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27001 f. 279

2706 f. $\frac{117}{9}$



BARRY PAIN

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Edited by E. V. Knox

BARRY PAIN



Methuen & Co. Ltd.
36 Essex Street, W.C.2
LONDON



First Published in 1934



PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

NOTE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS are due to Messrs. T. Werner Laurie, Ltd.; Messrs. Ward, Lock & Co., Ltd.; Mr. Grant Richards; and Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., for permission to reprint the essays and stories in this volume from their publications.



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I. ON CAUSES; WITH AN EXCURSUS
ON LUCK

I HAVE just been lunching with a man. He is either a Socialist or a Vegetarian—I forget which. On second thoughts, he cannot have been a Vegetarian, because he ate cutlets. He may have been a Philatelist; but I doubt it, and I do not fancy that it really matters. He was something—one of those things that make a man want to lead a higher life, and collar most of the conversation. He told me a good deal about it, and I know that at the time I thought it was a fine thing and an interesting thing; and I wondered why more of us did not do it; and yet I've forgotten what it was. The main point, however, is not what he was, but the fact that he was something. He had a Cause, an Enthusiasm; something that lifted him above the common ruck, something he could brag about, something that made it necessary for him to fill up papers, and sign declarations, and feel as if the nation had purchased him at his own price.

The jilted are bitter on the subject of women; the fox was malicious about the grapes that he could not reach; Tantalus was often heard to

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remark that undiluted water was not worth drinking. If a man sneer at Causes, it is because he himself has not any Cause; and the sneer is idle, because he might have many Causes if he liked. A man may be so poor that he has no effects; but he may still have a Cause. Some of them require a subscription of one shilling; but with more it suffices that a man shall bother half a crown out of his friend. So, as the sneer is not required for the consolation of the sneerer, it must therefore be quite pointless and unprejudiced.

Personally, I must own that I have no Cause at present. I loaf. I am utterly selfish. But I am going to select one soon, because I feel sure that it will elevate me. Besides, I do not see why I should be bored to death by those of my friends who happen to be cracked—quite cracked—about some glorious ideal, and never be able to return their unkindness. Reciprocity is the rule of life. You brag to me about your picture gallery for the starving poor, and I feel at once that I must lie to you about thought-transference. It is partly because I am just about to ruin a Cause by my support that I feel so angry with those selfish, flippant, trivial people who sneer at Causes. The worst point in the sneer is its impartiality. We do not want cold, hard, uncoloured criticism with its

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shameful want of bias. We want warm, tender, muddle-headed enthusiasm, that does not quibble about merit or demerit, that tinges the mere critical faculty with good feeling or bad feeling as the case may be, that is full of humanity which is pigheadedness. But no amount of sneers will prevent me from selecting a Cause to which I may devote my life. The only thing which is likely to prevent me is the difficulty of selection. There are so many Causes, and they are all so good. Shall I be a Philanthropist? Help the poor, and you help yourself. The Philanthropist is the mainstay of the nation. Or shall I be a Dipsomaniac? Help yourself, and pass the bottle. The Dipsomaniac is the mainstay of the Budget. It would be difficult to choose even between these two. The Dipsomaniac sacrifices more than the Philanthropist, and he is less self-conscious; but, on the other hand, the Philanthropist is more popular and less truthful. If it be a fine thing to help the poor, is it not an equally fine thing to help the dear Budget? Perhaps the main distinction between the two is that the Dipsomaniac accounts for most of the rum, and the Philanthropist is mostly rum in his accounts. But who can possibly decide the difference in their merits? And these are but two: there are thousands of others.

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There once was a cuckoo-clock bird; and after the manner of cuckoos it did not lay wind-eggs in its own nest. It deposited them in a mare's nest, and a stuffed phoenix hatched them dead on the Greek Kalends of April. It was thought at the time that the mechanical, the impossible, and the futile had never been so beautifully combined. Yet I have seen a man repeat the lessons that the last pamphlet had wound him up to say, deposit a handsome donation of his father's money in the society that published it, crow to all his friends and expect to see the world regenerated. The combination was quite as beautiful, and yet people sneer at Causes! What great general ever lived who had not this, or a similar faculty for combination? And though the things combined may be utterly bad in themselves, we should never forget how very much of them we get for our money—or our father's money, as the case may be.

But it is of little use to speak. There are few men in the world who have a Cause. We are not serious enough. We give our minds to all manner of trifles. With the exception of yourself, perhaps, I believe that I am the only man left who really wants a Cause and is unable to find one. With the rest it is sheer selfishness.

See me hit that fly on my boat's nose. Flop.

ON CAUSES

Missed it. All right, you wait till it comes back again.

It seems to have aggravated that fly. It has left the boat's nose and gone for mine. I wonder if it knows that I do not like to hit my own nose hard: instinct is a marvellous thing in insects. Or it may simply be luck: luck is quite as marvellous.

I knew a man once who wanted to do serious good until luck spoilt him. He was fond of whist, and he played a good—University-good—rubber; but he felt that it was not profiting the world, and that he should like to feel that he was working for humanity when he was playing for sixpenny points.

And, firstly, it struck him that it would be a good thing to put a small tax on trumps, and help the dear Budget. He wrote to his uncle about it, because his uncle was in the House, and had once picked an earwig off Mr. Gladstone's coat, and had a good deal of influence. His uncle wrote back to say that it was a good idea, and that he had given it his earnest consideration; but that it was impracticable, because the tax would be too difficult to collect.

And, at the same time, his aunt sent him a collecting-box for the Servants' Home in Tasmania, and asked him to place it in a prominent position in his rooms and do his best for it.

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So it occurred to him that here was a chance for him to impose a voluntary tax upon himself, and make his whist do some serious good. He made a vow, and repeated it aloud in these words: 'I vow that the next time I have five trumps I will put half a crown in the collecting-box for the Servants' Home in Tasmania.' He told me afterwards that if the experiment had turned out well he had intended to repeat it, and do a good deal in one way or another for the Tasmanian servants. He also called my attention to the wording of the vow, which he said was important. That very night he sat down to a rubber, and started by dealing himself five trumps. They were the five lowest trumps; but my friend was surprised and pleased at the coincidence, stole softly from his place, dropped half a crown into the collecting-box on the mantelpiece, and returned without saying anything.

As it happened, one of his opponents had the remaining eight trumps, and not one of my friend's five made a trick. Ultimately he lost two trebles and the rub. It was then that he recalled the exact wording of his vow. Of course it is not an easy thing to break the bottom out of a collecting-box for the Servants' Home in Tasmania with a common brass poker; but it had to be done, and he did it.

ON CAUSES

He lost his money by gambling, which shows how wrong and foolish gambling is, and the other man won it, which proves—— What beautiful weather it was on Bank Holiday, wasn't it?

Still, it was a curious piece of luck.

A man once took out his purse in Fleet Street to buy a newspaper, and out rolled a golden sovereign. He did not see that he had dropped it. He only discovered his loss that night, and then he remembered the exact spot where he had taken out his purse. Next day he was ill in bed; but on the day after he said he should walk back to Fleet Street and look for that sovereign. His friends laughed at him. They pointed out that in so crowded a thoroughfare the coin must have been snapped up in a moment. But the man was obstinate, and went back. He did not find the whole coin, but he found twelve shillings and sixpence of it, and an IOU for the remainder.

Yes, that story's a lie. Stories about luck generally are.

That wretched, silly little fly has just perched itself on my boat's nose again. Well, I shall hit it next time—the third time.

Have you ever noticed how luck is connected with the number three—one of the religious numbers? The dream which comes true is

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always dreamed three times. At the coconuts, too, you can have three shies for a penny. There's a mystery about these things.

There once was an adopted father, and the son who had adopted him died without leaving a will, and the poor father was sonless and penniless. He felt sure that his adoptive son would never have been thoughtless enough to omit so important an arrangement as the making of a will. However, no will was found, and the property of the rich son was put up to auction. The poor father watched the sale with a gloomy face. There was the Broadwood grand-piano, on which his son had taught him his scales: he saw it disposed of to a stranger, and turned away to weep. Then a copper coal-scuttle was put up to auction, and the poor father fancied he heard a voice within him saying, 'Buy the coal-scuttle! Buy the coal-scuttle!'

He had but a few pounds left, and it was a Louis XIV coal-scuttle; but he bid for it, and ultimately secured it. With trembling hands he bore it off to the little cottage, which now was all that he had to call a home. Eagerly he opened the lid, and saw inside some small coal and a pair of broken braces.

That shows luck just as much as the other stories; but luck is like the moon—we see only

ON CAUSES

one side of it. At any rate, it is quite as true as the other two stories.

That fly again! This is the third time. I feel that it is fated. I raise my paddle on high, and bring it down with one mighty whack and a murmured 'Bismillah!'

I have missed the fly, and split the paddle, and could do with *something shorter* than 'Bismillah!'

Now I'm going home.

II. MRS. MURPHY ON HONESTY

IF you goes out to work at houses, same as I does, and you happens to have a basket, you burn it. Leastwise, leave it at home. For if you takes it to the place where you're working you're making trouble for yourself. A char-woman what carries a basket ain't popular, and only attracts attention.

I remember what happened when I were a deal younger nor what I am now. I was but fifty-four then, and sent for sudden to a job at the 'Sycamores', where I'd never been afore. I takes my basket and off I goes. I does my work, and were just starting back when up sails her ladyship with her chin stuck out. She were titled, though not born to it, nor looking it neither.

'I wish to see what you've got in your basket,' says she.

So I took and showed her what I'd got. It were my apron, and the key of my door, and my teeth, what I only wears for meals, waste not being a fault of mine.

'Which of these is yours?' says I.

'Don't address me in that way,' says her majesty. 'I merely wished to know. I have

MRS. MURPHY ON HONESTY

had things taken out of my house before by dishonest charwomen.'

'And I hope you may again,' I says. 'Good-bye, ducky. Take care of yourself.'

And with that I leaves her.

No, I hadn't got nothing of hers in my basket. And all I'd got in the pocket under my skirt was a bit of bacon as were too corner-wise for the dining-room rashers, a few potatoes, half a bar of soap, and a box of matches. And most of that had been give me by the cook.

I never took no basket with me after that, not when I were going out to work. It puts ideas into the lady's head, and leads to unpleasantness. I've had to take the rough with the smooth all my life; but suspiciousness is just one of them things as I can't stick. Never could. No honest woman could. Besides, if the pocket under your skirt's large enough, you don't need no basket.

Yes, I'm honest according to my views. And if the lady ain't got the same views, then that's her misfortune. Just look into it for yourself.

Suppose I was to find a diamond tarara when I were doing out the scullery—I ain't never found none yet, but you never knows your luck—what should I do? I should up and take that tarara to her ladyship in once. Shouldn't even stop to wipe my hands and

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adjust my toilette. There you are. Property worth hundreds, and give back instantaneous by a poor woman out for two-and-a-kick and her dinner.

I've thought that out, and it's right every way. It puts your character right for all time, and the meanest lady as ever stepped couldn't shed less than a sovereign for a tarara come back. And what else are you to do? A nice old sight I should look, round at my uncle's, and asking for fifty on a diamond tarara. Six months with the usual bonus is about what I should get. Not for me, thank you. I comes of a family what has kept theirselves respectable.

But when the cook gives you a trifle, that's a different thing altogether. It's my duty to do what the cook says, and act respectful. If she says: 'Hand me this here, Mrs. Murphy,' then I hands it. If she says: 'Reach me that there,' then I reaches. And if she trims a chop off of the end of the loin afore she puts it in, and says I can fry that for my supper, then I borrows a bit of last week's paper to wrap it in.

And I'm right again, and I knows it. It's the lady herself as has given me that chop, acting through the cook, which is her agent. She mayn't know it, and maybe she wouldn't like it if she did, but there it is just the same. That's the law of this land, and I ain't making

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no mistake about it, for I got it from a solicitor's clerk what lodged with us in brighter days. And a fine upstanding gentleman he was—doing time now, poor chap.

There's a motto as should be chalked up in letters of gold over the bed of every charwoman. And the words of it is, 'Keep in with the cook.' If she speaks of her rich relatives with the motor-car, keep your temper and listen for all the world as if you believed it. When she tells you what they said about her looks when she were a girl, tell her they might say the same to-day, and not be so far out. When she starts on the men what she might have married, but wouldn't, don't let yourself go. And if she shows you her new hat, break out into a cold sweat over the marvel of it at the price. Kind words is a good investment, as the hymn says. And so you'll think next morning when you warms up them cold sausages for your breakfast.

I'm not saying as it was the cook as give me that bit of soap and the box of matches. There's many a woman as will leave soap in the water to waste. That's a thing I never did in my life. And what I saves I has a right to half a bar of now and again. As for the matches, matches is cheap enough. It would be a measly sort of lady as would make a song

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over a box of matches. I acts on principle, and I has what matches I requires, and I ain't bought a box for the last eighteen years, and I ain't going to begin now.

If no lady never comes across no worse sort nor what I am, then she's lucky.

But I do remember one time when I were suspected wrongful, and never spoke back, nor nothing. And why? Because I'm one as can make allowances where reasonable. For one thing, the party in question were a young couple, hardly old enough to blow their own noses, and had just started housekeeping. And then, again, I'd been recommended to them by the parson's wife, and we all knows what that is.

Mostly, the parson's wife recommends them as has been brought to see the error of it, and is wishful to make a fresh start. All right as far as it goes. She's got to back her husband up in his business, same as any other woman. Still, anybody taking anybody on what I calls a rectory character, so to speak, naturally counts the spoons and tries the cupboard where the decanters is kept to see if it's really locked. You've got to look after yourself in this world. And though nothing of the kind in my case, how was that young couple to know?

The first time they sent for me was when the housemaid were upset internal, which was put

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down to the new paint. That is a thing as may happen, a niece of my own being one as the smell of new paint is death to, as she's proved more than once. However, cook asked me to take a cup of tea up to that suffering housemaid, so I see the girl myself, and what was the matter with her were not paint. Oh, no! And it didn't take me two minutes to find out what her trouble really was. I were right, too. A week later she was sent out on the quick jump, with her box to follow per C.P., and they found the actual whisky bottles.

But that were nothing to do with me at the time. I were there to do her work, and start in on the breakfast-room, which I did. Soon as I come to the mantelshelf I see a silver shilling lying there. Now them as is used to doing out rooms knows when a thing has been put there, and when it's been left there accidental. Ask me the difference, and there I confess you has me, for I couldn't put it in words. All the same, I won't never make a mistake about it. That shilling had been put deliberate, as I'd have swore to before a magistrate. So I ups with it and turns it over, and it were no surprise to me to find a small cross scratched left-hand of the lion.

To think of it—them two poor young Canterbury lambs trying to lay the marked-money

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trap for me as would be sixty-seven next quarter day! Simply look at it. Their cook ordered what she like from the tradesmen, and no weights was never checked. Their housemaid was making life one long beano. Smoking fags in the shed were the gardener's principal work. They was done all round, them turtle-doves was. They could never have caught nobody at nothing. And there they was playing at being the C.I.D. along of me.

Well, you couldn't be angry with them—it were too heart-breaking. Made me smile, I can tell you. So to carry the fun on, I put that shilling under a bronze figure of Venus, or Gladstone, or some such person. Then I finishes off there, and hops down to the kitchen for my elevenses. I don't want to drink better beer nor what they kept in that house.

Presently orders was brought me to go up to the breakfast-room, which was what I had expected. There they both was, a nice-looking couple, though nervous. She were pretending to read the paper, and not looking a bit like it. He'd been put up to do the talking, and were standing back to the fire and heartily ashamed of himself, which was to his credit. So I opens the ball by dropping my curtsy, which is old-fashioned but earns money.

'I say, Mrs. Murphy,' says he. 'I left a

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shilling on the mantelpiece here this morning, and it seems to have gone. Do you know anything about it?’

‘Yes, sir,’ I says. ‘It’s still there. I slipped it under that little small bronze statute by your elbow, sir, out of sight, sir, and was meaning to have mentioned it. For it didn’t hardly look safe with the painter’s men coming and going. Of course, they may all be as respectable as the day, but sudden temptation is what finds out the sore point in the armour. And I’m sure I hope I haven’t done wrong, sir.’

Then she up and spoke, and very pleased with me she were. She said I were a most honest, intelligent, and careful woman. He said he only wished everybody who worked for him had got my common sense. Then they gave me the shilling, and said I deserved it.

Later in the day she brings out a pair of very handsome, showy vases. They’d been given them as a wedding present, but seemingly was not to their taste, and she asked me if I could do with them. So I thanked her warmly, and said they’d make my little home look very bright and gay. And so I dare say they would, if I hadn’t sold them that night for half-a-crown and a pie-dish, and believe now I ought to have got more.

And that were not all. Just as I were leaving

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they were turning out a nice bit of linoleum, as they'd bought, and then not fancied, and I could have it if I liked. So I did. What with them things, and a few trifles as cook had said I could take, I could hardly carry the stuff home.

I still works for that couple, but it ain't the little gold mine here below what it used to be. It's cocoa at eleven now, and all the extra I've had this last twice has been a pair of his old pyjamas. It's a wonderful thing how much a girl picks up in a few months after she's become a married woman.

Now don't what I've told you go to show that the old proverb is right which says as honesty is the best policy? Use it with discretion, same as I have done, and don't make too much of a hobby of it, and you won't go far wrong.

III. MRS. MURPHY ON TEMPER

WHEN through no fault of my own I has a morning off, as like as not I treats myself to the police-court. Of course, the seats is that uncomfortable you might almost be in church, but otherwise it just suits me. There's nothing to pay, and that's what I mostly spend on luxuries. There's always something doing—one turn sharp after another and no waiting—and as like as not you will see some friends of yours what you never would have expected it of. It's a poor heart that never rejoices.

I were there one July morning, and a beautiful day it was. The sun were shining. The sparrows outside was singing their songs of love. Even the policeman looked happy. The beak were a fair picture—a dear old white-haired gentleman, he were, with a fresh complexion and a kindly smile and a gentle word for every drunk as he give the option to. He didn't look as if anything on earth could have upset him.

And then come a case in which I took a particular interest, through knowing one of the parties. Yes, it were my old friend Mrs. Stunt, the laundress, what used to wash for the rectory when I worked there. She were charged with

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assaulting another lady, Mrs. Hopper, and no wonder neither. Considering the circs you couldn't blame her.

You see, it was just the old, old story of a trade rivalry. Now, when a woman gets away one of your customers by slandering of you, and then sneaks your clothes-line to hang it out on, are you to take that sitting down? No, indeed. Not in a Christian country. Mrs. Stunt called to get her clothes-line back and passed a few remarks, and that was how it begun. Well, as I said myself afterwards, if my hair had been the colour of Mrs. Hopper's, I'd only have been too thankful to have lost a handful or so of it. And as for the discoloration of the eye, that were proved to be pure accident.

However, Mrs. Hopper put her cousin up to give evidence, and a very poor figure the girl cut, in my opinion. When she had finished, the magistrate says to Mrs. Stunt, in his consoling and encouraging way, 'Now have you any questions to ask this witness?'

'Yes, your worship, thanking you kindly, I have,' says Mrs. Stunt. 'She can't have seen what happened, because she were never there at all.'

'A question, I said. Don't make statements to me. Do you want to ask the witness any questions?'

MRS. MURPHY ON TEMPER

'I do, indeed, sir, your honour. If I stood up in a public place and told lies like she's been doing, I should expect to be struck dead.'

'That is not a question. It must be a question. Do you know what the word means?'

'Yes, your worship. Seeing that she never got back from the Hat and Fiddle till half-past three—which have told me themselves they would sooner have her room than her custom—she couldn't have been in the backyard of No. 14 at the time when——'

And then came the surprise of my life. So far that old gentleman on the bench had been as quiet and peaceable as some old pet lamb, and looked more fit to be running a Sunday-school treat than a police-court; and then all of a sudden he flared up. He clenched his fists. His eyes stuck three inches out of his head. He fair shouted. He gave it to that poor woman all anyhow. He told her to hold her tongue and speak up. He accused her flat of not knowing the meaning of the simplest words. In fact, I don't know what he didn't say. Oh, he stuck at nothing.

And what was all the fury about? Just because she didn't put it in the correct form, which is what might happen to anybody in the nervousness of giving a performance.

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Yes, we all has tempers, even them as looks the least like it. And sometimes it is the smallest little trifle as will lift the cork out.

Otherwise, speaking for myself, it's not etiquette for no charwoman to have no temper at all. Ladies may be in a temper with everybody. Cooks may be in a temper with everybody except the ladies—and they don't stop there sometimes. But if you goes out for half-a-crown a day and your dinner, you are expected to leave your temper at home in the jewel-box on the grand piano in the north drawing-room. I have lost more nor one job by forgetting of that rule.

There were one house where I worked off and on for over a year, and I gave satisfaction. There were never a hitch until they took and give that fat-headed girl of theirs three months at a domestic training college. Now, nobody's going to learn all I know about my work in three months, and that fat-headed eldest girl could never have learned nothing about anything in a hundred years. As soon as she come back home I knew there would be trouble. She started her interfering at once.

One morning she gave me a few kindly hints on how to scrub a floor. I suppose I've scrubbed about fifteen million floors in my time, but I said nothing. A few days later I

MRS. MURPHY ON TEMPER

was cleaning a pair of her shoes, and I got some more advice from her.

'The commonest mistake, Mrs. Murphy,' she said, 'is to use too much of the—er—blacklead.'

I controlled myself. If I could have told her just what I thought of her for a shilling, poor though I am, I would have spent the money. All I said was, 'Never uses no blacklead.'

'Then what do you use?' she says.

'Paraffin and bread-crumbs,' says I. And even then it might have gone off all right if the cook, who happened to be in the kitchen at the time, hadn't made a noise like a bust pipe. As it was, I was told I could either apologize to Miss Fathead or be fired out. I were fired. It had to come sooner or later.

I can do with a lady who knows nothing about my work and don't pretend to. I can do with a lady who really does know it, though naturally that keeps you more active. But I can't stick being taught my business by a girl young enough to be my grand-daughter, who knows about half nothing, and has got that muddled.

It takes different people different ways, temper does. When my second husband got took with a fit of it, he'd got to break something. Sometimes it were crockery. Sometimes it were furniture. Sometimes it were me. Towards the end it were mostly me, because

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there was nothing else left. Folks what never married Murphy and become a widow afterwards, don't understand what calm after the storm really means. Yet I don't know that his temper wasn't easier to put up with than my first husband's. If he'd got to wait five minutes for his dinner, he got the sulks, and when he got the sulks it took the form of not speaking. If he wanted anything he pointed and expected me to pass it, which I never did. It would last the best part of a week sometimes.

Of course what he really needed was a good clip over the ear, but unfortunately I was too much of a lady in those days to give it to him. There ain't many like him, for which we may be truly thankful. What I mean to say is, temper don't generally drive men to say too little, it drives them to say too much.

The other day I saw a dust-cart standing in front of a house. It were one of them high-toned dust-carts with a sliding roof to it. Out came the dustman from the house with a great heavy bin of rubbish on his shoulders. He went up the short ladder and bent over the side of the cart to tip that rubbish in. It went in all right. So did he. Foot slipped or something. I saw him when he climbed out again. He came down his ladder, sat down on the bottom of it, and begun.

MRS. MURPHY ON TEMPER

Until I heard him I thought I knew something about language. His were enough to have burnt a hole in the pavement. And while he was in the middle of it his horse moved on—afraid of its tail being scorched—the ladder came down, and over he went in the road. He looked all round. Then he took up his ladder and went off after his cart without another word. It were too much for him. He give up.

That's pretty generally the way. When the thing gets too big, you don't lose your temper. Most men—unless they're parsons, and paid to be otherwise—swears when they break their bootlaces, but they don't when they break their legs.

Temper's just about the most crossways thing, as I knows of. With anything else you can say whether you want it or not. Ask me if I want a golden sovereign, and I can tell you. Ask me if I want the appendicitis, and I knows the right answer. But with temper it's different; for if you've got a temper you acts foolish, and if you've not got one, then you're everybody's doormat.

There's no mistake about the foolishness. You cast over in your mind the last time as you got irritated and fair let yourself go. If you didn't do or say something foolish, I'll return you your money. When I gets out of

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bed the wrong side and gives my lady a back answer, I may enjoy it at the time, but it's only foolishness. A charwoman at my time of life ain't the whole world's fancy, and she ain't such a Carnegie that she can afford to quarrel with a job of work.

I've seen a cook up with a glass jug and throw it at the cat. Nobody hurt but the jug. And, as I said to her, if that had been her own jug she'd have been sorry for it afterwards. Temper has all the foolishness of a drunk and none of the fun.

But I've knowed just one lady as had no temper at all, and I can't say as I envied her. Used to come into the kitchen in the morning, and if the cook had got time to attend to her, she'd be told what she could have to eat. Otherwise, she'd be sent out again. And the poor thing used to call that giving the orders. She were known to all the shops round about. Yes, indeed. When they see her coming they'd get out all the stuff as they daren't even show to anybody else, and shove it off on her. She were a safe mark.

If you ain't got no temper you get trod on.

So my tip to everybody is to have a temper, but to keep it. Never let it get out. Keep it down. Sit on it. And then you'll get on in the world if you don't bust a artery first.

IV. THE DAY OFF

ON the occasion of the marriage of our junior partner to Ethel Mary, only surviving daughter of William Hubblestead, Esq., J.P., of Banlingbury, by the Canon of Blockminster, assisted by the Rev. Eugene Hubblestead, cousin of the bride—on this occasion the office was closed for the whole of one day, and the staff had a holiday without deduction of salary.

The staff had presented six silver (hall-marked) nutcrackers and a handsomely bound volume of *Cowper's Poetical Works*. The latter was my own suggestion; there was a sum of eight shillings over after the purchase of the nutcrackers, and I have always had a partiality for Cowper. The junior partner thanked us personally, and in very warm terms; at the same time he announced that the following Thursday was to be treated as a holiday.

.

The weather was glorious, and I have never had a more enjoyable day. The girl laid breakfast overnight, and we rose at half-past five. By half-past six Eliza had cut some mutton sandwiches, and placed them in a basket with

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a bottle of milk—the milkman having obliged with a specially early call by appointment. A brief journey by train, and by a quarter-past seven we were at Danstow for our day off in the country.

Danstow is a picturesque little village, and looked beautiful in the hot sunlight. I was wearing a fairly new summer suit, with brown boots. As I remarked to Eliza, it would probably have created a feeling of surprise among the villagers if they had learned that, as a rule, my professional duties took me to the City in the morning.

Eliza said: ‘All right. What do we do here?’

‘Why,’ I said, ‘there’s the old church. We mustn’t miss that.’

We went and examined the old church. Then we went twice up and down the village street, and examined that.

‘Well,’ said Eliza, ‘what next?’

‘Now,’ I replied, ‘we just stroll about and amuse ourselves. I feel particularly light-hearted.’

‘That’s breakfasting at six, that is,’ said Eliza. ‘If you could find a quiet place, we might have a sandwich.’

We went a little way along the road, and I espied a field which seemed to me to look likely. I said to a passer-by: ‘I am a stranger

THE DAY OFF

here. Can you tell me whether there would be any objection to our sitting in that field?' He said, in rather an offensive and sarcastic way, that he believed the field was open for sitting in about that hour. I did not give him any reply, but just opened the gate for Eliza.

We sat down under the hedge, and finished our sandwiches and milk. The church clock struck nine.

'What train do we go back by?' asked Eliza.

'Not until half-past nine to-night. There's a day for you!'

'Twelve hours and a half,' said Eliza. 'And we've done the sandwiches, and done the milk, and done the church, and there's nothing else to do.'

'Except amuse ourselves,' I added, as I took off my boots, which had pained me slightly. I then dozed off.

.

Eliza woke me to say that she had read all the newspaper the sandwiches were wrapped in, and picked some wild flowers, and the flowers had died, and she wanted to know what the time was. It was just past eleven.

She said: 'Oh, lor!'

I soon dropped off again.

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When I woke, at half-past twelve, Eliza was not there. She returned in a few minutes, and said that she had been doing the church over again.

'That was hardly necessary,' I observed.

'Oh, one must do something, and there's nothing else to do.'

'On the contrary, there's luncheon. We'll have that at once, so as to give us a good long afternoon.'

'The afternoon will be long enough,' she said. If I had not known that she was having a day's enjoyment, I should have thought that she seemed rather dejected in her manner.

.

The luncheon at the village inn was not expensive. Eliza said that their idea of chops was not her idea; but all the same she seemed inclined to spin the thing out and make it last as long as possible. I deprecated this, as I felt that I could not very well take my boots off again until I had returned to the field.

'Very well, then,' she said. 'Only let's go back slowly.'

'As slowly as you like,' I replied. 'It's the right boot principally; but I prefer to walk slowly.'

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When we had resumed our old position under the hedge, and I had removed my boots, I said:

'Now, then, I think I've earned a pipe and a short nap. You amuse yourself in any way you like.'

'Do *what* with myself?' she asked rather sharply.

She walked twice round the field and then I fell off to sleep. It turned out afterwards that she also did the picturesque old church for the third time, and went over a house which was to let, refusing to take it on the ground that there was no bathroom. This was rather dishonest, as she would not have taken it if there had been a bathroom, or even two bathrooms. I would not do that kind of thing myself. I awoke about tea-time. The charge for tea at the inn was very moderate, though Eliza said that there was tea which was tea, and tea which was an insult.

Eliza found that there was a train back at half-past six, and said she was going by it, whether I did nor not, because it was a pity to have too much of a good thing, and she hadn't the face to ask for the keys of that church again. I accompanied her. I fancy that the brown leather is liable to shrink in the sun, and I was not unwilling to get back

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to my slippers and stretch myself out on the sofa.

There is nothing like a long day in the country; quite apart from the enjoyment, you feel that it is doing you so much good. I am sorry that Eliza did not seem to enter into the spirit of the thing more.

V. THE PEN-WIPER

ELIZA always works me some little pretty trifle for my birthday, and always has done so since the day when I led her to the hymeneal altar. But it is not done at all as a matter of course. During the days before my birthday, when she is working at the present, she keeps a clean handkerchief by her side, and flings it over the work to hide it when I enter the room. This makes it more of a surprise when the day comes. As a rule, I whistle a few bars in a careless way before entering the room, so as to give her plenty of time to get the work under the handkerchief. There is no definite arrangement about this; I merely do what good taste dictates. Last year, instead of the handkerchief, she kept a large table-napkin by her side when she was working. However, though I did not tell her so, this let the secret out. I knew that she must be doing me a pair of slippers.

.

This year, on my birthday, when I came down to breakfast, I found placed before me the hot-water plate with the tin cover to it—a very

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useful article when there happens to be an invalid in the house.

Eliza, bending down behind the tea-cosy to hide her smile, told me to be quick with my breakfast, in rather a censorious voice. I lifted the tin cover, and there on the plate was the pen-wiper which Eliza had made for me.

This rather graceful and amusing way of giving a present is not really Eliza's own invention. I did it some years ago when I gave her a pin-cushion. As the pin-cushion was made to imitate a poached egg (and really very like), perhaps the humour in that instance had rather more point. However, I do not say this at all to find fault with Eliza. I am rather one to think of novelties, and if Eliza cares to copy any of them, so much the better.

.

The top and bottom of the pen-wiper which Eliza had made for me were of black velvet, which always had a handsome look to my mind. On the top was worked in gold beads, 'Kindly clean the pen.' The interior was composed of several folds of very pale shades of art muslin. Only the day before Messrs. Howlett & Bast had refused to send any more patterns, as the last lot sent had not been returned, though twice applied for. I understood that now.

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However, it made a very good pen-wiper, in pleasant, simple taste, and I thanked Eliza for it several times most warmly. At my suggestion it was placed on the centre table in the drawing-room. One never wrote there, but it seemed naturally to belong to the drawing-room.

.

So far, my birthday had gone happily enough. In the evening, when I returned from the City, I sat down to write a short, sharp note to Messrs. Howlett & Bast. I explained to them that by their impertinence they were running a grave risk of entirely losing my custom, and suggested to them that the lot of patterns to which they referred might possibly have been lost in the post.

When I had finished the letter, I wiped my pen on the inside of my coat. This is my general custom. Some men wipe their pens on their hair—not a very cleanly habit, in my opinion—besides, unless the colour of the hair is exceptionally dark, the ink shows.

I had no sooner wiped my pen on the inside of my coat than I remembered Eliza's present. Determined to show her that I appreciated it, I took a full dip of the ink, stepped into the drawing-room, and wiped the pen on the new

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pen-wiper. Then I called upstairs: 'Eliza, I have just found your present very useful. Would you like to come and look?' She happened to be fastening something up the back at the time, but she came down a minute afterwards.

She picked up the pen-wiper, looked at it, exclaimed 'Ruined!' and then walked rapidly out of the room. I followed her, and asked what was the matter.

It appeared that the words, 'Kindly clean the pen', meant that the pen was to be cleaned on a scrap of paper before the pen-wiper was used. Eliza said that I might have known that the pretty muslin was not intended to be a perfect mess of ink.

'Well,' I said, 'I didn't know. That's all there is to say about it.'

But it was not, apparently, all that there was to say about it. In fact, the whole thing cast an unpleasant shade over the evening of my birthday. Finally, I took a strong line, and refused to speak at all.

VI. THE HORSE THAT DID NO WRONG

I HAD formed my own plan for the Easter Monday immediately following my promotion. I had a long talk over the matter weeks before with Mr. Percy Jennings, who teaches riding and driving, and lets out horses and vehicles.

He heard what I had got to say, and seemed respectful, but doubtful.

'Well, sir,' he said, 'things being as you say, if I might advise, I should think you'd better change your mind. Let me send you a nice comfortable victoria and one of my men to drive you, and then there can't be any mistake.'

'I think not, Mr. Jennings,' I said. 'I want to drive myself and my wife in a dogcart to the Lion at Winthorpe; it would give me no pleasure to be driven. I know that my limited experience with—er—the humbler animal does not amount to very much, but I feel that I should be all right with a safe horse. You understand, a perfectly safe horse. I mean one that has no vice of any kind under any provocation, that does not require any looking

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after, and, if possible, an animal that is in the habit of going to and from the Lion, and knows the road thoroughly.'

Mr. Percy Jennings sucked a straw thoughtfully.

'You're asking for miracles,' he said, 'but as it happens I've got just that miracle. Young horse—Tommy we call him. He's worth £60 of any man's money, and he's worth £80 to me in my business. In fact, if you offered me £80 for him now, I'd tell you to put your money back in your pocket. You see, I get gents here to learn, and when the beginners are beginning I take them out with Tommy to get confidence. Say it's an oldish gent who's never seen a horse before, and has been told to ride by his doctor—first few times I put him up on Tommy. Say it's a nervous lady wants to start a governess cart, and don't know how to drive—I starts her with Tommy. That horse has never done anything wrong, and never thought of doing anything wrong, since the day he was foaled. He couldn't do wrong, if you asked him, and he'll do anything else you ask. Why, the blooming horse would climb a tree if he thought I expected it of him. The very first day he was in the shafts I drove him straight to Winthorpe—and that's a fact. No work comes amiss to him, nor nothing else,

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neither. He'll stand like a statue with his nose over a buzzing motor, or he'll draw you twelve miles an hour without a whip. You can stop him with a thread, and turn him with just thinking about it. And he's as pretty as he's good. But——'

Mr. Jennings stopped short and shook his head.

'Well?' I said.

'But I don't let that horse out to every chance comer to knock about as he pleases on the high-roads on an Easter Monday.'

'Now Mr. Jennings,' I said, 'do I look like a man who would knock a horse about?'

'No,' he said, 'you don't. If I may say it without offence, you're the ignorant, nervous sort. And I've known them bring the horse and cart back safe when one of the rowdy lot, that think they know something, will get three-parts screwed, start racing, and go to glory. If I'd thought that you were one of the rowdy lot, I shouldn't so much as have mentioned him to you. However, we can't stop here talking all day. Set that horse towards Winthorpe, and he'll go there and stop at the Lion—he's used to it—if he's not interfered with. Let him take his own pace up hill and down; he knows his business. And at night he'll take you home all right if you

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let him alone. You taking all responsibility up to ten fivers, I might think about it.'

Business was subsequently arranged on these terms.

.

Eliza has not, perhaps, what would be called a sunny disposition. I said in my nonchalant way that evening, as I stirred my cocoa:

'I've arranged about the Bank Holiday, Eliza. I'm going to tool you over in a high dogcart to Winthorpe. I understand they give you a decent dinner at the Lion. Then I shall tool you back at night—moonlight, you know. Best horse in Jennings's stables—not let out as a general rule.'

All she would say at first was that extravagance was never any pleasure to her, and she wondered what mother would say if she knew. But after a certain amount of argument on both sides, I said that of course I should expect to make up for it in other ways as far as possible, and she admitted that she might enjoy it.

'If,' she added, 'we ever get home alive.'

'That will be all right,' I said. 'I shall not ask you to drive. That will be my province, and I am not entirely without experience.'

During the next few days I talked over the details frequently. There is nothing like a

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thorough preparation for making a success. I also kept my eye open in the streets and made some useful notes with reference to:

- (a) Getting into the dogcart;
- (b) Positioning of the hands and expression of face when driving;
- (c) Arrangement of the rug;
- (d) Getting out of the dogcart.

I also read carefully in our public reading-room an interesting and instructive article on 'How Race-horses are Trained.' Its bearing on the subject was somewhat indirect, but I gathered from it the meaning of several phrases which had previously been something of a difficulty to me.

.

I may say at once that we reached the Lion at Winthorpe without any accident. There was one little contretemps, as the French would say. We happened to meet Miss Sakers—for which, in itself, I was not sorry. She bowed, and in raising my hat I fancy the reins got caught—I never quite understand how it happened—but the horse turned round. However, I got down, and put him back in the required direction. It was merely a mistake on the horse's part, and he showed no trace

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of obstinacy. I also dropped my whip once or twice, but there is always some boy to pick that up for you and glad to earn a few coppers. I could not, considering the circumstances, agree with Eliza that a halfpenny would have been sufficient. However, I was quite good-tempered about it—indeed, I felt in particularly high spirits. I was wearing a straw hat for the first time that season—it was a last year's hat, but Eliza had cleaned it with salts of lemon, so that really it was quite presentable. I also wore a black diagonal frock-coat and vest that I reserved for Sundays and similar occasions, and a pair of white flannel trousers and brown boots. The trousers were new and almost unnecessarily long and roomy. However, as Eliza pointed out at the time, that, of course, allows for shrinkage in the wash. My necktie was of white satin with sprigs of flowers embroidered in the natural colours—tasteful and, I think, uncommon. Eliza wore her macintosh—rather against my wishes, as the day was quite fine. The general appearance of our turn-out gave me great satisfaction. I cannot help thinking that we made some impression on people that we met, and I amused myself with wondering what they thought I was.

The dinner at the Lion was good, though Eliza rather kicked at the price. I drank one

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pint of bitter at dinner, and no more. In the light of subsequent events the necessity of mentioning this will be apparent. The place was, unfortunately, rather crowded, and not entirely with the best class of people. There were too many Bank Holiday cyclists there for my taste. One gentleman entered into conversation with me on the subject of horses. He was an elderly man, and Eliza said afterwards that she did not like his eye. Personally I found him most civil, quite ready to listen to me and to take a word of advice. He said that he had seen me drive up, and had said to the landlord: 'That man knows what he's doing, anyhow.' He seemed quite surprised to hear that it was not my own horse, and said he supposed I was trying it.

'Well,' I said, 'under certain circumstances I might buy him.'

Here Eliza drew in her breath hard and long through her nose. It is an unpleasant habit. She does it whenever I say or do anything that she dislikes. Yet I had kept strictly within the limits of truth. I have no doubt that if my income had justified it I should have bought that horse. Indeed, as things turned out, I practically—but do not let me anticipate.

There is not very much to do at Winthorpe. We obtained permission from the proprietor

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to walk round the garden, but that took only three or four minutes. Then Eliza found out that there was a coconut shy in the village, and insisted on going to it. It was, perhaps, a little *infra dig.* (as they say), but I was in an easy temper after dinner, and let myself be persuaded; also, there was nowhere else to go. Eliza won four coco-nuts, and seemed to enjoy it. I had rather the feeling of having left all that kind of thing behind me, myself, and said so.

Eliza and I decided almost unanimously for an early tea and a pleasant drive home to a quiet evening. The elderly gentleman joined us at tea and offered me brandy and soda-water at his expense.

'Thank you,' I said, 'but when I am going to handle the ribbons I like to keep my head as clear as possible.'

He said that he thought I was right. He really made himself most useful and obliging when we were leaving. There was a good deal of confusion through so many vehicles being drawn up outside at the same time.

The return journey was a great surprise. I had expected that the horse going home would fly like the wind, and that I should have difficulty in holding him. It was not so at all. He seemed reluctant to start, and I could never

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get him beyond a very slow trot; three or four times he seemed on the point of stopping altogether. Mr. Percy Jennings had told me that I should never want the whip, but I felt constrained to make a moderate use of it, and, really, it seemed to cause no improvement at all. The farther we went the worse the horse got, till it seemed to be less trouble to let him walk, which I did. About a mile from home Eliza pointed out to me that the horse was going very much down on one side, and very much up on the other.

'Ah!' I said, 'then he's gone lame. That accounts for everything. I shall have to blow Jennings up about this. Still, as it is a valuable animal, we perhaps had better get out and lead him the rest of the way. Personally, I shall be glad to stretch my legs.'

Eliza, who is, perhaps, a little inclined to grumble at every trifle, said that anything was better than some kinds of driving, and joined me in the road. We walked slowly back, and had to put up with many silly, and even personal, remarks from those who met us. Some of them whistled the 'Dead March', which was not only quite inappropriate, but, in my opinion, actually blasphemous. I suppose one must not expect the best taste from these Bank Holiday crowds. I made no reply.

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I could have said a good deal, but, being with a lady, I wished to avoid any fracas.

Eliza left me when we reached our house. She said that I could take the horse and cart back to the yard while she went in and helped the girl to get supper.

Mr. Percy Jennings was standing in the yard when I led the horse in.

‘What’s all this?’ he said.

‘That’s what I want to know,’ I replied rather sharply. ‘This horse that you made so much fuss about was not fit for work. He’s dead lame. No fault of ours. I can assure you we——’

‘Oh, shut up!’ he said offensively. Then he called ‘Jim!’ and some kind of ostler person appeared.

He gave Jim some orders, and I heard enough to realize what had happened. Jim was to ride off at once to the Lion at Winthorpe and bring Tommy back if he was still in the stables there. If not, he was to find out where the horse had gone and follow him up, let the police know, and not come back without him. Neither of them took the least notice of me. I did put in a question once or twice, but they went on just as if I had never spoken at all. I am not the man to put up with disrespect. I was much annoyed. As soon as Jim had gone off, I said:

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'And now, perhaps, you can give me a few minutes of your attention, Mr. Jennings. It seems through some mistake on the part of the stable people at the Lion I have brought back the wrong horse. Naturally, I disclaim all responsibility for their blunder.'

'Oh, go away!' said Mr. Jennings. 'I'll talk to you when you're sober.'

'I am perfectly sober, and I'll thank you not to venture to dare to——'

'Then, if you're sober—and I don't say you are, but *if* you are—you must be a bigger fool than ever I took you for. You drive out my best horse, worth a hundred and twenty to me, and you bring back this dying cripple, worth what the knacker will give for him to-morrow. I tell you if I don't get my own horse back you'll have to pay that fifty. I've got your name and address, and your employer's name and address; and that won't half make it up to me. Worst day's work I've ever done, this is. Oh, don't stand gaping there! Get out of the yard! Get out of my sight!'

I have not reported this speech exactly as it was spoken. Before every noun a certain adjective—always the same—was inserted. I have omitted that adjective.

'I am extremely sorry for the error,' I said with dignity.

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He said that he didn't want my (same adjective) sorrow.

'But in future,' I continued, 'all communications between us must be through our respective solicitors.'

I rather wish now that I had not said that. The horse was never recovered, and my solicitor could only get the claim down to £34 (£10 cash and the rest in weekly instalments). I feel that I could have done as much as that myself; and as it was I had to pay the solicitor.

But at the time my blood was up, and I did not very much care what I said—as long as it showed him that I was not to be played with.

Mr. Jennings then made a remark about our respective solicitors which cannot be further particularized.

I, personally, simply swung round on my heel and walked right out of the yard.

.

I am willing to admit that I had some apprehensions as to the way in which Eliza would take this. In one way she took it far better than I expected.

Let me take an instance. A few days before, being in a playful mood, I sprang out at her from behind a door in order to make her jump.

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She did jump—and so far I suppose the thing was a success. But she also dropped and broke a vase—a pretty little thing, representing a boot, with maidenhair fern growing over it. She quite lost her temper, and said things which I trust and believe she regretted afterwards.

But now, when the loss was far more considerable, she was much quieter. It would be idle to say that she was cheerful about it, but she never once said it was all my fault. On the contrary, she said it was all her own fault—because she had known all along I had got the wrong horse, but she said nothing about it because she knew that she knew nothing about horses.

I thought she was wrong in saying that the man who stole our horse was the elderly man who had entered into conversation with me, and made himself so pleasant, and that he had done his utmost to bustle us and confuse us when we were leaving the hotel.

But I did not argue the point. I did not feel much like arguing about anything. One of my favourite hymns points out that the roseate hues of early dawn vanish far more quickly than a beginner might suppose. So it had been with my increasing income. What with the extra expenses that we had already incurred and this serious blow, we were now in much

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the same position that we had been the year before.

I paid the £10 in cash to Mr. Jennings at once. The solicitor thought it would be better. Fortunately, I had some money in hand at the time. And the balance, £8 15s., I borrowed from Eliza's mother. There is one drop of sugar in the darkest cloud—I found an opportunity to sell the flannel trousers at very little under cost.

VII. THE REMARKABLE FOG

IT is the custom of the partners in the firm which has secured my services to give a dinner once a year to a few of those who hold the highest positions in their employ. The dinner is given at a first-class restaurant, and on quite an unlimited scale.

When I received my invitation I took the matter in hand at once. My reply was based on the model given in *The Perfect Gentleman*, and was, I think, in the best taste. I insisted that Eliza should go over my evening clothes with a little benzine at least one week before they were required—if this is left till the very last, the smell is often only too noticeable. I also purchased a new pair of good patent-leather boots. Eliza said, in rather a nasty way, that it was just as well that these dinners only came once in a year. I answered, with a smile:

‘The boots will still remain when the dinner is over, my dear; and if I can judge by appearances, I have seldom had better value for half a guinea.’

The only possible objection that could be taken to them was that they creaked; the very best boots are liable to do this, and it can be

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neither foreseen nor prevented. However, Eliza said that she did not care to be awakened in the middle of the night, and I promised that on my return I would remove my boots in the passage downstairs. As a matter of fact, Eliza is a singularly heavy sleeper.

The dinner was a great success, and although champagne was served *ad libitum*, the bounds of sobriety were never actually exceeded. The only person who at all approached the border was a man of the name of Watson, whose inclusion among the invited guests seemed to me a matter of doubtful policy. He has been with the firm for many years, but he is not my idea of a gentleman. Personally, I kept a very close watch on myself, not wishing to incur the slightest risk of the merest suspicion of anything not being as it should be. Very few men when invited, and even pressed, to take so much, would have taken so little; but, with me, self-control is a second nature.

I took the last train back, and found, on my arrival, that a dense fog had set in. However, I walked home without thinking much about it, humming a tune as I went. I let myself in with my latch-key, groped for the chair by the umbrella-stand, sat down, and took off my boots. I placed these under the chair, wound up my watch, and then struck a match. The

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first thing that struck me was that our stair-carpet had been taken up; then I noticed that the furniture and wall-paper were strange to me. In the fog I had missed my right turning and taken the next. By an accident my latch-key had fitted, and I was in the wrong house—a house very much like my own, but not my own. And just as this dawned on me, a dog began to bark most savagely.

I did not lose my head. I rather flatter myself that under no possible circumstances should I lose my head. If I had lost my head, I should have stopped and explained. I might have shown that my latch-key happened to fit the lock, and my appearance would have helped to prove that I was no burglar. But I was in evening-dress in the wrong house with my boots off, and with my face slightly flushed from fast walking, and no explanation could have avoided a most unjust suspicion on the part of the occupants as to my sobriety. So, keeping my head, I left at once, closing the door behind me.

If I did make a mistake at all, it was that I forgot to take my boots with me. Mind, I discovered it almost immediately, but it was a mistake, and I did not see my way to put it right. I might have gone back, but I did not know whereabouts the dog would be; and if

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the occupants of the house were already roused, I should be merely incurring the absurd suspicion to which I have already alluded. So I walked or, more accurately, ran home in my socks. You may be sure that I got the right house this time, and that I was particularly careful to avoid waking Eliza.

Next morning she asked when I had returned. I told her. I mentioned also that I had noticed that the clock in the passage was four minutes slow, and had put it right; and that I had folded up my evening things and put them away.

Eliza said:

‘What for?’

‘Nothing in particular,’ I replied.

The fact was that I had wished to have some evidence, in case Eliza discovered that I had come home without my boots, that the loss was not due to any—well, say any lapse on my part. I also gave her a very clear account of the dinner, and expressed my regret that Watson had taken just that second whisky and soda after dinner which makes all the difference.

‘Personally,’ I added, ‘I never touch anything after dinner.’

This was Sunday morning. For some reason or other the firm always gives its annual dinner on a Saturday evening. I had a very hearty breakfast; in fact, Eliza remarked upon it, and

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said it was no compliment to the dinner of the night before.

'Ah!' I said, 'I expect it's very different with Watson. It would never surprise me if he were not asked next year.'

Just then the girl came in to say that she had hunted everywhere for the boots I wore the night before, and how was she to clean them when she didn't know where they were?

I said:

'The boots in question are patent-leather and valuable, and require to be cleaned in a special manner. I prefer to undertake them myself, and have put them aside for that purpose.'

Eliza then thought it her business to strike in.

'What nonsense!' she said. 'She's done patent-leather of mine.'

The girl said that it was all the same to her, but it had got to be one way or the other.

I said sternly that it and everything else had got to be just exactly as I said. I then took my hat and went for a little stroll before church. I had some idea that if the discussion were prolonged Eliza might become suspicious. If she had once found out that I had after that dinner left my boots in the wrong house, talking would have been of little use.

There are some things we shall never understand. I shall probably never know what

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moved me to go back to the street which, owing to the fog, I had mistaken for my own last night. Once there, I had no difficulty in locating the house—the eleventh on the left. I had no thought of getting the boots back; I was only hoping that when the people of the house found a pair of practically new boots under the chair in their passage they would have the sense to say nothing about it; any talk on that subject in the neighbourhood might have been most prejudicial. I just took one glance at the house, and saw in the window this notice:

TO LET
Keys at No. 12

It all came over me in a flash. I had left the boots in an empty house! I was carrying out my plan before some men would have had the time to form a plan at all. In five seconds I was knocking at the door of the next house, asking for the keys of No. 11, which I wished to see on behalf of a friend, and apologizing for troubling them on a Sunday. The woman who gave me the keys apologized too for the noise her dog was making. But she said that he was a good watch-dog, and when he had heard some drunken brute trying the door of the next house the night before, he had barked

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like anything. I had reason to know that this was in part true.

The first thing I saw when I entered that fatal house was my copy of the menu. I must have pulled it out with my handkerchief, or by some other accident. I caught the words *Blé vert à l'Allemande*, which would appear to be the French for soup, and *Pommes naturelles*, which I had not been able to identify. The chair was still there—owing to some little misunderstanding with the landlord the previous tenants had not got all their furniture out—and the boots were still under it. In another moment they were in the tail-pockets of my frock-coat.

I confess that I look back on this incident with no little pleasure. It may seem absurd at first sight, but I believe there are men in the diplomatic service who could not have taken that situation up and dealt with it as I did. Everything passed off well.

At the same time, if I am invited (as I have reason to expect) next year, I shall make no bones about ordering a cab to meet me at the station on my return and saying nothing to Eliza about it. In these fogs anything may happen. I have had the menu suitably framed, and it makes quite an addition to our drawing-room.

VIII. THE TYROLESE EXERCISES

MY grey flannel trousers had been put away for the winter with some of Pigley's Patent Preservative. This is sold in penny packets; and so little is needed that one packet might very well last a man a life-time. Quite a small pinch of it will not only keep moth away, but will destroy any moth that already happens to be there. Eliza, who is quite enthusiastic about it, says that it would suffocate an elephant. The only real trouble about it is that the smell does undoubtedly cling. My system, with clothes that have been put away with the preservative, is to hang them on a line in the garden for twenty-four hours. This removes the worst of the smell, and the rest passes off slowly in use. In about a week or ten days it becomes hardly noticeable. It is a case where tact helps, as it does in so many things in life. For instance, Miss Sakers surprised us once by a call when the suit I was wearing still carried a considerable reminder of the patent preservative. I simply turned to Eliza and said carelessly: 'My dear, I am afraid the plumber has not made quite a success of that gas-leak.' Of course, Eliza had

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to mess the whole thing up by saying that we had not got any gas-leak, and she didn't know what I was talking about. But otherwise it would have passed off very nicely.

However, it was about those grey flannel trousers that I wished to speak. They had been made to my order by a fair-price tailor two years before, and were still distinctly good. They had been worn only on my annual holidays, and occasionally on a fine Saturday afternoon. Light flannel trousers on a Sunday are things I have always set my face against, whatever the opinion of the majority may be. This spring I had given them twenty-four hours on a clothes-line in the garden—naturally in a secluded spot where they could not possibly be overlooked—and, Saturday afternoon being fine and sunny, I took them up to my room to put on. And a very sharp disappointment I got.

I joined Eliza in the garden. 'Hullo,' she said, 'I thought you were going to put on those grey flannel trousers?'

'That had been my intention,' I said. 'However, I find that my express orders have been disregarded. Those trousers have been washed. Washed, mark you. And, as was inevitable, they have shrunk. It is impossible to make them meet at the waist without causing me

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great physical discomfort. 'There's twelve-and-six thrown on the dust-heap, sacrificed to your obstinacy. Why couldn't they have been dry-cleaned at home by our own simple process, as I directed?'

'They were,' said Eliza.

'Not washed?'

'No.'

'But could a chemical preservative in the form of a dry powder cause material to shrink?'

'No,' said Eliza, 'but a man getting fatter might cause his clothes to get too tight for him.'

I must admit that the idea had already crossed my mind once or twice, but I had shut my eyes to it. I was now very seriously disturbed. I went to the station and weighed myself on one of those penny-in-the-slot machines. I have been told that these are often inaccurate, and I could only hope that this was the case now.

I talked it over with Eliza on my return from the station, and she said that, of course, the only thing for it was more exercise. So I mowed the lawn twice and rolled the paths. And what was the result? At dinner I had an appetite that it was hopeless to fight against. The thing is what is called, I believe, a vicious circle.

THE TYROLESE EXERCISES

On Sunday, Eliza, finding me slightly depressed, said that, as a rule, men did not get any thinner as they got older, and there was no use in getting snappy about it. If I really wanted to deal with it, a good twenty-mile walk was what she would——

‘Thank you,’ I said. ‘I am not snappy. Far from it. Nothing of the kind. But I had some of your advice yesterday, and what did it lead to? The matter may not be of the first importance, but I propose to take it in hand myself and deal with it scientifically.’

‘As how?’ she asked doubtfully.

‘As I say. You will see to-morrow.’

I felt sure that there must be some literature dealing with the subject, and on the following day in the City I made inquiries, during the luncheon hour, at three bookshops, explaining that I was doing it on behalf of a friend who was rather sensitive in the matter. Finally, I purchased a copy of Mossop’s *Tyrolese Exercises*, with Chart. Considering the size of the book, the price (five shillings net) seemed to me a bit stiff. But there were numerous illustrations of Mr. and Mrs. Mossop engaged in the Tyrolese exercises, and the price of these scientific works always runs high. I should be very sorry to see Eliza photographed in the costume that Mrs. Mossop was represented as wearing,

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of which I will only say that it omitted much which should have been present. But perhaps I am specially particular.

The idea of Mr. Mossop's system is both admirable and simple. Noticing that in nations where much climbing was done obesity was of rare occurrence, Mr. Mossop devised a series of exercises, calling into play exactly the same muscles that would be required in, say, an ascent of the Matterhorn. The regular use of these exercises for the absurdly short period of fifteen minutes per diem is practically guaranteed to prevent any undesirable frontal extension, and ultimately produces a harmonious development of the entire frame.

I showed the book to Eliza. 'Here,' I said, 'is not only the means of dealing scientifically with my little trouble——'

'Your little what?' said Eliza.

'Not only the means of dealing scientifically with my little trouble,' I repeated firmly, 'but also another interesting addition to our library.'

She happened to open it at the picture which represents Mrs. Mossop doing the back stretch in the third position, which was not the one I should have selected. She sniffed.

'I shouldn't leave this book lying about,' she said.

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'Well,' I said, 'of course, for the purpose of gymnastic exercises anything like constriction of clothing is to be avoided. That is well known.'

'Very likely. All the same, Parker has been strictly brought up, and I don't want her to give us notice just as she's getting into our ways.'

She went on turning over the pages, and seemed to get more and more despondent. 'I hope you understand the way these things go,' she said. 'They'd fairly flummox me. Here's a picture of a man with twelve arms in convict's dress.'

'Nothing of the kind,' I said. 'The man is not a convict. Those arrows are simply intended to show the direction in which the arms are to be moved. And the man has not got twelve arms. He has only two, and the others are put in with dotted lines to show the different positions in which they go in the course of the exercise. I have studied that one particularly. You begin like this. See.'

I gave her a demonstration, and if the vase had not been put on the very edge of the mantelpiece it would never have been knocked off. I said that I hoped this would be a lesson to Parker to use her brains when dusting. Incidentally, too, this demonstration proved

the truth of what Mr. Mossop says as to constriction of the clothing. Eliza had two buttons to sew on for me, but why she should have been so upset about it is more than I can imagine.

Thoroughness has always been rather a motto of mine. Mr. Mossop, in the book, only demands fifteen minutes a day for the Tyrolese exercises, but I gave thirty—fifteen before breakfast and fifteen on going to bed. And once one had realized the necessity for a clear space and properly adjusted clothing, no further damage was done. I also cut down (considerably) my consumption of Embridge's light dinner ale. I may add that it had never been in any way excessive.

At the end of the week I felt that I had derived so much benefit that I might safely appeal once more to the verdict of the weighing machine on the station platform. I did so, and it registered an increase in weight of five stone eleven pounds, and then returned my penny. It was so obvious that the thing had got completely out of order that I thought it my duty to mention it to the station-master. He said that boys would get tampering with those machines, and if I liked to leave the penny with him he would hand it to the collector when he next came round. He seemed to have

THE TYROLESE EXERCISES

missed my point absolutely, and so I told him.

After that I lost all feeling of confidence in public weighing machines, and decided to expend no more money on them. But I continued to persevere with the Tyrolese exercises. I could now do them all without reference to the chart, and I told Eliza that if she cared to invite a few friends I might be persuaded to give a demonstration which would be interesting to them. I thought she seemed rather to fall in with the idea at the time. Her one objection was that the harmonious development of the entire frame had better be carried a little further first. However, in the end nothing came of it.

After I had continued with the exercises for about a fortnight it occurred to me that, after all, there was a very simple test that I might make to show the effect of the Tyrolese exercises. I went upstairs and once more tried on my grey flannel trousers. If I had found them an inch short round the waist I should have been amply satisfied. It would have shown that progress had been made. But to my surprise and delight I found that those trousers were now, if anything, too large. I could have done Tyrolese exercises in them without the slightest risk.

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Eliza was in the garden, and I hurried out to her.

'Eliza,' I said, 'I will ask you to observe what I am wearing. A fortnight ago they were too small round the waist by three inches. To-day I wear them with comfort. I know it is not what you have expected——'

'Yes, it is,' Eliza interrupted.

'I think not,' I said, with a smile. 'You were prejudiced against Mr. Mossop. You never believed in the Tyrolese exercises. You showed it in several little ways. And now you see that you were wrong and I was right. This is a triumph for Mr. Mossop's system. This is what comes of dealing with a thing scientifically.'

'Funny,' said Eliza. 'I knew I'd made a pretty neat job of it, but I thought you'd have noticed it, all the same.'

'Noticed what? I don't know what you're talking about.'

'About the piece I let into the back of those trousers. You can't say that I don't look after your clothes properly now, can you?'

'Perhaps I can't. But you ought to have told me. I don't like things to be done behind my back.'

'Well,' said Eliza, 'it was just there where it was wanted.'

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I have by no means lost faith in the Tyrolese exercises, and I am going on with them. But in future I shall use a tape-measure. Nobody will let a piece into the back of that.

IX. THE AQUAPEN

I THINK I have mentioned that young Gillivant, who is learning business with our firm, receives an allowance which is hardly proportionate to his father's wealth. As he is not free from an occasional burst of extravagance, he sometimes finds himself pressed for ridiculously small sums of ready money.

The other day he produced a gold-mounted fountain-pen from his pocket. 'Look at that,' he said to me bitterly. 'Present from my Aunt Elizabeth. It's a new dodge, called the Aquapen. Like an ordinary fountain-pen, except that you fill it with water, and it comes out ink. Got chemicals of sorts in its inwards, I reckon. Well, that cost twenty-five bob. It's worth twelve, and I can't find a son of Attenborough in London who'll give me more than two bob for it. I'm not asking them to lend. If they'd give me three-and-six for it, I'd let them keep it. I've never used the thing, and never shall. And me without a cent until to-morrow morning!'

I examined it carefully, and glanced through the directions which were in the box with it. They seemed simple enough as long as you followed the diagram carefully and did not

THE AQUAPEN

confuse the different parts. It was obviously a high-class article.

‘Well, Mr. Gillivant,’ I said, ‘I very rarely do anything of this kind, but, if you really do wish to dispose of this pen for three-and-sixpence, I am prepared to——’

‘Say no more,’ said Gillivant. ‘It’s yours, and I see my way clear to lunch. Fancy lunching on Aunt Elizabeth’s fountain-pen! Golly, what a life!’

I had rather a triumph over Eliza with my Aquapen on my return home. ‘I have often required a fountain-pen for business purposes, and to-day I have purchased one,’ I said. ‘How much do you think?’

‘Might be worth five shillings,’ said Eliza.

‘The price new—and this pen is practically new—is twenty-five. But I can generally see an opportunity when one comes in my way, and I bought it for three-and-six. It is an absolute novelty, known as the Aquapen. You fill it with water, and the water is immediately converted into ink.’

‘Will it work?’ said Eliza doubtfully.

‘I have no doubt that it will. At the back of the printed directions are various testimonials (one of them from a bishop) to the effect that it works perfectly. However, we will put it to a practical test.’

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Eliza brought me a glass of water, but I said that I would just run through the directions again before filling the thing. They were a shade more complicated than they had seemed at first. There were fourteen different things you had to do in filling the Aquapen and getting it ready for work, and you had to do them all in the right order. There was also a list of ten special warnings against things which you might not do unless you wished to ruin the pen altogether, and they were nearly all of them things that you would naturally have done if you had not been warned. It was a very nervous business.

After about half an hour, Eliza said rather hastily that she hoped I would wake her when I was ready to start.

'I am ready to start now. This is not a toy, but a highly scientific patent, and one has to be quite certain that one gets it right the first time one tries it. After that it can be done in a moment. Now, then, if you will read out the directions one by one, I will carry them out with the pen.'

Eliza took the paper and read:

'Unscrew cap A.'

'Good!' I said. 'I have got that done. What next?'

'Depress perforated plate B on spiral spring c

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round tube D E until orifice F is exposed to view, taking care not to confuse this with orifice G, which is to be found on the——'

'One moment, Eliza. You are going too fast. First let me depress perforated plate B on spiral spring c.'

After a few minutes, Eliza said:

'Well, you must have done that now.'

'There's no must about it. I have not done it. And the reason is that I cannot find perforated plate B. I thought at first that this was it, but I can see that it is not.'

'Let me have a look,' said Eliza, and bent over me. 'How would it be,' she suggested, 'if I took a hair-pin and propped up that loose bit in——'

'Ruin the whole thing. I must think this out for myself.'

But, funnily enough, it was Eliza who discovered what was wrong. I had unscrewed the wrong cap at the other end of the pen—cap Q instead of cap A. After that everything went swimmingly. It was an anxious moment after I had squirted the water into it, for there was always the possibility that some mistake had been made. But as soon as I tried to write with it I was reassured. I have never in my life had a pen that wrote better; the ink was certainly pale, but still it was, beyond any possibility of doubt, ink.

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As I handed it to Eliza to try, I observed that there seemed to be practically no limit to the marvels of modern science.

'Well,' she said, 'it took you two hours to get this thing started, and you could have got an ordinary pen and ink going in two seconds. Don't see where the catch comes in, myself.'

'It took two hours only because I was new to it. It will not take ten minutes next time. Suppose I were in some place where I could get water but no ink, how useful this would be!'

'There isn't a village in England where you can't buy better ink for a penny than ever this silly old machine will make. Never mind. You can take it to the North Pole with you next time you go.'

As it happened, Eliza was quite wrong. I tried it after breakfast next morning, and the ink was already much darker. The oscillation in the train did it good, and within eleven hours of filling, the ink in that Aquapen could hardly have been distinguished from ink except by an expert.

I showed it to several men that day, and they all agreed that it was one of the most ingenious things they had seen. Young Gillivant said that if he had money to spare he did not know that he wouldn't think about offering to buy it back.

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That was the only happy day I ever had with that Aquapen.

A week later I said to Gillivant, 'Look here, I've given that Aquapen of yours a pretty extended trial, and I find it is not as you represented it. I think, in common honesty, you ought to take it back.'

'What's the matter? Won't it work?'

'It did the first day. On the second day I lent it to Mr. Bagshawe to sign the wages cheque, and—well, he was very angry about it—told me never to bring the infernal thing into his office again. I've overhauled it and refilled it, and for the last three days it has refused to make any mark of any kind. I bought it as a pen, and it is not a pen.'

'You must have done something rotten with it. Bet I'll spot what it is. Give me hold of it.'

I gave it him, and he tried to sign his name with it. It was precisely as I said—it refused to mark.

'Ah!' said Gillivant, 'I expect one wants to press a little harder——'

'On no account,' I said. 'That's what Mr. Bagshawe did, and——'

But I was too late. The Aquapen simply streamed ink at him. I offered him a recipe which I had found useful myself for removing ink stains from linen, but the way in which it

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was received did not encourage me to resume the negotiations at that moment.

On the following morning, however, I said that he had seen for himself that the Aquapen was a complete failure, and I should like to know what he felt he ought to do about it.

'Well,' he said, 'you don't deserve it for ever letting me touch a dangerous thing like that, but I'll give you the straight tip. The most you could get out of me would be three-and-six, if I had it, which is not the case now. Take it to the makers in Holborn, and they're bound to give you a new pen or the cash price.'

I did not think that the makers were bound, but I thought it quite worth while to try it. I entered their shop with the air of a man who means to stand no nonsense, and showed an assistant the pen. 'Cost twenty-five shillings a few weeks ago, and is not worth twenty-five pence. What's the good of a pen that won't write? I call it an absolute——'

'Permit me,' interrupted the young man, taking the pen from my hand. He had smooth black hair, parted in the middle, and the air of a very patient nurse dealing with a fractious and partially imbecile child.

'Mind you,' I said, 'either I must have a new pen or my money back.'

'Twenty-five shillings?'

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‘Yes, that’s what I said.’

As far as I could see, all that young man did was to unscrew one of the caps and then screw it on again. Then he drew a sheet of paper to him, and wrote a few lines. There was no reluctance in starting and no excessive flow of ink. It could not possibly have gone better.

‘I don’t think I understand, sir,’ he said. ‘What is it you are complaining about? The pen is in perfect order. Try it for yourself.’

I tried it. ‘Seems all right now,’ I had to admit. ‘But it has given me a deal of trouble. If you press hard on the nib, it——’

‘Of course. But you are specially warned on the paper of directions not to press hard, and are told what will happen if you do. If you don’t mind, I’ll take the name and address of the retailer who charged you twenty-five shillings for this. It is our fifteen-shilling quality, and we do not allow it to be sold for more or less than that.’

‘Well, strictly speaking, I did not buy it from a dealer. I got it from a friend of mine for three-and-sixpence, but twenty-five shillings was what he said his aunt paid for it.’

‘Will there be anything else this morning?’ said the young man.

He said it very patiently, but to my mind he was most offensive. What he ought to have

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said was that he quite understood how the mistake occurred. By omitting that, he practically called me a liar and a swindler. And what he did actually say was only another way of asking me to get out of the shop.

I said, 'Nothing more, thank you. Good morning.'

He never even answered me. I was much upset—angry, in fact. I did not see young Gillivant again that day, or he would have had the rough side of my tongue.

For two days my Aquapen worked as well as anybody could have wished, but my old confidence in it was entirely sapped. It always came as a surprise to me when I found that it really did write. One morning I had the happy idea that now was the time to sell it, either to Gillivant (who had explained to me that he must have mistaken the price pencilled on the bottom of the box) or to some other man in our office. If I waited till it struck work again, I might never get my money back on it at all. So when I started for my train I slipped my Aquapen into my pocket.

I should have hardly thought it possible that so small a thing could have held as much ink as it disgorged into my pocket on the way. The articles totally ruined or seriously injured by it were:

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1 coat.

1 waistcoat.

1 shirt.

1 under-garment.

1 pair of Berkeley braces—the special Aquapen ink acting as a solvent of rubber.

1 handkerchief.

1 cigarette case of (imitation) lizard skin.

3 'Pride of the Harem' Turkish cigarettes.

4 halfpenny stamps.

When I discovered the disaster, I must have slightly lost my head. I took that Aquapen and hurled it out of the carriage window. For a few seconds it gave me a kind of savage satisfaction that I had got rid of the thing. But afterwards I reflected that the three-and-sixpence was now lost irretrievably.

At the office Gillivant came up to me, looking slightly worried. 'I say,' he said, 'I'll give you three-and-six for that old Aquapen.'

'I cannot do it,' I said coldly.

'Well, five bob, then. My Aunt Elizabeth's coming to see me—worse luck—and she's certain——'

'I repeat, I cannot do it.'

'Seven bob is my last, final offer, and you ought to take it. You know the pen's no good.'

'I do,' I said. 'And because I knew it was

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rubbish I threw it away. It is no longer in my possession.'

'Golly!' said young Gillivant. 'I'm afraid I'll have to buy a new one, for the old girl's bound to ask about it. Fifteen shillings! I could do better with the money.'

'I can't pretend I'm sorry,' I said. 'You sold me a defective pen which has caused me much worry and actual financial loss. Now you have to pay fifteen shillings. This will be a lesson to you.'

'Hold on,' said Gillivant. 'I've got it. I'll tell her I've lent the pen to you. Oh, yes, that'll be all right.'

'Then,' I said, 'you will be making a most unwarrantable use of my name.'

But this did not appear to affect him.

X. THE LETTER TO 'THE TIMES'

I WAS talking over the subject the other day with one or two friends of mine, and we all agreed that dreams are very curious things. We cannot account for them.

My friends all had instances which happened within their own experience of dreams that had come true. These seem to be quite common, but they have never come my way.

'Why,' I said to Eliza that night, 'have I never had a dream that has come true? Men whom I cannot possibly think to be my superiors or even my equals seem to have dreams of this kind, or if they don't their wives do.'

'Don't seem to me the kind of thing I should worry about,' said Eliza.

'Look, for instance, at the dream that I had last night or early this morning. I was adding up an immensely long column of figures. The trouble was that I myself was one of the figures, so that when I got down to the bottom of the column to add them up, that put the addition all wrong. Mr. Bagshawe came in at the moment, and I asked him what I should do about it, and he said the only thing to do was

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to wear larger boots in future. That is the kind of dream I get. It not only does not come true, but it cannot come true.'

'Last night,' said Eliza, 'I dreamt that some money came to me.'

'Seems to be much the same sort of dream as mine.'

'I don't know. We were sitting in this room together, and the girl knocked at the door, and brought in a letter, and the money was in the letter. That might happen.'

'I think not. Who's going to send you any money?'

At this moment a most singular and dramatic thing happened. Parker knocked at the door and brought in a letter for Eliza.

'Open it at once,' I said.

She did so. It contained a postal order for eighteenpence from the people at Grimsby who supply us with fish, and was accompanied by a letter apologizing for the mistake in the account which Eliza had pointed out to them.

'The first thing to do,' I said, 'is to make a note of the exact time at which the letter arrived.'

'Why?' said Eliza.

On second thoughts I could not exactly say why. All I could tell her was that it was usual. Whenever a dream comes true, people always

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make a note of the exact time. It seems to be one of the rules.

Eliza did not seem to attach much importance to the incident. She said that after all it was only eighteenpence, and it hardly seemed worth getting a supernatural warning about. At the same time, if those people at Grimsby tried anything of the kind on with her again, she would get her fish elsewhere. She then went up to see the baby, and I sat down at my bureau to prepare a careful and temperate statement of what had occurred for publication in the form of a letter in *The Times* newspaper.

I began as follows:

'DEAR SIR,—It has been well observed by Shakespeare that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of——'

I stopped here, because I could not for the life of me remember the rest of the quotation. The memory is a very curious thing. You cannot explain it. That quotation is rather a favourite of mine. I use it constantly. And now it was gone.

However, I began again:

'DEAR SIR,—It is a question whether a supernatural premonition is required with reference to a small consideration which in

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this case was precisely the sum of eighteen-pence, but may be conditioned by a further question of commercial morality, or, at any rate, accuracy, on which it may be fairly said that the fortunes of this empire do under Providence to some considerable extent——'

I read this over again. It was all right, and I could see the meaning precisely. But perhaps it was better after all to shut out abstract considerations for which *The Times* newspaper, in the event of any unusual pressure of news, might not be able to find space. I therefore began again:

'DEAR SIR,—A dream that came absolutely and literally true,' I wrote, 'although it merely involved the correction of a small sum in a tradesman's account, may perhaps be of some interest to those of your readers who are interested in such interesting subjects——'

The last phrase clearly needed to be recast. I was just going to recast it, when Eliza came in, and asked me what I was doing.

'I am preparing,' I said, 'a statement with reference to your dream and its fulfilment for publication in *The Times*. Our name of course will not be given, nor the address. It is

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customary to enclose these as evidence of one's *bona fides*, but they form no part of the matter to be published.'

'Well,' said Eliza. 'I'm blest if it doesn't beat me altogether.'

'The problem,' I said, 'is one upon which I myself would be glad to hear——'

'Oh, I'm not talking about that,' said Eliza. 'You go to business in the City. You've got on pretty well. You've had your salary raised. And yet when you're at home you act just like a child. Do you mean to say you didn't know that I had never had any dream at all, and was just having a little game with you? I had written to complain about that account, and told them to put it right by return of post, or I should deal elsewhere. So of course I knew the money was coming.'

'In that case, Eliza, you made a statement to me which you must have known to be untrue. Conduct of that kind does not tend to increase my confidence in your character.'

'Oh, cheer up,' said Eliza. 'Everything's got to have a start. Even if the dream didn't come true, it would have come true if it had ever been a dream.'

'I want you to see the principle involved.'

'Yes,' said Eliza. 'And I want you to come and have a look at the waste-pipe of the bath.'

BARRY PAIN

I don't know what that girl's been doing to it, but the water won't run off. You had better bring a bit of cane with you or something of that kind.'

It seemed idle to pursue the subject further.

XI. THE COCKROACH

THE other day, as I was leaving the office, old Pridgeon came up to me in a very free and easy way and said, 'What do you do about cockroaches?'

Now, I like Pridgeon very well, and in the matter of the greenhouse he certainly gave me some useful hints. But I should like to see him show a proper sense of the difference which has occurred in our relations. We are no longer on terms of equality. If I am not actually Pridgeon's master, I am at any rate approximate to that.

So I was rather stand-offish in my manner. I said, 'What do I do about cockroaches? I simply fail to understand you, Pridgeon.'

'Why,' said Pridgeon, 'what is the difficulty? What I mean is what do you do to get rid of cockroaches? It's simple enough, isn't it?'

'I do nothing to get rid of cockroaches, and have no need to do anything. In a house which is properly kept and looked after there are no cockroaches. We have none, and I cannot advise you.'

'Oh,' said Pridgeon, 'we've got them, and they're getting a bit too thick.'

BARRY PAIN

I dismissed the subject from my mind at the moment, but when I got back, on my way up the High Street, I saw in an ironmonger's window a remarkably ingenious trap for cockroaches, acting electrically. The price, tenpence, was perhaps rather high for a thing of the kind, but scientific apparatus, as I found when I purchased the garden thermometer, nearly always runs into money. I determined that I would mention it to Pridgeon next day. The man himself is all right. It is merely that he has not the tact to adapt his manner to changed circumstances.

A few minutes later, in the course of casual conversation, Eliza said to me that Gladys rather believed that she had seen a black-beetle in the kitchen the night before. This naturally came to me as a bit of a shock.

'By black-beetle she means cockroach. They are an extremely annoying and disgusting thing to have in the house. May I inquire what she did about it?'

'Didn't do anything about it. Said it was too quick for her.'

'Well,' I said, 'after all, the very important thing is what you personally have done about it.'

'Nothing—same as Gladys. Have I got to pull my hair out every time the girl thinks she sees a black-beetle?'

THE COCKROACH

'I never suggested that you should pull your hair out by the roots. I do suggest that in a house of this class, for which I pay forty sovereigns in rent every year, cockroaches should not be allowed to exist. However, it is the same old story. If anything has to be done, I must do it myself. Kindly give me my hat, please.'

I went out and purchased the cockroach trap which I had seen in the ironmonger's shop. Mr. Pawling himself served me, and said that it was quite a new thing, for which he anticipated a great sale. I went over the directions with him and found the trap simple in construction and yet remarkably ingenious. The fact that the cockroach infallibly perished before it had ever reached the bait made it singularly economical in working. Also, as the trap reset itself automatically, it would destroy a million cockroaches with the same ease that it would destroy one. Science has always had a fascination for me, and I was really almost glad that we had a cockroach on which to experiment.

I showed Eliza the paper of directions and then explained the trap to her. As I had expected, she quite failed to appreciate the ingenuity of the mechanism.

'Unfortunately,' I said, 'I can only give you an explanation. I cannot provide you with the

BARRY PAIN

intelligence to understand it. I shall now take the trap into the kitchen and set it myself, placing it, as directed, near the range.'

'While you are there,' said Eliza, 'you had better catch that cockroach and read the paper of directions to it. Otherwise it won't know which way it has got to go into the trap, and it may miss the second turning on the right, and nothing happen at all.'

I told her that intentional silliness did not appeal to me, and went into the kitchen. I examined the trap at 9.30, at 10, at 10.30 and at 10.45. The cockroach was not yet caught, but I believe it is a well-known fact in natural history that these insects are nocturnal in their habits. I examined the trap again at eight o'clock next morning, and the cockroach was still not to be found. As I said to Eliza, in things of this kind all that one wants is a little patience.

On the following morning and the day after, the cockroach remained at large. I tried changing the position of the trap, I also altered the character of the bait provided. But I did not get the result I anticipated. Eliza, of course, had to regard it as rather a joke.

'On the contrary,' I said, 'it is a very serious matter. The cockroach lays a great number of eggs, and lays them continuously.'

'Pity it isn't a hen,' said Eliza.

THE COCKROACH

'You will adopt a different tone,' I said, 'when you find the house swarming with cockroaches from cellar to roof.'

'Well,' she said, 'what did you want to buy that rotten old trap for? That will never catch anything except the mug who bought it. Tenpence for a thing like that! A pennyworth of beetle poison from the chemist was what you wanted.'

'I think not. We have a child in this house. It would be highly dangerous.'

'So it would, if I kept the child in the kitchen all night. But then I don't.'

'The poison might contaminate the milk.'

'So it would, if I put it in it. But I shouldn't.'

It was useless to continue the subject with her. Rather reluctantly I had recourse to Pridgeon. Unfortunately he was in a rather bad temper with me.

'Did you get rid of those cockroaches, Pridgeon?' I said, quite pleasantly.

'I thought we were not interested in cockroaches, not since we got our rise and took a larger size in hats.'

I passed this over. 'On the contrary,' I said, 'I should be interested to know how you got rid of them. I might find occasion to use the same method one day. We are only human, even the best of us.'

BARRY PAIN

‘Well,’ said Pridgeon, ‘I will tell you what I did. I got a paving-stone measuring six feet by three, and laid it down in the garden. I then placed the cockroaches on the paving-stone and passed the garden roller over it two or three times. After that they gave me no more trouble. You try it yourself.’

It ended, as it always does, in Eliza having her own way. She put down the poison and it killed nothing. Of course, however, it would be too much to expect her to confess that she was in the wrong. What she says now is that the cockroach was never seen before or since, and that it is her belief that Gladys imagined it.

If that is the case, all I have to say is that there is tenpence thrown in the gutter because Eliza chooses to employ hysterical servants.

XII. QUEER FARES

BLOWED if it ain't enough ter mike yer chuck the 'bus business and mike yer earn yer livin' by goin' abart the streets singin', 'Hi'm but a little simple flar,' or wuds ter thet effec', or try some other sort o' street cadgin', or go an' drarn yerself.

It were this wye. We was goin' along as yooshal in the slack time o' the arternoon. I'd got four lyedies inside. They were the yooshal kind o' lyedy, a bit 'aughty an' sniffy. Bless yer 'eart, I don't mind thet. I'm yoosed ter it. They pyes their feers with a sort o' hair as if they was conferrin' on me the Victoryer Crorss an' a week at the seaside throwed in; but they don't give no trouble. I'd sooner 'ave them any dye than a common drunk, or a gent callin' 'isself a netshralist, which is whart I were let in fur thet very arternoon. But thet's whart I'm comin' to.

'E were a mild-lookin' ole gent, small-built, with a grye overcoat, and a cawdboard box unner 'is awm. 'E stood at the corner witin' for the 'bus. Well, 'e gort in, settled 'isself darn, an' pide 'is feer. I didn't tike much notice of 'im, but so fur as I seed 'e

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looked abart as 'awmless as a Sunday-schule teacher.

Hall of a sudding I 'ears a series o' hawful screams, and all them four lyedies come a-strugglin' ter git art o' the 'bus, an' pretty near knocked me inter the road. I stopped the 'bus and arst 'em whart they thought they was doin' of. They all begun ter speak at once, and hall as I cud gather was that I was ter give 'em all their feers back agin, and I ought to be ashimed of myself, and they'd report me any'ow.

Well, I turned ter the oldest of 'em, and I says, 'Nar, ma'am, if yer'd kindly tell us whart this is all abart, and them others wud 'old up for a bit, I'd be thenkful.' So I got it art of 'er thet the meek an' mild old gent, whart were still settin' as if nutthink 'ad 'appened, 'ad a lawge pizernous snike in thet cawdboard box, and 'e'd opened the lid an' they seed it fur theirselves; and it was disgriceful thet I shud 'ave allard 'im ter enter a public omnerbus at all. And if I didn't pye up at once they'd have the perleece on me.

"Old on," I says, cuttin' 'er short, and I goes up ter the ole gent. 'Look 'ere,' I says, 'whart der yer mean by this be'iviour, upsettin' ev'rybody? Yer know as well as I do thet yer cawn't kerry live pizernous snikes in a

QUEER FARES

public vehicle, and openin' the box lid an' all.'

'Yuss,' 'e says, 'thet's why I ain't done it. This snike isn't pizernous, an' never was. Also, it ain't alive. It's stuffed. I tried ter egspline it ter 'em, but they wouldn't listen. I'm a netshralist—thet's 'ow I comes ter 'ave it.'

Arter a lot more jaw and wisetin' a lot more time, I got three o' them lyedies ter git beck inter the 'bus on condition the ole gent rode artside. But the lawst o' the lyedies said she wasn't goin' ter be bit ter death by serpeants, whether they was stuffed or not. She warnted 'er money beck. Well, I looked at 'er, and I says, feelin' in my bag fur the coppers, 'Cawn't give it yer, unless yer gives me the ticket beck fust.'

'Oh, you can 'ave yer ticket,' she says, and 'ands it me.

I took it an' looked at it. It were jest as I egspectid.

'Very well, ma'am,' I says, 'I see as you've ridden two 'undrid yawds over yer penn'uth already.'

'I'm shaw it was unintenshnal,' she says.

'No dart,' says I; 'but instead o' me pyin' you, yer'll 'and me over another penny, or yer'll see thet perleeceman as yer've bin talkin' so much abart.'

BARRY PAIN

She pide. But, all the sime, when theer's so many o' thet sort ararnd, it's a dog's life, and one as might drive a less joodishus man than myself ter intemp'rance.

.

I never knowed 'ow fur orkudness could go until one dye lawst week. I 'ad a young man on my 'bus whart feerely took the gingerbread. I've 'ad clumsy people on the 'bus afore, but none like 'im. 'E were a tall young man, narrer-chested, with a biggish, turnup-shiped 'ead. 'E kerried two books under 'is awm, an' a humbereller. As 'e were goin' up the steps, the 'bus stawted, and I sharted to 'im to 'old on. Blest if 'e didn't drop the books and the humbereller, and it was jest a chawnst thet they didn't go inter the road. 'It ain't often I drop anything,' he said, as I 'anded 'im them back; 'in fac' it's most unushal.' Then I give 'im 'is ticket. It were a penny fare, and 'e offered me a shillin'. Clumsy people never 'as the right change 'andy. 'Avin' no silver, I was forced ter give 'im eleven coppers, which 'e took and then dropped the 'ole caboodle. 'Why, I shall begin ter think I'm turnin' orkud,' he said, pyshuntly. Theer was that abart him—'e never sim'd ter git irrertited. I've knowed men as would 'ave swore themselves

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black in the fice for lesss nor what happened ter this young man. Well, I left 'im on 'is 'ands and knees 'untin' fur the lost coppers. 'E wouldn't let me 'elp 'im, and so I went darn agin. I 'adn't bin stannin' theer mor'n a minnit before a brarn felt 'at blowed pawst me and inter a puddle. I didn't wite to awst no questshings; I knowed 'oose 'at thet 'ud be. I 'opped off the 'bus, got the 'at, and took it up to 'im. He thanked me and give me twopence. 'I don't sime ter be in luck ter dye,' he said. 'Theer were a gust of wind come just as I were miking myself a cigarette.' The cigarette looked like a busted caterpillar. 'So,' 'e went on, 'I 'adn't a 'and ter 'old my 'at on with. I'm sorry to 'ave troubled yer.'

'No trouble,' says I. I kin alwise be perlite ter them as is perlite ter me. Darn I went agin ter wite fur the next awxerdunt as 'e might 'appen to 'ave, an' I 'adn't ter wite long neither. This time it were a silver metch-box as went flyin' inter the road, sime as the felt 'at 'ad done. I got it back fur 'im, and 'e give me another twopence.

"Ow did yer come ter drop that over the side, sir?" says I.

'I didn't egsackly drop it,' 'e said. 'I throwed it awye in mistike. The wind 'ad jest blowed the metch art that I was lightin' my

BARRY PAIN

cigarette with, and I throwed awye the box by mistike fur the metch. Very keerless of me.'

'E 'adn't no more awxerdunts as I seed until 'e come darn ter git off the 'bus. 'Don't you git off till we storps, sir,' says I.

'Ho, no,' says 'e; 'yer needn't storp fur me. I'm yoosed ter this kind o' thing.' With that 'e gives a sort o' jump, gets 'is humbereller between 'is legs, and hover 'e goes flat on 'is face. 'E wasn't 'urt, and 'e told the copper as it was all 'is own fault, which was the bloomin' truth, an' nuthink else.

Well, it were foppence inter my pockut, but all the sime, an' yer ken berlieve me or nort, I were glad when thet young man was done with. Anythink as orkud as thet mikes me feel nervous. On my soul, if I'd 'ad another five minnits of 'im I should 'ave stawted droppin' things myself. It's wunnerful the wye such things mye affect yer. Theer was a ole lyedy gort inter 'Ankin's 'bus one dye, an' ev'ry nar and then the 'ole of one side of 'er fice give a twitch, one corner of 'er mug shootin' up like as if she were grinnin'. It were some sort o' afflickshun as she'd gort; a cousin of my wife's 'ad much the sime thing, only it took 'er in the heyebrrar. Well, 'Ankin stood theer a-watchin' of 'er and a-watchin' of 'er, until at lawst 'e farnd 'is own fice stawtin' ter wink jest the sime

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wye. As 'Ankin said, it were 'alf as if 'e were doin' it a-puppus, and 'alf as if 'e couldn't 'elp it. As luck 'ud 'ave it, she were the only pussen inside, and 'e'd gathered as she didn't know 'er wye abart. So 'e told 'er To'm Court Road was the Mawble Awch, which was wheer she wonted ter go, an' she said she didn't see no awch anywheer, but still she berlieved 'im and got art. And if she 'adn't 'e might a bin afflicted pummanunt sime as 'erself.

.

We gits some 'ot 'uns sometimes. One dye a young chap got on my 'bus as didn't look no more nor any other young chap. 'E weren't a man as you'd notice in the street. Sim'd just like nutthink at all. 'E says ter me, 'Awe yer a 'Ammersmith?'

'No, sir,' says I; 'I'm a ormnerbus conductor.'

'I mean,' says 'e, 'does yer 'bus go ter 'Ammersmith?'

'It don't,' says I.

'Then,' 'e says, 'it'll soot me nicely; thenk yer.'

Theer was sutthink in thet dreamy wye 'e 'ad of speakin' as guv me suspicions as 'e were a nawsty one ter tackle.

Presintly 'e comes darn, and says very civil,

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'Storped, please.' Well, I storped the 'bus, and 'e never gort off. 'E just stood an' looked ararnd.

'Cawn't wite 'ere all dye,' I says, shawplike.

'Troo,' says 'e; 'you'd better go on agin; I've chinged my mind. I dunno as I'll get art 'ere, arter all.' And with thet 'e goes slowly up them steps agin, whistlin' of a 'ymn-toone ter 'isself.

Well, I were pretty mad. 'Hall right,' thinks I ter myself. 'This is the lawst time as yoo plyes it orf onter me.' A foo minnits liter I were up top, givin' of the tickits, when 'e touched me on the shoulder.

'Might I trouble you,' says 'e, 'ter awsk the driver to pull up 'ere.'

'No, you mightn't,' says I, thinkin' as I wouldn't be done again. 'I've storped this bloomin' 'bus fur yer once, and blow me tight if I do it agin. Nar yer can wite until we gits ter the Succus.'

'Thenks,' 'e says, 'but it's nort fur me—it's fur this lyedy 'ere.' And so it was, and, blimey, if 'e 'adn't copped me agin.

'Ho, very well!' says I, 'thet's all right. As long as it ain't fur you, I don't mind.' So I storped the 'bus, an' the lyedy gort off, and the 'bus went on agin.

Blessed if we'd gorn a 'undrid yawds afore

QUEER FARES

'e looks over and calls darn ter me, 'Hi! storp!' I didn't 'awdly know whart ter do. 'It ain't fur me,' 'e says in a serus, cornfidential kind o' wye. Well, I storped the 'bus, fur I were jolly sure thet if 'e 'ad storped it fur 'isself, I'd stawt it agin afore ever 'e cud git darn the steps. Well, 'e never even tried ter come darn; no more did anybody else.

I went up, bilin' over with rige, an' I say ter 'im, 'Whart did you do thet fur?'

'Ho,' says 'e, 'yer told me as yer didn't mind storpin' the 'bus, as long as it weren't fur me.'

'Then whart did yer wornt ter storp the 'bus fur?'

'Just fur the sike of awgymment,' 'e said, as unmoved as if 'e 'adn't done nutthink. And whart cud I sye? At least, I 'ad a good deal ter sye, but it weren't the kind o' thing as cud be said with any degree o' sifety.

Thet put me art a good deal, but I dunno as it ain't good fur yer ti git let darn a bit ev'ry nar and then. If yer goes tikin' pints horf of ev'ry man as yer meets, yer mye git a bit above yerself. Still, jest fur the moment it ain't pleasant, and yer needs a little comfort at the other end o' the rowte afore yer can feel as if you're jest as good as ev'rybody else and better nor most.

BARRY PAIN

Thet ain't the only time as I've bin done. 'Ere's another kise. Yer don't horftun see tew people egsackly alike, nort even in apperunce. I did once, and I wish I 'adn't. It 'appened this wye. A young man gort on my 'bus, 'at back of 'is head, gryn coat, and striped bags, kerryin' a brarn-piper pawcil, and a black walkin'-stick with a white handle to it. 'E wen' up on the top, I followed 'im, punched a penny ticket, and give it 'im, turned rarnd and went down agin. As soon as I got darn, I finds 'im sittin' inside aginst the door—sime fice, sime 'at wore the sime wye, sime clothes, pawcil, walkin'-stick, and ev'rythink. 'Egscoose me, sir,' I syes, 'but 'ow did yer get 'ere?'

'The or'nery wye,' syes 'e, lookin' surprised.

'Thet you didn't,' says I, 'or you'd 'ave 'ad to come pawst me.'

'I dunno whart you're talkin' abart,' 'e says. 'Give me my ticket.'

'I've jest this moment give it yer,' says I.

"Ave yer?" says 'e, 'well, I 'aven't got it any'ow.'

"Ere yer aw, then," says I. 'You kin 'ave a dozen o' 'em fur a shillin', if you're fond o' 'em.'

'Yer'd better be keerful,' says 'e. Presintly I 'as to go up top, and blest if 'e wasn't theer, jest wheer I left 'im the fust time.

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'Look 'ere,' I says, 'I don't know 'ow you works this 'anky-panky, but I've 'ad abart enough of it, and so I tells yer strite.'

'E says, 'I dunno whart yer thinks you're syin', but you kin tike it from me that if yer gits drunk while you're on this 'bus you'll find yourself in trouble.' I goes darn again, and theer 'e was settin' against the door as afore.

'Very well,' says I, shikin' my fist in his fice. 'If yer moves agin, egsep ter git art in the or'nery wye, I'll tike yer an' throw yer inter the road.'

'You're drunk,' 'e says. 'You ain't fit ter 'ave chawge of a 'bus.'

'I ain't fit ter 'ave chawge of a bloomin' box o' mirracles like this!' says I, 'but I'll keep my heye on yer all the sime, my friend.' Just then the 'bus stopped, and art 'e got. As I was lookin' arter 'im, the other one come darn off the top and went pawst me. Theer was two of 'em, as like as two peas. They went off tergither lawfin'. At fust I'd a mind ter go fur the two of 'em, and chawnce it, but I sees 'em stawt ter plye the sime gime agin on another 'bus, and let 'em be. If yer 'as ter be mide a fool of it's jest as well ter 'ave comp'ny.

O' course yer does git a bit of a treat nar and agin. One dye a little chep—looked as if 'e

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might be one o' them 'Ebrew Jews—come up ter me as I were standin' abart, witin' fur the 'bus ter stawt, an' thinkin' o' the niture o' succumstances. 'E touched me on the shoulder, and 'e said, 'Your 'bus is on the corner at a quarter pawst ten ev'ry mornin', ain't it?'

'Yuss,' I says, 'you've gort thet right, sir.'

'Well,' 'e says, 'ter-morrer mornin' at thet time I shall git onter yer 'bus with a youngish gemmun, a fair-'aired chep, with a lawge nose and a heye-glass. I shall tike a twopenny ticket, and I shall pye yer with a French penny, a 'ipeny stamp, and two fawthin's.'

'Thet's N. G.,' says I.

'Whart der yer mean?' says 'e.

'Well,' I says, 'yer can do as yer likes, but if yer tries ter pye me thet wye, I shall refoose ter tike it.'

'E didn't sime nowise put art. 'Thet's just whart I thought,' 'e said, 'but I 'appen ter be pertic'lar angshus as yer shud tike it, and mike no complinte abart it neither; so 'ere's 'arf-a-crarn fur yer, and mind yer remember me.'

'Thenk you, sir,' I says, 'I 'on't furgit.' And I didn't furgit neither. Why, yer cud see the 'ole thing with 'awf a eye. 'E'd mide a bet with the fair-'aired gemmun, and this was the bloomin' sportsman-like wye 'e were tikin' ter be sure o' winnin' it. 'E were a reg'lar bad

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egg. But 'is 'arf-carn were good enough, and so I pouches it and thinks whart I'll do.

Next mornin' I gives my mite the office, and we're at the corner a bit early. The little Jew chep weren't theer, but the fair-'aired gemmun was, with the big conk an' the heye-glawss all complete.

"Ere yer awe," I sings art ter 'im. "This is the 'bus where we tikes a French penny, a 'ipeny stamp, and two fawthin's fur a twopenny fare." 'E looked a bit staggered.

"Ho, the doose!" says 'e. "Thet dutty little sweep 'as bin a-gittin' at yer."

"You 'as the size of it," says I.

"Whart was 'is price?" says 'e.

"Arf-a-carn," says I.

"Mine's five shillin's," says 'e.

"Then it's done with you, sir," says I. I took 'is five shillin's, and give 'im the tip ter stroll awye an' nort come up agin until the little Jew 'ad gort in. And so 'e did. When they was both in the 'bus they begun ter talk.

"Look 'ere," says the fair-'aired gent, "surpose we halves thet bet?"

"Halve yer gran'mother!" says the little chep, feelin' as if 'e'd gort the money in 'is pockit. 'I don't mind doublin' it, if yer like.'

"Very well, then," says the gent, "we'll double it."

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At thet, hup I comes, lookin' as if I'd never see'd either of 'em in my life afore, and says, 'Hall fares, please.' 'Twopence,' says the Jew, 'andin' me 'is French penny, the 'ipeny stamp, and the two fawthin's, at the sime time tippin' me a wink as I didn't sime ter 'ave noticed, though yer might 'ave 'ung yer 'at on it.

'Very sorry, sir,' I says, 'but I cawn't tike thet. I ain't allard ter.'

Well, 'e looked as black as thunder, but he see'd the gime were up—pide me a proper twopence, and 'anded two suvverins ter the other chep. 'E deern't say nutthink ter me, or else 'e'd 'ave bin givin' 'isself awye.

Thet did me a bit o' good, thet did. Seven-an'-six and a 'awty lawf—very narce mornin's wuk indeed!

.

When I fust begun, I used ter tike a parful lot of hinterest in folks as gort on the 'bus—used ter wunner whart they was goin' ter do, and whart they did, an' whart they 'ad ter eat. Now I don't trouble my 'ead abart 'em. A penny feer is a penny feer, and a twopenny feer is a twopenny feer, and that's hall they is ter me. Some dyes I gits inter thet mekinikul stite thet if a Chinese gyunt was ter git on the 'bus drunk, I shud just punch 'is ticket an' tike no

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more notice on 'im. It's doin' the sime thing hall dye and hev'ry dye as gits yer like thet. Yer gits like as if yer goes by clockwuk, and when yer does come ter tike a 'ollerdy, yer feels like a fish art of water, and it tikes yer the best pawt of a dye afore yer kin git inter the wye of enj'yin' yerself.



XIII. WEAK CRUMPETS

I HAS a great respect for doctors. It's wonderful how little harm they does, considering the opportunities they gets. All the same, if there's a doctor in London who wants his garden looked after by a capable man, it won't be no good his applying to me. You can't expect a man of my standing and character to put up with the kind of thing what happened the last time I worked for a doctor. I wouldn't do it, even if I couldn't find another job. I wouldn't do it, not if I were half starved. Even if I didn't know where the next drink were to come from, I'd think twice about it. I've had some.

The very first day I went to that doctor's house, he came out and said to me:

'Edwards,' he said, 'I have a resident patient here, a mental case. You understand what I mean?'

And being a intelligent man, I did.

'Yes, sir,' I says. 'You illudes to a sort of weakness in the crumpet.'

'That's it,' he says. 'He's an old gentleman, and he's very fond of being in the garden. He's quite harmless. If he starts talking to you, you needn't take any notice.'

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‘Very good, sir,’ I says. And gets to work.

First thing I done were to straighten the edges of the lawn. Whenever I goes to a new place, that’s what I starts with. There is nothing as makes more show with less labour. Then, when I’ve gone, my employer can come out and see what I’ve been doing. ‘Why,’ he says to himself, ‘that man Edwards has made the place look a lot better already.’ So I starts with a favourable impression. Then, later on, when he comes into the garden and can’t see that I’ve done anything, he’s ready to believe that it’s his mistake, and the work must be there somewhere.

So I fixes my line along the edge, and takes my half-moon and begins cutting. And I’d no sooner started, than out of the house come that old gentleman, him that had the weakness. He were well dressed, and I didn’t see nothing peculiar about him at first. He were singing a evening hymn rather loudly, but that’s a thing that might happen to you or me. When he sees me, he stopped singing suddenly, and said: ‘Aha!’ Then he darted back into the house, and come out again with a note-book and pencil. Up he come to me, very brisk and business-like.

‘Name, please,’ he says.

‘Edwards,’ says I. And he wrote it down.

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'Occupation?' he says.

'First-class jobbing-gardener,' I says. And he wrote that down, too.

'Age?' he says.

'Forty-one,' says I. (It's my experience that employers won't have a man no older than that, so I keeps to forty-one.) 'But,' I says, 'may I ask what you want to know them things for?'

'I don't,' he says. 'I'm simply acting for the Government. I collect statistics for them. Then, if anything goes wrong, they know where they are. You see the point, Mr. Edwards? And now, how long have you been like this?'

'Been like what?' I says.

'Been in this sad condition,' says he.

'Nothing's the matter with me,' I says, 'except that I'm being interfered with when I wants to get on with my work.'

'It's no good taking that tone with me,' said the old man. 'If there was nothing the matter with you, you wouldn't be here. See the point? I'm a doctor, you know. I've got one mental case already—a man with delusions. Thinks he's a doctor himself, and will keep on employing first-class jobbing-gardeners. Now, Mr. Edwards, I ask it in your own interests—what's your special delusion?'

'Look here,' I says, 'I don't want to lose my

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temper with you. You just get yourself a chair, and set over in the far end of the garden there, and look at the pretty flowers; or get yourself a nice book with some pictures in it. That's what a gentleman like you ought to do.'

'Aha!' he cries. 'Now I see. You needn't tell me. I know what your delusion is. You issue orders. You imagine that you're the Emperor Napoleon. You probably think——'

'I don't think nothing,' says I, getting a bit sulky.

'Oh, yes, you do,' he says, raising his voice. 'You think you're going to pack up this lawn and take it away with you. And you're not, simply and solely because you don't know how to do it. For packing,' he says, holding up two fingers, 'you require firstly string, secondly brown paper. You've only got the string. You've forgotten the paper. If I wished to pack you up, first-class jobbing-gardener though you are, I couldn't do it with string alone. I will illustrate my meaning. Kindly observe.'

With that, he pulls up one end of my line what I'd just fixed, and begins running round and round me very fast, winding me up in it, and singing, 'Here we go round the mulberry-bush.' Enjoying himself no end, he was. In about another moment I should have had to give him something to remember me by.

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And then out comes the doctor. He calls to the old gentleman:

‘Mr. Samuel, go back into the house.’

‘Just what I was thinking,’ said the old chap, throwing down my line. ‘I’ll return to my devotions immediately.’

Then he went up to the doctor, pointed at me, tapped his forehead with his finger, and said:

‘Sad case! Brain mischief, and wife and twenty-eight children dependent on him.’

They both went into the house together, and I were so upset that I went to my elevenses at half-past ten that morning.

I saw no more of the old chap that day, for which I were not sorry. But I didn’t see the doctor either, my money being sent out. And I’d wanted to see the doctor. I wanted just to put it to him, as man to man, that he couldn’t expect a respectable gardener like myself to be interfered with in his work and worried by lunatics, without some allowance being made for it in his wages.

Next week I were back at the place again, and there were the old gentleman waiting for me in the garden. Up he comes, smiling and very polite.

‘I beg your pardon,’ he said. ‘Might I inquire if you are this first-class jobbing-gardener that

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there has been so much talk about? This is indeed a pleasure.'

'You'll get pleasure in the eyeball in half a minute, my old friend!' I says to him, thinking to scare him off a bit.

He didn't care. As long as he could talk, he were happy.

'The name still Edwards?' he says.

I says nothing.

'And just one more inquiry,' he goes on. 'Might I ask—what sex?'

Still I says nothing.

'A civil answer to a civil question would not be amiss,' he says. 'But if you would prefer me to read to you, I will do so. What is your favourite author? Dickens is delightful. I wrote most of the work ascribed to him myself. Thackeray, again, owed a great deal to me. Will you have Thickens or Dackeray?'

'Oh, go away!' I says. 'Can't you give it a rest? How am I to do my work with this everlasting talk going on around me, and all meaning nothing?'

'Don't get excited,' he said. 'I shan't keep you half a minute. Compose your mind.'

He runs into the house again, and comes back with a camp-stool and time-table. He set himself down on the camp-stool beside where I were working, and begun reading out the

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names of the stations and drumming on the gravel with his heels.

I moved to the other end of the garden, and he came after me with his camp-stool and timetable, and started it again. I couldn't stick it. It were too early for it, but I went to my elevenses. And nothing makes your morning seem longer than that do.

When I got back again, he were still waiting for me, though he were not reading no more. He come up and said that he liked my face, but that I smelt of beer. And that were the only sensible remark I ever heard from him. I began to think this was what they calls a lucid interval.

'And what are you going to do next?' he asks.

'I'm going to mow the lawn and mark out the tennis-court.'

'And how,' he says, very earnest, 'does a man proceed to mark out a tennis-court?'

'Well,' I says, 'I mixes up whitening with water in that there pail, and puts it on with that there marker.'

'I thought so,' he says. 'I may as well tell you at once that I'm probably the best whitening-mixer in the world. I've taken prizes for it. I give exhibitions of it. Will you permit me to mix whitening for you?'

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'I will permit you,' I says, 'to do any blooming thing you like, so long as you don't talk to me.'

So he started to mix the whitening, and a rare old mess he made of himself with it. But, at any rate, it kept him quiet and out of my way, and I begun to mow the lawn.

But, bless me! in about five minutes up he comes once more, right in front of my mower, with the pail of stuff in his hand.

'Stop that at once!' he says.

'What for?' says I.

'Because,' he says, 'you're making a very serious mistake. I suppose you must at some time have been in a barber's shop. See the point? You must have noticed that the barber applies the lather first, and then the razor. You, on the other hand, have taken this safety razor of yours and are beginning to shave the lawn without first lathering it. I will put that right for you at once. Here's the lather.'

And with that he ups with the pail of whitening and sloshes the whole lot of it over the grass—likewise over my mower and my boots.

That finished it. I went straight off to the house, asked to see the doctor, and give him my resignation.

'I'm sorry, sir,' I says, 'but if you keeps a

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mental, you won't never keep no gardener. Look what he done to my boots! Wet through they is—which has brought many a man to his death-bed, as no doubt you very well knows, being in that line of business yourself. And a lot more of the stuff he throwed over my mower, which is my livelihood. That's done very serious damage. To start with, it rusts up everything. And then, when dried off, the whitening works into the bearings, and that's the end of all things. Whichever way you looks at it, it's a loss to me, and may run into——'

But—and that were a funny fact about the man—he didn't seem able to let me finish what I had to say. 'Stow it!' says he, which ain't a polite expression for a gentleman to make use of.

But, however, he were a easy-going sort of man. I got my money from him, and half-a-crown in compensation, which is all right as far as it goes. But I don't want nothing to do with no more mentals.

A few more weeks of it might have undermined my natural intelligence, which is mentioned special in a testimonial which I got, or drove me to drink through the irritation of it. 'Edwards,' I says to myself, 'you done right, and you won't never lose by it.' And, sure enough, I got another job that very afternoon.

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I lost it again next day, owing to the stuff what I'd bought for my rheumatism with the doctor's half-crown being a bit stronger than I knew. But the principle's the same.

XIV. MR. BARLEY

PUNCTUALLY at half-past twelve, Mr. Barley approached the tennis-court. His misfit smile showed that he was now in the part of the genial host. Over his shoulder he carried a skipping-rope. The players should, Mr. Barley considered, have flung down their racquets and come to welcome him. But they neither saw nor heard him. The interest of a close finish had transformed them. James Havern, a good-humoured and pleasant-looking young man as a general rule, wore an expression of mad and murderous hate. The tame and submissive Mary was changed into a blood-thirsty leaping tigress. Vantage out. Jimmy, with his white teeth set and breathing hard, delivered a swift and vicious service. The tigress leaped, and the ball came back hard and low to the far corner. Jimmy just reached it, and the rally went on. Two people playing for their lives could not have been more concentrated. At last a well-placed one beat Jimmy, and he returned it into the net. Game to the tigress. At once they resumed the normal expressions of decent and civilized people.

‘Good game,’ said Jimmy.

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'Excellent!' cried the genial host, with intent to attract attention to himself.

'You there?' Jimmy called to him. "Shan't be long finishing this sett.'

'You don't mind?' added the submissive wife.

He minded very much. It was selfish; and on the part of a young man like James it was disrespectful. Why could they not have abandoned the game and resumed it after luncheon? What did they think he had come out for? However, in the role of the genial host, it was necessary to make sacrifices. So Mr. Barley, with a fine imitation of a careless and cordial manner, said:

'By all means. Finish the game, of course. I can wait.'

He took a garden-chair, and unconsciously assumed the expression of a Christian martyr. The game went on, and a further triumph for the tigress finished the sett. Then, somewhat perfunctorily, they asked Mr. Barley if he wouldn't play. Mr. Barley's tennis was of a childish pat-a-cake order, and they accepted his refusal with equanimity.

'No, thanks,' he said. 'I've got rather tired of it. I like to strike out a new line now and again. Now, did you ever try this.' He swung his skipping-rope carelessly.

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'Don't know,' said Jimmy. 'Expect I did when I was in the nursery.'

'Very much the answer I expected, James. Now, when people laugh at skipping, I generally say, "Yes, but can you skip?" There's a good deal in it. Apart from plain skipping, there are the variations. It is a grand exercise. I generally take a few minutes of it in my dressing-room before my bath in the morning.'

James very properly suppressed a desire to ask if he couldn't have a photograph.

'And,' Mr. Barley continued, 'it takes some little skill, especially when you come to the variations. I don't profess to be anything much at it myself. What do you say? Shall we try a little competition?'

'I don't mind, just for the fun of it. Will you start, Mary?'

'I've tried it. I'm no good. You begin.'

At his tenth skip James broke down; Mr. Barley, who had been counting, was delighted.

'Ah! you see there is a little art required for it, after all. Of course, what is essential is a perfect co-ordination of the eye and hand. I will show you where you are wrong, afterwards. In the meantime, I have to beat ten.'

He began to skip with great solemnity and precision. At his eighth skip James suddenly screamed out:

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‘Look behind you!’

Mr. Barley was startled, caught his foot in the rope, and nearly came over. James was much amused.

‘My win! What price perfect co-ordination?’

Mr. Barley glared at him in silence for a moment, and then hurled the skipping-rope from him and strode rapidly in the direction of the house. The storm had burst.

Jimmy gave the low whistle which indicates surprise.

‘Sorry I annoyed him,’ he said. ‘It hadn’t occurred to me that a grown man could lose his temper over a skipping-rope.’

‘I don’t think he’s lost his temper,’ said Mary, mendaciously. ‘I think he just happened to think of something suddenly.’

‘Yes,’ said Jim, drily; ‘he thought of something all right. I’m glad he had the delicacy not to say it. I hope for your sake it won’t last long.’

‘You’ve got quite a wrong idea of Ernest. He’s one of the best and kindest of men, really. You listen to everything that that wicked old man, Uncle Nathaniel, says. He’s always been prejudiced against Ernest.’

‘Oh, I shouldn’t say that—one may like a man all right even when one recognizes his

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little weaknesses. And uncle's distinctly fond of you.'

'He needn't talk about weaknesses, with a memory that absolutely cannot be depended upon for a single thing. I think you go there far too much. You came from him to us, and now you are going back to him again. Ernest doesn't think that he's at all a good influence for you. Oh, I must go and see about luncheon.'

She ran into the house; Jimmy followed leisurely. She went straight upstairs to the work-room, and found the door locked. Within the room Ernest Saunders Barley, that best and kindest of men, was lying on his back on the sofa, with his handkerchief over his face. He repeated in a bitter and determined whisper:

'Swindler and blackguard! Swindler and blackguard! Dirty swindler! Swindler and blackguard!' He chastised the sofa cushions without mercy.

A gentle tap at the door caused him to stop suddenly. 'Who's there?' he asked, in the sepulchral voice of imperfect resignation.

'It's me, dear,' said Mary. 'Aren't you coming down to lunch?'

'No; I have a headache.'

'I'm so sorry. What shall I have sent up to you?'

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'Nothing. I couldn't eat anything.'

'Ernest, James says he's sorry if he annoyed you by his silliness.'

'I was not in the least annoyed or surprised either. That has nothing to do with it. I went away because it seemed impossible to get him to play fairly. It was of no consequence to me in the least.'

'You'll see him before he goes?'

'If I am well enough. In the meantime, I wish to be left alone, please.'

The storm had given place to a deep depression. He took a half-sheet of notepaper from the fret-worked tray in which he kept such treasures, and wrote on it as follows:

*'No noise of any kind in this passage please.—
E.S.B.'*

He opened the door to affix this notice outside, and a slight smell of luncheon greeted him. It was not unpleasant. It was even appetizing. Should he? Headaches might, and frequently did, pass away very suddenly. No, it would be absurd. He fixed his notice, locked his door again, and returned to the sofa. His absence would mean one unclaimed poached egg; probably James would have it. Eggs were dear. What was that riddle about them. If an egg and a half cost three half-pence, how

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many herrings—— And here Mr. Barley fell asleep.

He awoke at two with an undeniable hunger. Beyond the need for posing as an interesting invalid was the need for luncheon. Why not? Voices in the garden showed him that Mary and James had finished luncheon and were safely out of the way. The servants would be occupied with their own dinner, and had probably not cleared the luncheon-table yet. It was reasonably likely that he would be undiscovered. He opened his door and listened. There was not a sound in the house. No one was about. He removed the notice from the door, crumpled it up, and threw it into the waste-paper basket. Then, on tip-toe, he went along the passage and down the stairs. He felt adventurous and rather good. There was no one in the dining-room and—Oh, joy!—the pressed beef was still on the sideboard. Its proportions told Mr. Barley's practised eye that James had been at it—in spite of that extra poached egg; but even this could not entirely damp his satisfaction. His place was laid for him at the table. This was very much all right.

XV. MR. DUMPHRY DOES NOT LIVE
BY SCHEDULE

THE tulips in Hyde Park this year are spoken of very highly in the newspapers,' said Mr. Dumphy, as he carved the Sunday sirloin. 'One writer calls them "the children of the sun"—a pretty thought, to my mind. Slightly on the hard side, I fear, and Kenton should be spoken to about it.'

(The last sentence applied to the beef, not to the tulips. Mr. Kenton supplied the beef.)

'Of course,' Mr. Dumphy continued, 'in Hyde Park they have exceptional facilities. Rightly or wrongly, I am told that if any bulb goes blind or does not grow the correct height it is turned out, and its place supplied from a reserve grown in pots. This must give perfect regularity. At the same time I am not sure that it is quite cricket.'

'No,' said Queenie. 'Sounds more like gardening.'

'Yes, but you see what I mean. It is almost a point of honour that if you put in a bulb you take what comes up, whether you like it or not. You are not given a second chance. If, as seems probable, Hyde Park has a second chance

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then it is not competing with such men as Pierce Eveleigh and myself on even terms. Still, the result seems to be so beautiful, that I think I shall run up to town for an hour this afternoon and have a look at it. The horse-radish sauce is excellent. Anybody care to come with me?"

But the society of Queenie and Barbara was much in demand, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, and both the girls were already engaged. Mrs. Dumphry always preferred to spend a quiet Sunday afternoon. This sounded better than saying that she liked a post-prandial nap on Sundays, but meant the same thing. So Mr. Dumphry, a man of great energy, went up to town alone.

In the Park the tulips were all a-blowing. So also were the orators by the Marble Arch. But Mr. Dumphry gave his attention to the tulips first. No doubt he was actuated by a love of beauty, but there was also another idea lurking at the back of his head.

Pierce Eveleigh grew some tulips, and so also did Dumphry. This year Pierce's tulips were indisputably better than Ernest's, and Pierce had already alluded to the fact two or three times in conversation. It rankled. The next time Pierce approached the subject, Ernest proposed to talk about the Hyde Park tulips. In

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comparison with their glory, profusion, and magnificence, Pierce's little lot would be as a dropped teaspoon to a full-sized Alpine avalanche. And that would teach him. Mr. Dumphry made a few pencil notes in the course of his inspection.

Mr. Dumphry now had time to turn to the orators. The particular orator to whom he turned was an elderly gentleman whose white hair was very much longer than it should have been. He also wore a pointed beard.

But this man was a spellbinder. He had been born like that. The whole of his gifts went into it. He did not shout, as most of his neighbouring orators did, but his voice carried and got the stuff over every time. He spoke from a small platform to which was appended a notice that he represented the Rational Life Association.

He did not flatter his hearers. He called them fools, imbeciles, numskulls, fatheads, one-eyed cockroaches, and used various other terms of invective and contempt. Apparently his audience enjoyed it. They smiled in a shy, foolish way when he launched some particularly devastating term at them. The whole truth is that the man was a spellbinder. He was one of the few who are gifted with that special ability. He could talk to people and he

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could make it work. His platform was quite well attended and Mr. Dumphry recognized that many of them were not there for the first time.

'I am speaking,' said the venerable gentleman, 'to those who live the ordinary life.' He tapped his massive forehead. 'There is something here,' he said, 'which would prevent them from living the ordinary life. They have got it and they make no use of it. Well, you've got to use it. If you just listen to me I'll show you how to double your happiness, improve your health, get on to an income three times higher than you are earning now. No special secret of mine. What I ask you to do is to live the rational life, to make some use of your think-box instead of leaving it out of action for twelve hours a day. If you don't want the money, you fatheads, then get out. Go and listen to the noisy gentleman on my right-hand. He'll just about suit you. He's never done any thinking in his life and he'll show you how to do the same.'

He proceeded to analyse and to lash the ordinary life. He spoke of men whose only form of exercise was to bash a football referee, and who never did that unless they had enough blockheads to support them to prevent any accusation of courage. He spoke of the folly of betting.

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'You don't know what's going to win the two-thirty,' he said. 'The owner don't know, the trainer don't know, the jockey don't know, and the horse don't know and if he did he wouldn't tell you. You don't bet—you just make a small contribution to the bookmaker.'

He said that they fooled away their time, they had no knowledge of the classics, they had no appreciation of the arts. There were chances open to them everywhere in London and they did nothing. They were a set of purblind stoats and they knew nothing, they learned nothing, and they never would learn anything. And probably there was not one of them who would not be better, happier, and more prosperous if he would only use such brains as he had got.

'You waste your time,' he declared. 'I don't need to tell you so. You know it. Any man who is not up, washed, and dressed by seven in the morning ought to be taken out and shot. I myself was up at six this morning and reading *Sartor Resartus* for the third time. Look down your day, find out those holes where time runs to waste, and fill them up with something better, something that will do you good. We must begin at the beginning.'

And already Mr. Ernest Dumphry was much impressed. This man spoke like an educated

man. It might and should have occurred to Mr. Dumphry that for a man who commanded the sources of wealth this orator might have been wealthy enough to buy himself a frock-coat somewhat less seedy than that which he was at present exhibiting. But this did not occur to Mr. Dumphry. He was already hypnotized.

'Begin at the beginning,' said the orator firmly. 'Make out your time schedule. Make it out for every day in the week with twenty-four squares representing the twenty-four hours of each day. Don't be in too much of a hurry. Fill in slowly as you go along. Time? What is it?'

The last question suggested to Mr. Dumphry that he should look at his watch, which he did and found that he would have to hurry somewhat to catch his homeward train. He hurried.

But all the way home the shabby orator was still holding him. He could see now that he was simply fooling away his life. The schedule would have to begin and he would have to live by it. He had a brain. Why not use it?

The first intimation his family received was at breakfast the next day.

'The priceless treasures of literature,' said Mr. Dumphry, 'are within the grasp of all of us and yet we neglect them. I have on my

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shelves the complete works of Sir Walter Scott and those of George Eliot. I wonder how often any volume of them is taken down from the shelves.'

'I think I can tell you that,' said Mrs. Dumphry brightly. 'Every book in this house is taken down and dusted twice a year, spring and autumn.'

This ought to have satisfied Mr. Dumphry. If you possess the classics and take them down and dust them twice a year, that is all that should be asked of you. But Mr. Dumphry was not satisfied.

'I find,' he said, 'that six days a week I fool away an hour of my time, half an hour in going up to town and half an hour in coming back. That is going to stop absolutely. In future that time will be devoted to works in classical literature, such as Keats, or to works of a definitely instructional and informative character.'

He put his horrible threat into execution on the following morning.

He got through his morning paper at the house before starting for the station. But he left it with the regretful conviction that there were things in it which he ought to have read and that he had not read them. The literature which he took with him into the train consisted

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of a library copy of *The Crime of the Eight Roads* by A. Paton Whiffle, and a very small book, his own property, entitled *French as the French Speak It*. He decided to begin on the novel and as soon as he found that bored him, to change over to the special French.

When he reached the terminus the conductor came up to him and said, more in sorrow than in anger, 'All chinge.' Mr. Dumphry closed the novel rapidly, noted that the carriage had emptied, said 'Dear me!' and got out.

It is greatly to his credit that he never opened the book in those hours from ten to one which were due to business. He felt nearly certain now that it was not the gigantic and murderous-looking negro who had really murdered the piano-tuner, but that it was the meek and quiet little postman. He presumed he could settle that question during the hour, one to two, which would be scheduled 'Luncheon.' He took the book out to luncheon with him and returned at 3.15, which was regrettable, but assured himself that the guilty man was in reality the dark-browed detective engaged on the case. Again Mr. Dumphry's iron will asserted itself. He did not so much as open the book until he was in the train for his return journey, and even then he only went three stations beyond his objective.

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He had to wait twenty minutes for a train back. He found his household extremely agitated. He admitted frankly what had happened.

'Mind you,' he said, 'the book's rubbish. I had not read two pages of it before I found that out. Still, I had just to see if my solution of the mystery was the correct one, and so I read on. Stupid mistake. It mustn't occur again.'

After dinner, which was too late for any schedule, Mr. Dumphry said he would just pick that book up again and get it off his mind. He then found that he had left it behind in the train. He was annoyed. It was a library book and would have to be replaced.

Seeing a copy of *The Crime of the Eight Roads* on the bookstall at the station next morning, he bought it. He would have to buy it sometime, and he wanted to see if there was, as to which there was no doubt in his own mind, sufficient evidence to hang the detective. He finished the book before reaching the terminus. The detective had not murdered the piano-tuner. The piano-tuner had committed suicide. And considering their profession it is remarkable that more of them do not do it.

Mr. Dumphry found that there was not very much for him to do that morning at the office. This gave him leisure to reflect on his present

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efforts to guide his life by the light of reason alone. Was he succeeding?

Truth compelled him to admit that he was not. There had been one hopeful feature. To-day he had resumed strenuous physical exercises before breakfast. For weeks he had neglected them simply because they had come to bore him stiff. His brain told him contemptuously that he might as well say that his morning bath bored him stiff, and Dumphry had meekly obeyed his brain and overcome his laziness. Loud applause.

But what about his decision to read classical or educational works in the train? It was true he had carried *French as the French Speak It* up with him. But the information it contained did not soak through the coat-pocket and become absorbed into the system. It was necessary to read the book and he had not even opened it. The one thing he had read was a trashy novel which had led him into error. Disgraceful!

And he could see where his mistake had been. The venerable orator had instructed him to begin at the beginning—first to make his schedule and then to live by it. He had not done this. Spasmodic and ill-considered efforts were bound to fail. There must be a schedule. He must begin upon it at once.

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He therefore summoned to his presence a young clerk with a very serious expression.

'I wish you,' said Mr. Dumphry, 'to procure a sheet of thin white cardboard with a good writing surface, and to cut from it eight cards the size of this envelope. Seven of these cards are to be headed with the days of the week, and each is to be divided into twenty-four squares ruled out in red ink. The eighth card is to be left blank. Do it at once and as neatly as you can. You understand?'

'Perfectly, sir. I can go out to get the white card?'

'Of course. Of course.'

It is doubtful whether the first establishment which the young clerk visited really stocked white cardboard. But a small Bass was pushed across the counter to him, and he seemed to know what to do with it. He found the white card at another place, and then having first finished his cigarette he returned to bondage. He was a quick worker and very neat and accurate. Before Mr. Dumphry went out to lunch he had the cards spread out on his table before him, and expressed his approval of them. He gathered them together, put an elastic band round them, and placed them in his note-case which they fitted perfectly. He felt good. He had taken the first sound step

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towards the rational life. The one blank card was reserved for Admitted Exceptions, for the lynx-eyed Dumphry foresaw there would be some. On the very next day, for instance, he was to lunch with old Harker, and he might not be back before three-fifteen—a rare occasion but one for which due allowance must be made. Mr. Dumphry was going to make his brain his guide in life; he was going to live strictly by schedule; but he was not going to be pedantic and narrow. Oh, dear, no—nothing of that sort!

To-day he left for luncheon as the clock struck one and was back again as the clock struck two. This was as perfectly schedule as could be, and gave him satisfaction. And during his luncheon he came to several decisions.

First and foremost, there would have to be a rough copy of the schedule. Nothing would go down on the neat and final cards until it had been duly tried and tested. Then the question of classification was to be considered. For instance, was dancing to be classed as social amusement or as exercise? On warm evenings, he had certainly felt it to be exercise. And how many times round the studio dancing would be the equivalent of one mile walking? He would put the problem to Barbara who had an almost

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morbid taste for mathematics. In a fortnight the rough draft should be tested and completed, and ready to be copied on the cards. He had already made one or two notes for it in his pocket-book. Under Admitted Exceptions was written:

'1. On one day in any month the luncheon hour may be disregarded altogether.

'2. If on any other day the luncheon hour should be exceeded, the excess must be made up from subsequent luncheon hours.'

Nothing pedantic there. Kindness coupled with firmness, that was what it was. Mr. Dumphry looked forward eagerly to the new life when his brain would direct his every action, and inclinations and weaknesses would be powerless before the schedule.

Suffused with the glow of virtue he was no sooner seated in his evening train than he took out *French as the French Speak It* and studied assiduously for the five minutes before he fell asleep. However, he did better in the up train next morning; the study of French lasted the whole journey.

As the hour of luncheon approached, he became conscious that he was hungry. He was to lunch with Harker, a man who thoroughly understood the subject, and the prospect was pleasant. He would largely exceed the luncheon

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hour, but that did not matter for provision had already been made for it. *Vide* Admitted Exceptions, No. 1. All was well.

In the hall of the Cabinet Club old Harker shook Mr. Dumphry genially by the hand, and presented him to another guest, Mr. Tallibut Eden, the managing director of a railway.

'And now,' said old Harker, 'we're only waiting for Tudill—Charles Tudill. You may have heard of him.'

'I've not had the pleasure of meeting him,' said Dumphry, 'but I've often seen his name in the papers. Barrister, isn't he?'

'That's the man. Making pots of money. He's a member here, and we don't see as much of him as we ought, for he's a glutton for work. Rather a melancholy beggar, but very much knows how to live, and is quite a good sort really. Politically, we're not the same colour, but that don't matter. As far as that goes, I'm an old friend of Tallibut Eden here, but I don't like his trains.'

'Ah, they're not bad trains,' said Mr. Eden complacently. 'And we keep on improving.'

And then Charles Tudill joined the group—a big, rather clumsy, rather fat man of fifty, round-faced and clean-shaven, and looking tired and sad.

'Though I've not met you before,' said Mr.

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Dumphry, 'I've seen your name in many important cases. And I hope it will never be your duty to cross-examine me.'

'I hope not,' said Tudill, 'but of course one never knows.'

'Charles, behave yourself decently,' said Harker.

'What's the matter?' said Tudill. 'I merely meant that if I ever did cross-examine Mr. Dumphry the discredit would be entirely mine. You should think before you speak. Got anything fit to eat to-day?'

'No,' said Harker, grinning. 'You think a lot too much about your food and a lot too much about yourself. Let's come on to lunch, shall we?'

'Plain-spoken chap, our host,' said Tudill, 'but however——'

They passed on to the table reserved for Mr. Harker. Dumphry was seated between his host and Eden. But for some reason it was Charles Tudill who principally interested him.

And as Mr. Dumphry ate the smoked salmon and sipped the Meursault he reflected that here was a chance for him. He was lunching with three men all of whom had been eminently successful. They might possibly tell him how much of the success they owed to a schedule.

And soon the conversation concentrated on

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railways. Harker had seemed to push it in that direction: Tudill undoubtedly did. Mr. Tallibut Eden spoke at length and with conviction on his special subject. Tudill was clearly much interested. Old Harker put up a sprightly opposition from the point of view of the ticket-holder. It chanced that Mr. Dumphry knew quite a good deal about railways, and his contributions to the conversation were neither ill-informed nor unintelligent. Mr. Eden observed it.

‘I can talk to you, Mr. Dumphry,’ said Eden. ‘Even when we disagree, you’re a reasonable man and you know what you’re talking about. But I can’t argue with our excellent host. Either he wants the railways to do the impossible, or to do something at about half-cost—which is equally impossible. He’s a solicitor and ought to know better.’

Mr. Harker smiled placidly. And Mr. Dumphry was distinctly pleased.

Thus encouraged, he soon found an opportunity to introduce his special subject.

‘I’ve been thinking lately,’ he said, ‘of making out a schedule by which I could live—nothing pedantic of course, but the kind of thing which would tell me precisely what I ought to be doing at any hour of the day. My idea was that at present probably I waste much time or

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at any rate do not employ it in the most profitable way. Now if one had a series of cards, one for each day in the week, ruled out in squares with the employment for each hour indicated, it seemed to me that would prove rather an illuminating guide. What do you think?’

Harker sipped his glass meditatively.

‘If you want to know what I really think—and of course you do,’ said Harker—‘I think the whole thing’s perfectly childish.’

‘It’s seldom I agree with Harker,’ said Mr. Eden, ‘but I think he’s in the right here. You see, life is elastic. One has to be always altering and accommodating as different things come along. I won’t say that a schedule’s never useful. As a matter of fact, I run my trains by schedule.’

‘And they never keep to time,’ said Mr. Harker.

‘That is as it may be. But I shouldn’t certainly dream of attempting to run myself by schedule. It would decrease my efficiency.’

‘Dear me!’ said Mr. Dumphry, ‘it looks as though I were on the wrong track, doesn’t it? What do you think about it, Mr. Tudill?’

‘I’m afraid,’ said Tudill, ‘that I also am in the opposition. It is not my experience that good resolutions are much use. The good never

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need them, and the bad never keep them. It's a subject about which I've thought a good deal. Several young men have come to me and asked for advice about their careers. I tell them that there isn't any. They may be the kind that will make a career, or the kind that won't. But if they are the kind that won't, then advice won't help them.'

'In the face of such a body of opinion,' said Mr. Dumphry, 'I see I must give up my project.'

And the talk slid into other subjects.

However, when luncheon was over and they had adjourned to the smoking-room for coffee and old brandy it chanced that Mr. Dumphry found himself in earnest converse with Charles Tudill, while Harker and Eden continued their amicable dispute on the subject of railways.

'There was a point which rather struck me in what you were saying at lunch, Mr. Tudill,' said Dumphry. 'You said that the good men did not need good resolutions and the bad men never kept them. No doubt that is so. But then how many of us are either good or bad? Most of us are middling. I should certainly describe myself as middling.'

'Oh, well,' said Tudill. 'I don't want to lay down any hard and fast law. If the middling can get any good out of schedules and stuff

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of that kind by all means let them. At the same time, Mr. Dumphry, from what our host told me of you before we met, I should not describe you as a middling man at all. You've got a good progressive business, you're a good family man. What more do you want?'

'Well,' said Dumphry, 'I want to get the best out of myself that I can.'

'Don't worry about that,' said Tudill. 'You're all right. All this tuppenny-ha'penny advice and direction for life is based on a misconception. They tell a man to do this and to do the other. Now the thing of supreme importance is not what a man does but what he is. These rules are dealing with results instead of causes. Ninety-nine times in a hundred if a man does the right thing it is not because he has been advised to do it but because, being the man he is, he actually prefers to do it. There is a friend of mine who is supposed to be rather a blackguard. He is certainly a self-indulgent man, but being what he is he has not got the cold vices. I'm certain he never did anything dishonest in his life. He cannot even tell the ordinary social lie. He is so constituted that he would sooner be taken out and shot than do either. The idea revolts him. You see, it's not what he does, but what he is, as I told you before.'

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'Then how is it,' said Mr. Dumphry, 'that so much is written which is intended as a guide to life and insists so strongly on what we do without touching on the question behind it—what we are?'

'Well, submit it to a practical test. Look at the life of the successful men, the men who really get on. Do any of them use schedules and resolutions and things? No, they're too busy. And they're not self-conscious enough either. Look at the four of us who met to-day at lunch. Harker and Eden are successful men and neither of them has ever attempted to live by schedule. You're a successful man yourself, Mr. Dumphry, so Harker tells me, and I might perhaps claim that I'm not an absolute failure myself. But we owe none of it to the nursery talk about a schedule of life. Give it up, Mr. Dumphry. You don't need it.'

And Mr. Tudill lit another cigarette.

When Mr. Dumphry went back to the office he was much shaken in his resolution. At times he felt that he would at any rate give the thing a fair trial, and at other times that money spent on white cardboard of a good writing surface was an unnecessary expense. It was not till he was on the way to the station that final conviction came to him. He observed a slight crowd in the street and went up to it. The

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first figure he noticed was that of an old gentleman, extremely inebriated and unsteady in his walk. He had venerable white hair hanging down on his coat collar and Mr. Dumphry had no difficulty whatever in recognizing him. There was a policeman on each side of him.

In most London crowds there is a well-informed man and on this occasion the well-informed man addressed himself to Mr. Dumphry.

'Don't suppose you know who that is,' said the well-informed. '“Grandfather” is what we always call him. Curious old chap he is, too. Does a lot of good work in the world, I believe. He makes a little bit by lecturing for the Rational Lifers on Saturdays and Sundays and the rest of the week he's a jobbing gardener when he feels like it. Every now and then he gets overtook the same as at present, but that's a thing which might happen to you or me or anybody.'

And this seemed to Mr. Dumphry to settle it absolutely. The night was rather chilly for the time of year and a fire was commanded in Mr. Dumphry's drawing-room. Part of the fuel of that fire consisted of eight cards taken from Mr. Dumphry's note-case. He reserved the elastic band, being a careful man.

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'IS one o'clock one o'clock, or isn't it?' said Mr. Tamplin peevishly. He was always querulous if lunch was not punctual.

'Sorry,' said Jessie cheerfully. 'The joint will be in directly. Shan't keep you waiting a moment longer than I can help.'

She vanished rapidly kitchenward.

'And now,' said Mr. Tamplin, 'I suppose the pork will be underdone. That's women all over. First they make one blunder, then they make a worse one to cover up the first. If that pork is underdone I can't eat it. And I not only can't eat it, but I won't eat it. And they may make what they can of that.'

Mr. Kemp tried to lead him to some less tragic subject.

'This morning, Mr. Tamplin, I was passing along the back here, and I saw Jessie out in the garden.'

'And what of it?' asked Mr. Tamplin morosely.

'Nothing much. But she really did look fine. She was in some sort of a thinnish dress, with the sleeves rolled up, and her arms were above her head taking clothes from the line. She's

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got a perfectly lovely figure. Calls to mind some of those old Greek statues that——'

'If you'll take the advice of an older man than yourself,' said Mr. Tamplin, on whose large red face general disapprobation was plainly written, 'you'll give up this loose and indelicate way of talking. A girl may have a figure—that's neither here nor there——'

'Generally there, isn't it?' murmured Mr. Kemp.

'What I mean to say is, that no nice-minded man would make any allusion to it. Besides, Jessie's a good girl and knows her worth, and if you think——'

'But, damn it all, what are you talking about? I was only telling you the sort of picture she made. Speaking from the point of view of Art——'

'Art! I thought that would be dragged in. Let me tell you that I don't hold with Art in any shape or form. Perhaps I could give you information on the subject of Art that you've not yet picked up. But here's Jessie with our pork.'

A breathless Jessie waited on them in a flash, and flew to the next table.

'She's given you a better helping than she has me,' said Mr. Tamplin gloomily. 'More crackling. Better every way.'

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'Change it if you like,' said Mr. Kemp.

'No, thank you. Besides, I've begun mine. What does it matter? If it's not one thing it's another. You're a regular customer for years, and then they treat you like the dirt beneath their feet. It's the curse of the monopoly. I'll trouble you for the mustard.'

During the next two minutes he consumed pork vigorously, and it was pleasing to note the emollient effect of pork on a perturbed temper. For it was excellent pork. The local reporter—smart young fellow—would inevitably have described it as 'super-pork' and probably have referred to its 'gesture'. The bitterness passed from Mr. Tamplin's considerable face and the sun of benignity shone forth. He paused to take breath, referred to a pewter, and addressed Mr. Kemp.

'I've not much fault to find. A shade overcooked, but that's to be expected when lunch isn't quite punctual—and which of us is always punctual? Young, small, and tender, as it should be. The sage and onion's tasty. I shall certainly need more of this.'

'I wonder,' said Mr. Kemp presently, 'why you are so opposed to Art.'

'That's soon explained. We had a case of Art in my family. I make no secret of it. Every family has got a black sheep in the

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cupboard somewhere. Strictly speaking, of course, it was my wife's family. Still, this Egbert always called me uncle——'

'What Egbert?'

'You may well ask. My wife's brother was named Herbert, and he married a Miss Susan Egg, and so they called the eldest boy Egbert. There's never any blessing on these fanciful names. Call your boy by some simple name, such as Frederick or John, if you wish him to be respected in after life.

'Of course I'd rather not say a word against my own brother-in-law, but he's absolutely unfitted to have the control of a family. He was once bit by a rabbit, and there's no regular housekeeping allowance, and everything's too easygoing. More than once he's forgotten to wind up the clocks on Sunday. Still, that's between ourselves.

'Well, after Egbert had been at school a few years I began to take notice of him. In some things he was not bright. If you asked him the interest on £61 13s. 1d. for three months at $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum, he wouldn't get it out right. But in drawing he was in a class by himself. Why, when he was only thirteen he'd draw you faces, and you'd not only know they were meant for faces, but you'd know whose faces they were meant for. He was

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always at it. I rather took to him. We may all be deceived.

‘He came to stay—Jessie! Oh, damn the girl! She must have heard. As I was saying, he came to—— Jessie, just see if you can’t give me a helping of the pork that really is a helping and not a mockery. With these everlasting interruptions I forget where I was.’

‘Egbert came to stay.’

‘You’re right. He came for a few days. He was popular with my children and the missus. He did a sweet little drawing of our Katey—we’ve got it framed and hanging in the drawing-room. He was nice-spoken and nice-behaved. He’d have taken in anybody. The day he left I was in the High Street with him, and as we passed Podbury’s—they’d just started a new line in artists’ materials—I saw in their window a box of eight water-colours, all different. I told him I’d make him a present of them, unless there were something else he’d sooner have.

‘He thanked me quite properly, and said that sort of box was only meant for the kids, but that he did want another three-B pencil if I cared to give him that. So I took him into the shop to buy it. He was particular about it. He wanted one special make. And it cost three times as much as I ever pay for a pencil for my own use. He seemed grateful.’

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'Then what did he do to offend you?'

'It was no question of offence. It was a question of black ingratitude on the part of that boy. Boy? He was nothing more or less than a viper—a viper that bit the hand that fed him. I'll just give you the plain facts.

'It was a few days later that I had to see Herbert on a matter of business. He said that his boy had enjoyed his stay with us, and I said the pleasure was mutual. I can give politeness for politeness as well as any man. And the other thing also.

'“Yes,” said Herbert. “And he was very pleased with that pencil you gave him. The first thing he did with it was to make a drawing of you. I'll show it you. It's bound to amuse you.”

'So he showed me the drawing. It represented me sitting at my own supper-table at home. A semicircular piece had been cut out of the edge of the table to enable me to get near it. I'd got a plate in front of me piled about two feet high. I'd got at least four rolls of fat neck sticking out over the top of my collar. I'd got drops of perspiration dripping off my cheeks. I was supposed to be saying: “I will have my mutton cut thick or not at all.” It was false, it was insolent, and it made me look ugly, and yet—if you can imagine it—

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it was enough like me for anybody to recognize.

'I tore it up there and then. "I see nothing amusing in this," I said. "Impertinence from the young towards their elders and betters is not a laughing matter, to my mind."

' "Don't take it like that," said Herbert. "He only meant it for a joke. He makes these funny drawings of me and the missus, and all of us, and we roar with laughter over them."

' "If he was my boy," I said, "he'd do all the roaring, and it wouldn't be with laughter either. I've only a few more words to say on the subject, and I'll ask you to remember that I've said them. That boy will bring down your grey hairs in sorrow to the grave."'

'And did he?' asked Mr. Kemp.

'Well, give the lad time. That was only about three years ago. He's been working in London since then, and if appearances meant anything, you'd say he'd not done so badly. He got prizes at one of these Art schools. Sometimes he sells drawings to the illustrators, and he's got regular work making designs and modelling figures for extra special wedding-cakes for one of the high-class firms. But that's all on the surface. His father made the mistake of showing me a photograph of the top of one of those cakes. There were six tiny little boys, hand-in-hand, dancing in a ring, and with the

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exception of a few flowers, there was not a stitch of clothing on any of them.'

'I see,' said Mr. Kemp. 'Sort of cupids. Well, who cares a bean about babies like that?'

'Don't mislead yourself, Mr. Kemp. Either a thing is right, or it is not. And it's not the time of life that makes the difference. Answer me one plain question. What would you say if I came here to lunch doing a dancing step with a wreath on my head, three tulips in my left hand, and nothing else whatever?'

'I couldn't,' said Mr. Kemp.

'I thought not. There you see your fallacy. And now he's joining with another lad in a studio in St. John's Wood. We all know what that means. He's launched on the downward path. And why Mrs. Baker ever gave us anything so heavy as apple-dumplings on the top of roast pork, I can't tell you. However, we must do our best.'



PRINTED BY
JARROLD AND SONS LTD.
NORWICH





