ill astonish *you* by saying, "Yes, m'lord!"

"Tea on the terrace at once," said the Harris-tweeded one, "and tell them not to be ll day about it."

Checkles went, and the footman too. Charlotte always believed that the last glance e cast at her was not one of defiance, but of etition.

"So you're him," Charles was saying. How jolly!"

But to Caroline it seemed that there was o time to waste in personalities, however attering. Lord Andor's tea was imminent. He was most likely in a hurry for his tea; it as past most people's tea-time already. So he suddenly held out the flowers and said, Here's a bouquet. We made it for you. Vill you please take it?"

"That's awfully good of you, you know," said Lord Andor; "thanks no end!" He took the bouquet and smelt it, plunging his nose into the midst of the columbine, roses, cornflowers, lemon verbena, wistaria, gladiola, and straw.

"It's not a very nice one, I'm afraid," said Caroline, "but you can't choose the nicest flowers when you have to look them out in two books at once. It means, 'Welcome, fair stranger. An unexpected meeting. We are anxious and trembling. Confidence—no, we left that out because we hadn't any. And Agreement, because we hope you will."

"How awfully interesting! It *was* kind of you," said Lord Andor, and before he could say any more Charlotte hastened to say:—

"You see, it's not just an ordinary nosegay, please, and don't thank us, please, because it wasn't to please you, but to serve our own ends, though, of course, if we'd known how nice you are, and if we'd thought you'd care about one, we would have in a minute."

"I see," said Lord Andor, quite as if he really had seen.

"I'm sure you don't," said Caroline; "don't be polite, please. Say if you don't understand. What we want is justice. It's one of your tenants that had the cottage in your father's time before you, and they're turning her out because there are some week-endy people think the cottage is so pretty, with the flowers she planted and the arbour her father made and the roses that came from her mother's brother in Cambridgeshire. And she said you didn't know. And we decided you ought to know. So we made you the nosegay and we came. And we ought to go, and here's her name and address on a bit of paper, and I'm sorry it's only pencil. And you *will* see justice done, won't you?"

"It's very kind of you," said Lord Andor, slowly, "to take such interest in my tenants."

"There!" said Charlotte. "Of course, we were afraid you'd say that. But we didn't mean to shove our oar in. We just went in for ginger-beer, and Caro found her crying; and there's a hornbeam arbour, ever so old, and a few shillings a week can't make any difference to you, with a lovely castle like this to live in. And the motto on the tombs of your ancestors is 'Fiat Justitia.' And it's only bare justice we want; and we saw the tomb on Sunday in church, with the sons and daughters in ruffs."

"Stop!" said Lord Andor. "I am only a poor, weak chap. I need my tea. Come and have some too, and I'll try to make out what it's all about."

"Thanks awfully," said the three C.'s, speaking all together. And Caroline added, "We mustn't be long over tea, please, because we've got to get home by half-past six, and it must be nearly that now."

"You shall get back at half-past six all right," said Lord Andor, and led the way—a huge figure in the dust-coloured clothes—through the little door by which they had come, on to a pleasant stone terrace with roses growing all over and in and out and round about its fat old balustrades.

"Here's tea," he said. And there it was, set on a fair-sized table with a white cloth—a tea worth waiting for. Honey and jam and all sorts of cakes, and peaches and strawberries. The footman was hovering about, but Charles was the only one who seemed to see him. It was bliss to Charles to see this proud enemy humbly bearing an urn and lighting a spirit-lamp to make the tea of those whom he had tried to drive from even the lowly hospitality of Lord Andor's doorstep.

"Come on," said the big, sixth-form-looking boy who was Lord Andor; "you must be starved. Cake first (and bread and butter afterwards, if you insist upon it) is the rule here. Milk and sugar?"

They all drank tea much too strong for them, out of respect to their host, who had forgotten that when he was a little boy milk was what one had at tea-time.

And slowly, by careful questioning, and by making a sudden rule that no one was to say more than thirty-seven words without stopping, Lord Andor got at the whole story in a form which he could understand.

"I *see*," he would say, and "*I* see," and then ask another question.

And at last, when tea was really over, to the last gladly-accepted peach and the last sadly-unaccepted strawberry, he stood up and said:—

"If you don't mind my saying so, I think you are regular little bricks to have taken all this trouble. And I am really and truly very much obliged. Because I do mean to be just and right to my tenants, only it's very difficult to know about things if nobody tells you. And you've helped me a lot, and I thank you very much."

"Then you will?" said Charlotte, breathlessly.

"Not let her be turned out of her cottage, she means?" Caroline explained.

"She means the mineral woman," said Charles.

"Of course I won't," said Lord Andor; "I mean, of course, I will. I mean it's all right. And I'll drive you home, and if you're a minute or two late, I'll make it all right with uncle."

The motor was waiting outside the great arch that is held between the two great towers of Andor Castle. It was a dream of a car, and there was room for the three C.'s in the front beside the driver, who was Lord Andor himself.

The footman was there, and the proudest moment of the day, for Charles, was that in which Lord Andor gave the petition-bouquet into that footman's care, and told him to see that it was put in water, "Carefully, mind; and tell them to put it on the dinner-table to-night."

The footman said, "Yes, m'lord," as though he had never seen the bouquet before. Charlotte's proudest moment was when the woman at the lodge gate had to curtsy when the motor passed out.

Rupert was waiting for them at their own lodge gate, and when he saw the motor his eyes grew quite round like pennies. Yet, even after that, Rupert only said:—

"It's chance, I tell you. It's just accidental. Co—what's its name—incidence. It would all have happened just the same if you hadn't taken that hideous old mixed assorted haystack with you."

"Still disagreeable?" said Charlotte, brightly.

"Oh, been all the same, *would* it?" said Charles. "That's all you know."

"It's *not* all I know," said Rupert. "As it happens, I know heaps of things that you don't, and I could find out more if I wanted to. So there!"

"Oh, Rupert, don't be cross," said Caroline, "just when we're all so happy. I *do* wish you'd been there, especially at tea-time."

"I'm not cross," said Rupert. "As it happens, I was feeling extra jolly until you came home."

"Oh, *don't!*" said Caroline. "Do let's call it Pax. We haven't told you half the little interesting things that happened yet. And if you can't believe in the magic, it's your misfortune. We know you can't help it. We know you don't unbelieve on purpose. We know we're right, and you think you know you are."

"It's the other way round," said Rupert, still deep in gloom.

"I *know* it is when *you* think it; and when we think it it's the other way," said Caroline. "Oh, Pax! Pax! Pax!"

"All right," said Rupert. "I had a good

swim. Your Mr. Penfold's not half a bad sort. He taught me a new side-stroke." But it was plain that Rupert's inside self still felt cloudy and far from comfortable.

Next day the three C.'s and Rupert, in the middle of Irish stew, were surprised by the sudden rustling entrance of Mrs. Wilmington.

"A person wishes to see you," she said to Caroline; "quite a poor person. I asked her to wait till dinner was completed, but she says that she hopes you will see her now, as she ought to commence going home almost at once."

"THE FOOTMAN SAID, 'YES, M'LORD,' AS THOUGH HE HAD NEVER SEEN THE BOUQUET BEFORE."

"Of course," said Caroline; "it must be the mineral woman."

"She seemed to me," said Mrs. Wilmington, "to have an animal face."

But Caroline was already in the hall, and the figure that rose politely from the oak chair was plainly—though disguised in her Sunday clothes—that of the mineral woman.

"Oh, miss!" she said. "Oh, miss!" She took hold of both Caroline's hands and shook them; but that was not enough. Caroline found herself kissed on both cheeks, and then suddenly hugged, and "Oh, miss!" the mineral woman said; "Oh, miss!" And then she felt for her handkerchief in a black bag she carried and blew her nose loudly.

Mrs. Wilmington had gone through the hall very slowly indeed, but even she could not go slowly enough not to be gone by the time the mineral woman had, for the time being, finished with her nose. And as Mrs. Wilmington went through the baize door she heard again:—

"Oh, miss!"

Mrs. Wilmington came back five minutes later, and this time she heard:—

"And it's all right, miss; and two bright new five-pound notes 'to buy more rose trees with,' and a letter in his own write of hand thanking us for making the place so pretty, and I'm to be tenant for life, miss. And it's all your doing, bless your kind heart. So I came to tell you. I never thought I should feel like I do about any strange little gell. It was all your doing, miss, my dear."

Which was a very mysterious and exciting thing to be overheard by any housekeeper who was not in the secret. And a very heart-warming and pleasant thing to be listened to by a little girl who was.

"You see," said Caroline, when she had told the others of the mineral woman's happiness, "the magic always works."

(To be continued.)

CURIOSITIES.

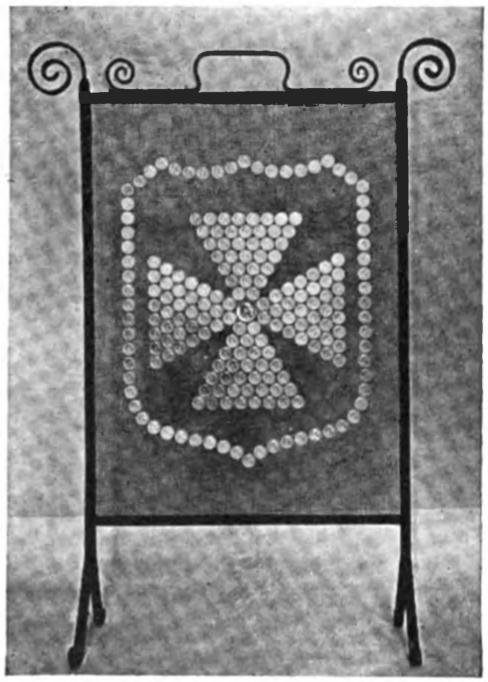
[We shall be glad to receive Contributions to this section, and to pay for such as are accepted.]

STRANGE CUSTOM OF SOME STRANGE PETS.

I HAVE had these two little wood-chucks ever since they had their eyes open, and when they were too young to eat food of any kind I had to feed them from a bottle like a baby. Some people do not believe that wood-chucks—or ground-hogs, to give them the name by which they are better known—come out to see their shadow on Candlemas Day. They are inclined to scoff at the idea, but my experience with these animals has proved it to be true. They went to sleep during the latter part of October, since when I have watched them very closely to see if they woke up, but never found them awake. I took them out of the nest and they appeared to be dead, except for a slight movement of their heads and the beating of their hearts. On February 2nd I went to look at them in the afternoon, and found them awake, playing in their cage and very happy. They stayed out for three days and ate a considerable quantity of food, and they then went back to sleep and have slept ever since.—Mr. E. B. Cleminger, Frozel, Minn., U.S.A.

A SAFE OFFER.

THE erection of the Pilot Knob Hotel at Yuma, Arizona, was prompted by the opening of the Yuma Irrigation Project, one of the big irrigation plans started by ex-President Roosevelt, under which thousands of acres of desert land are made to "blossom as the rose." The place, as the small sign states, is 3,127 miles west of Broadway, New York — a mere nothing in this country of magnificent distances. The legend, "Free Board Every Day the Sun Doesn't Shine," is an up-to-date variety of the "Pay To-day, Credit To-morrow" signs that occasionally appear in England, and in Arizona the landlord is taking no chances on his offer. It may be added that 90,000 acres are to be made irrigable under this Yuma project.—Mr. Allan Dunn, 2,004, Hyde Street, San Francisco, California.



FIRE-SCREENS IN FARTHINGS.

THE fire-screen here shown is composed of 206 farthings (King Edward VII.), which were dipped bright and lacquered, the centre coin being a penny silver-plated. The design is mounted on a copper-gauze background, which is bronzed and partly rubbed off to give an antique finish; while the frame is made of wrought-iron and finished dull black. Overall dimensions are: Height, 2ft. 10in.; width, 2ft.; the panel being 2ft. by 18in.—Mr. Thos. B. Baker, 6, Upper Baker Street, Lloyd Square, London, W.C.

ANOTHER "SONG OF A SHIRT."

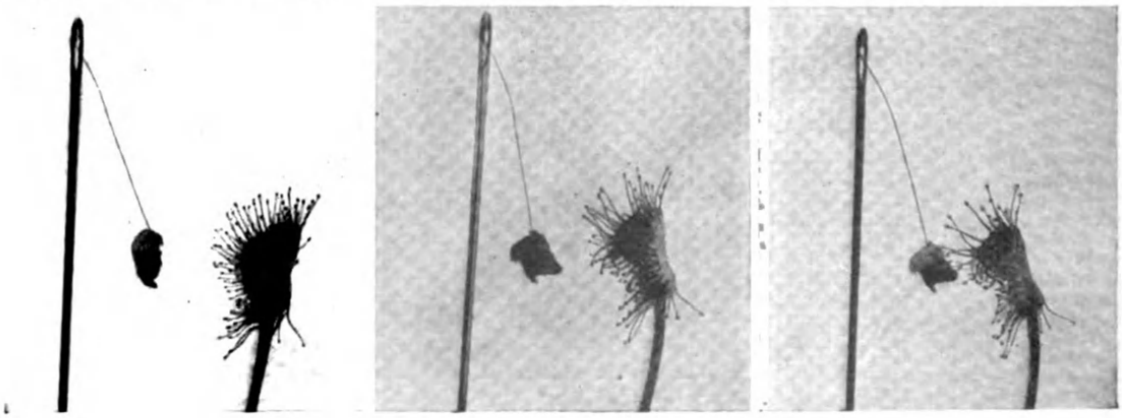
THERE are few famous shirts in the world, but one of the number forms the subject of the accompanying photograph. Look at it! It only measures eight by eight inches, and when folded up does not even fill the tiny box seen in the photograph, in which it is always kept. But a more famous shirt it would be hard to find. It is a christening shirt, and two and a half centuries have passed since it was made in Flanders of the best lace and linen then obtainable, to the order of an English admiral. It reposes in its tiny box at sunny Worthing, in the home of the inventor of a well-known dog-biscuit. Some thousand children had been christened in the wee garment even several years ago. Think of it! A thousand children and more have worn it at their baptism, and among the number have been several who have grown up to be famous as soldiers, sailors, authors, travellers, and scholars. So it is not to be wondered at that the little shirt has come to be looked upon as a "lucky" shirt and a talisman against all ill. Mothers send for it from distant lands, to which fate has taken them, believing that if their children are christened in it good fortune will smile upon them all their lives. It has passed safely through several battles on the sea, including the Battle of Trafalgar. It went down with the ill-fated *Royal George*, the log-book of which vessel may be seen in the same house at Worthing in which the shirt rests Years later it was wrecked on the Goodwin Sands in a small passenger boat, and after being lost for several weeks was picked up on the seashore at Deal and in course of time restored to its owner, whose address happened to be on an envelope inside the box. It was once wrecked off the coast of France and once again found on the seashore, but this time inside a large trunk. In a house at Streatham it had the distinction of passing safely through a fire which completely gutted the building with the exception of one room—the room in which the shirt was put away. On three occasions it has been found in the Dead-Letter Department of the General Post Office, and been lost in the streets of provincial towns on no fewer than twenty-one occasions.—Mr. J. C. Bristow-Noble, Rookwood, Warnham, Horsham, Sussex.

"SARAH PICKFORD . . . BACHELOUR."

THIS very curious epitaph may be seen on a gravestone in Prestbury Churchyard. The inscription reads: "Also Sarah Pickford, sister to the above-said James Pickford, was here interred August 17, Anno Dom. 1705. And died a Bachelour in the 48 veare of her age." It will be noticed that the letter "f" is frequently used instead of the letter "s." I think this is the only gravestone which tells of a woman dying a "bachelour."—Mr. Thomas Cooper, Chapel House, Prestbury, Macclesfield, Cheshire.

A LEAF WITH AN APPETITE.

I AM sending you three photographs, taken at intervals of about forty minutes, of a sundew leaf (*Drosera rotundifolia*), near to which I had suspended a tiny fragment of meat, using a hair attached to a needle. The photographs show clearly how the leaf bent over and captured the meat. The puzzle is: How did the leaf know that the meat was within its reach? One is driven to the conclusion that plants are more "sensible" than is generally supposed.—Mr. Alfred H. Bastin, Wensley, Upper Redlands Road, Reading.



A CHAIR WITH A HISTORY.

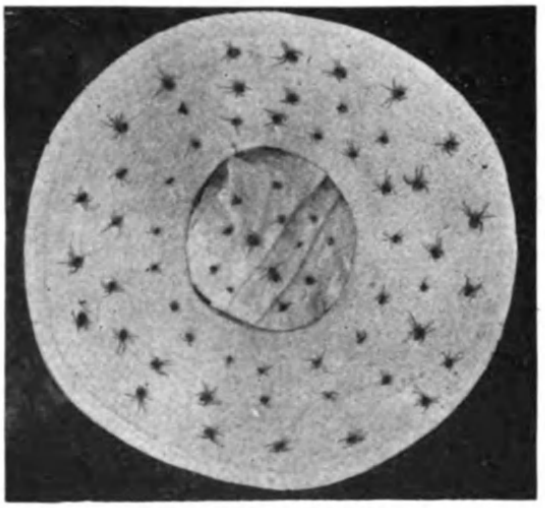
AN inscription cut on the stone which forms the seat of this fine old chair testifies to its having been made entirely from wood and stone taken in 1832 from the foundation of old London Bridge, after having remained there for six hundred and fifty-six years. The inscription reads: "I am part of the first stone that was put down for the foundation of Old London Bridge in June 1176 by a priest named Peter, who was Vicar of Colchurch in London, and I remained there undisturbed safe on the same Oak piles this chair is made from, till the Reverend William John Jolliffe Curate of Colmar Hampshire took me up in July 1832 when clearing away the Old Bridge after New London Bridge was completed." It will be noticed that models of several of London's bridges have been incorporated in the design of the chair, which is the property of the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. —Mr. T. Sturdee, 157, Malpas Road, Brockley.

WHAT IS THE EXPLANATION?

GET a silver dessert-spoon and put it at right angles in front of you on a table. Next get a gold ring, a wedding-ring preferred, and to it tie a piece of thread about fifteen inches long. Twist the other end of the cotton round your forefinger two or three times and bring it over the point of the thumb, with the nail down. Rest your elbow on the table and suspend the ring about an eighth of an inch above the centre of the handle of the spoon, keeping the hand as steady as possible. If you are a man the ring will oscillate up and down the spoon. Next put your free hand on the table and ask a woman to lay her hand on yours. Watch the ring carefully, and you will notice that it will gradually cease to swing along the spoon, but will commence to swing across it. If a woman holds the thread it is *vice versa*. I have known of only one case in which the experiment has failed. Can this be explained?—Mr. W. Greene, Ivybank, Monkstown, Co. Cork.

HOW MANY PAGES ARE THERE?

THESE six volumes all contain an equal number of pages. The sum of the numbers on the first and last pages of the whole six volumes is 9,222. How many pages are there in each volume?—Mr. Harold M. Haskell, 67, Appleton Street, Manchester, New Hampshire, U.S.A.

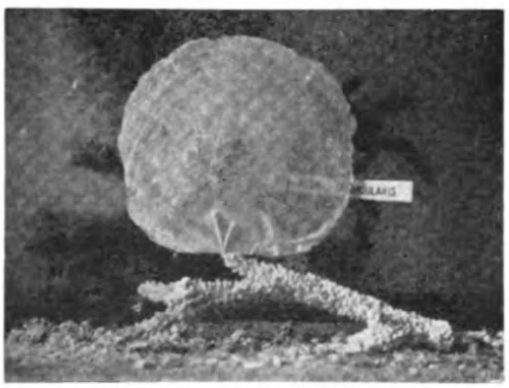


A WASP'S LARDER.

THE photograph I send you shows a white linen hat lying upside down on the grass with white gloves filling the crown. Arranged on the gloves and underside of the brim are between fifty and sixty spiders, which were taken from the nest of a mason wasp. The wasps build strange little nests of two or three rooms, made of tiny pieces of clay carried in and fitted together by the insect herself. In each "room" she lays an egg, which she packs carefully round with spiders, brought in one at a time and stung into insensibility—they seem almost like drugged spiders. When the room is packed closely it is tightly sealed up with more clay and left. The spiders neither wake again nor die; but when the egg is hatched there is living, but unresisting, food for the grub of the wasp to start feeding on straightaway. The spiders in the photograph were found in a "three-roomed" nest, not more than three inches long, built in a crack between two boards at the side of an old boat landing. We had fastened our boat and were lunching among the beautiful bush and ferns for which the west coast of the South Island of New Zealand is famous.—Miss M. Hitchcock, care of National Bank of New Zealand, 17, Moorgate Street, London, E.C.

HAYMAKING IN THE SNOW.

IN the high Alpine valleys in summer-time haymaking forms the most important part of the farmer's work. Indeed, there is little else to do, as the soil is so rocky and the climate so treacherous that even the hardiest of plants cannot be grown successfully. Grass, however, grows very rapidly in the Alps, and as many as three crops of hay are often made in one season. The first crop is usually cut towards the middle of July, when the hill-slopes may be seen covered with men, women, and children, all cutting down the grass with scythes. The grass is never allowed to dry on the ground as in England, but is always built up into little cocks, to protect it against the effects of the weather. Snow is never absent in the Alps, and sometimes in the midst of summer the valleys and hills are covered with a deep mantle of snow. Our photograph depicts the hay, built up into cocks, covered with snow to a depth of six inches! The snow melts, however, in the course of a few days, and the grass is seldom the worse for this occurrence. When thoroughly dry, the hay is stored in large wooden shanties until required for use in the winter.—Mr. J. Dudley Stewart, 35, Canford Road, S.W.



NATURE'S WINDOW-GLASS.

THE Chinese go to the all-generous Mother Nature for the window-panes used in their homes. These window-panes come from the ocean, and are marine shells known as the Chinese window-shell (*P. placenta Linn*). This shell is transparent, resembling mineral mica. The laminated structure of the shell permits of its separation into thin sheets. The Chinese have for ages past used these shells in lieu of glass. The transformation from shell to window-pane involves a simple process. Mr. Chinaman merely soaks the shells, which loosens the thin laminæ that compose them, and his "glass" is ready to be placed in his window-panes. — Mr. Clarence Pietzsch, 2,344, Second Avenue, New York.

LOCKED ANTLERS.

THIS is a unique photograph of "locked antlers," the horns being absolutely perfect and unbroken. The animals quarrel, fighting for supremacy of the herd, and, by some rare chance, the horns become inextricably entangled. In this case the brain of one of the caribou has been pierced, but the other would die of slow starvation. The caribou is a very large and fierce species of stag, and the whole skeletons were discovered by Mr. W. H. Greene while shooting in the wilds of Newfoundland. It was impossible to transport more than the heads.—Miss E. C. Greene, 5, Western Drive, Woodend Park, Grassendale Road, Liverpool.

A BRIDGE OF OFFICE STOOLS.

THE arch shown in the accompanying photograph was constructed with the help of two fellow-students, with a number of ordinary office stools. No support other than that afforded by the pressure of one stool against another was used.—Mr. Eric B. R. Davis, 7, Cavendish Road, Regent's Park, N.W.