

Punch, or the London Charivari, Volume 156, May 21, 1919 eBook

Punch, or the London Charivari, Volume 156, May 21, 1919

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Page 1

CHARIVARIA.

"We thought it was to be a *Peace Conference*," remarks the *Berliner Tageblatt* sadly. Instead of which it turned out to be another Diet of Worms.

"Wanted a Dock Examiner," says a technical paper advertisement. Now if they had only wanted a Duke examiner we have the very man in mind.

Several correspondents have written to *The Daily Express* asking whether it is not unlucky to be married on a Friday. Our own experience is that it doesn't make much difference which day it is.

We learn on good authority that an airman recently flew from Newfoundland to the English coast, but immediately returned as he considered that the weather was unfavourable for landing. As the whole affair appears to have been hushed up it is thought that he was of American nationality.

"A seasonable dish," says *Household Hints*, "is *crab au gratis*." We can only say that in our own experience it never seems to be in season at the smartest restaurants.

An American Army doctor has discovered that sea-sickness originates in the ears. This confirms the old theory that persons who sleep with both ears pressed against the pillow are never sea-sick.

Presents given prior to engagements, says Judge CLUER, are in the nature of bait and cannot be recovered. Once the angler is safely hooked a different situation arises.

"I am confident," writes "J.E.P." in *The Daily Mail*, "that nineteen out of twenty men do not know what they should do on being bitten by a mad dog." The common practice of trying to bite the dog back is admittedly inadequate.

The London County Council have decided not to remove the marks of damage done by aircraft to the base of Cleopatra's Needle. It seems that they have also had to refuse the request of some curio-hunters who asked if they might have the indentations as mementos.

Owing to the inflated price of silver, a contemporary points out, the shilling now contains only ten-pence half-penny worth of silver. More important however is the fact that, owing to the inflated cheek of dairymen, it only contains three pennyworth of milk.

"Singing," says Dr. *Henry Coward*, "is a valuable preventive against influenza." It is also known that certain streptococci have an intense dislike to the trombone.

The parishioners of All Saints' Church, South Acton, are invited by the clergy to say what they would like to be preached to about. The little boy who wrote that he would like a sermon on the proper way to feed white rats is still hopeful.

It appears that a Wallasey licensee, in order to satisfy his customers, sent a sample of Government ale to be analysed. We understand that the analyst reported that there was nothing in it.

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"I don't go to the pictures," says Mr. H.G. *Wells*. It is not clear whether the Academy or the cinema is meant, but it shows that the famous novelist is, after all, only human, like so many of us.

As a result of high prices, says *The Daily Express*, ladies may now be seen at Longchamps without stockings. We have noticed similar signs of the high price of ladies' dresses in this country.

Sir *Neville* MACREADY'S statement that "burglars to-day often resort to violence" has caused much annoyance, and the famous police chief is to be asked to receive a deputation of London burglars to discuss the point.

Under no circumstances, says a medical leaflet, should flies be allowed in the house. If they knock at the front-door and then rush past you, send for a policeman.

A Streatham resident is offering a reward of ten shillings for the return of a "ginger" cat which has been lost. As the owner has shown no other traces of the effect of the hot weather the authorities have decided not to pursue the case.

Things are coming to a pretty pass in Ireland. Just because a man attempted to murder somebody in County Armagh the police have threatened to arrest him.

An ex-special constable, relating his experiences in a weekly magazine, mentions that he once found a perfectly good alarm-clock on the doorstep of a neighbour's house. Further investigation would, no doubt, have resulted in the discovery of the milk-jug on the bedroom mantelpiece.

“A young man should kiss a girl on either the left or the right cheek,” says a writer on hygiene in a weekly paper. As the option of either cheek is given, many young men will no doubt hesitate between the two.

An evening paper reports that a live shell was found “laying” in an open field near Southend. This seems a sure sign that the nesting-season is now in full swing, and it seems a pity that we did not think of this method of shell-production during the War.

“No honest German,” says Herr SCHEIDEMANN, “can possibly sign the Peace Treaty.” The best plan, perhaps, would be to call for volunteers and take the risk as to qualification.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Boxer (amidst a babel of advice). “Look ’Ere—Chuck it! I got demobilised as A ONE-MAN business.”*]

* * * * *

From a recent law-report:—

“I say ‘Civis Britannicus Sam.’”—*Evening Paper*.

It is proposed, we understand, to adopt this as the motto of the Anglo-American Union.

* * * * *

BREST-BUCHAREST-VERSAILLES.

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Oh, those were palmy days at Brest!
You had no sort of scruples then;
You knelt at ease on Russia's chest,
Dipped in her blood your iron pen,
Dictated terms the most abhorrent
And made her sign her own death-warrant.

At Bucharest 'twas much the same:
You had Roumania under heel;
No pity here nor generous shame,
But just the argument of steel,
The logic of the butcher's knife—
And so she signed away her life.

These object-lessons learnt by rote,
As once we learnt your poison-gas,
Your pupils now are shocked to note
How Teuton wits, a little crass,
Mistake for rude assault and battery
Our imitation's feeble flattery.

We could not copy, line for line,
The perfect models made by you;
Yet the ideals they enshrine
We dimly strove to keep in view,
Trying to draft, with broad effect,
The kind of Peace that you'd expect.

Our efforts miss the cultured touch
By which we saw your own inspired;
They leave—beside the model—much,
Oh very much to be desired;
We've no excuse except to say
We were not built the German way.

But why these wails and tears and whines?
I must assume that they are bluff,
That, as compared with your designs,
You find our terms are easy stuff,
And, with your tongue against your cheek,
You'll sign the lot within a week.

O.S.

* * * * *

The beetle of Buda-Pesth.

An unrecorded episode of the great war.

The War being now practically at an end and Austria-Hungary irrevocably broken up, I am able to recount an adventure, in which I was involved, that occurred at Buda-Pesth in the second week of August, 1914.

Seated at a cafe on the famous Franz-Josef Quai, I was sipping coffee, after an excellent lunch, with Frederick, whose surname I will not mention in case I get into trouble for relating the incident before Peace is actually signed. The sun shone joyously down upon the kaleidoscope of gaily dressed people promenading by the cool waters of the Danube, and we sat engrossed—I in the charm of the scene, and Frederick in that of individual beauties who passed to and fro.

Suddenly I noticed that he was staring intently upon the ground a few yards in front of him. I asked him what was the matter.

“Perceive,” he replied in a very serious tone, “a small beetle of the order of Coleoptera making its way across the pavement?”

“I do perceive it,” I replied; “but what about it?”

“Does it not occur to you,” he continued, “that it is a very remarkable thing that that beetle should have already travelled six feet across the most crowded promenade in Buda-Pesth without having been trodden on?”

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Being used to Frederick I do not take him too seriously and made no reply, intending to brush the incident aside, but I found my gaze continually returning to Coleopteron, conscious of that peculiar fascination which attracts one to impending tragedy. It was evident that he had just left the cafe and was hurrying across the promenade to catch the little steamer which was due to leave in ten minutes for Ofen. It was also evident to any thinking individual that there must be some extraordinarily urgent reason for his wishing to catch the boat which justified him in taking the awful risks which he was incurring. The position was full of human interest and I became as intrigued as Frederick.

It seemed that Coleopteron was under some divine protection which enabled him to elude so large a crowd. One lady stepped right on him, but apparently, by a piece of brilliant footwork, he managed to get in the arch between the sole and the heel and so survive. Another promenader brushed him with his boot and knocked him over, but he doggedly continued on his way.

I was conscious of a greatly accelerated beating of my heart and noticed that Frederick was perspiring freely.

Half-way across the twenty-foot pavement Coleopteron was sniffed at by a dog and our hearts stopped beating, but again he was saved by the fact that the dog was on a chain and just hadn't time to eat him before he was dragged after his mistress.

I noticed now that Frederick's eyes were protruding from his head and that he was muttering to himself. I too felt the strain telling upon me, A shrill whistle from the little steamer warning passengers to hurry up was immediately responded to by Coleopteron, who increased his speed to the utmost, when suddenly Frederick's trembling hand caught mine.

"Look!" he said, and, following his gaze, I saw approaching twelve gendarmes. We did not speak; we did not need to invite each other's views; our minds had but a single thought—Coleopteron could not possibly escape twenty-four Hungarian Government boots.

On scurried our little friend and on came the gendarmes. I was conscious of a feeling of physical sickness, and Frederick groaned aloud. As the dreadful moment of contact approached we shut our eyes tight and each gripped the other's hand. How long we remained like this I cannot tell, for we were both afraid to look and see the my smudge on the pavement indicating a hero's end; but eventually, by mutual arrangement, we opened our eyes, and then we saw—not a smudge, but Coleopteron still advancing quite unconcerned. It was a miracle.

"I can't stand it any longer," cried Frederick, to the amazement of those sitting about us outside the cafe, "I shall go mad!" and, leaping up from his seat, he rushed across the

promenade and, taking from his pocket a picture-postcard of some Hungarian beauty, he coaxed Coleopteron to walk on to it, then bore him triumphantly back and deposited him upon the leaf of a palm which overhung our table.

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Shortly afterwards the little steamer whistled again and left the quay.

Frederick remained silent for some time as befits a man who has saved a life, and then arose to have a look at Coleopteron and doubtless to make himself better known to the little hero; but to his pained surprise Coleopteron was not to be found. All over that palm he searched in vain and on the floor; then suddenly he emitted a gurgling sound and I saw that he was in the grip of deep emotion. There was a look on his face I had never seen before, and I anxiously asked him what had happened. For some time he could not speak, but stood gazing vacantly into space. At last, with parched lips, he spoke.

“Look in the milk-jug!” he said, and sank into his chair.

For a moment I thought that Frederick had been poisoned, and then I realised the truth, for there in the hot milk floated the corpse of Coleopteron.

“Why did he do it?” pleaded Frederick with a break in his voice.

“Because,” I replied, “you hadn’t the sense to realise that he was staking his all on catching that boat, and, instead of helping him, you brought him back to where he started from.”

* * * * *

Early the next morning, at Frederick’s desire, we left Buda-Pesth *en route* for the Swiss Frontier. It was impossible, if he was to retain his reason, to stay longer in a city that had for him such tragic associations.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE PEACE QUEUE.

AUSTRIA (*to Germany*). “GET A MOVE ON!”

BULGARIA. “IT’S NO GOOD HAGGLING; WE’VE ALL GOT TO HAVE IT.”

TURKEY. “WELL, I’M LAST, AND I DON’T CARE HOW LONG ANYBODY TAKES.”]

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[Illustration: *Temporary Officer (in department which they have forgotten to close down)*. “DASH IT! I DON’T SEE WHY WE SHOULDN’T GET UNEMPLOYMENT PAY.”]

* * * * *

A CAPITAL OUTLAY.

It was, in a sense, mutual. We had chickens; the chickens had us. On the other hand, they had the best of the bargain. We kept them; and they did not keep us.

My aunt insisted that we *must* keep chickens, and you know my aunt.

Pardon! You don't know my aunt. She is an elderly maiden lady who "keeps house" for me. She is eminently practical—theoretically speaking.

She insisted. "With eggs at eightpence it's a sin and a shame not to keep hens in war-time."

I urged that the food would cost a good many eightpences—in war-time.

Her reply was "Pshaw!" (She really does say "Pshaw"—and means it.) "Pshaw! they will live on kitchen scraps."

We consulted Nibletts. He has a local reputation as a chicken expert, mainly, I believe, because he's a butcher. He recommended a breed called Wild Oats (by which he meant, I discovered, Wyandottes).

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"You take my tip, Sir," he said, "and buy Wild Oats. If you'll excuse the word—" (Nibletts is always apologising for some term he is about to use, which promises to be inexpressibly shocking to polite ears, and never is)—"they're clinkers."

We ordered a round dozen. We also bought a hen-house fitted with all modern conveniences. The total outlay represented a prince's ransom; but, as I pointed out to my aunt, we had a run for our money.

The hens, when they arrived, were not strictly "as per" advertisement. We bought them as laying pullets, and they didn't lay for quite a time—so far as we knew. Nibletts, however, declared that they were "what you might call in the pink," and surmised that the train journey had "put 'em off the lay, as you might say." If eating and fighting were evidences of their being "in the pink," those birds must have enjoyed exceptional health. They also slept well, I believe.

After about a month one enormous egg arrived—an egg that would not have disgraced a young ostrich. Its huge dimensions worried my aunt. She wondered if they were a symptom, and consulted Nibletts.

He put it down to the food. He said that kitchen scraps were "no good for laying pullets." "That egg, lady," he said, "is what us fanciers call—excuse me—" (I saw my aunt shudder in anticipation)—"a bloomer. You must give 'em a lot more meal."

We bought a big sack of meal—through the medium of Nibletts. If I remember rightly it cost rather more than the pullets.

Still no eggs. Then some of the hens went out of "the pink." For instance, one developed a chronic habit of running centripetally round a constantly diminishing circle, fainting on arriving at the geometrical centre. My distressed aunt called in Nibletts to prescribe. There was only one word for it—that awful word "staggers." There was only one cure for it—death. Should he wring its neck?

We feelingly withdrew, and he did it. He took the corpse away with him, so that he presumably had a use for it.

Soon a second pullet went down with a considerably swollen face. My aunt bathed it twice a day in a hot anti-septic, but to no purpose, except that the poor thing seemed much comforted by the fomentation. That hen was, Nibletts whispered to me, for fear my aunt should overhear, "a waster." The only thing to do was to coop it up from the rest, or they'd all go down with it—whatever it was.

We cooped it up till it died. Nibletts certified the cause of death as that unmentionable complaint, the pip.

Still no eggs, notwithstanding repeated appeals in the sacred name of *Macduff*. We did, however, find out what the trouble was.

The hens were eating the eggs!

Niblett said—under his breath—that they were what was known as “blighters.” He recommended (deprecating the term) a “stodger.” A “stodger” proved to be an egg-shell stuffed with bread-crumbs, mustard and the strongest photographic ammonia.

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My aunt said it would be cruel. It was certainly rough on me. Niblett's apologetically directed me to blow an egg—"a shop 'un 'd do." Accordingly, following his instructions, I injected or otherwise introduced the ingredients through a small aperture. It was the bread-crumbs that gave me most trouble; but it was the photographic ammonia that was "cruel." The mustard went in quite easily with a squirt.

I stopped the holes with paper stuck on with sealing-wax and put the *oeuf farci* in the run. I waited to see what would happen. It happened at once. All ten hens went for that egg in a convergent attack, and all ten pecks got home simultaneously. The deputation then hurriedly withdrew, with loud protests, and spent the rest of the day wiping their beaks in the cool earth.

But they remained recalcitrant. They systematically cannibalized. A cackle from the layer brought all the rest to the spot; and I simply couldn't stay there all day to forestall the onslaught.

Niblett's suggested our getting a patent laying-box, furnished with (what he apologised to my aunt for calling) a false front. My aunt did not at first grasp the idea, but what Niblett's did in fact refer to was a contrivance that would admit one sitter only at a time, subsequent unauthorised entrance being cut off by an ingenious drop slide. Further elaborate construction also prevented the sitter herself from turning round to peck. She had to remain sitting till some human came and lifted her out.

Just one egg was laid in that patent box. The object of it was also patent—to the hens. Nothing would induce them to use it after that once.

Niblett's then recommended (if he might so describe it) a "tit-up." That was, so to speak, a conjuring-trick of a laying-box, which let the egg fall through a trap-door into a padded cell beneath. My aunt thought it unnatural and feared that it might be exhausting. Nevertheless we tried it, and extracted one solitary egg from the basement.

Then, being an engineer by profession, I conceived a mechanical means of giving those hens the scare of their lives if they persisted in their antisocial habits. I constructed a "spoof" egg of white enamelled metal, with hinges that opened when a catch was touched. Inside I compressed one of those jack-in-the-box snakes that spring out when free to do so.

It was quite effective—as a parlour-trick. Those hens pecked the catch loose, and that cockatrice fairly staggered them. It was to them a clear case of "nourishing a viper." But all was as before.

Niblett's then gave up the case as (what he might be excused for calling) a "fair corker." Should he wring their (pause) necks?

We thought it best so, and gave him a couple of “laying pullets” for his trouble. The other eight kept us going monotonously for about a month.

The house is still on offer. Houses are scarce just now.

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I have sown my Wyandottes.

* * * * *

It was the income-tax man that suggested the title that I have given to my story. I disagreed with him *in toto*. But he persisted that it wasn't an "expense."

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Ex-Soldier (to stout passenger)*. "MIGHT I SUGGEST, SIR, THAT EITHER YOU PASS FURTHER DOWN THE CAR OR TAKE A COURSE OF PHYSICAL TRAINING?"]

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Mr. Skivvington-Smyth (loudly)*. "COVENT GARDEN!" *Taximan (equally loudly)*. "MARKET?"]

* * * * *

THE NOMADS.

"There are no houses in the Town,"
Said Mr. Smith (of Smith and Brown);
I hardly like to put it down,
But that's what he asserted;
So thereupon I went to Anne
And told her of my brilliant plan,
Which is, to purchase from a man
A furniture-removal van,
And have the thing converted.

Within that mobile villa gay
We shall not choose, though gipsies may,
Through country lanes and woods to stray,
Not likely. We shall enter
An up-to-date Bohemian lot,
And, if you read *The Daily Rot*,
You'll find it has observed us (what?)
Proceeding at a smartish trot
Through London's throbbing centre.

And there will be some curious stirs,
Unless my fancy greatly errs,
At restaurants and theatres



When our distinctive turn-out
Lines up with all the others there,
And we look out with quite an air
And order the commissionaire
Kindly to put the little stair
That hangs behind the stern out.

And, when at nights our prancing team
(I have before me now a scheme
To use auxiliary steam)
Desires to seek its stable,
Why, John—I have not mentioned John;
He is the man who sits upon
The front of the Pantechnicon—
Will take them off. And when they're gone,
And hush succeeds to Babel,

We'll rest within our home complete
Wherever seems to us most sweet,
And none shall say that such a street
Or such a square is pleasant,
But we shall answer straightway, "Yes,
We used to live at that address;
Quite jolly. But we liked it less.
Than opposite the Duke of S.
In Amaranthine Crescent."

But if in wandering to and fro
We chance to see—you never know—
One house that has "TO LET" to show
And find report has tricked us,
And there *are* houses in the Town,
We'll simply dump our chattels down
And challenge Smith (of Smith and Brown)
Or any landlord, bar the Crown,
To blooming well evict us.

EVOE.

* * * * *

"A visit was paid to Exeter, yesterday afternoon, by
Lieut.-General Sir Henry Crichton Selater, G.C.B., K.C.B.,
C.B."—*Provincial Paper*.

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More fortunate than the LORD CHANCELLOR, the gallant General seems to have had three Baths allotted to him.

* * * * *

“The enemy is engaged vigorously in making his expected protest against the Peace Terms.... To show the depth of his emotion he has declared a week of mourning. Theatres may remain open, but must stage plays appropriate to the occasion.”

It is rumoured that the first play chosen was *Measure for Measure*.

* * * * *

“The War Office says there is no authority whatever for the statement that General Townshend would shortly be appointed Commander-in-Chief in the Tower Hamlets, F.C.”—*Star*.

Mr. Punch begs leave to say that this item of football news did not appear in his columns.

* * * * *

PROCRASTINATION.

A few mornings ago I found among my letters a tragic document—a bill. A first quick glance at it filled me with despair, because I was luxuriating in that Fools’ Paradise produced by the illusion that one is all paid up. Of course one never is; there is always something that one forgets, and this must have been it; so that, instead of perfect freedom from liability, here I was apparently still owing no less a sum than L5 9_s_.

The figures looked familiar enough, although disconcerting, but I rubbed my eyes when I found that they were made up of two items that had never come my way; the first being one-and-a-half dozen essences, L3 15_s_, and the second, a dozen *poudre assortie*, L1 14_s_. It could not be for me. Essences and powders wholesale are not in my line, nor is my acquaintance so extensive among the Fair as these quantities would imply.

A moment later all my anxieties dispersed and tragedy turned to comedy when I realised that the bill was for the hairdresser with the same name as my own, who lives next door but one and gets so much of my correspondence.

I therefore put the bill on my desk, intending to take it into the shop when I went out; and forgot it.

The Russian Corps de Ballet at the Alhambra is an assemblage of charming and gifted people who are at last giving their admirers full measure. Now that they have a vast theatre of their own and perform three ballets every night the old frustrated feeling that used to tantalise us at the Opera and the Coliseum has vanished. But I have still a grievance, and that is that the programme is so rarely the programme that I myself would have arranged. In other words the three ballets that form it are seldom the Big Three that are nearest my heart. To be explicit, I want *Petroushka*, and instead I find myself not knowing where to look while *Scheherazade* unfolds its appalling freedoms; I want *Les Sylphides*, and instead am given *Les Papillons*, which is very lovely but not of an equal loveliness; and I want *Carnaval*, and instead am offered the perplexities of *The Fire Bird*. It happened, however, that one night recently the perfect programme was given—*Carnaval*, *Les Sylphides* and *Petroushka*; but there was not a seat in the house, and I therefore had to stand in great discomfort, so that half the joy evaporated.

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“Meanwhile” (I seem to hear you say) “what of the hairdresser who has the same name as yourself and plies his trade next door but one? This story—which so far is a poor enough thing—was surely to have been about him.” (So I seem to hear you say.)

Patience! It is about him, but it is also about the evils of procrastination. In short, it is a kind of tract.

On the morning after my disappointing evening at the Alhambra, while moving some papers on my desk, I brought to light the bill for the powder and the essences. “Good Heavens!” I murmured, “the poor fellow will be distracted not to have this;” and I took it in to him straightway.

I apologised for the delay.

“There is no hurry,” he replied. “Accounts can wait; But I hope,” he added, taking an envelope from a drawer, “that this letter for you is equally unimportant. It came, I’m afraid, four days ago, and I was always meaning to bring it in, but forgot.”

Unimportant! It was merely an invitation from the most adorable woman in London to share her box at the Russian Ballet on the previous night, to see what she knew was my most desired performance, *Carnaval*, *Les Sylphides* and *Pelrroushka*.

Either the hairdresser or I must move.

Or we must both take a course of memory training. I believe there is some system on the market.

* * * * *

[Illustration “WE DON’T YET REALISE, MY BOY, ALL THE VAST CHANGES THIS WAR WILL MAKE.”

“NO, SIR. BUT ISN’T IT RATHER A LOT OF BLITHER ABOUT BRIGHTER CRICKET?”]

* * * * *

“Wanted, five unfurnished Rooms and bath (1 large for music studio).”—*Local Paper*.

We are glad to note the spread of the healthful habit of singing in the bath.

* * * * *

THE PERILS OF REVIEWING.

A most unfortunate thing has happened to a friend of mine called —— to a friend of —— to a friend of —— . Well, I suppose the truth will have to come out. It happened to me. Only don't tell anybody.

I reviewed a book the other day. It is not often I do this, because before one can review a book one has to, or is supposed to, read it, which wastes a good deal of time. Even that isn't an end of the trouble. The article which follows is not really one's own, for the wretched fellow who wrote the book is always trying to push his way in with his views on matrimony, or the Sussex downs, or whatever his ridiculous subject is. He expects one to say, "Mr. Blank's treatment of *Hilda's* relations with her husband is masterly," whereas what one wants to say is, "Putting Mr. Blank's book on one side we may consider the larger question, whether ——" and so consider it (alone) to the end of the column.

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Well, I reviewed Mr. Blank's book, *Rotundity*. As I expected, the first draft had to be re-headed "A Corner of Old London," and used elsewhere; Mr. Blank didn't get into it at all. I kept promising myself a sentence: "Take *Rotundity*, for instance, the new novel by William Blank, which, *etc.*," but before I was ready for it the article was finished. In my second draft, realizing the dangers of delay, I began at once, "This remarkable novel," and continued so for a couple of sentences. But on reading it through afterwards I saw at once that the first two sentences were out of place in an article that obviously ought to be called "The Last Swallow;" so I cut them out, sent "The Last Swallow: A Reverie" to another Editor, and began again. The third time I was successful.

Of course in my review I said all the usual things. I said that Mr. Blank's attitude to life was "subjective rather than objective" ... and a little lower down that it was "objective rather than subjective." I pointed out that in his treatment of the major theme he was a neo-romanticist, but I suggested that, on the other hand, he had nothing to learn from the Russians—or the Russians had nothing to learn from him; I forget which. And finally I said (and this is the cause of the whole trouble) that ANTOINE VAURELLE'S world-famous classic—and I looked it up in the Encyclopaedia—world-renowned classic, *Je Comprends Tout*, had been not without its influence on Mr. Blank. It was a good review, and the editor was pleased about it.

A few days later Mr. Blank wrote to say that, curiously enough, he had never read *Je Comprends Tout*. It didn't seem to me very curious, because I had never read it either, but I thought it rather odd of him to confess as much to a stranger. The only book of VAURELLE'S which I had read was *Consolatrice*, in an English translation. However, one doesn't say these things in a review.

Now I have a French friend, Henri, one of those annoying Frenchmen who talks English much better than I do, and Henri, for some extraordinary reason, had seen my review. He has to live in London now, but his heart is in Paris; and I imagine that every word of his beloved language which appears, however casually, in an English paper mysteriously catches his eye and brings the scent and sounds of the *boulevards* to him across the coffee-cups. So the next time I met him he shook me warmly by the hand, and told me how glad he was that I was an admirer of ANTOINE VAURELLE'S novels.

"Who isn't?" I said with a shrug, and, to get the conversation on to safer ground, I added hastily that in some ways I almost liked *Consolatrice* best.

He shook my hand again. So did he. A great book.

"But of course," he said, "one must read it in the original French. It is the book of all others which loses by translation."

"Of course," I agreed. Really, I don't see what else I could have done.

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“Do you remember that wonderful phrase ——” and he rattled it off. “Magnificent, is it not?”

“Magnificent,” I said, remembering an appointment instead. “Well, I must be getting on. Good-bye.” And, as I walked off, I patted my forehead with my handkerchief and wondered why the day had grown so warm suddenly.

However the next day was even warmer. Henri came to see me with a book under his arm. We all have one special book of our own which we recommend to our acquaintances, regarding the love of it as perhaps the best passport to our friendship. This was Henri’s. He was about to test me. I had read and admired his favourite VAURELLES—in the original French. Would I love his daring LAFORGUE? My reputation as a man, as a writer, as a critic, depended on it. He handed me the book—in French.

“It is all there,” he said reverently, as he gave it to me. “All your English masters, they all come from him. Perhaps, most of all your —— But you shall tell me when you have read it. You shall tell me whom most you seem to see there. Your MEREDITH? Your SHAW? Your —— But you shall tell me.”

“I will tell you,” I said faintly.

And I’ve got to tell him.

Don’t think that I shall have any difficulty in reading the book. Glancing through it just now I came across this:—

“Kate, avez-vous soupe avant le spectacle?”

‘Non, je n’avais guere le coeur a manger.’”

Well, that’s easy enough. But I doubt if it is one of the most characteristic passages. It doesn’t give you a clue to LAFORGUE’S manner, any more than “‘Must I sit here, mother?’ ‘Yes, without a doubt you must,’” tells you all that you want to know about MEREDITH. There’s more in it than that.

And I’ve got to tell him.

But fancy holding forth on an author’s style after reading him laboriously with a dictionary!

However, I must do my best; and in my more hopeful moments I see the conversation going like this:—

“Well?”



"Oh, wonderful." (*With emotion*) "Really wonderful."

"You see them all there?"

"Yes, yes. It's really—wonderful. MEREDITH—I mean—well, it's simply—(*after a pause*) wonderful."

"You see MEREDITH there most?"

"Y—yes. Sometimes. And then sometimes I—I don't" (*with truth*). "It's difficult to say. Sometimes I—er—SHAW—er—well, it's ——" (*with a gesture somewhat Gallic*) "How can I put it?"

"Not THACKERAY at all?" he says, watching me eagerly.

I decide to risk it.

"Oh, but of course! I mean—THACKERAY! When I said MEREDITH I was thinking of the *others*. But THACKERAY—I mean THACKERAY *is*— er—" (*I've forgotten his name for the moment and go on hastily*) I mean—er—THACKERAY, obviously."

He shakes me by the hand. I am his friend.

But this conversation only takes place in my more hopeful moments. In my less hopeful ones I see myself going into the country for quite a long time.

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A.A.M.

* * * * *

ANOTHER IMPENDING APOLOGY.

“The book contains a portrait of the author and several other quaint illustrations.”—*Daily Paper*.

* * * * *

“Miss Leitch played delightful golf up to the hole, but when once she had arrived there the result was almost ludicrous, as she could not hit the ball truly with her puttee.”—*Evening Paper*.

Personally we have always found this an ineffective weapon.

* * * * *

ROYAL ACADEMY-SECOND DEPRESSIONS.

[Illustration: IN THE DAYS OF AULD LANGSIDE.

The Despatch-Bearer. “EXCUSE ME, SIR, BUT THE QUEEN IS HERE. YOU ARE REQUESTED TO MAKE AS LITTLE NOISE AS POSSIBLE, AND, ABOVE ALL, NO BLOODSHED.”

Bothwell (to Mary, Queen of Scots). “IF YOU WOULD DEIGN TO TURN YOUR HEAD A LITTLE, DEAR MADAM, YOU WILL FIND THAT THE BATTLE IS OVER HERE.”]

[Illustration: *The Cheshire Cat*. “I NEVER GET TIRED OF THIS STORY ABOUT DICK WHITTINGTON.”]

[Illustration: *The Profiteer’s Wife (sadly)*. “POOR WILLIAM HASN’T BEEN HIMSELF SINCE ARMISTICE DAY.”]

[Illustration: *The Man (listening to the lark and quoting the poet)*. “UP WITH ME, UP WITH ME INTO THE CLOUDS.”

The Lady. “OH, JOHN, LET US STAY HERE. I DON’T FEEL IN AN AVIATING MOOD TO-DAY.”]

[Illustration: *The Spoilt Beauty*. “WHAT ROTTEN LUCK! I SIMPLY DAREN’T GO JAZZING WITH THIS BLACK EYE!”]

[Illustration: "THE SCRAP OF PAPER." *Both (mentally)*. "WHAT A FINE DRAMATIC SUBJECT THIS WOULD MAKE FOR AN ACADEMY PICTURE!"]

[Illustration: MISS WINNIE WENDOVER SELECTS HER COSTUMES FOR THE NEW REVUE. THE CHARMING AND TYPICALLY ENGLISH ACTRESS IN HER DELIGHTFUL TURKISH BUNGALOW NEAR STAINES.]

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Billiard-marker (awed by rank of visitor—a foreign prince who has joined in a game of pool)*. "SHOULD I CALL 'IM 'YER ROYAL 'IGHNESS, SIR, OR 'SPOT YALLER'?"]

* * * * *

THE HAIRIES.

We have carried our lancer's, hussars and dragoons
And tugged in the batteries, columns and trains,
On *pave* that smoked under white summer noons
And tracks that washed out under black winter rains.

We've shivered in standings hock-deep in the mud,
With matted tails turned to the drift of the sleet;
We've seen the bombs flash and been spattered with blood
Of mates as they rolled, belly-ripped, at our feet.

We've dragged ammunition up shell-smitten tracks,
Round bottomless craters, through stump-littered woods;
When the waggons broke down took the load on our backs
And somehow or other delivered the goods.

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But the dread roads, the red roads will know us no more;
Oh, it's England, chum, England for you and for me!
The countryfolk wave us as westward we pour
Down the jolly white highways that lead to the sea.

There's a mist of frail blossom adrift in the trees,
The Spring song of birds sets the orchards a-thrill;
And now on our brows blows the salt Channel breeze,
The busy port hums in the lap of the hill.

So warp out your transports and bear us away
From the Yser and Somme, from the Ancre and the Aisne,
From fire-blackened deserts of shell-pitted clay,
And give us our Chilterns and Cotswolds again.

Oh, show us old England all silver and gold,
With the flame o' the gorse and the flower o' the thorn;
We long for lush meadow-lands where we were foaled
And boast of great runs with the Belvoir and Quorn.

The pack-pony dreams of a primrosy combe,
A leisurely life in a governess-cart,
Plum-cake and a bottle-nosed gardener-groom;
The Clyde has a Wensleydale farm in his heart.

We whinny and frolic, light-headed with bliss,
Forgetting leg-weariness, terror and scars;
Ye ladies of England, oh, blow a soft kiss
To the hairy old horses come home from the wars.

PATLANDER.

* * * * *

TO-MORROW.

"To-morrow," said the brave young subaltern, "if my Company Commander curses my men for having long hair, I'll whip off his own hat and show him to be three weeks overdue at the barber's.

"To-morrow, if the Adjutant finds fault with my salute, I'll give him a faithful imitation of his own ridiculous ear-flip.

"To-morrow, if the Major strafes me for my handling of the platoon on the barrack-square, I'll challenge him to detail 'presenting arms, by numbers.'



“To-morrow, if the Colonel checks my men for being slovenly turned out on parade, I’ll publicly point out to him that the buttons of his own pockets are undone and that the ends of his bootlaces are hanging out.

“To-morrow, if the General curses a man for rubbing his nose while at attention, I’ll openly suggest to him that it is not smart and soldierlike to slouch along with one hand in your pocket while inspecting the ranks.

“To-morrow, if I get the chance, I’ll do all these things. I have put off doing them far too long.”

So spake the brave young subaltern, knowing full well that he is to be demobbed to-day.

* * * * *

“A Tooting hen is laying two eggs a day.”—*Evening Paper*.

Then it seems to us that she is quite justified in tooting.

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[Illustration: THE LOVING CUP: A PARTING TOAST.

BRITISH LION (*to American Eagle*). “HERE’S LUCK TO YOU. YOU BROUGHT IT TO ME.”]

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* * * * *

ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, May 12th.—Lord FRENCH'S newspaper revelations were brought to the notice of Mr. CHURCHILL, who adduced the cases of the late Lords WOLSELEY and ROBERTS as evidence that Field-m Marshals, when unemployed, have always been allowed considerable freedom of criticism. The fact that Lord FRENCH is Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland and (nominal) Commander-in-Chief of the considerable army employed in that country makes no difference; but ordinary serving officers are still subject to the Regulations and will take FRENCH leave at their peril.

In the course of a further discussion on milk—prices, about which the West Country is still up in arms, Mr. MCCURDY dropped the remark that it was impossible to control cream, owing, no doubt, to its notorious insurrectionary tendencies; and Colonel WEIGALL removed a load of suspicion from some of our minds by the emphatic declaration that “a cow was not a pump, of which the supply could be turned off or on as one liked.”

The FIRST COMMISSIONER OF WORKS was not very hopeful about the removal of the buildings which disfigure the Parks. The most he could say was that he was doing his best to get the camouflage school out of Kensington Gardens, and let nature have a chance.

Tuesday, May 13th.—The Lords defeated the Government by inserting in the Ministry of Health Bill a provision that the new Minister should have only one Parliamentary Secretary. In vain Lord SANDHURST protested that the amendment would tie the PRIME MINISTER'S hands. Lord MIDLETON was delighted to think that it would. Lord CREWE declared that the creation of minor Ministers was becoming a disease (possibly the Ministry of Health will include it among “notifiable” epidemics?). Lord BLEDISLOE quoted the old tag about big fleas and little fleas. But after all there must be some check to the inveterate tendency to somnolence in the public offices.

When the Ways and Communications Bill was before the Commons the Minister-Designate buttressed his case with the alarming statement that there would be a deficit of one hundred millions this year on the working of the railways. Members were therefore surprised to find in the Budget that only sixty millions was provided to meet it. Even in these days a discrepancy of forty millions does not pass entirely unnoticed. When taxed with it, Mr. CHAMBERLAIN said he thought it was due to Government traffic not having been allowed for in the original calculation, but advised his questioner to ask Sir ERIC GEDDES to explain. For some reason—can it be the formidable appearance of the GEDDES chin?—Sir JOSEPH WALTON did not seem greatly pleased at the prospect.

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Like many another Chief Secretary before him, Mr. IAN MACPHERSON, who reappeared in the House after a long absence in Ireland, had to figure with a scourge in one hand and an olive branch in the other. At Question-time he was the stern upholder of law and order, obliged within the last few days to suspend a seditious newspaper and to surround the Dublin Mansion House with soldiers. A few moments later he was moving the Second Reading of a most generous Housing Bill, under which Irish Corporations will be enabled to build thousands of dwellings largely at the expense of the general taxpayer.

[Illustration: FAILING TO DIFFER.

SIR EDWARD CARSON AND MR. DEVLIN.]

In his warm welcome to the measure Sir EDWARD CARSON revealed a side of his character not often seen, except by his personal friends. He was so sympathetic to the needs of the Irish working-classes, so eloquent upon the benefits to health, sobriety and contentment that good houses would secure, and so insistent upon the necessity of making the new dwellings beautiful as well as useful, that Mr. DEVLIN could do little more than say "ditto to Mr. BURKE."

Wednesday, May 16th.—Those persons, at home and abroad, who persist in regarding the British as universal land-grabbers will please note that Spitsbergen, despite the undoubted fact that an Englishman landed there three centuries ago, leaves us cold. Although no direct response was made to Mr. ASHLEY'S suggestion that the future of the island should be referred to the Coal Commission, it is widely felt that if Mr. SMILLIE and Sir LEO CHIOZZA MONEY would volunteer to explore its possibilities they would be doing the country signal service.

The drawbacks of having the Leadership of the Opposition in commission were further exemplified when Sir DONALD MACLEAN in his most impressive manner asked for a day to discuss Lord FRENCH'S communications to the Press. Mr. BONAR LAW inquired if he desired to move a Vote of Censure in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition. "No, no," shouted the supporters of the rival claimants, Mr. ADAMSON and Mr. GEORGE LAMBERT. Whereupon Sir DONALD altered his tone and mildly observed that he only wanted to clear up a constitutional point.

The debate on Mr. HARTSHORN'S motion regarding the state of Ireland was unique of its kind in that not a single Member representing an Irish constituency took the floor; but in spite of that it produced more heat than light. Both the mover and the seconder (Mr. SEXTON) were rich in denunciation of the present Government of Ireland, but poverty-stricken in suggestions for its improvement. Lord HENRY BENTINCK seized the opportunity to make final recantation of his Unionist principles, but in default of more practical proposals was reduced to imploring the people of Ulster "to show some spirit of compromise;" and Lord HUGH CECIL in a despairing moment declared that he would

sooner see three-fourths of Ireland independent than the whole of it presented with a form of Home Rule which no Irishman desired. After that one appreciated Sir KEITH ERASER'S remark, that during four years' soldiering in Ireland he had only met one man who understood the Irish Question, and he was an Englishman who had only been there a week!

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Thursday, May 15th.—The intelligent foreigner who should try to disentangle the causes of Egyptian unrest from the speeches delivered in both Houses this afternoon will be rather puzzled. From Captain WEDGWOOD BENN in the Commons he would learn that it was due to the ineptitude of the British Administration, the ill-treatment of the natives by the Army of Occupation, and in particular the unsympathetic attitude adopted by Lord CURZON towards the Nationalist leaders, one of whom, according to Captain BENN, “held in Egypt a position comparable with that of Mr. Speaker here.” Across the corridor at the very same moment Lord CURZON was asserting that Egypt was enjoying extraordinary material prosperity, that the British soldiery had shown wonderful restraint in very trying circumstances and that the Government had not the least desire to repress Egyptian individuality (when not too exuberant, of course) or deny to natives an ever-increasing share in the administration of their country. They would have been quite ready to listen to ZAGHLUL and his friends if they had not begun by demanding the complete disappearance of British rule. The intelligent foreigner will probably come to the conclusion that Egypt is very like Ireland—except that it has no Ulster.

General SEELY gave a fairly plausible explanation of the apparently wanton destruction of new aeroplanes that is going on at Farnborough and elsewhere. Owing to the rapid progress in aviation they were already obsolete for military purposes before they were delivered. They are quite unsuitable for civilian use, and are therefore being “reduced to produce”—a euphemism for “scrapped.”

Mr. SHORTT was not in his place, but the interests of the Home Department did not suffer in the hands of the Under-Secretary. Sir HAMAR GEEENWOOD rattles out his replies with the speed and accuracy of a machine-gun, and has a neat formula for dealing with “supplementaries”: “All these further Questions are covered by my original answer.”

* * * * *

“But in course of time sympathetic Americans and the other tribes will be searching the ruins of burned-out passions and agonies, armed with the rewritten Badaecker or its Allied equivalent.”—*Manchester Guardian*.

The re-writing seems to have begun already.

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[Illustration: *The Muzzled One*. “TAKE MY TIP, YOUNG FELLER, AND HOP IT—QUICK. THERE’S A COPPER COMING.”]

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MORE MUSICAL RECONSTRUCTION.

(By our Special Reporter, who is also busy with the Coal Commission.)

At the three hundred and seventeenth sitting of the Musical Reconstruction Commission Mr. Justice Bland, the President, said he felt sure he would be voicing the feelings of all present in tendering his congratulations to Sir Leonardo Spaghetti Coyne on his elevation to the peerage as Viscount Vermicelli of Milan, and to Mr. Gladney Jebb on receiving the honour of K.P.O. (Knight of the Proletarian Order).

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A memorandum on the economics of the Russian Ballet and the probable cost of its reorganisation on a Marxian basis was read by Mr. Ploffskin of the Garden City Gymnosophist Guild. By a scheme for a uniform salary for all dancers, compulsory vegetarian diet, and the exclusive use of the balalaika, Mr. Ploffskin was of opinion that a Bolshevik Ballet might be safely organised so as to satisfy the artistic aspirations of the proletariat and counteract the pernicious influences of the pseudo-Ethiopian style affected by the idle rich.

Examined by Sir Edwin Edgar, O.M., Mr. Ploffskin admitted that none of the famous Russian composers of recent years had associated themselves with the Revolutionary movement, and that the Russian Ballet had originally been an integral part of the Imperial Opera. But he had no doubt that on a proper proletarian basis it would function with a far more beneficent activity. He pointed out that there was a strong facial resemblance between TROTSKY and M. PADEREWSKI, and between LENIN and BEETHOVEN. In reply to a question from Mr. Moody MacTear, Mr. Ploffskin said that he had been down a coal-mine in Siberia.

Sir Mark Holloway, who next occupied the witness's chair, admitted, in reply to the questions of Sir Gladney Jebb, that, since his student days, he had seldom been engaged in manual labour on any instrument for more than two hours a day. It was not necessary for a conductor. But he knew of pianists who practised for six or even eight hours a day with impunity.

Sir Gladney Jebb. Do you not think that if all compositions were written in the key of C it would materially conduce to the greatest happiness of the greatest number?—The President has already deprecated the multiplication of hypothetical questions, which have reached a total of more than fifteen thousand.

Viscount Vermicelli. Do you think that the unrestrained performance of Jazz-music conduces to the moral betterment of the simian proletariat?—That seems to me to be a question which bears on the administration of the Unnecessary Noises Act.

Are you in favour of the establishment of a Ministry for the Control of Syncopation?—No; but I would cordially support a Bill for the Compulsory Segregation of Irresponsible Collectivists.

In reply to Mr. Moody MacTear, Sir Mark Holloway said that he had never been down a coal-mine, but that he had a few shares in a gold-mine, which had cost him five pounds a-piece, but had never borne any dividends and were now quoted at one-and-sixpence.

The next witness, Dame Frisca, the famous Californian singer, was subjected to a remarkably severe examination by Mr. Moody MacTear.



Mr. Moody MacTear. Do you consider that the assumption of the title *prima donna* is compatible with democratic principles?—I never assumed it; it was bestowed on me by the free suffrages of the musical world.

Mr. MacTear. Then you admit that you possess it. Are you prepared to submit proof of your title to the Commission?—Certainly; but it would probably mean bringing forty van-loads of press-cuttings and cause considerable congestion of traffic.

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Mr. MacTear. Is it not the case that the *prima donna* has been condemned by the best musical critics as an obsolete anachronism, tending to perpetuate the abuses of the “star” system and to foster breaches of the Decalogue and to enhance the soloist at the expense of the chorus?—I believe that WAGNER held the view expressed in the opening part of your question, but he was unable to get on without her, wrote a famous address to the Star of Eve, and gave the chorus practically nothing to do in many of his operas.

Mr. MacTear. Is it not the case that the operatic tenor has been pronounced on good authority to be not a man but a disease?—The authority was a German conductor, who was presumably speaking of German tenors.

Mr. MacTear. Have you ever been down a coal-mine?—No; but I was presented with a diamond brooch by the diggers of Kimberley.

* * * * *

BAKERLOONACY.

This is a song of the Tube—
Let us begin it
By cursing the furies who fight and who bite ev’ry night
To get in it;
The folk who see red and who tread on the dead
And climb over the slain,
And who step on your face in the race for a place
In the train.

The pack!
The wolves who attack,
Attempting to kill you until you
Fall flat on your back;
The tigers who tear at your-hair and who swear
As they tread on your neck,
Leaving you battered, bespattered and shattered,
An absolute wreck.

From these sharks,
These mild-looking typists and clerks,
May Heaven defend you. They’ll rend you—up-end you
(I carry the marks),
This meek-looking, sleek-looking, weak-looking clique
With the Bolshevik brains



Inflamed at the thought that they ought to have caught
Much earlier trains.

Mourn

For the hat that is flat
And the collar of which you were shorn.
Shed a tear for the dear little ear that you had
And the bags which to rags have been torn.
Weep for the fellow who tried but who died at your side
As the tide swept along.
He was a victim. They tricked him and kicked him to death,
Though he'd done them no wrong.

This is a Song of the Tube.
A ballad of sorrow,
A grey sort of lay of To-day and a greyer To-morrow;
A dismal, abysmal, chaotic, neurotic Creation
Of one who was done after running a mile
To the station.

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[Illustration: *Munitionaire*. "I THINK I'LL MAKE A BID FOR THAT CHAP, MARIA, FOR A
HALL-MAT AND STAIR-CARPET."]

* * * * *

From a report of the Coal Commission:—

"The next witness was Lord Dynevor. He said he had 8,270 acres
of coal land in Carmarthenshire. His interest in the estate
came to the family through one of three collieresses."

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Even Mr. SMILLIE would admit that that ought to constitute an absolute title.

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MORE IMPENDING APOLOGIES.

From a bookseller's advertisement:

"NEW FICTION.

Reason and Belief—By Sir Oliver Lodge.

Man and the Universe—By Sir Oliver Lodge.

The Great Crusade—By Right Hon. D.

Lloyd George."—*Canadian Paper*.

* * * * *

"It was essential for Great Britain that France should emerge from this war strong and able to defend herself. The recognition of this fact explains the change of British policy at Paris during the Conference of Peace."—*The Times*.

We like the new title for the victors' conclave, but do not care so much for the unusual spelling of the French capital, though it may have been adopted in deference to American prejudices.

* * * * *

"DIAMOND-CUT-DIAMOND."

This is to warn all honest men to beware of No. 007 Field Company, R.E., known to its victims as "Chaucer's Gang," the most conscienceless crew of body-snatchers and common thieves in all the B.E.F.

I am myself no fastidious precisian, being in a Labour Company, but there are limits—or should be. My own particular grouch against them started at Ripilly-sur-Somme. They, being skilled Royal Engineers, were clearing undergrowth and putting up huts in Ripilly woods for a division due to arrive, and my scorned rabble were unloading the huts in sections from barges at Ripilly canal wharf and loading them on to lorries for transport to the woods. Chaucer and his Royal Engineers were living on the spot—Ardenne waving o'er them her green leaves and so forth—and we were in rest billets (loud roars of raucous laughter) in Ripilly village, the least sanitary spot in the whole war zone.

Chaucer wouldn't let us stay with him in the huts—said the Chief Engineer was very keen on men living next their work. But between Ripilly and the canal wharf was an ideal spot. The chalk downs sloped steeply to the river, and halfway down was a bit of a level plateau just the size for a couple of huts. South aspect; good fishing and bathing; a home from home. The woods hid it from view above and the roadside poplars from below. It was a truly desirable building site.

We had a hurdle-maker in our company, so I gave him a brace of light-duty men as apprentices and they built a little hut of wattle and daub. It had a nice rural appearance and was warm, but it leaked in wet weather, and the more I thought of Chaucer lying dry under his felt roofs the worse I felt about it. So I had a chat with my sergeant at the wharf, and the long and short of it was that two walls and one roof got delivered by mistake at the desirable building-site.

We worked late that night, and next day had thirty men in residence, with one end of the long hut partitioned off for Simmonds, my subaltern, and myself.



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So far so good. I began to think about making another mistake and getting a second hut, but that evening Chaucer came sliding down over the steep turf, visibly annoyed.

"Where did you get this hut?"

"Found it."

"On Ripilly wharf?"

"Certainly not. I found it down there by the road and had it brought up here for safety. If a lorry had run over it in the dark—"

"Ah, cut it out," he said. "The hut is mine. I found two odd sections in the last barge-load. Any poacher who knew his job would burn the feathers when he cooked the bird. You needn't start to explain about your fool N.C.O., who made a mistake. I keep that sort of N.C.O. myself. *If* I get an official inquiry about this hut I shall send back official information."

"Right-o! Then come in and have a drink, and don't be official before you need."

That's where I was wrong. I tried to enlist the blighter's sympathy. Showed him round camp, the view, the bathing—everything. When Simmonds came up from the river with a string of roach Chaucer admitted it was a truly *bon* billet.

Next day he called again with one of his subalterns, a creature called Gubson, who went down to the river to watch Simmonds fish. When he had gone Chaucer told me he had a spare hut.

"Not one of these divisional huts, but a thing we knocked up ourselves. We've nearly finished our job here, and if it's any use to you you can have it. But mind you, I know nothing about this other hut you've got here. If you're caught with that one your blood be on your own head."

"You're a Christian," I told him, and, Gubson and Simmonds returning, the conference had a drink and adjourned.

Next day I found quite a squad of light-duty men, and sent 'em to dismantle and bring down Chaucer's hut. I admit they rather exceeded instructions, for they brought a lot of things that Chaucer had omitted to mention. However, they said he was there when they took them, so I supposed it was all right. Besides the hut they had two bell-tents, a big tarpaulin, some corrugated iron and expanded metal, some home-made chairs and tables, a water-tank and a field kitchen, with its wheels broken off—a noble lot of loot it was. They worked like beavers bringing it down and getting it in place, and when Chaucer drifted down again at the end of the week all my men were housed there as snug as you please. Finally Gubson presented the camp with a punt he had salvaged in

Sailly village—and there we were, all the pleasures of the Riviera and none of the disreputable company.

We were so pleased with all they had done for us that we suggested they should stay the night and celebrate the occasion. Chaucer said he would be delighted, if we would send to his batman and tell him to bring down his razor and toothbrush. At midnight, when the batman arrived, Chaucer said it was time for bed. And could we give his man a shake-down, please? It was pretty dark, he said, and the fool might lose his way home.

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That should have warned me. Chaucer wasn't the man to keep a batman who was a fool.

It must have been about 3 A.M. when I was waked by my man helping Chaucer dress.

"What's the matter?"

"Your fellow says my man's ill."

"What is it?"

"I dunno, Sir," my man said. "'E 's groanin' an' rollin' about an' keepin' all us others awake."

When I got to the men's hut I found Chaucer kneeling beside the sick man, who was holding his head and groaning. All the other men were sitting up and looking on. After a minute or two Chaucer got up and beckoned me outside.

"Look here," he said, "I don't want to scare you, but suppose that chap's got anything infectious. Is there a doctor handy?"

"Nowhere nearer than Saily."

"Well, Gubson tells me they were expecting the M.O. at our camp today. He may have stayed the night. Can you send somebody up to see?"

I sent off an orderly at once, and in half-an-hour a young doctor arrived, and ordered all the other men out of the hut. Then he pulled a gaudy handkerchief out of his pocket, sprinkled it with some stuff out of a small phial, tied it over his mouth and only then began to fiddle about the sick man, feeling his pulse and sounding him.

Then he got up, readjusted his handkerchief-respirator and mumbled that it was cerebro-spinal-something. Spotted fever.

We all got out of that hut in double-quick time, believe me. The doctor was full of orders—half a hundred things to do at once. The man must be strictly isolated. All the contacts—every blessed man who had been in the hut with him—must be placed under supervision. The hut must be put out of bounds. And when he found half the men had gone under the tarpaulin shelter he put that out of bounds too.

We were a full hour trying to separate the contacts; but when the doctor found the cook getting breakfast ready and heard he had been in the sick man's hut he threw his hand in.

"I won't answer for a single one of you," he said; "the place is no better than a pest-house. Throw that breakfast away. It's sheer poison. Clear out, all of you."

It was Chaucer started the panic. I saw him sneaking away up the slope, so I thought it better to make a move too. I didn't ask the doctor where we were to go; he'd have had us all sleeping out on the open grass for a week if I had. So the whole lot of us, half asleep, trekked back to Ripilly village and turned into our old billets again.

* * * * *

It was my Sergeant-Major who told me next day that Chaucer and his gang had taken possession of the Riviera—my Riviera. I went there at once, to find out what it all meant, but they had a sentry at the foot of the slope, who said the camp was infected and no one was allowed there; so I climbed the slopes and looked down from above. Chaucer was smoking outside my pet hut talking to a couple of his subalterns, and a string of men was lined up beside the field kitchen for tea. Close by, the batman, recovered from his illness, was putting a fishing-rod together, and one of the subalterns blew his nose on a gaudy handkerchief which I recognised at once.

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I went straight back and told the Town Major of Ripilly that one of the new divisional huts was being occupied by the Sappers. It wasn't cricket, but it was all I could do.

"That's all right," he said. "Chaucer's acting as divisional R.E. He's entitled to one hut. He told me he had been arranging for you to erect it for him."

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[Illustration: LIFE'S DIFFICULTIES.

Mother. "WHY, WHAT'S THE MATTER, DARLING?"

Small daughter (tearfully). "OH, MUMS, I DO SO WANT TO GIVE THIS WORM TO MY HEN."

Mother. "THEN WHY DON'T YOU?"

Small daughter (with renewed wails). " C-COS I'M SO AFRAID THE WORM WON'T LIKE IT."]

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OUR PESSIMISTS.

"Applications are invited from properly qualified persons for the position of Medical Officer of Health....

The appointment will be from the 1st July, 1919, for the duration of the War."—*Advt. in Local Paper.*

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"Chicks, day old; ready Saturday."—*Advt. in Local Paper.*

It looks like a case of counting before they are hatched.

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THE KEY TO FAIRYLAND.

The trees have magic doorways
Down into Fairy-land,
Yet nobody, but only me,
Has time to understand
That if we knew the magic,
If we could work it too,



We could creep down to Fairy-town
And do as fairies do.

The keys are four-leaved clovers;
They're not so hard to get—
Just creep about and search them out,
And don't mind getting wet;
But oh! I wish the fairies
Weren't *quite* so secrecy;
I've tried and tried, but *still* they hide
The key-holes for each key.

* * * * *

FROM GRAVE TO GAY.

"The Burial Board resolved that tenders be obtained from the various bands in the district with a view to holding concerts in the Queen's Gardens during the summer months."

* * * * *

AT THE PLAY.

"CYRANO" MOVES TO DRURY LANE.

SIR THOMAS BEECHAM, having been translated to another place, has made way for *Cyrano* and his nose, which now finds more room to turn round in. I had not seen Mr. LORAINÉ on the more congested stage of the Garrick. Indeed the last time that I assisted at M. ROSTAND'S play was some twenty years ago in the South of France. It happened that there had recently been a vogue of Musketeer plays in England. Behind my seat was a British Baronet (a recent creation) for whom the French language had little or no meaning. The first and only sign of intelligence that he showed was well on in the performance, at the words, "*Qui est ce monsieur?*" "*C'est D'Artagnan.*" (*D'Artagnan* then disappears altogether).

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"Another of these damned Musketeer plays," said the Bart.; "I'm off!" And he went.

I am not sure that, even in English, it would have been just the play for his taste; but that London has plenty of people who can appreciate it may be seen by the way in which Mr. LORAINÉ can hold the great auditorium under the spell of its romance. Without an effort he endears to us the defects of his hero's Quixotic qualities, and makes his very deformity contribute to the triumph of his heroic *panache*. Even such of the poet's prolixities as survive a very careful pruning of the text are made to seem essential to the self-expression of character.

Mr. LORAINÉ is happy in his book, for the clever rendering made by Miss GLADYS THOMAS and Miss MARY GUILLEMARD reproduces both the spirit and the letter of the poem. And from his cast he gets all the support that he needs. True, he needs very little. He fills the stage, and the other characters—notably the colourless *Christian de Neuville*—are little more than his foils. Miss STELLA CAMPBELL, as *Roxane*, failed, at times, to convey a sense of overwhelming passion either for the body of *Christian* or the soul which she imagined it to contain; but she was always a gracious figure and her voice was gentle. Perhaps Mr. LORAINÉ owed most to his scenic artists, Messrs. DULAC and JOHN BULL, who gave of their best. There was attraction too in the very names of Arras and Bapaume, as well as in the thought of the part that our *Cyrano* of to-day has played against a ruder foe than the Spaniard. And was I wrong in tracing a hint of other experiences gained at the front, when Mr. LORAINÉ nearly turned up his false nose at the mention of "military wit."

The part offers little scope for humour. *Cyrano*, with all his generous impulses, is too self-conscious for that. But in each of his moods and phases—bravado, sacrifice, acceptance of the inexorable pathos of things—Mr. LORAINÉ had got at the heart of the man. A very brave and inspiring performance.

O.S.

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[Illustration: "WHERE YOU BIN THIS HOUR OF THE NIGHT?"

"I'VE BIN AT ME UNION, CONSIDERIN' THIS 'ERE STRIKE."

"WELL—YOU CAN STAY DOWN THERE AN' CONSIDER THIS 'ERE LOCK-OUT."]

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HOW HISTORY IS WRITTEN.

From reports of Mr. ASQUITH'S speech at Newcastle:—



“He [Lord French] has taken an unusual, and I think an unfortunate, course (cheers), giving to the world at this stage what must be an *ex parte* narrative of what happened under his command.”—*Times*.

“He has taken an unusual, and as I take it, an unfortunate course in giving to the world what must of necessity be an expert narrative of what happened under his command.”—*Daily Herald*.

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“BEAUTY IN HOUSE BUILDING.

LET US LOOK AS THOUGH WE HAD WON THE WAR.”—*Daily Mirror*.

Who said we hadn't?

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THE DAY.

At last the great day has arrived; in less than half an hour I shall be at the church. Heavens! what excitement. And yet I suppose most girls have had to undergo the ordeal, if one may so describe it, at some period of their life.

The magic church is not far distant and from my room I can hear the merry pealing of the bells. In the garden the birds are singing as they have never sung before. Truly life is a beautiful poem on such a day as this.

But I have really little time to dwell on these things, for am I not the centre of creation itself, the hub around which the whole household revolves in one wild bewildering whirl of ecstasy? How can one think when one is surrounded by a triumphant mother, a couple of adoring and not envious sisters, a critical brother and a doting father?

But then why should I think? Why use my brain at all when all the thinking that needs to be thought is being thought for me? Goodness, how my poor head reels. If only I could sleep. Ah, yes, that is what I could almost wish for at this moment—sweet, soothing, refreshing sleep.

But it is not to be; the house is just a great tearing pandemonium of joy. Hark! What's that? A motor horn? Yes, yes, a taxi is at the gate. Now another has glided forward and waits expectantly for the central figure—myself.

“Well, darling,” murmurs my father, “it's high time we were off. Wouldn't do to be late today, you know.” And he laughs proudly.

Can I describe the journey to the church? I can, but I will spare you. Enough to say that I carry myself with dignity. Whether I do so in the vast solemn atmosphere of the church I am unable to say, though I will confess to a feeling almost of awe.

In deep silence we move down the aisle. The service begins. Can I repeat it? I fear not. But one passage there is which stands out prominently from the rest. It is in the form of a demand made by the clergyman. Looking steadily at my father, he exclaims:

—

“Name *this child*.”

I am roused to a fresh interest, and with fast-beating heart I await my father's answer. It comes as a bombshell to my sensitive ears:—

“Armisticia Beatty Zeebrugge!”

And I believed that only Germans could wage war on helpless babes.

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[Illustration: SPRING-TIME IN THE OFFICE.]

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OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks.)

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Books dealing with life at the Front have naturally somewhat slackened in volume of late. Perhaps this accounts for some part of my interest in *Pushed and the Return Push* (BLACKWOOD). But more must be put down to the lure of the subject, and most of all to the admirable way in which the writer, who chooses to be known as "QUEX," has dealt with it. Briefly, the book is a record of the two great sensational movements of 1918, and of the writer's experiences as an officer of an Artillery Brigade in the retreat forced upon the Fifth Army by the break through of the Germans on March 21st, and subsequently in the return push which broke the Hindenburg Line and ended the War. The publishers say that this is the only account yet written by a participator in these happenings; I hardly think that any will appear more vivid and moving. The amazing sequence of the events with which it deals gives to the book the thrill of arranged drama, in which disaster is balanced by the triumphant ending. However unskilfully told, such a history could hardly fail of its effect; by good fortune, however, it finds in "QUEX" a chronicler able to do it justice. Simply and without apparent effort he conveys the suspense of the days before the attack (a couple of chapters here are as breathlessly exciting as anything that I have yet read in the literature of the War), the long trial of the retreat, and finally the retaliation and the ever-quickenning rush forward from victory to victory that makes last autumn seem like an age of miracles. It is essentially a soldier's story, at times technical, throughout filled with the unflurried all-in-the-day's-work philosophy that upheld our armies in every change of fortune. For many reasons a volume that should find its place in any collection of the smaller histories of the Great War.

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Until I had very nearly reached the end of *The Cormorant* (MELROSE) I could not, though I tried, make up my mind as to which of three possible claimants was filling the title-role. When I did discover the "Cormorant's" identity with a fourth person quite unsuspected, I found myself just a little inclined to wonder whether perhaps the authoress had not had the mystification of her readers as her real aim when she chose her title, and merely introduced a pleasant American, who called people names with a sincerity few of us would dare to imitate, in order to justify her choice. But all the same I am not going to tell her secret here, for I feel that much will be added to the interest of a very pleasant book if readers will pause long enough at the end of chapter sixteen to try to "spot" the "Cormorant" and—as I hope and believe—guess wrong. Miss ANN (or ANNE, for her publishers seem to be in two minds about it) WEAVER has compounded her tale from the somewhat ordinary ingredients of a heroine, as aggressively red-haired as only red-haired heroines can be; a philandering but finally faithful hero; a worthless but charming married man, and a number of less important people, many of whom are well drawn, though I think that I have met that scheming and malicious French maid before. *The Cormorant's* lines are chiefly laid in country houses of the more delightful sort and the story is well told. When Miss WEAVER invents a more distinguished plot she should do something very good indeed.

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Mr. HORACE BLEACKLEY'S *Anymoon* (LANE) is a reasonably diverting because superbly improbable account of England under the new Socialist Commonwealth, with *Joseph Anymoon*, a highly popular Cockney plebeian, as President. Follows an era of feminist control and a Bolshevik revolution contrived by one *Cohen* (with the authentic properties, "Crimson Guards" and purple morality), and finally the Restoration through the loyalist Navy, the complacent *Anymoon* consoling himself with the reflection that if he was a failure as CROMWELL he can at least be a success as General MONK. Perhaps the wilder critics of the present order have no reason to complain if their impatient generalisations are marshalled, however disingenuously, against them. But the judicious folk of every school who are now trying to take their bearings may wonder if much is to be gained by putting up and knocking down such flimsy figures of straw. Mr. HAROLD COX contributes a rather too solemn preface, which labels this otherwise irresponsible novel as a serious tract. I rather think that the engaging spectacle of the biographer of WILKES and the editor of *The Edinburgh* (the author of *The New Republic* surely somewhere in the offing) crouching among the headstones with a candle in a hollow turnip will make a certain appeal to those with a sense of humour and proportion ... The others may like it even better.

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Nothing could be more attractive than the central idea of *The Love Spinner* (METHUEN), which is to tell the war-time adventures of a little old lady—the good fairy of her circle—whose interest in the heart-affairs of her friends wins her this pleasant if slightly sentimental title. But, ungrateful as is the task of breaking so innocent a butterfly upon the wheel of criticism, I'm afraid I must add that I think Miss CLARA TURNBULL has hardly carried out her purpose with sufficient discrimination. In plain fact she has allowed her sympathies to run away with her. Such a character as *Miss Jessie*, who goes about doing good, and producing incidentally the most benevolent reactions in confirmed misanthropes, demands to be handled with the nicest care if sentimentality is to be avoided. Let me put it that Miss TURNBULL has not always been entirely successful in this respect. Thus, despite some agreeable scenes, the book remains one for the unsophisticated, or for those whose appetite for fictional glucose is robust. There is not very much that can be called plot; what there is concerns itself with the fortunes of *Miss Jessie*'s tenants, the chief objects of her ministrations. In the end an air-raid, of which the details are surely unusual, provides *Miss Jessie* with the opportunity for a deed of heroism that I am still trying to visualize (her nephew had thrown her down and was protecting her body with his own; but the heroine, seeing this, changed places with her defender "between the flash of the shell's impact and the explosion") and finishes, with an appropriately tearful death-scene, a tale that would have been improved by more restraint in the telling.

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In *The Thunderbolt* (UNWIN) *Georgina Bonham*, at home and amongst her intimates, delighted in small-talk. It flowed in an unceasing stream, particularly when *Dr. Rayke*, her chief adviser and confidant, came to tea and ate his favourite currant-and-sultana cake. Everything, in fact, prepares you for one of the tamest of all tame novels, when suddenly the "Thunderbolt" of the title remembers its attributes and bursts from a clear sky. Thenceforward Mr. GEORGE COLMORE'S book is of a particularly painful character. For the horrors which here accumulate on horror's head I find no adequate excuse, even though the villain of the story is a German.

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Blanche Maddison, the heroine of *The Obstinate Lady* (HUTCHINSON), might without any excess of rudeness be called pig-headed. With her case in my mind let me advise women who have married disgusting men to seek whatever shelter the law may give them rather than adopt her persistently cold and aloof manner. I hardly wonder that her husband found her a little exasperating. We all know Mr. W.E. NORRIS as a novelist who can be trusted not only to tell an intriguing story, but also to construct it irreproachably. But here, I think, he has penalised himself with the materials he has chosen. However he sets bravely to work to wipe off his handicap, and very nearly succeeds. If I cannot credit him with complete success it is because the subsidiary tale of love which he gives us is really too anaemic. Yet I can conceive of people so fed up with the makers of blood-heat fiction that Mr. NORRIS'S lukewarm method will afford them a pleasant change.

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However cleverly Mr. WILLIAM CAINE may treat his theme, *The Wife Who Came Alive* (JENKINS) is only another version of the antiquated mother-in-law business. *Doll Brackett* was a beautiful American girl, and if she had not been idiotically idolised by her mother and could have realised the difference between pounds and pence she might have made an excellent wife for *George March*, of Hampstead, portrait-painter. *Mrs. Brackett* was not actively hostile to this marriage, but after losing her fortune she began to disapprove of the economy which *March* preached and tried in vain to practise. Persuaded that her idol was no longer becomingly enshrined, she proceeded to make trouble between husband and wife, and they separated. Then followed a very lean time both for *Mrs. Brackett* and her daughter, until at last the former made such an outrageous proposal that *Doll* came to her senses. You will easily believe that this sort of subject offers no very favourable outlet for Mr. CAINE'S particular gifts, but the confidential style in which he tells the story is distinctly engaging, and as a warning to foolish mothers-in-law it is something more than adequate.

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[Illustration: *Bus Conductor*. "ANYBODY WANT THE ALBERT 'ALL?"

Weary Househunter (absent-mindedly). "IT'S RATHER LARGE, BUT PERHAPS I MIGHT BE ALLOWED TO SUB-LET A PART."]