

Punch, or the London Charivari, Volume 153, July 25, 1917 eBook

Punch, or the London Charivari, Volume 153, July 25, 1917

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Contents

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Punch, or the London Charivari, Volume 153, July 25, 1917 eBook..... | 1 |
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Table of Contents..... | 4 |
| Page 1..... | 5 |
| Page 2..... | 7 |
| Page 3..... | 9 |
| Page 4..... | 11 |
| Page 5..... | 13 |
| Page 6..... | 15 |
| Page 7..... | 16 |
| Page 8..... | 17 |
| Page 9..... | 19 |
| Page 10..... | 21 |
| Page 11..... | 23 |
| Page 12..... | 25 |
| Page 13..... | 27 |
| Page 14..... | 29 |
| Page 15..... | 30 |
| Page 16..... | 32 |
| Page 17..... | 34 |
| Page 18..... | 35 |
| Page 19..... | 37 |
| Page 20..... | 39 |
| Page 21..... | 41 |
| Page 22..... | 43 |

[Page 23.....45](#)

[Page 24.....47](#)

[Page 25.....49](#)

Table of Contents

| Section | Table of Contents | Page |
|----------------|-------------------|------|
| Start of eBook | | 1 |
| CHARIVARIA. | | 1 |
| LXIII. | | 5 |

Page 1

CHARIVARIA.

Not one of the morning papers advocated the appointment of Sir Eric Geddes to be First Lord of the Admiralty. A big scoop this for the Government.

A shortage of paper yarns is reported from Germany. The coarser varieties have apparently all been monopolised by the Imperial Government.

A foolish rumour is going the rounds to the effect that a music-hall comedian has confessed that he has never made a joke about the Mess in Mesopotamia. It is feared that the recent hot weather has affected the poor fellow.

In the absence of the sea-serpent this year a tope weighing thirty-nine pounds has been captured at Hastings. The fisherman who caught it declares that if he had known it was a tope at the time he would not have been in such a hurry to sign the pledge.

The Food-Controller is calling for strict economy in the use of ice. It is not generally known that after it has been warmed a little in front of the fire the stuff will keep almost indefinitely.

The order prohibiting the use of enemy languages over the telephone is said to be causing some inconvenience. Several persons intercepted by the operator in the course of a guttural conversation have been subsequently shown to have been talking Swiss.

A Pittsburg inventor is reported by Mr. *Marconi* to have discovered a method of bottling light. If he can bottle anything lighter than the new Government ale his claim to be a wizard is established.

A safe weighing three hundredweight has been stolen from a branch post office in the Gray's Inn Road. It is believed that in the excitement caused by an air-raid alarm it was snatched up by a customer who mistook it for his hat.

A man applied at Willesden Police Court recently for advice as to what he should do with a loaf of War bread which was uneatable, as he dared not destroy it and could not eat it. His only objection to keeping it as a pet was a fear that it would never become really fond of children, although it might in time prove a good house-guard with which to ward off burglars.

At the Birmingham Assizes a man has been sent to prison for publishing a pamphlet entitled "Questions for Parsons." He now contemplates a new pamphlet entitled "Back Answers to the Bench."

Owing to the fact that the political situation is not quite clear in Germany the Reichstag has been adjourned. It is expected also that an attempt will be made to adjourn the War.

A writer in *English Mechanics* declares that a cornet played near caterpillars will cause them to drop to the ground and die. We understand that the R.S.P.C.A. plead with allotment-holders to destroy these pests by a less gruesome method.

Page 2

A motor lorry laden with petrol dashed into the front of a house at Hazelgrove when the family was not at home. It is only fair to say that the driver did not know they were out.

The Barcelona-to-Bilbao motor race has been postponed owing to strikes in Spain. A few sharp lessons like this will, we feel certain, have the effect of discouraging the habit of striking.

Some men, said a man before the Swindon Guardians, take up angling in order to go into the country to enjoy a smoke. It is not known why the others do it.

The Board of Agriculture point out that there is an abundant supply of kippers on the market at reasonable prices. This will come as a great boon to music-hall audiences, who find that the kippers used by comedians are getting rather frayed at the edges through constant wear.

"Bad language is used at Billingsgate not so much by the porters as by the buyers," said a witness at a City inquest last week. A purchaser at this market declares that the language is often provoked by the fish. Only last week he had a heated argument with a very talkative haddock.

England has lost first place in Germany, for America is said to be the most hated country now. The morning hate of the German family with ragtime obbligato must be a terrible thing.

"The National Service Department," said Mr. Beck in the House of Commons, "is desirous of remaining where it is." If we are to believe all we read it will take a great deal to move this department.

“Cod liver oil,” says a weekly paper, “is the secret of health.” Smith minor sincerely regrets that our contemporary has not kept the secret.

The *Vossische Zeitung*, referring to the appointment of Dr. Michaelis, says “there is no chance of his clubbing together with the big industrialists and misguided agitators.” So long however as they are clubbed separately we shall not grumble.

Waste-paper in Westminster, it is stated, has gone up from L2 10s. to L7 a ton. Why, it is asked, cannot the Government come to the rescue and publish the full reports of the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia Commissions?

Boxes of matches with jokes on them, we are told, are now on sale. Several correspondents who were charged twopence for a box complain that they are unable to see the joke.

An Irish newspaper, *The Kilkenny People*, has been suppressed for seditious utterances. People are wondering what it can possibly have said.

There will be no flag-day on August 26th.

A girl clerk in a Surrey bank has explained a shortage of a half-penny in her postage-stamps by admitting that she swallowed one. It is thought that the extremely low price tempted her.

Page 3

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[Illustration: *New Hand*. “Flies seem pretty awful out here, Corporal.”

Hardened Campaigner. “Wot flies?”]

* * * * *

On Vimy Ridge.

TO B.S.B., JULY 11TH.

On Vimy Ridge I sit at rest
With Loos and Lens outspread below;
An A.D.C.—the very best—
Expounds the panoramic show;
Lightly I lunch, and never yet
Has quite so strong an orchestration
Supplied the music while I ate
My cold collation.

Past Avion through the red-roofed town
There at our feet our white line runs;
Fresnoy’s defences, smoking brown,
Shudder beneath our shattering guns;
Pop-pop!—and Archie’s puffs have blurred
Some craft engaged to search the Bosch out—
I hold my breath until the bird
Signals a wash-out.

Scarce I believe the vision real,
That here for life and death they fight;
A “Theatre of War,” I feel,
Has set its stage for my delight,
Who occupy, exempt from toll,
This auditorium, green and tufty,
Guest of the Management and sole
Object in mufti.

And now along the fretted ground
Where Canada’s “Byng Boys” stormed their way,
I go conducted on the round
That *George of Windsor* did to-day;
Immune he trod that zone of lead,



And how should I, who just write verses,
Hope to attract to my poor head
Their "Perishing Percies"?

Bapaume had nearly been my tomb;
And greatly flattered I should be
If I could honestly assume
The beastly shell was meant for me;
But though my modesty would shun
To think this thought (or even say it),
I feel I owe the *Kaiser* one
And hope to pay it.

O.S.

* * * * *

How to cure the Bosch.

"Yes, I seen a good bit o' the Bosch, one way and another, before he got me in the leg," said Corporal Digweed. "Eighteen months I had with 'im spiteful, and four months with 'im tame. Meaning by that four months guarding German prisoners."

"And what do you think of him at the end of it?" I asked.

Digweed leant back with a heavily judicial air.

"Some o' these Peace blighters seem to think he's a little angel, basin' their opinion, I suppose, on something I must 'a' missed during my time out. On the other hand there's a tidy few thinks that one German left will spoil the earth. Now me, I holds they're both wrong. The second's nearer than what the first is, I don't deny. But a incident what occurred in that Prisoners' Camp set me thinking that you might make something o' Fritz yet, if you only had the time and the patience.

Page 4

"We had a batch of prisoners come in what I saw at once was a different brand to the usual. There wasn't that—well, that distressin' lack o' humility that you mostly finds showin' itself after we've had them a week or two. There seemed about 'em almost a sort o' willingness to learn that put 'em in a class by themselves. I sez to the interpreter, 'There's something odd about that lot. You find out what it is;' which he does. And what do you think it was? *They was convicts*. All men in for a long term, what had served five years and more o' their sentences and was let out to fight.

"It seemed to me at first the rummiest thing that ever I see. But I've thought it over and thought it over, and now it's as clear as day. When the Bosch is kept in a watertight compartment for a bit, he gets back to being more or less of a human being. His whole trouble's really through being surrounded by other Bosches. They get tellin' each other what a great nation they are, and how they was born to inherit the earth, and that it's only forestalling nature a bit to go and take it now, and so on—each going one better than the last. They keep on contaminatin' one another till what do you get? Why, me and you spending our old age a-teaching of 'em humility.

"Now, with these 'ere convicts it was another story. 'Stead o' keep talkin' about German culture and what rotters all the rest o' the world was, their heads had plenty o' time to cool while they picked their oakum or what not—resultin' in quite a fairly decent lot o' men, as I say. Yes, it's very interesting and instructive. I believe it's the solution of the question, 'How to cure the Bosch,' I do. If you could keep 'em all apart from each other for five years you'd find they'd be quite different. I daresay they wouldn't mind it so much either."

"If I was a Bosch I should be thankful," I said. "But wouldn't there be difficulties about this segregation?"

Digweed waved them aside.

"There's always difficulties," he said. "But you mark my words, that's the thing to do. It would help it along, too, to give 'em the right sort of books and papers to read. Why, if you worked the thing properly, they might mostly be cured in two years or two and a half."

I shook my head. "There are some you'll never cure," I said.

"There'd be stubborn cases, I won't deny. And a few incurables, as you say. But the first thing to do is to advertise the idea. You make a speech about it, Sir. When you're proposing a vote of thanks to a Duchess for openin' a bazaar, you bring it up. I've heard people before now take that kind of opportunity to bring something forward what they'd got on their chest."

“I’m not likely to get a chance like that,” I said; “but I’ll see if I can write an article about it.”

Whether Digweed will consider the article worthy of the subject I cannot say. Perhaps the Editor of *Punch* is less fastidious.

Page 5

* * * * *

For our sailors.

The current week is "Navy Week," and Mr. Punch begs to urge his kind friends to take their part in the great organised effort to raise a large sum for the benefit of our sailors and their families—R.N., R.N.R., R.N.V.R., trawlers and mine-sweepers. The nation owes them all a debt that can never be paid. The fund is to be administered on the lines of King Edward's Hospital Fund. An All-American matinee will be given in this good cause at the Victoria Palace on Thursday, July 26th, and *Trelawny of the Wells* (with Miss *Irene vanbrugh*) at the New Theatre on Friday. Gifts for the fund may be addressed to Commodore Sir *Richard Williams-Bulkeley*, Bt., at the offices of "Navy Week," 5, Green Street, Leicester Square, W.C. 2.

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[Illustration: *The scrapper scrapped.*]

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[Illustration: *Sergeant (to cadet)*. "SIT BACK, SIR! SIT BACK! THINK WOT A BLINKIN' FOOL YOU'D LOOK IF 'IS 'EAD WAS TO COME ORF!"]

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THE WATCH DOGS.

LXIII.

My dear Charles,—I never meant to give myself away; I meant to go on talking about the old War till the end, just as if I was taking a leading part in it, so that you should have still believed I was doing the bull-dog business with the best of them. But no, let me be honest and tell you that I have practically ceased to be a dog. The only painful connection I can boast of recently with the War is that, having cause to travel from place to place in this country, I was unhappy enough to strike six meatless days in succession, which gave me to think that even embusquing in France has its drawbacks. On the seventh day I was accused, by good people who know not Thomas, of being (1) a Russian, (2) an American, (3) a Belgian, and (4) an Irishman, which made me feel that these gaudy colours I have burst into are not so famous as I supposed; and on the eighth day I find myself insulted in twenty-seven places by an angry mosquito, whom in the small hours of the morning I had occasion to rap over the knuckles and turn out of my billet. And I've got a nasty cold, and nobody loves me or cleans my buttons, and if I want to go anywhere there are no more motor cars and they make me pay a penny for the tram, and my wife doesn't think I'm a hero any longer, and little

James is being taught to blush and look away and start another subject when anybody says “Dad-dad,” and (if you can believe this) I’ve just been made to pay a franc-and-a-half for a tin of bully beef.

Page 6

But you don't sympathise, not a bit of it; why should you? I shouldn't if I were in your place. I should just cut off the supply of cigarettes and shaving-soap, stop wishing me good luck, and, with haughty contempt, say, "Call yourself a soldier!" Nevertheless, my friend, whatever I may *be*, I *look* extraordinarily magnificent, so much so that a short-sighted Major has taken his pipe out of his mouth as I have drawn near and has as good as saluted me. When he saw I was only a Captain (and a temporary Captain at that) he tried to cover his mistake; but he didn't deceive me; he didn't need to take his pipe out of his mouth in order to scratch his head, did he?

There is this to be said about being at war, you never know what is going to happen to you next. For the most part this is just as well. There is, however, a decent percentage of pleasant surprises, which is, I suppose, the only thing that makes the business tolerable. No orderly ever came up to the trenches, when I was in them, but he gave rise to the hope that he had orders for me to come out at once and command in chief. Some such orderly did arrive at last, but the instructions he gave me said nothing about taking over the B.E.F. Nevertheless orders were orders and I obeyed them and came out. Having a private conversation with Fortune on the way down the communication trench, I thanked her very sincerely for her kindness and said I was so grateful that I would never ask her for anything else.

But you know human nature as well as I do; I soon found myself saying what a hard life it was in an office, and how one missed the open-air life one had with one's regiment and the healthy appetite it gave one. Besides which, as I pointed out to Fortune, my solid worth wasn't being recognised as it should be. "I don't ask for favours," I told her. "All I ask is bare justice." Now, if I'd been Fortune, Charles, and a man had spoken to me like that, after all I'd done for him, I'd have had him marching up that communication trench again, with a full pack, at five o'clock in the very next forenoon.

But Fortune, ever kind and forgiving, did no such thing. She did remonstrate with me gently of nights, when the noise of the bombardments was particularly fierce and prolonged. "What about those poor fellows right up in front," she said, "who are sitting out in the wind and the rain and going through *that*?" "Yes," said I, "what about them? Can't you do something for them? Do you know that this is their fourth night of it in succession, and the only bit of change you've been able to give them was sleet instead of rain on the Sunday?" That used to put Fortune in the cart, and she'd try and work the conversation round to my own case again. But what with the wind and the noise and the downpour and the mud, I was too hot on the other subject, and I said that Fortune ought to be ashamed of herself, carrying on like that; and it was a disgraceful war and the police ought to stop it, and I'd a very good mind to write to the papers about it.

Page 7

Then the next day would be fine and dry and warm, and it would be early closing for the Bosch artillery, and the infantry would go marching past my office window, whistling and singing and behaving as if the whole thing was a jolly old picnic; and who'd be an inkslinger in such weather? And Fortune, modestly intruding, would say to me casually, "I think I've arranged that rather well, don't you?"

"Ah, you've arranged something at last, have you?" I'd say, assuming that she must be thinking about me, and I'd open my official envelopes with an unusual interest, feeling practically sure that one of them must contain immediate orders for me—the one and only me—to proceed forthwith to England and reorganise the War Office, taking over a couple of six-cylinder cars and a furnished flat in St. James's for the purpose.

Poor old Fortune! what could she say next? She'd look at me, more in sorrow than in anger, and murmur, "Aren't you forgetting that this is a war and you are supposed to be fighting it?" Did I blush for shame? Not I. As bold as brass I'd look old Fortune straight in the face and, with righteous indignation, would say, "I know as well as you do, Ma'am, that it is a war; but there's no reason why it shouldn't be a *just* war." Thinking it out I have never been quite able to see what I meant by that, as applied to my own case. However, I seem to have said the right thing, and it appears to have impressed Fortune very considerably, because—well, Charles, here I am.

Yet if there is justice in this world (and I subsist on the confident hope and belief that there is not) I know what the end of it must be. That confounded orderly, turned traitor, will one day search me out, however far I may have wandered from the battlefield meanwhile, and, saluting ironically, will hand me an envelope marked "Urgent, secret, confidential, personal, private." The contents will be a piece of news and some orders, and all that Fortune will have had to do with it will be to attach a forwarding slip, "Passed to you, please, for your information and necessary action." The news will be that for everyone else the War is over, and the infantry and the rest of them will take over forthwith my present circumstances, being free to revel in the trams and the mosquitoes and the nasty colds to their hearts' delight. The orders will be that for me the War is about to begin again in grim earnest, and that to-morrow at dawn I take over and defend till further notice, and against all the most noisy and loathsome inventions that man can devise, that sector of the trenches which extends from the Swiss frontier to the sea.

When that day comes I shall be too busy (taking cover) to have leisure to write to you. Meanwhile I shall still be in touch with life from time to time and will pass on to you such scraps as come my way. Yours ever, Henry.

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"The India Office goes to Mr. Montagu."—*The Star*.

Page 8

Mahomet had to go to the Mountain, but Mr. Montagu is more fortunate.

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[Illustration: *Bill*. "I dessay some women can do men's work. But they'll never git men's wages."

Joe (much married). "Wotchermean—*never*? They always 'ave!"]

* * * * *

OUR MIGHTY PENMEN.

BY A LITERARY EXPERT.

The House of Boffin announces a revised edition of Mr. Elbert Pitts's *Final Words on Religion*, under the title of *Antepenultimate Words on Religion*. As Mr. Pitts observes in his arresting Preface, "Finality, in a time of upheaval, is a relative term, and I hope, at intervals of six months or so, to publish my penultimate, quasi-ultimate and paulo-post-ultimate views on the vital beliefs which underlie the fantastic superstructure of dogmatic theology." The new work will be illustrated with three portraits of the author by Mr. Marcellus Thom, taken at various stages of the composition of the work.

* * * * *

Mr. Pitts has also completed a new novel entitled *The Bounder of Genius*, and has kindly furnished us with a brief outline of its contents. The hero, who starts life as an artificial raspberry-pip maker and amasses a colossal fortune in the Argentine grain trade, marries a poor seamstress in his struggling days, but deserts her for a brilliant variety actress, who is in turn deposed by (1) the daughter of a dean, (2) the daughter of an earl, and (3) the daughter of a duke. Ultimately Jasper Dando, for that is his name, leads a crusade to Patagonia, where he establishes a new republic founded on Eugenics, China tea, and the Prohibition of the Classics. Mr. Pitts thinks it the finest thing he has done, and he is fortified in this conviction by the opinion of Mr. Stoot, the principal reader of the House of Boffin.

* * * * *

We are glad to hear that Mr. Hanley Potter will shortly issue, through the firm of Bloomer and Guppy, a selection from the reviews, notices and essays contributed by him to *The Slagville Gazette*. "They are interesting," says the author, "as the expression of a fresh and unbiassed mind, unfettered by any respect for established reputations or orthodox standards." The titles of some of the articles—"The Dulness of Dante," "The Sloppiness of Scott," "George Eliot as Pedant," "Jane Austen the Prude"—indicate sufficiently the richness of the treat provided in these stimulating pages.



* * * * *

Page 9

The Centenary of JANE AUSTEN is to be celebrated in a thoroughly practical manner by the House of Hussell. It will be remembered that, some thirty years ago, an effort was made to revive the waning popularity of SIR WALTER SCOTT by the issue of a series of condensed versions of his novels, in which redundant passages, notes and introductions were removed and the salient features were compressed in a compact and animated narrative. In order to render justice to JANE AUSTEN the process needed is diametrically opposite. JANE AUSTEN'S novels are short and singularly lacking in picturesqueness, emotion, colour. Mr. Hamo Bletherley, who has been entrusted with the task of infusing these elements into JANE AUSTEN'S staid and reticent romances, points out that her vocabulary was extraordinarily limited. Her abstinence from decorative epithets led to results that are bald and unconvincing. One may look in vain in her pages for such words as "arresting," "vital," "momentous" or "sinister." She never uses "glimpse," "sense" or "voice" as verbs. We look forward with eager anticipation to the results of Mr. Bletherley's courageous experiment.

* * * * *

In this connection we cannot too heartily congratulate Mr. Jerome Longmore, the well-known bookman and literary curio-collector, on his latest stroke of good luck. It appears that in a recent pilgrimage to Selborne he met the only surviving great-granddaughter of Sarah Timmins (charwoman at Chawton in the years 1810 to 1815), and purchased from her a pair of bedroom slippers, a pink flannel dressing-gown and a boa which had belonged to the great novelist. A full description of these priceless relics will shortly appear in *The Penman*, together with a life and portrait of Sarah Timmins, who married a pork butcher in Liphook and died in 1848. One of her letters establishes the interesting fact that JANE AUSTEN never ate sausages.

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We may add that Mr. Longmore is not one of those miserly collectors who brood over their treasures and deny the sight of them to others. On the contrary he takes the keenest pleasure in showing them to his friends, and at the present time is holding a series of informal receptions at his charming villa at Potter's Bar, at which, robed in JANE AUSTEN'S dressing-gown, wearing her boa and shod in her slippers, he presents a truly romantic and distinguished spectacle. We understand that the Potter's Bar authorities are favourably considering the proposal that warnings of air raids in that locality should be given by the appearance in public of Mr. Longmore in this striking dress.

* * * * *

"... Mr. Lloyd George, on whom, by devious paths, has descended the mantle of Lord Rosebery."—*Daily Express*.

Including the PRIMROSE path, we presume.

* * * * *

Page 10

PETHERTON'S PEDIGREE.

A stroke of luck enabled me to open an interesting little correspondence with my genial neighbour, Petherton, which resulted in one of those delightful passages-of-arms in which Petherton, at least, excels.

DEAR MR. PETHERTON (I began),—I have made a discovery which will, I am sure, interest you, though I am uncertain whether it will be as pleasing to you as to myself.

During certain research work at the Record Office I came across incontrovertible evidence that we are in some way related through a Petherton in the early part of the eighteenth century (*tempus* GEORGE II.) being sufficiently far-seeing to contract a marriage with a Fordyce. This Petherton, by name Edward, lived at Kirkby Lonsdale, and his wife, Emily Jane Fordyce, at Dent, in the same district. I haven't a family tree by me, but know the late-lamented Emily Jane by name. She was part of the issue of one Henry Fordyce, who is in the direct line, absolutely non-stop, without changing, from the earliest known Fordyce to myself. What a field for speculation is here opened up! With your scientific bent you will grasp the possibilities of the hereditary influence of my family on yours, supposing Edward Petherton to be a direct ancestor of your own. To me the unexpected result of my researches will give an added interest to our correspondence, and I await with eagerness your views as to the value and interest of my discovery.

Your kinsman,

HENRY J. FORDYCE.

Petherton cried "Touche" at once, and lunged at me in accordance with my plan of campaign.

SIR (he spluttered),—As a very busy man I must protest against your attempt to distract my attention by writing to me on a matter that is of no importance. That your discovery is of a somewhat disconcerting nature I will not deny, but that it is of any particular value or interest to me is hardly to be expected, seeing that it relates to a by-gone century, and any defects acquired by the Pethertons from such a union will, I imagine, have been overcome by now. The Fordyces were apparently a more attractive race in the eighteenth than in the twentieth century. I can scarcely imagine a present-day Petherton contracting such a *mesalliance*. A direct ancestor of mine, Edward Petherton, as I see by the Family Bible in my possession, was born in 1699, married in 1728, and lived at Kirkby Lonsdale. His wife's name is not stated, but I can the more readily believe that he is the misguided individual to whom you refer, as he died in 1729, no doubt as the result of his rash act. His son, Primus Postumus Petherton, born, as his second name suggests, after his father's death, carried on the line. Any possible virtues

or talents my family may possess are not, I am certain, from the distaff side of this union.

Yours faithfully,

Page 11

FREDERICK PETHERTON.

I made a thrust in tierce:—

DEAR COUSIN FRED,—What a mine of information you are! I touch a spring and out comes Primus Postumus Petherton. The name conjures up visions of grey church towers, monumental urns and the eulogies in verse beloved of Georgian poets. I wonder whether Possy was a great letter-writer and kept poultry. By the way, what a lot of good things begin with a “P,” and, talking of poultry, I notice yours are laying, or should be. They are certainly in full song these mornings. I’m so glad that you’re so glad that I’m a relation. When I was at the Record Office again yesterday I searched for more information about my new-found relatives. In fact I dug up the Petherton allotment thoroughly and unearthed Priscilla and Anne, both of CHARLES I.’s time, and Marmaduke of the Restoration. I couldn’t exhume a complete family tree, or no doubt I should have found all these worthies hanging on their respective branches, though Marmaduke might have dropped off, as he appears to have been a bit over-ripe from what I could gather from the records. How are the Food Regulations suiting you? Judging from your last letter I’m afraid you are not taking enough starch. Of course I know it’s gone up fearfully in price lately. Personally I’ve taken to wearing soft collars.

Your affectionate Cousin, H.F.

Aren’t you pleased that potatoes have come in again? (Another good thing beginning with a P.)

Petherton ground his teeth for a last bout, and bade me come on.

SIR (he wrote),—I’m glad you’ve taken to soft collars. They will suit your soft head. As for food, I’m afraid you’re not taking enough arsenic. A slight touch of relationship to my family has evidently turned your brain. I cannot say how sorry I am that you should have discovered the one flaw in my pedigree.

Yours faithfully,

FREDERICK PETHERTON.

I gave him one last little tweak under the ribs:—

DEAR OLD BOY,—Just a hurried line to say that all is forgiven and forgotten. The family feud (there must have been one, I’m certain) which has kept the Pethertons and the Fordyces apart for the last couple of centuries is a thing of the past, now that we two understand each other so thoroughly. I am only sorry I did not discover the strawberry mark on your left arm earlier, that I might the sooner have subscribed myself.

Your long lost HARRY.

This either disarmed him or he threw away his weapon in disgust.

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[Illustration: *British Tar* (confidentially to lady friend). "SHE'S SUNK ALL RIGHT."]

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"Other houses have a good many books which have come down from posterity, mostly in odd volumes."—"Claudius Clear" in "*The British Weekly*."

Page 12

Some of those that we bequeath to our ancestors will be quite as odd.

* * * * *

It is rumoured that during the period of food-control a well-known Soho restaurant intends to change its name to the “Rhondda-vous.”

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Busy City-man to his Partner (as one of the new air-raid warnings gets to work).* “IF YOU’LL LEAVE ME IN HERE FOR THE WARNINGS I’LL CARRY ON WHILE YOU TAKE SHELTER DURING THE RAIDS.”]

* * * * *

THE LITTLE THINGS.

I used to be a peaceful chap as didn’t ask for trouble,
An’ as for rows an’ fightin’, why, I’d mostly rather not,
But now I’d charge an army single-’anded at the double,
An’ it’s all along o’ little things I’ve learned to feel so ’ot.

It’s ’orrid seein’ burnin’ farms, which I ’ave often seen ’ere,
An’ fields all stinks an’ shell-’oles, an’ the dead among the flowers,
But the thing I’ve ’ated seein’ all the bloomin’ time I’ve been ’ere
Is the little gardens rooted up—the same as might be ours

It’s bad to see the chattos—which means castles—gone to ruins,
And big cathedrals knocked to bits as used to look that fine,
But what puts me in a paddy more than all them sort o’ doin’s
Is the little ’ouses all in ’eaps—the same as might be mine.

An’ when the what’s-it line is bust an’ we go rompin’ through it,
An’ knock the lid off Potsdam an’ the KAYSER off ’is throne,
Why, what’ll get our monkey up an’ give us ’eart to do it?
Just thinkin’ o’ them little things as might ’ave been our own
(An’ most of all the little kids as might ’ave been our own)!

C.F.S.

* * * * *

GOIN’ BACK.



I'm goin' back to Blighty and a free-an' easy life,
But I grant it ain't the Blighty of me pals:
They takes the Tube to Putney, to the kiddies and the wife,
Or takes the air on 'Ampstead with their gals;
My little bit o' Blighty is the 'ighway,
With the sweet gorse smellin' in the sun;
And the 'eather 'ot and dry, where a tired man may lie
When the long day's done.

There's picture-'alls in 'Ammersmith to suit them mates o' mine;
There's beer and 'addock suppers and cigars;
But I guess I'd sooner slog it where there's jest the scent o' pine
And over'ead an 'eap o' little stars;
The lights o' Charin' Cross and Piccadilly,
I'd swop 'em for the silver of the streams,
When the summer moon is lit and the bats begin to flit
And the dark earth dreams.

Page 13

I'm goin' back to Blighty, to the little lonesome lanes,
The dog-rose and the foxglove and the ferns,
The sleepy country 'orses and the jolty country wains
And the kindly faces every way you turns;
My little bit o' Blighty is the 'ighway,
With the sweet gorse smellin' in the sun;
And the 'eather good and deep where a tired man may sleep
When the long day's done.

* * * * *

[Illustration: LONG LIVE THE HOUSE OF WINDSOR!]

* * * * *

ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, July 16th.—In the course of a discussion on “rope” in War-bread Mr. THORNE accused the West-End bakeries of mixing white flour with the “G.R.” variety, and so supplying their wealthy customers with better bread than is procurable by his own constituents. Although no official confirmation of this charge was forthcoming Mr. THORNE appeared to be convinced of its accuracy. In his opinion the Government, following the historic example of PHARAOH, should give the bread to the people and the rope to the bakers.

It might not be accurate to say that in the matter of beer the Irishman wants but little here below, but he certainly wants that little strong; and being, in spite of a popular impression to the contrary, a seriously-minded person, he resents any reduction of his gravity. Mr. BRIDGEMAN'S gentle reminder that no Irish brewer need avail himself of the new regulations unless he pleases quite failed to satisfy the Nationalists that a new item had not been added to Ireland's catalogue of grievances.

Tuesday, July 17th.—For some weeks Mr. GINNELL has been absent from his place. No one has gone so far as to suggest that the Roll of the House should be called in order to bring back the hon. Member to his Parliamentary duties. But considerable curiosity was aroused by his recent statement that he proposed to make one more appearance at Westminster before retiring permanently to Ireland to watch over the growth of the Sinn Fein Republic. To-day was the day. Question 45, “Mr. Ginnell, to ask the Prime Minister, &c., &c.,” was eagerly awaited. There was no saying that the hon. Member, if dissatisfied with the reply, would not hurl the Mace at the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, so as to ensure a properly dramatic exit. At last No. 45 was reached; but Mr. GINNELL was not there to put it. Once more the Saxon intellect had been too slow to keep up with the swift processes of the Celtic cerebellum. Mr.

GINNELL has on more than one occasion made what his compatriots call a “holy show” of himself; but he refuses to do this sort of thing to order.

[Illustration: THE EMPTY SEAT.

MR. PUNCH DROPS A SILENT TEAR AT THE DEPARTURE OF ONE OF HIS BEST PUPPETS.]

Mr. HOUSTON is still harping upon the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER’S recent confession of his ship-owning gains, and laboured hard this afternoon to convince the Committee that shipowners in general were in no sense profiteers. He failed, however, to avert the wrath of Mr. DENNISS, who declared that if, after what had been revealed, any shipowner was made a peer, he should move to abolish the peerage.

Page 14

This day the KING in Council decreed that the Royal House should forthwith abandon all German titles and be known henceforth as the House of Windsor. No one will be better pleased than Mr. SWIFT MACNEILL, who for months past has been unsparing in his efforts to purge the Upper House of enemy peers, and to-night had the satisfaction of seeing a Bill for that purpose read a second time. His prophecy that such a measure could be passed in three minutes was not quite borne out; but that was chiefly because the hon. Member himself occupied a quarter-of-an-hour in complaining of the Government's delay in introducing it.

Wednesday, July 18th.—Sir HENRY DALZIEL has been labouring under the delusion that the R.N.A.S. and the R.F.C. are so mortally afraid of trespassing upon one another's aerial preserves that the former will not attack an enemy plane travelling over land, or the latter over sea. Dr. MACNAMARA for the Navy, and Mr. MACPHERSON for the Army, informed him that there was no truth in the suggestion; but Colonel CLAUDE LOWTHER, remembering that there were once Two Macs who delighted in spoofing their audiences, refused to be comforted until categorically assured that between R.N.A.S. and R.F.C. there is "sufficient cohesion."

[Illustration: LORD HARDINGE'S CHAMPION.

MR. BALFOUR LETS OUT.]

This was BALFOUR's day. Never since he gave up the Leadership of the Unionist Party six years ago has he more completely dominated the scene. Mr. BONAR LAW had announced that the Government had on third thoughts decided not to set up a new tribunal to try the persons affected by the Mesopotamia Report. The military officers would be dealt with by the Army Council. As for Lord HARDINGE, the Government, "on the representations of the FOREIGN SECRETARY," had again refused his proffered resignation. If any Members disapproved, let them propose a Vote of Censure or move the adjournment.

It was perhaps fortunate for the Government that Mr. DILLON accepted the challenge. During the War the Member for East Mayo has lost such authority in the House as he once possessed. Criticism on the conduct of the campaign from one who boasts that he has never stood upon a recruiting platform lacks sincerity. Mr. BALFOUR, always at his best when defending a friend, laid about him lustily, and convinced the majority of the House, not very friendly at the outset, that it would be an act of gross injustice to remove a great public servant because the Commission—on whose evidence, without further inquiry, you could not hang a cat—had reported adversely on his conduct in an entirely different capacity.

To add to the force of this appeal came Sir HEDWORTH MEUX'S striking testimonial—"I have known Lord Hardinge from a boy." After that, small wonder that the House rejected Mr. Dillon's motion by 176 to 81.

Page 15

Thursday, July 19th.—The only thing that keeps Mr. Reddy at Westminster is his delight in acting as Chorus to Major Pretyman Newman. Whenever the hon. and gallant Member asks a question Mr. Reddy, in a piping voice of remarkable carrying power, immediately puts another, designed to throw doubt upon his personal prowess or his military capacity. Major Newman had several Questions on the Paper this afternoon, and, as he had just announced the withdrawal of his valuable support from a Government so lost to all sense of propriety as to welcome Messrs. Churchill and Montagu to its fold, Mr. Reddy's comments were awaited with pleasurable anticipation.

Alas! for once he was not in his place. Even when Major Newman elicited the damning information that some members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police occasionally employ a German barber there was no penetrating voice from the back benches to ask, "Why doesn't the honourable Member go and shave them himself?"

Mr. Jowett wants the Home Secretary to withdraw the permission he gave some time ago "to employ women on the night-turn in wool-combing." Several much-married Members are afraid that whatever he may decide the objectionable practice will continue.

* * * * *

SCOTLAND FOR EVER.

They came from untamable highlands,
From glens where their fathers were free,
From misty and mountainous islands
Set fast in the throat of the sea;
They fought for the honour of Britain;
They died in defence of the right;
Their deeds are in history written
In letters of light.

They fell where the Ganges is flowing;
They lie 'neath the Russian Redan;
Their dust o'er the desert is blowing
In the whirlwinds of far Kordofan;
The sons of Glen Orchy and Rannoch
Sleep sound by the slow-moving Scheldt,
And the bones of the men of Loch Fannich
Are white on the veldt.

But the Lows and Lochmaben and Gairloch
Still march to the battle array,
And the fighters from many a fair loch,



Like their fathers, leap forth to the fray;
Red flame tears the darkness asunder
Where the curtain of battle is drawn,
Where the clansmen through death-cloud and thunder
Go over at dawn.

In the strength of the hills and the heather,
With the salt of the sea in their blood,
They sweep from the trenches together
With the force of an onrushing flood;
Like the billows that beat upon Moidart
When gales from the Hovrudes blow,
Like a storm on the mountains of Knoidart
They burst on the foe.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Hairdresser (with a view to business—to customer, who is getting rapidly bald)*. “There are plenty of hairdressers, you know, Sir, who profess to make a wig; but, when you’ve got it on, it looks nothing like a wig at all, Sir.”]

Page 16

* * * * *

A film-drama:—

“It is the story of the poor orphan daughter of a South American aristocrat. She has become enamoured of a tradesman’s son, but misapprehension having arisen, she becomes engaged to a man who apparently is well endowed with this world’s foods.”—*Leicester Daily Mercury*.

In these times, who can wonder at her choice?

* * * * *

From an article on the Royal Lineage:—

“After the extinction of the Billing Family....”—*Daily Telegraph*.

A correspondent, writing upon House of Commons’ notepaper, assures us that the above passage is a gross exaggeration.

* * * * *

“Charlie D. (Westminster).—We answer you in the words of Cassius, ‘A plague of both your houses.’”—*Town Topics*.

Were not the words those of *Mercutio* when he had failed to set up a Business Government in Verona?

* * * * *

“Apply weed-killers to garden walks and drives, using every precaution against domestic fowls and other bird-eating worms.”—*Irish Gardening*.

Very careless of St. Patrick to leave these ornithophagous reptiles at large.

* * * * *

“Wanted, Few Men to travel with Hobby Horses.—Apply Murphy’s Steam Galloping Horses, Abbeyleix, Queen’s Co.”—*Irish Independent*.

Now we understand Mr. Ginnell’s sudden decision to quit Westminster.

* * * * *

THE TAP-ROOM.

Our Reserve Battalion has a billiard-room, which is well patronised by all those cheerful souls who have escaped from France without permanent injury and resignedly await the second call.

To-night the "Tap-room" is in top form. A four-handed game of snooker is in as rapid progress as is reasonably possible. Every easy-chair is filled with a would-be player offering gratuitous advice in order to speed things up. A young war-scarred Captain is balanced on a rickety side-table, offering odds on the game in a raucous voice. The Mess-waiter strives to be in three places at once. Through all, the players, totally unnerved, play with a desperate attempt at concentration.

Suddenly the door opens, and the Colonel enters, heated and out of breath. His eye pierces through the tobacco smoke and transfixes the unhappy bookmaker. He requests him to take advantage of his position to open a window. The players examine the tips of their cues in sudden silence. The Colonel refuses the offer of six vacated chairs with a slightly impatient negative and inquires as to the probable length of the game. He accepts the obvious untruth that it has just ended, smiles with satisfaction, and proposes to the Adjutant a game of one hundred up.

Page 17

The Colonel, after examining the cues with marked disapproval, eventually selects one of short length and pronounced weight. He then appropriates for his sole personal use the only piece of chalk, demands the spot ball, places it in position, and endeavours to cast his opponent's ball into a baulk pocket with a rapid back-hander. The Adjutant sprints round the table in pursuit.

The Colonel next addresses his own ball and propels it violently against the red, which, taken completely by surprise, bounds with a strong resilience from the top cushion, courses twice up and down the table and comes to a pause in the neighbourhood of the middle pocket. The Colonel tests the elasticity of the cushion with his thumb and gives way a foot to enable his opponent to begin a neat break of twenty-seven.

The Colonel, finding time hanging heavily on his hands, devotes this period to filling his pipe from a borrowed pouch; he then tramps determinedly back to the table and is about to pocket the red from a point of considerable vantage, when the Adjutant deferentially suggests that he is about to play with the wrong ball. The Colonel immediately strides round the table to where his command is clinging to the cushion, lifts the ball to convince himself that there is a spot on its surface, plants it back in a slightly more favourable position, and with one thrust of his cue projects it into open country. He then leaves the table without awaiting the result and resumes his pipe.

The Adjutant now compiles a fifteen break, pauses, notices the Colonel's inattention, and with typical lack of true discipline pots his opponent's ball and leaves the others in baulk. A horrified silence ensues. The Colonel, without noticing the delicacy of the situation, playfully slopes his "hipe" and marches back to the table. The awful truth is instantly laid bare. The colour of his face becomes of an imperial shade. He dumbly fumbles for his ball, which, with a last bid for exemption, eludes his fingers and rolls under the table.

Taking advantage of this the Colonel, with one glance of concentrated hate in the direction of his opponent, grapples with his choler, and by the time that his ball is returned under escort, has partially recovered himself. He is determined to show to his subalterns the value of coolness in an emergency. He places his ball with infinite care and walks round the table to examine the position from every point of view. His next move is to mark out elaborate angles with the assistance of chalk marks on the cushions. Having finally formed all his plans, he encourages his artillery with a few more rounds of chalk, approaches the field with studied and dignified calm, delivers his attack, and retires to watch the effect from his O. Pip.

His command, flying desperately across the open, loses direction, blunders hopelessly into an obstruction on the flank, retires in confusion, and makes a blind despairing dash for a shell-crater. Missing this by a fraction it loses all interest in life, wanders pitifully off at an unnatural angle, runs into the hostile force of the Adjutant, and comes finally into contact with the red.

Page 18

The Colonel hastens to remark to the enthusiastic audience that this cannon only proves the possibilities of the noble game when accuracy is achieved. It is calculated to improve their marksmanship, to teach them to grasp an opportunity, to apply their tactical training, and to render them cool in the hour of crisis.

Inspired by this truth he attempts to pull off an awkward losing hazard. This effort is ruined by an appalling miscue which affects the new cloth. The Colonel justly blames the chalk, removes the pet-dog of the battalion from his path with his foot, and makes for the scoring-board. The volunteer marker inadvertently puts the Colonel's modest score on to the large total of the Adjutant.

At this critical moment an orderly fortunately arrives with a note from the Brigade office. The Colonel secures the missive, tears the envelope to shreds, runs his eye over the trivial contents, and curses the War. He then assumes an air of enormous importance, excuses himself, and stamps out into the night.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Ancient Heroine*. "IT'S BEEN A TRYIN' TIME FOR ME, MRS. BLOGGS. MY SAVIN'S-BANK BOOK WAS UP IN LUNNON ALL THROUGH THE AIR-RAID."]

* * * * *

"It may be the bravery of ignorance that induces us to take this point of view, but the locality excuses ignorance to some extent, and the bravery still exists: Ovid has a line that might be learnt with advantage by our readers—

"Falliker augurio, spes bona saepe sus."—*Nigerian Pioneer*.

We do not recall this line in OVID; but the locality is notoriously unfavourable to Latin quotation. As HORACE says, *Hic Niger est; hunc tu, Romane, caveto*.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Officer*. "WANT A NEW MESS-TIN, DO YOU? WHERE'S YOUR OLD ONE?"

Private. "I HAVEN'T GOT IT, SIR." *Officer*. "WHY NOT?"

Private. "PLEASE, SIR, THERE'S A CHATEAU ON TOP OF IT, SIR."]

* * * * *

DR. SULLIVAN.



It had been decided that there never was such a resemblance as is to be traced between my homely features and those of a visitor to the same hotel last year—Dr. Sullivan of Wigley Street. This had become an established fact irrefutable like a proposition of Euclid and one of my new friends, who was also a friend of the Dr. Sullivan of Wigley Street who had so satisfyingly and minutely anticipated my countenance, made it the staple of his conversation. “Isn’t Mr. Blank,” he would say to this and that *habitué* of the smoking-room as they dropped in from the neighbouring farms at night, “the very image of Dr. Sullivan of Wigley Street, who was here last year?” And they would subject my physiognomy to a searching study and agree that I was. Perhaps the nose—a little bigger, don’t you think? or a shade of dissimilarity between the chins (he having, I suppose, only two, confound him!), but taking it all round the likeness was extraordinary.

Page 19

This had been going on for some time, until I was accustomed, if not exactly inured, to it, and was really rather looking forward to the time when, on returning to London, I could trump up a sufficient ailment to call upon my double in Wigley Street and scrutinize him with my own eyes. But last night my friend had something of a set-back, which may possibly, by deflecting his conversation to other topics, give me relief. I hope so.

It happened like this. We were sitting in the smoking-room as usual, he and I, when another local acquaintance entered—one who, I gathered, had been away for a few weeks and whom I had therefore not yet seen, and who (for this was the really important thing to my friend) consequently had not yet seen me.

In course of time the inevitable occurred. “Don’t you think,” my friend asked, “that Mr. Blank is the very image of Dr. Sullivan of Wigley Street, who was here last summer?”

“What Dr. Sullivan’s that?” the newcomer inquired.

“Dr. Sullivan of Wigley Street, who was fishing here last summer. Don’t you remember him? The very image of Mr. Blank.”

“The only Dr. Sullivan I know,” replied the newcomer, “is Dr. Sullivan of Newcastle. He’s a very old man by now. A very learned man too. He has a wonderful private museum. He—”

“No, no, the Dr. Sullivan I mean was From Wigley Street—a specialist—who took the Manor fishing last summer and stayed in the hotel.”

“Dr. Sullivan of Newcastle is a very old man—much older than Mr. Blank here, and not a bit like him. He’s a most interesting personality. He is the great authority on the South Sea Islanders. You should see his collection of Fiji war clubs.”

“But that’s not the Dr. Sullivan I mean. You must remember him,” said my impresario; “we all used to meet evening after evening, just as we’re doing now—Dr. Sullivan of Wigley Street, the specialist, a clean-shaven big man, exactly like Mr. Blank here. Everyone has noticed the likeness.”

“Dr. Sullivan of Newcastle has a beard,” said the newcomer. “And he’s a very old man by now. A great receptacle of miscellaneous learning. He showed me once his collection of coins and medals. He’s got coins back to the Roman Emperors and stories about every one of them. His collection—”

“Yes, but—”

“—of idols is amazing. You never saw such comic figures as those natives worship. There’s nothing he doesn’t collect. He’s got a mummy covered with blue beads. He’s got skulls from all over the world, showing different formations. It’s some years—”

“Yes, but—”

“—since I saw him last, and of course he may be—”

“Yes, but—”

“—dead. But if not he’s a man worth knowing. If ever you go to Newcastle don’t forget about him. But he must be very old by now. He—”

At this point I finished my glass and slipped away to bed. Consulting the mirror as I undressed, I smiled at the reflection that confronted me. “You can sleep well to-night,” I said, “for there are signs that you are about to have a rest.”

Page 20

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HEART-TO-HEART TALKS.

(*DR. VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG AND HERR MICHAELIS.*)

Michaelis. I have called partly because I desired to offer my most tactful condolences to my distinguished predecessor in the high office which I hold, and partly because I thought you might be willing to give me some hints as to my conduct, for I should like to leave nothing undone that might make me a successful Chancellor.

Von Bethmann-Hollweg. Upon my word you are even more kind and considerate than I had expected. Even to exchange a word with a fallen Chancellor is a sign both of kindness and courage. I wonder how you could screw yourself up to the pitch of being so daring.

M. I am glad you think so, for that is how I myself felt it.

Von B.-H. Well, we will leave your courage out of the question. It is sufficiently proved by your acceptance of the Chancellorship. As to such advice as I am able to give, I must ask you first whether you are ready to have the boots of the All-Highest constantly wiped upon various parts of your person?

M. A true Prussian endures that with difficulty.

Von B.-H. But a true Prussian, it seems, can accustom himself to this form of friendship and confidence as to many others.

M. What others do you speak of?

Von B.-H. My worthy Michaelis, you really must have covered your eyes and stopped your ears ever since you were born, otherwise you could not possibly be so ignorant. Do you not know that if your great and beloved says a foolish thing or does an indiscreet one it will be your duty to shoulder the responsibility for it? And you can easily calculate yourself during how many hours of the day your back is likely to be without a burden of some sort. And mind you, you are not to expect to receive any gratitude for your toil.

M. But he speaks a kind word now and then, doesn't he?

Von B.-H. A kind word? Ha-ha. When I think of all that I have done for that man, the acts I have defended, the stupidities I have tried to convert into statesmanship, the tempers I have been the butt of, the childish insults I have had to tolerate, the theatricalities I have been compelled to treat as if they were the most glorious



manifestations of Imperial splendour—when I think of all this and realise that he and I are both still alive, I marvel at such a spectacle of human endurance.

M. I must confess you are not very cheerful or very encouraging.

Von B.-H. I did not set out to cheer you up or to encourage you, but I thought it just as well that someone should tell you the truth.

M. Why aren't you glad then at having dropped your burden?

Von B.-H. I own I ought to be, but, as you hint, I am not. There are ways of doing things, and there is a real difference in walking quietly through a door and being kicked out through it with all possible violence.

Page 21

M. But you have had the Hohenzollern Order presented to you and the All-Highest has written you with his own gracious hand a letter.

Von B.-H. *Verbosa et grandis epistola venit a Capreis.* As for the Hohenzollern Order I don't care a snap of the fingers for it. Nor will you when your time comes.

M. I hope that will not be for many years.

Von B.-H. For your sake I hope your time may be short. In any case I must thank you most warmly for your tactful condolences.

* * * * *

THE REST-RUMOUR.

I know not in what rodent-haunted caverns
By what rough tongues the tale was first expressed,
By choking fires or in the whispering taverns
With wine and omelette lovingly caressed,
Or what tired soul, o'erladen with a lump
Of bombs and bags which someone *had* to hump,
Flung down his load indignant at the Dump
And, cursing, cried, "*It's time we had a rest!*"

And so, maybe, began it. Some sly runner,
Half-hearing, half-imagining, no doubt,
Caught up the word and gave it to a gunner,
And he, embroidering, 'twas noised about
From lip to lip in many a trench's press
Where working parties struggled to progress
Or else go back, but both without success,
"*Officer says Division's going out.*"

It found the Front. It came up with the rations;
The Corporals carried it from hole to hole;
And scouts behaved in strange polemic fashions
On what they thought would be their last patrol;
While Fritz, of course, from whom few things are hid,
Had the romance as soon as any did,
And said, thank William, he would soon be rid
Of yon condemned disturbers of his soul.

Nor were there few confirming little trifles,
For James, rejoining from the Base, had scann'd



Strange waiting infantry with brand-new rifles,
In backward areas, but close at hand;
And some had marked the D.A.Q.M.G.
Approaching Railhead in the dusk, and he
(Who, as a fact, was simply on the spree)
Had gone, of course, to view the Promised Land.

And what a land! Who had not heard its promise?
A land of quietude and no grenades,
Soft beds for officers, fair barns for Tommies,
And rich estaminets and gracious maids,
And half-an-hour from Abbeville by the train
A land of rivulets and golden grain
(Where it would be impossible to train
And even difficult to have parades)!

Then it appeared the groom of General Harrison
Had news denied to ordinary men,
How the Brigade was going home to garrison
A restful corner of the Lincoln fen;
But weeks have passed and we are as we were;
And possibly, when Peace is in the air
And these dear myths have died of sheer despair,
They may come true—but not, I think, till then.

Page 22

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FELINE AMENITIES.

“Cats’ Happy Holiday Home—Wired garden, Home comforts, References”—*Church Family Newspaper*.

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From a notice of “Three Weeks”:—

“The Queen of Croatia, one of those convenient operatic Balham royalties....”—*Liverpool Daily Post*.

Won’t Tooting be jealous!

* * * * *

“To one who has been long enough away from the centre of things almost to forget what it is like, a walk along Pall Mall yesterday brought some curious reflections. From the Circus to Hyde Park Corner not a single luxurious private motor-car or horse-drawn carriage was to be seen. It was not the Pall Mall of old days.”—*Evening Paper*.

No, it seems to have been much more like Piccadilly.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Troop-ship Officer*. “ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU, SIR?”

Enterprising American. “I GUESS SO. I’M THE CINEMATOGRAPH OPERATOR WHO’S GOING TO TAKE A FILM THE FIRST TIME YOU’RE TORPEDOED, AND I’VE GOT A LETTER FROM YOUR FOLKS INSTRUCTING YOU TO GIVE ME EVERY FACILITY.”]

* * * * *

A SURPRISE PARTY.

“Five-and-thirty wounded Tommies coming to tea and one of them coming to his death, but he doesn’t know it,” moaned Emily, and waved a knife round her head.

I saw what had happened. All this bun-baking and cake-making had been too much for my poor wife. She had been living in the oven for a week.

“You’re overdone. Lie down and try to get a little nap before they come,” I said soothingly. “Everything’s ready.”

“Will he die without a sound, or will he gurgle?” said Emily, and brought the knife within an inch of my nose.

“No one is going to die at our tea-party, dear,” I said, and ducked.

“Not after swallowing *that?*” shrieked Emily, and lunged at me with the knife again.

I got it firmly by the handle this time, and I recognised Emily’s special cake-knife, an instrument wrought to perfection by long years of service, sharp as a razor down both sides, with a flexible tip that slithered round a basin and scooped up the last morsels of candied-peel.

But the flexible tip was gone. I understood Emily’s distraught condition. You can replace a diamond tiara; money won’t buy a twenty-year-old cake-knife.

“Try and bear it, dear,” I said.

Emily pointed to the table weighed down with Madeiras and rocks and almonds and sultanas and gingers. “It’s inside one of them,” she said.

For the moment I failed to grasp her meaning. She explained. “I’ve made six dozen. The knife was all right when I started; a little bent, nothing more. It was when I was mixing the last that I noticed the tip was missing.”

Page 23

It was a difficult position. There was no time to submit the cakes to the X-rays; the advance party was streaming through the gate.

“Dear fellows! I wonder which one it will be,” said Emily, and clung round my neck.

I put her on one side. “I’ll manage it; leave it to me,” I said, and went forward and welcomed our guests. My mind was working clearly and rapidly, as it always does in a crisis. When I had got them seated round the tea-table, “My dear friends,” I said, “this isn’t a Christmas party, but my wife couldn’t help indulging in a little Christmas fun. She’s just whispered to me that she’s put a surprise in one of the cakes. I know her. It won’t be an ordinary sort of surprise. I should advise you all to keep a sharp look-out. There’s a pound” (it was worth a pound to save a hero’s throat from being cut) “for the man who finds anything in his cake which hasn’t any business to be there.”

Within five minutes two pebbles, a tin-tack, a chunk of wood and a black-beetle were on the tablecloth....

“Do you know that flutter’s cost me five pounds, and there wasn’t a sign of your infernal knife after all?” I said to Emily when they’d gone.

“I’ve just found it under the kitchen table,” said Emily. “I *am* thankful.”

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“This company’s year ended on the 40th June, and a good distribution is looked for by the market.”—*Journal of Commerce*.

With such help from the calendar any company should do well.

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THE SIGNAL SECTION.

You know how the great hunter who sleeps with his gun at his pillow is awake in an instant, with all his faculties alert, when the sacred spider breaks a twig in the jungle? You remember how the handsome highwayman, at the first far clatter of hoofs on the great North Road, is up and out on the scullery roof of the inn before you have turned the page, and is deep in Lonely Copse (wearing the serving-wench’s stomacher) before his first fat pursuer has said, “Open in the name of the Law,” below his window? Well, like Jimmy’s bloodhound in *Punch*, I am very good at that.

But it is a telephone-bell that does it. You go down seventy-two steps—backwards, or you hit your head—to a German room, which smells German, and you will find my boudoir, furnished with sandbags, a shaving mirror and a telephone.

At eleven o'clock I lie on the sandbags and, like the great hunter, close my eyes immediately in dreamless sleep.

At five minutes past eleven the telephone-bell rings.

That is what I am good at. I leap to my feet and say "Hullo!"

Utter silence follows, save (as Mr. BEACH THOMAS would say) for the monotonous drone of the great shells bursting outside.

I repeat my original remark. "Hullo!" I say brightly, "Hullo!... Hullo!"

Page 24

I shake the microphone. It sounds as though sand had got into it, and still there is silence. The minutes creep on and my voice begins to fail. Outside in the quiet night a solitary gas-alarm chirps a few quiet notes to the stars and is still. I continue to say “Hullo!”

At eleven-fifteen the operator at the other end finishes the story of what he said to her and what she, on the other hand, said to him, and turns refreshed to his instrument.

With a dexterous twist of his wrist he sounds a deafening peal in the bell at my ear, and says, “Hullo!”

I retaliate. When the score is vantage out, I put all the red tabs I can into my voice, and his tone changes. He is at once the cheerful and willing artisan, eager to please.

“Yes, Sir ... Yes, Sir ... Who do you want, Sir? This is Zed Esses Pip Ack five, Sir ...”

“You called me,” I say.

He is more hurt than angry at that. “Oh, no, Sir. You rang me up, Sir. This is Zed Esses ...”

I nip that in the bud by saying “Hullo!” very loud. He realizes that the game is up.

“Speak to Division, Sir,” he says curtly, and clicks before I can answer. A faint far gnat-voice says, “Is that Zed Ess?”

“No,” I shout. “What the ...”

“Through to Division,” says gnat-voice and clicks me off. Another voice carries on the good work. Upstairs the shells burst playfully on the parapet, and under the starlit sky a gas cloud drifts slowly across the fields, almost hiding the cattle who are grazing peacefully there in the long wet grass.

At midnight I am through to Division.

“Is that you?” says Division. “There is a list ...”

“Finished, please?” says the operator so near and loud that I jump.

Division and I are at one here—we are agreed that we have not finished. Like the Brothers Crosstalk, we say so simultaneously, using the same swearword.

The operator clicks off, baffled.

“That list of men for a bombing course,” says Division.



"Yes, Sir," I reply brightly, though my heart sinks.

"You ought to have sent it in at 6 P.M.," says Division. "And it has not yet arrived."

I look at my wrist-watch, but realise too late that this graceful gesture is lost on him. "I am sorry, Sir," I reply with dignity, "but the delay was inevitable. It shall be with you on the breakfast-table. The difficulty of communication in this great War ..."

Division laughs sardonically.

At ten minutes past twelve I go to bed again, and at twelve-fifteen an orderly shines an electric torch in my eyes in order to prevent my reading a wire which he hands me. It says, "Ref. your S.C. 1985 please ask PIG if they have salvaged any German socks. A.A.A. urgent."

I stand up, and the orderly, completely unnerved by the sight of a Staff Captain in undress uniform, releases the button of his torch and retires under cover of darkness.

Page 25

I twirl the handle of the telephone and listen. There is silence. I turn it again with vigour. For twenty minutes I behave like an organ-grinder. Towards dawn the bell rings and I receive an electric shock.

“Hullo!” says the operator.

I tell him what I think of him. When I have finished the sun is up and the first aeroplane is dropping its glad bombs on the dewy earth below.

I demand PIG. PIG is a Machine Gun Company. By breakfast-time I have discovered that PIG has salvaged socks, German, one.

I ring up Division ...

It is a splendid force, as they used to say in *The Message from Mars*—it is a splendid force, the Signal Service.

And men sleeping among the rats in the front line wake for their coffee and hot water and envy me my undisturbed nights.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *New Tenant (digging up lawn and waste ground, to agent)*. “CAN YOU INFORM ME WHERE I CAN FIND THE MAN WHO OWNED THIS PLACE BEFORE ME?”

House Agent. “ER—HE’S IN FRANCE.”

Tenant. “UM. WELL, I HOPE HE COMES BACK. SAFELY!”]

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“The Vienna *Die Zeit* considers the political crisis in Germany as one of the chief consequences of the political utterances of English, American and French statesmen, demanding the demoralisation of Germany.”—*Sunday Times*.

It seems superfluous.

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“It is authoritatively announced that the American troops fighting in France will very shortly receive steel helmets, the design of the helmets being very similar to those worn by the French and British forces, but bearing, as insignia, the United States coat of mail.”—*Daily Graphic*.

Head-protection is very necessary, but isn't this rather overdoing it?