

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 159, July 7th, 1920 eBook

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 159, July 7th, 1920

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PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

Vol. 159.

July 7th, 1920.

[Illustration: Punch Vol. Clix.]

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[Illustration: *Vol. Clix.*]

* * * * *

Timon.

About a month ago we lost our dog. I can't describe him, although I have tried from time to time; but Elaine, my wife, said I should not speak in that fashion of a dumb animal. He stands about two hands high, is of a reseda-green shade, except when in anger, and has no distinguishing marks except the absence of a piece of the right ear, which was carried off by a marauding Irish terrier. He answers with a growl to many names, including that of Timon. He will also answer to a piece of raw meat, another dog or a postman.

I do not know if dogs can be said to have a hobby; if so, Timon's hobby is postmen. He studies them closely. In fact I should not be surprised if he comes to write a monograph on them some day.

As soon as one of them has daringly passed the entrance gates of Bellevue, Timon trots forth like a reception committee to meet him. He studies the bunch of communications that the visitor bears in his hand. If they are all right—cheques from publishers, editors and missing-heir merchants, invitations to tea and tennis or dinner and dominoes, requests for autographs—Timon nods and allows the postman to pass unscathed. On the other hand, if the collection includes rejected manuscripts, income or other tax demand notes, tracts or circulars, then I hear the low growl with which Timon customarily goes into action, and the next moment the postman is making for the neighbouring county and taking a four-foot gate in his stride.

Consequently it is to be anticipated that if the Olympic Games are ever held in our neighbourhood the sprint and the hurdles will be simply at the mercy of our local post-office. They take no credit for it. It is simply practice, they say.

But, to return to the main subject, we have lost Timon. One month has passed without his cheery presence at Bellevue. Reckless postmen have made themselves free of the front garden and all colour has gone out of life.

We have done everything to win him back. We have inserted numerous advertisements in the agony columns of the newspapers: "If this should catch the eye of Timon," or "Come back, Timon. All will be forgiven;" but apparently we have yet to find his favourite newspaper.

We began with the well-known canine papers, trusting vainly that he might happen to glance through them some day when he was a bit bored or hadn't an engagement. After that we went through *The Times*, *The Morning Post* (he's strongly anti-Bolshevik), *The Daily News* (his views on vivisection are notorious) and other dailies, and then took to the weeklies.

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We had strong hopes for a time that *The Meat Trade Review* would find him. Timon is fond of raw meat. But failure again resulted. We have now reached *Syren and Shipping* and *The Ironmongers' Gazette* and—

* * * * *

I must stop here to inform you of the glad news. Elaine has just hurried in to tell me that Timon has replied and will be back to-morrow.

How did we catch his eye? Well, of course we should have thought of it before. It was *The Post Office Gazette*.

* * * * *

The romance of bookmaking.

A visit to Messrs. Pryce UNLTD.

(With acknowledgments in the right quarter.)

A gigantic commissionaire flings wide the doors for us and, passing reverently inside, we are confronted by the magnificent equestrian statue of Mr. Bookham Pryce, the founder of the firm. This masterpiece of the Post-Cubist School was originally entitled, "Niobe Weeping for her Children," but the gifted artist, in recognition of Mr. Pryce's princely offer of one thousand guineas for the group, waived his right to the title.

On the left we see the Foreign Department. Here we watch with rapt attention the arrival of countless business telegrams from all parts of the world. We choose one or two at random and see for ourselves the ramifications of Pryce's far-flung booking service. This one from China: "Puttee fifty taels Boko Lanchester Cup;" another from distant Siberia, emerging from the primeval forests of that wondrous land of the future: "Tenbowski Quitter Ebury Handicap." Bets are accepted in all denominations from Victory Bonds to the cowrie-shells of West Africa.

Passing up the marble staircase and leaving the Home Department on our right we arrive at the Stumer Section. Here a small army of ex-Scotland Yard detectives are engaged in dealing with *mala-fide* commissions— attempts on the part of men of straw to make credit bets, or telegrams despatched after a race is over.

Where shall we go next? We ask a courteous shopwalker, who in flawless English advises us to try the Winter Gardens, where a delightful tea is served at a minimum cost. Here, whilst sipping a fragrant cup of Orange Pekoe, we can watch the large screen, on which the results of all races are flashed within ten seconds of the horses passing the winning-post. At one time, in fact, it was nothing unusual for Pryce's to

have the results posted before the horses had completed the course, but in deference to the prejudices of certain purists this practice was abandoned.

Follows a hurried visit to the Library and Museum, where we gaze enthralled at the original pair of pigeon-blue trousers with which Mr. Bookham Pryce made his sensational *debut* on the Lincoln course in the spring of 1894. We might linger here a moment to muse over the simple beginnings of great men, but time is pressing and we are all agog to visit the Bargain Basement.

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An express lift flashes us downwards in a few seconds and behold we are in the midst of rows of counters groaning under bargains that even the New Poor can scarce forbear to grasp.

Here, for example, is one-hundred-to-eight offered against Pincushion for the Gimcrack Stakes. This wondrous animal's lineage and previous performances are carefully tabulated on a card at the side, and, remembering the form he showed at Gatwick, one wonders, as the man in the street would say, how it is done.

Or look at Tom-tom, which left the others simply standing in a field of forty-four at Kempton Park, and carrying eight-stone-seven. Here he has a paltry four-pound penalty for the Worcester Welter Handicap, yet one can have seven to one about him.

How the House of Pryce can offer such bargains is a mystery to the old school of red-necked bookmakers, whose Oxford accent was not pronounced. They fail to see what courtesy, urbanity and meat-teas at three shillings per head can do in the way of stimulating business.

From the Bargain Basement we wander at will through the remaining departments, making inquiries here and there from the expert assistants, technically known as laymen, without being once importuned to make a bet.

And when at length, refreshed and pleased with a delightful afternoon, we pass again through the portals of the House of Pryce, we make for home, confirmed supporters of the modern personal touch, which has transformed a drab business into a veritable romance.

* * * * *

Our optimistic advertisers.

"Will Person who took Gent.'s Trenchcoat by mistake whilst motor-cycle was on fire in —— Rd., on Wednesday night, please return same."—
Provincial Paper.

* * * * *

"Alec Herd, who went round in 72, and who is one of the old school, was second in the Open Championship no fewer than 28 years ago, and won it as far back as 19042."—*Provincial Paper.*

B.C., of course.

* * * * *

“Yesterday was St. Stephen’s Day, and, therefore, the patronal festival of the Abbey Church. Hence the choice of the date for the issue of the appeal, though probably not one Englishman in a thousand connects the Abbey with any particular saint.”—*Daily Paper*.

Well, certainly not this one, though we have heard St. PETER alluded to in this connection.

* * * * *

“THE HENLEY REGATTA.

A remarkable feature of the meeting is the number of ladies rowing, the ten heats for eight-oared boats in the Ladies’ Challenge Cup being decided to-day.”—*Provincial Paper*.

Lest the male element should be entirely forgotten, would it not be well to call it in future “The Cock-and-henley regatta”?

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* * * * *

IMPORTANT NEW BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY THE MARYLAND COMPANY, SQUINTING HOUSE SQUARE.

Ready to-day. An arresting Novel.

By RIZZIO DARNLEY.

REINCARNATION; OR, THE TWO MARIES.

With eighteen illustrations on superpulp paramount artcraft vellum.

"The story is one of the most gripping that I have ever read. I am still suffering from its grippe."—*Lord Thanet in "The Daily Feature."*

* * * * *

Also ready to-day. The Book of the Year.

FROM SCREEN TO THRONE.

By HARRY EGBOLD.

"I am glad to pay a tribute to the sincerity, intimate knowledge and exalted Quixotry of this extraordinary book. It is the best that has ever been written."—*Lord Thanet in "The Daily Mary."*

* * * * *

The Novel of the Century.

THE PERILS OF MAJESTY.

By H. STICKHAM WEED.

In MALLABY-DEELEY cloth, with luminous portraits.

"It is so rich in plums that I do not recommend anyone to read more than half-a-column at a time. In this way the pleasure and profit can be spread over several weeks. This wonderful book is the product of a brilliant thinker and tender-hearted gentleman. My shelves are full, but I should take down any war-book to make room for this."—*Lord Thanet (third review in "The Douglas Daily Dispatch.")*

* * * * *

A Novel of Super-Pathos.

THE QUEEN'S REST CURE.

By "MR. X."

"*The Queen's Rest-Cure* is a greater book than *The Rescue* by JOSEPH CONRAD, because the sinister thrill of suspense yields to the ever- fresh romance of young love. I have read and re-read it with tears of pure delight, punctuated with shrieks of happy laughter."—*Lord Thanet* in "*The Maryland Mirror*."

* * * * *

QUOTES AND CHEERIES.

A medium of instruction and enlightenment for literary gents, gentle readers and all persons anxious to think about four things at once.

EVERY SATURDAY.

Mary's Journal of her Trip to England.

The concluding instalment of Mary Queen of Hearts' journal of her trip to England appears in the current issue of *Quotes and Cheeries* under the caption of "Squinting House Square Papers." Reference has already been made in a preceding instalment to the riots at the Fitz Hotel and the flight of the Queen to Wimbledon in a taxi driven by Sir Philip Phibbs, afterwards Lord Fountain of Penn.

* * * * *

[Illustration: L'ENFANT TERRIBLE.

YOUNG TURK. "I WILL FIGHT TO THE DEATH FOR OUR NATIONAL HONOUR."

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OLD TURK. “WELL, IF YOU MUST. BUT I WASH MY HANDS OF THE WHOLE BUSINESS—
UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU WIN.”]

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Golfer*. “WHAT’S THE MATTER, SANDY? AREN’T YOU GOING TO PLAY THIS AFTERNOON?”

Sandy. “MAN, HAVE YOU NOT HEARD? I’VE LOST MA BALL.”]

* * * * *

ELIZABETH GOES TO THE SALES.

“Are you goin’ to the Summer Sales this year, ’m?” inquired Elizabeth, suddenly projecting herself on the horizon of my thoughts.

I laid down my pen at once. It is not possible to continue writing if Elizabeth desires to make conversation at the same time.

“Certainly I shall, if I hear of a sale of cheap crockery,” I replied pointedly; “ours badly needs replenishing.”

The barbed arrow did not find its mark. It may require a surgical operation to get a joke into a Scotsman, but only the medium of some high explosive could properly convey a hint to Elizabeth.

“‘Oo wants to go to sales to buy things like pots?” asked Elizabeth scornfully.

“*People who are always getting their pots broken,*” I replied in italics.

“Well, everyone to their tastes,” she commented casually. I began to wonder if even trinitrotoluol could be ineffective at times. “Wot I mean by sales is buyin’ clothes,” she continued; “bargins, you know.”

“Yes, I know,” I answered; “I’ve seen them—in the advertisements. But I never secure any.”

“Why don’t you, then?”

“Because of all the other people, Elizabeth. Those who get the bargains seem to have a more dominant nature than mine. They have more grit, determination—”



"Sharper elbows is wot you mean," put in Elizabeth. "It's chiefly a matter of 'oo pushes 'ardest. My! I love a sale if only for the sake o' the scrimmage. A friend o' mine 'oo's been separated from 'er 'usband becos they was always fightin' told me she never misses goin' to a sale so that she'll be in practice in case 'er and 'er old man make it up again."

"I'm not surprised that I never get any bargains," I commented, "although I often long to. Look at the advertisement in this newspaper, for instance. Here's a silk jumper which is absurdly cheap. It's a lovely Rose du Barri tricot and costs only—"

"Oo's rose doo barry trick-o when 'e's at 'ome?" inquired Elizabeth.

I translated hurriedly. "I mean it's a pink knitted one. Exactly what I want. But what is the use of my even hoping to secure it?"

"I'll get it for you," announced Elizabeth.

"You! But how?"

"I'll go an' wait an hour or two afore the doors open, an' when they do I don't 'arf know 'ow to fight my way to the counters. Let me go, m'm. I'd reelly like the outin'."

I hesitated, but only for a moment. What could be simpler than sending an emissary to use her elbows on my behalf? There was nothing unfair in doing that, especially if I undertook the washing-up in her absence.

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Elizabeth set out very early on the day of the sale looking enthusiastic. I, equally enthusiastic, applied myself to the menial tasks usually performed by Elizabeth. We had just finished a lunch of tinned soup, tinned fish and tinned fruit (oh, what a blessing is a can-opener in the absence of domestics!) when she reappeared. My heart leapt at the sight of a parcel in her hand.

"You got it after all!" I exclaimed. O thrice blessed Elizabeth! O most excellent domestic! For the battles she had fought that day on my behalf she should not go unrewarded.

"I'm longing to try it on," I said as I tore at the outer wrappings.

"Well, I orter say it isn't the one you told me to get," interposed Elizabeth.

I paused in unwrapping the parcel, assailed by sudden misgivings. "Isn't this the jumper, then?"

"Not that pertickler one. You see, it was like this: there was a great 'orse of a woman just in front o' me an' I couldn't move ahead of 'er no'ow, try as I would. It was a case o' bulk, if you know what I mean, an' elbows wasn't no good. An' 'ang me if she wasn't goin' in for that there very tricky jumper you wanted! I put up a good fight for it, 'm, I did indeed. We both reached it at the same time, got 'old of it together, an'—an'—when it gave way at the seams I let 'er 'ave it," said Elizabeth, concluding her simple narrative. It sounded convincing enough. I had no reason to doubt it at the moment.

"The beast!" I said in the bitterness of my heart. "Is it possible a woman could so far forget herself as to behave like that, Elizabeth?"

"But there's no need for you to be disappointed, as I got a jumper for you arter all," she continued. She took the final wrappings off the parcel and drew out a garment.

"There!" she remarked proudly, holding it aloft.

The Old Masters, we are told, discovered the secret of colour, but the colour of that jumper should have been kept a secret—it never ought to have been allowed to leak out. It was one of those flaming pinks that cannot be regarded by the naked eye for any length of time, owing to the strain it puts on the delicate optic nerve. Bands of purple finished off this Bolshevik creation.

"How dare you ask me to wear that?" I broke out when I had partially recovered from the shock.

"Why, wot's wrong with it? You said you wanted a pink tricky one. It's pink, isn't it?"

"Yes, it *is* pink," I admitted faintly.

“An’ it’s far trickier nor wot the other was.”

“You had better keep the jumper for yourself,” I said crossly. “No doubt it will suit you better than it would me.”

She seemed gratified, but not unusually taken aback at my generosity. “Well, since you ses it yourself, ’m, p’raps it is more my style. Your complexion won’t *stand* as much as mine.”

I was pondering on whether this was intended as a compliment or an insult when she spoke again.

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"I shan't 'arf cut a dash," she murmured as she drifted to the door; "an' it might be the means o' bringin' it off this time."

"Bringing what off, Elizabeth?"

"Bringin' my new young man to the point, 'm. You see, 'e do love a bit o' colour; *an' I knew 'e wouldn't 'ave liked the rose doo barry trick-o, anyhow.*"

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Proprietor (to the rescue of his assistants, who have failed to satisfy customer).* "ARE YOU SURE YOU KNOW WHAT KIND OF CAP YOU DO WANT?"

New "Blood." "WELL, YE SEE, IT'S LIKE THIS—I'VE BOUGHT A MOTOR-BIKE, AND I THOUGHT AS 'OW I'D LIKE A CAP WI' A PEAK AT THE BACK."]

* * * * *

"Wanted, a General, plain cooking, gas fires, two boys 9 by 5.—South Streatham."—*Local Paper.*

Nothing is said of their third dimensions.

* * * * *

A REMARKABLE COINCIDENCE.

"To-day is the birthday of Lord Durham and his twin brother, the Hon. F.W. Lambton, both of whom are sixty-five." *Provincial Paper.*

* * * * *

"Prince Arthur is well fitted for the high post to which he has been called. He is the tallest member of the Royal Family."—*Daily Paper.*

But it is only fair to his Royal Highness to say that he has other qualifications as well.

* * * * *

From the recent debate on "Doctors and Secrecy":—

"If you begin to open the door you take away the sheet anchor upon which our professional work is based."—*Daily Paper.*

We trust that the speaker mixes his medicines more discreetly than his metaphors.

* * * * *

ON WITH THE DANCE.

I have been to a dance; or rather I have been to a fashionable restaurant where dancing is done. I was not invited to a dance—there are very good reasons for that; I was invited to dinner. But many of my fellow-guests have invested a lot of money in dancing. That is to say, they keep on paying dancing-instructors to teach them new tricks; and the dancing-instructors, who know their business, keep on inventing new tricks. As soon as they have taught everybody a new step they say it is unfashionable and invent a new one.

This is all very well from their point of view, but it means that, in order to keep up with them and get your money's worth out of the last trick you learned, it is necessary during its brief life of respectability to dance at every available opportunity. You dance as many nights a week as is physically possible; you dance on week-days and you dance on Sundays; you begin dancing in the afternoon and you dance during tea in the coffee-rooms of expensive restaurants, whirling your precarious way through littered and

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abandoned tea-tables; and at dinner-time you leap up madly before the fish and dance like variety artistes in a highly-polished arena before a crowd of complete strangers eating their food; or, as if seized with an uncontrollable craving for the dance, you fling out after the joint for one wild gallop in an outer room, from which you return, perspiring and dyspeptic, to the consumption of an ice-pudding, before dashing forth to the final orgy at a picture-gallery, where the walls are appropriately covered with pictures of barbaric women dressed for the hot weather.

That is what happened at this dinner. As soon as you had started a nice conversation with a lady a sort of roaring was heard without; her eyes gleamed, her nostrils quivered like a horse planning a gallop, and in the middle of one of your best sentences she simply faded away with some horrible man at the other end of the table who was probably "the only man in London who can do the Double Straddle properly." This went on the whole of the meal, and it made connected conversation quite difficult. For my own part I went on eating, and when I had properly digested I went out and looked at the little victims getting their money's worth.

From the door of the room where the dancing was done a confused uproar overflowed, as if several men of powerful physique were banging a number of pokers against a number of saucepans, and blowing whistles, and occasional catcalls, and now and then beating a drum and several sets of huge cymbals, and ceaselessly twanging at innumerable banjos, and at the same time singing in a foreign language, and shouting curses or exhortations or street cries, or imitating hunting-calls and the cry of the hyena, or uniting suddenly in the war-whoop of some pitiless Sudan tribe.

It was a really terrible noise. It hit you like the back-blast of an explosion as you entered the room. There was no distinguishable tune. It was simply an enormous noise. But there was a kind of savage rhythm about it which made one think immediately of Indians and fierce men and the native camps one used to visit at the Earl's Court Exhibition. And this was not surprising. For the musicians included one genuine negro and three men with their faces blacked; and the noise and the rhythm were the authentic music of a negro village in South America, and the words which some genius had once set to the noise were an exhortation to go to the place where the negroes dwelt.

To judge by their movements, many of the dancers had in fact been there, and had carefully studied the best indigenous models. They were doing some quite extraordinary things. No two couples were doing quite the same thing for more than a few seconds, so that there was an endless variety of extraordinary postures. Some of them shuffled secretly along the edge of the room, their faces tense, their shoulders swaying like reeds in a light wind, their progress almost imperceptible; they did not rotate, they did not speak, but sometimes the tremor of a skirt or the slight stirring of a

patent-leather shoe showed that they were indeed alive and in motion, though that motion was as the motion of a glacier, not to be measured in minutes or yards.

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And some in a kind of fever rushed hither and thither among the thick crowd, avoiding disaster with marvellous dexterity; and sometimes they revolved slowly and sometimes quickly and sometimes spun giddily round for a moment like gyroscopic tops. Then they too would be seized with a kind of trance, or it may be with sheer shortness of breath, and hung motionless for a little in the centre of the room, while the mad throng jostled and flowed about them like the leaves in Autumn round a dead bird.

And some did not revolve at all, but charged straightly up and down; and some of these thrust their loves for ever before them, as the Prussians thrust the villagers in the face of the enemy, and some for ever navigated themselves backwards like moving breakwaters to protect their darlings from the precipitate seas.

Some of them kept themselves as upright as possible, swaying slightly like willows from the hips, and some of them contorted themselves into strange and angular shapes, now leaning perilously forward till they were practically lying upon their terrified partners, and now bending sideways as a man bends who has water in one ear after bathing. All of them clutched each other in a close and intimate manner, but some, as if by separation to intensify the joy of their union, or perhaps to secure greater freedom for some particularly spacious manoeuvre, would part suddenly in the middle of the room and, clinging distantly with their hands, execute a number of complicated side-steps in opposite directions, or aim a series of vicious kicks at each other, after which they would reunite in a passionate embrace and gallop in a frenzy round the room, or fall into a trance or simply fall down. If they fell down they lay still for a moment in the fearful expectation of death, as men lie who fall under a horse; and then they would creep on hands and knees to the wall through the whirling and indifferent crowd.

Watching them, you could not tell what any one couple would do next. The most placid and dignified among them might at any moment fling a leg out behind them and almost kneel in mutual adoration, and then, as if nothing unusual had happened, shuffle onward through the press; or, as though some electric mechanism had been set in motion, they would suddenly lift a foot sideways and stand on one leg. Poised pathetically, as if waiting for the happy signal when they might put the other leg down, these men looked very sad, and I wished that the Medusa's head might be smuggled somehow into the room for their attitudes to be imperishably recorded in cold stone; it would have been a valuable addition to modern sculpture.

Upon this whirlpool I embarked with the greatest misgiving and a strange young woman clinging to my person. The noise was deafening. The four black men were now all shouting at once and playing all their instruments at once, working up to the inconceivable uproar of the finale; and all the dancers began to dance with a last desperate fury. Bodies buffeted one from behind, and while one was yet looking round in apology or anger more bodies buffeted one from the flank. It was like swimming in a choppy sea, where there is no time to get the last wave out of your mouth before the next one hits you.

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Close beside us a couple fell down with a great crash. I looked at them with concern, but no one else took any notice. On with the dance! Faster and faster the black men played. I was dimly aware now that they were standing on their chairs, bellowing, and fancied the end must be near. Then we were washed into a quiet backwater, in a corner, and from here I determined never to issue till the Last Banjo should indeed sound. Here I sidled vaguely about for a long time, hoping that I looked like a man preparing for some vast culminating feat, a side-step or a buzz or a double-Jazz-spin or an ordinary fall down.

The noise suddenly ceased; the four black men had exploded.

“Very good exercise,” my partner said.

“Quite,” said I.

A.P.H.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Farmer (booming his land to inquiring stranger)*. “THAT THERE LAND BE WORTH DREE HUNDRED POUND AN ACRE IF IT BE WORTH A PENNY, IT BE. WERE YOU THINKING O’ BUYING AN’ SETTLING HERE?”

Stranger. “OH, NO. I’M THE NEW TAX-COLLECTOR.”]

* * * * *

“We published yesterday a protest from an eminent correspondent against the appointment of a British Ambassador to Berlin. We understand, nevertheless, that LORD D’ABERNON has been selected for the appointment.”—*Times*.

Sir WILLIAM ORPEN is already at work, we understand, on a picture for next year’s Academy, entitled “David defying the Thunderer.”

* * * * *

VANISHED GLORY.

(*The Life-tragedy of a Military Wag.*)

Time was I rocked the crowded tents
With laughter loud and hearty,
Librettist to the regiment’s
Diverting concert party;
With choice of themes so very small



The task was far from tiring;
There really was no risk at all
Of any joke misfiring.

I found each gibe at army rules
Appreciated fully;
I sparkled when describing mules
As “embryonic bully,”
Or, aided by some hackneyed tune,
Increased my easy laurels
By stringing verses to impugn
The quartermaster’s morals.

And so I vowed on my demob.
To shun the retrogression
To any sort of office job;
I’d jest as a profession
And burst upon the world a new
Satirical rebuker,
Acquiring fame and maybe too
A modicum of lucre.

But vain are all my *jeux de mot*,
No lip is loosed in laughter;
I send them to the Press, but no
Acceptance follows after;
And if, as formerly, I try
Satiric themes my gibe’ll
Be certain to be hampered by
The common law of libel.

In short, my hopes begin to fade;
The yawning gulf has rent them
Twixt finding subjects ready made
And having to invent them.
Shattered my foolish dreams recede
And pass into the distance,
And I must search for one in need
Of clerical assistance.

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* * * * *

“SOLDIER BREAKS WINDOW AND BOLTS WITH TWO CAKES.”—*Daily Paper*.

You can only do this kind of thing with the refreshment-room variety.

* * * * *

“For Sceptic Throats use Iodized Throat Tablets.”—*Local Paper*.

This distressing complaint is the very reverse of “clergyman’s sore throat.”

* * * * *

“LADY wishes to Exchange, from 15th July to 15th September, Young Englishman for Young Frenchman.”—*Daily Paper*.

We fear she is a flirt.

* * * * *

THE KING’S MESSENGER.

In Paris Geraldine’s mother suggested that, as I was paying a visit to London, I could bring Geraldine out with me on the return journey. She also suggested that I might bring out a new hat for her (Geraldine’s mother) at the same time. Though being in love neither with Geraldine’s mother nor with Geraldine’s mother’s hat I had to take kindly to both, to further my dark designs with regard to Geraldine.

In London I inspected the hat, complete in box. It was immediately obvious that it and I could never make the journey to Paris together. The sight of me carrying a hat-box at the early hour of 8 A.M. on Victoria Station would have put Geraldine off. Geraldine is very pretty, but she is like that.

On reflection, the transport of the hat from London to Paris seemed to me to be a matter eminently suited to the machinery of our Foreign Office. Though the Foreign Officer is as formidable as a Bishop in his own cathedral, he is, to those who persist in knowing him personally, a man much like oneself, fond of his glass of beer, ready to exchange one good turn for another. It happens that I have assisted the F.O. to make peace much as I have helped the W.O. to make war. In the sacred precincts I reminded my friend of this fact, and impressed upon him that the consolidation of the *entente* between Geraldine and myself was one of the most urgent political matters of the day. He was undiplomatic enough to ask how he could help ...

I don't want you to lose your awe of Diplomatic Bags, but there have been occasions when the Secret and Confidential Despatch consists of little more than a personal note from one strong silent man to another, touching on such domestic subjects as, say, a relative's hat. It was eventually, if arduously, arranged that in this instance the despatch should consist of the hat itself ...

My fascinating manner of greeting Geraldine on Victoria Station did not betray the fact that I had seen that arch-villain, George Nesbitt, installed in our train, looking terribly important. George doesn't want to marry any girl; every girl therefore wants to marry George. I managed to hustle Geraldine into our carriage and get her locked in without her seeing George. But George had seen her, and, not knowing that he doesn't want to marry any girl and thinking that he wants to marry every girl, he firmly convinced himself (I have no doubt) that he was passionately in love with Geraldine as he travelled down to Folkestone in his lonely splendour.

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On the Channel boat ... but perhaps it is fairer to all parties to omit that part.

At Boulogne I became inextricably mixed up with the Customs' people; Geraldine meanwhile got inevitably associated with George Nesbitt. She would, of course. Indeed, when at last I scrambled to the Paris train, with the cord of my pyjamas trailing from my kit-bag, there was Geraldine installed in George's special carriage, very sympathetically studying George's passport, wherein all Foreign Powers, great, small and medium-sized, were invited in red ink to regard George as It.

George informed me that, being a King's Messenger, he was afraid he dare not trust me, as a mere member of the public, to travel in the same carriage as the Diplomatic Bag. I said I must stay with them and keep an eye on Geraldine. George said that he would do that. In that case, I said, I would stay and keep an eye on the Diplomatic Bag. Geraldine being at one end of the carriage and the bag being at the other end George could not very well keep an eye on both. The possibility of George's eyes wandering apart when he was off his guard made a fleeting impression on Geraldine in my favour. I stayed.

George then set about to make the most of himself. Geraldine abetted. Geraldine is a terror. I became more determined than ever to marry her, George and the KING notwithstanding. George however got going. "For a plain fellow like myself" (he knows how confoundedly handsome he is) "it has been some little satisfaction to be selected as a Special Courier."

I explained the method of selection as I guessed it. "He forced his way into the F.O. and in an obsequious tone, which you and I, Geraldine, would be ashamed to adopt, begged for the favour of a bag to carry with him. If the KING had known about it he would rather have sent his messages by post."

"The general public," said George to Geraldine, "is apt to be very noisy and tiresome on railway journeys, is it not?"

Geraldine acquiesced. She doesn't often do that, but when she does it is extremely pleasant for the acquiescee. I pressed on with my explanation desperately. "I can hear poor old George pleading in a broken voice that he had to get to Paris and dared not go by himself. So they listened to his sad story and gave him a bag to see him through, and it isn't George who is taking the bag to Paris, but the bag which is taking George." To prevent him arguing I told Geraldine that you can tell a real K.M. by his Silver Greyhound badge, which he'll show you if you doubt him, just as you can tell a stockbroker by his pearl tie-pin, which you can see for yourself. This put George on his mettle.

"To think that to me are entrusted messages which may alter the map of Europe and change the history of the world! But I mustn't let my conceit run away with me, must I?"

Positively I believe Geraldine at that began to play with the idea of doing what George said he mustn't let his conceit do. Anyhow I had half-an-hour to myself while she listened to the inner histories of European Courts and flirted with the Bearer of Despatches. I was left gazing at the bag.

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There was only one bag, but it was very bulky. The contents were a tight fit; something round, about a yard in diameter, about a foot and a half in depth.

“Are you looking after this bag of yours properly, George?” I asked. “We shall be very angry with you if you go and lose it.” Something indefinable but intensely important in my tone caught Geraldine’s attention.

“That is between me and the F.O.,” said George irritably.

“When I was talking to them about it—” said I.

“What have you to do with the Foreign Office?” asked Geraldine.

“Little enough,” I said modestly. “I have my own business to see to. But the F.O. have always wanted to have something to do with me. So I gave them the job of looking after your mother’s hat. Had I known that they would send it along by any Tom, Dick or George who happened to drop in and offer to take the bag—”

George snatched the bag, examined it hastily and then tried to conceal it behind his own luggage. But Geraldine knows enough about hats to be able to spot a hatbox, when put to it, through all the heavy canvas and all the fancy labels in the world. So there was nothing more to be said about it; and there was little more to be done about it except for George to go on doing special messenger with it. The inner histories died down and, after a brief silence, George affected to go to sleep.

I only woke him up once and that was to ask whether he cared to look after the rest of my luggage for me.

When we got to Paris I explained to George that I had not meant to hurt his feelings; there was no fellow I would more gladly entrust my odd jobs to. Indeed Geraldine and I should want him to officiate in a similar capacity at the coming ceremony.

A very satisfactory conclusion. I got Geraldine; Geraldine got her full deserts—me; and if George had the misfortune to sit on the bag in the taxi, what matter? Geraldine had acquiesced; after that who cared what Geraldine’s mother did, said, thought or wore?

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Small Boy*. “WHO’S THAT FAT MAN, DAD?”

Dad. “DON’T KNOW. HE LOOKS LIKE A PROFITEER.”

Small Boy. “DON’T YOU THINK HE MUST BE ONE OF THE EXCESS PROFITEERS?”]

* * * * *

“Lady Clerk wanted for office work, with an engineering firm, a few miles out of Leeds; also able to cook and serve a luncheon for the principals.”—*Yorkshire Paper*.

If you want a cook nowadays you must employ a little diplomacy.

* * * * *

“During a discussion on over-crowded motor ‘buses a member declared that on one occasion 110 persons were found ‘clinging like bees’ to a car certified to hold 0.”—*Provincial Paper*.

Some of these might have been accommodated in the bonnet.

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“In Nepal His Highness shot what is believed to be the record tigress. She was a most magnificent specimen, with a total length of 9 feet 7 inches—her body alone measuring 9 feet 5 inches.”—*Indian Paper*.

The record, of course, consisted in the brevity of her two-inch tail.

* * * * *

From Smith Minor's Scripture-paper:

“Abraham was the man who was very keen to go into the land of Israel but he did not obey the word of the Lord, and the Lord's punishment to him was to forbid him to go into this land. There he sat on the heights of Abraham looking down on this land.”

And crying “Wolfe, Wolfe!”

* * * * *

GOLDWIRE AND POPPYSEED.

(*A Chinese Poem.*)

I make a bow; and then
I seize my brush (or pen)
And paint in hues enamel-bright
Scenes of Cathay for your delight.

Two buzzards by a stream,
So still that they might seem
Part of a carving wrought in bone
To decorate a royal throne.

Two lovers by a mill,
A picture sweeter still:
Will Chen-ki-Tong in this pursuit
Evade Pa-pa's avenging boot?

Lotus and mirror-lake
Aesthetic contact make;
No interfering dragon wags
His tail across their travelling bags.



Blue terraces of jade;
Sherbet and lemonade
Regale the overloaded guests;
They loose the buttons on their chests.

Birds'-nests and shark-fin soup:
I join the festive group;
My simple spirit merely begs
A brace of fifteenth-century eggs.

Pa-pa with heavy whip
Waits near the laden ship.
The cloud that hides the ivory moon
Is singularly opportune.

Clamour of gilded gongs
And shout of wedding songs.
I do not fail to notice that
The ophicleides are playing flat.

Peacock and palanquin,
Lacquered without, within.
This is the jasmine-scented bride
Resting her fairy toes inside.

Joss-sticks and incense sweet.
The perfume of her feet
Creates around her paradise.
I also find it rather nice.

A Chinese tale, you know,
Works upward from below.
The sense of mine is none the worse
If taken backward, verse by verse.

* * * * *

“Frederick —, 14, was summoned for failing to display a white front
light on a bicycle and pleaded guilty.

Policewoman — stated the facts, and was fined 5s.”—*Local Paper*.

Most discouraging.

* * * * *

“Florists by the thousand for cutting. They are also nice for borders round grass-plots, along hedges, round shrubs, *etc.*”—*Dutch Bulb Catalogue*.

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We should not dare to treat a British florist like this.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Bright Beginner* (as opponent is serving). "DOES THE BALL COME TO ME NOW?"]

* * * * *

CHARIVARIA.

"The English comedians are great," Mr. DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS is reported to have told an interviewer. He has already accepted an invitation, we understand, to visit the Law Courts and hear Mr. Justice DARLING ask, "Who is MARY PICKFORD?"

* * *

A turkey with four legs has been born in Purley. This attempt to divert attention from the visit of Miss MARY PICKFORD seems to have failed miserably.

* * *

"The increased wages in the catering trade," says an employer, "will be borne by the public." How he came to think out this novel plan is what mystifies the man in the street.

* * *

There is one reason, we read, why tea cannot be sold cheaper. If "The Profiteer" is not the right answer, it's quite a good guess.

* * *

No burglar seems to visit the houses of the profiteers, says a Labour speaker. Perhaps they have a delicacy about dealing with people in the same line of business.

* * *

For the seventh successive time, says a news item, there are no prisoners for trial at Stamford Quarter Sessions. We can only remind the Court that bulldog perseverance is bound to tell in the end.

* * *

It is fairly evident that the Americans fully realised the physical impossibility of having American bacon and Prohibition in their own country at the same time.

* * *

Western Texas, says a cable message, is being eaten bare by a plague of grasshoppers. Before Prohibition set in a little thing like that would never have been noticed in Texas.

* * *

Some of the new rich, says a gossip, only wear a suit once. There are others like that, only it is a much longer once.

* * *

"A healthy boy's skin should be well tanned after a holiday," says a health-culture writer. Surely not, unless he has done something to deserve it.

* * *

"But why a Ministry of Mines?" asks a contemporary. The object, of course, is to put the deep-level pocket-searching operations of the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER on a national basis.

* * *

Special arrangements have been made for expediting fish traffic on all railways. Meanwhile it is to be regretted that, owing to the nation's persistent neglect of scientific research, the self-delivering haddock is still in the experimental stage.

* * *

New Jersey has a clock with a dial thirty-eight feet across. In any other country this would be the largest clock in the world. In America it is just a full-size wrist-watch.

* * *

According to a medical writer, hearing can often be restored by a series of low explosions. The patient is advised to stand quite close to a man who has just received his tailor's bill.

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* * *

Baby tortoises are being sold for two-pence-halfpenny each in Kentish Town, says a news item. One bricklayer declared that he wouldn't know what to do for exercise without his to lead about.

* * *

An extraordinary report reaches us from a village in Essex. It appears that in spite of the proximity of several letter-boxes, a water-pump and a German machine-gun, a robin has deliberately built its nest in a local hedgerow.

* * * * *

[Illustration: I.O.U.]

GERMAN DELEGATE (*at Spa Conference*). "WE HAVE NO MONEY; BUT, TO PROVE THAT WE ARE ANXIOUS TO PAY YOU BACK, LET ME PRESENT YOU WITH OUR BERNHARDI'S NEW BOOK ON THE NEXT WAR."]

* * * * *

ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, June 28th.—Less than thirty years ago the prophets of ill foresaw ruin for the British shipping trade if the dock labourers got their "tanner." The "tanner" has now become a florin, and this afternoon the Peers passed without a dissentient voice the Second Reading of a Bill to enable Port and Harbour authorities to pay it.

They were much more critical over the Increase of Rent Bill, and at the instance of Lord MIDLETON defeated by a two to one majority the Government's proposal to deprive landlords of the power to evict strikers in order to provide accommodation for men willing to work. But the Government got a little of their own back on the clause authorising an increase of rent on business premises by forty per cent. Lord SALISBURY wanted seventy-five per cent. and haughtily refused Lord ASTOR'S sporting offer of fifty, but on a division he was beaten by 25 to 23.

In the Commons Sir FREDERICK HALL complained that slate and slack were still being supplied to London consumers under the guise and at the price of coal. What was the Government going to do about it? Mr. BRIDGEMAN replied that control having been removed the Government could do nothing, and consumers must find their own remedy—a reply which drove Sir FREDERICK into such paroxysms of indignation that the SPEAKER was obliged to intervene.

Mr. KILEY'S gloomy vaticinations as to the disastrous effect of the Plumage Bill on British commerce met with no encouragement from Sir ROBERT HORNE. In his opinion, I gather, our foreign trade is quite safe, and the Bill will not knock a feather out of it.

To Viscount CURZON'S inquiry whether the Allies were going to proceed with the trial of the EX-KAISER the PRIME MINISTER at first replied that he had "nothing to add." On being twitted with his election-pledge he added a good deal. When he gave that pledge, it seems, he did not contemplate the possibility that Holland would refuse to surrender her guest, and he had no intention of using force to compel her. WILLIAM HOHENZOLLERN, he considered, was not worth any more bloodshed. In that case the Government would save a good deal of Parliamentary time if they were definitely to write him off with their other bad debts.

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Among other methods of brightening village life the Ministry of Agriculture has lately circulated "rules for the mutual insurance of pigs and cows." The intellectual development of our domestic animals evidently proceeds apace. We have all heard of the learned pig, but that the cow also should be deemed capable of conducting actuarial calculations does, I confess, surprise me.

[Illustration: "WHO WAS CHIEF MOURNER?"

"I," SAID THE WREN,
"I, WEDGWOOD BENN,
I WAS CHIEF MOURNER."]

Having heard the latest feat of the Sinn Feiners in kidnapping a British General, the House evidently considered that it had better hurry up with the Government of Ireland Bill. Clauses 51 to 69 were run through in double-quick time. Only on Clause 70, providing for the repeal of the Home Rule Act of 1914, did any prolonged debate arise. Captain WEDGWOOD BENN pleasantly described this as the only clause in the Bill that was not nonsense, and therefore moved its omission. He was answered by the PRIME MINISTER, who declared that no Irishman would now be content with the Act of 1914, and defended the present Bill on the curious ground that it gave Ireland as much self-government as Scotland had ever asked for. Sir EDWARD CARSON'S plea that it was a case of "this Bill or an Irish Republic" was probably more convincing. In a series of divisions the "Wee Frees" never mustered more than seventeen votes. The author of the Act of 1914, Mr. ASQUITH, was not present at the obsequies.

Tuesday, June 29th.—The establishment of a "National home" for the Jewish race in Palestine aroused the apprehensions of Lord SYDENHAM and other Peers, who feared that the Moslem inhabitants would be exploited by the Zionists, and would endeavour to re-establish Turkish rule. Lord CURZON did his best to remove these impressions. Authority in Palestine would be exercised by Great Britain as the Mandatory Power, and the Zionists would not be masters in their "national home," but only a sort of "paying guests." The confidence felt in Sir HERBERT SAMUEL'S absolute impartiality as between Jews and Arabs was such that a high authority had prophesied that within six months the High Commissioner would be equally unpopular with both races.

In the Commons Mr. BALDWIN explained that the Inland Revenue Authorities were taking all possible steps to collect income-tax in Ireland despite the obstacles placed in their way by the local authorities. Whereupon Sir MAURICE DOCKRELL, in his richest brogue, summarised the Irish situation as follows: "Is not the difficulty that they do not know which horse to back?"

A Bill "to continue temporarily the office of Food Controller" was read a first time. The House would, I think, be sorry to part with Mr. MCCURDY, whose replies to Questions are often much to the point. He was asked this afternoon, for example, to give the salaries of three of his officials, and this was his crisp reply: "The Director of Vegetable

Supplies serves the Ministry without remuneration; the post of Deputy-Director of Vegetable Supplies does not exist, and that of Director of Fish Supplies has lapsed.”

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Mr. BONAR LAW shattered two elaborately-constructed mare's-nests when he announced that the appointment of a British Ambassador to Berlin was made in pursuance of an agreement arrived at in Boulogne on the initiative of the French Government, and that Lord D'ABERNON'S name was suggested by the FOREIGN SECRETARY. I am not betraying any confidence when I add that it will be no part of Lord D'ABERNON'S new duties to establish a Liquor Control Board on the Spree.

The Overseas Trade (Credits and Insurance) Bill was skilfully piloted through its Second Reading by Mr. BRIDGEMAN. The House was much pleased to hear that only nine officials would be required to administer the twenty-six millions involved, and that their salaries would not exceed seven thousand pounds a year—although two of them were messengers.

But this temporary zeal for economy quickly evaporated when the Pre-War Pensions Bill made its appearance. Member after Member got up to urge the extension of the Bill to this or that deserving class, until Sir L. WORTHINGTON-EVANS pointed out that, if their demands were acceded to, the Bill, instead of costing some two millions a year, would involve three or four times that amount.

Wednesday, June 30th.—The Lords discussed, in whispers suitable to the occasion, the Official Secrets Bill. As originally drawn it provided that any person retaining without lawful authority any official document should be guilty of a misdemeanour. But, thanks to the vigilance of Lords BURNHAM and RIDDELL, this clause, under which every editor in Fleet Street might have found himself in Holloway, was appreciably softened. Even so, the pursuit of “stunts” and “scoops” will be a decidedly hazardous occupation.

The Press Lords were again on the alert when the Rents Bill came on, and objected to a clause giving the LORD CHANCELLOR power to order proceedings under the measure to be held in private. This time the LORD CHANCELLOR was less pliant, and plainly suggested that the newspapers were actuated in this matter by regard for their circulations. Does he really suppose that the disputes of landlords and tenants will supply such popular “copy” as to crowd out the confessions of Cabinet Ministers?

[Illustration: HALF MEASURES.

SIR ROBERT HORNE, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE, AND SIR ERIC GEDDES, MINISTER OF TRANSPORT (*speaking together*). “That’s a rummy get-up. But perhaps he couldn’t afford anything better.”]

Constant cross-examination on the Amritsar affair, involving the necessity of framing polite replies to thinly-veiled suggestions that MONTAGU rhymes with O'DWYER, is making the SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA a little restive. The tone in which he expressed his hope that the promised debate would not be much longer delayed distinctly suggested that his critics would then be “for it.”

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Two days ago the MINISTER OF TRANSPORT expounded in a White Paper his elaborate plan for redistributing and co-ordinating the activities of the railway companies—the North Eastern excepted—and directing them all from an office in Whitehall. By the Ministry of Mines Bill it is proposed to treat the mines in much the same way. Sir ERIC GEDDES' scheme has yet to run the gauntlet of Parliamentary criticism. Sir ROBERT HORNE'S had its baptism of fire this afternoon, and a pretty hot fire it was. Miners like Mr. BRACE cursed it because it did not go all the way to Nationalisation; coal-owners like Sir CLIFFORD CORY, because it went too far in that direction. The voice of the mere consumer, who only wants coal cheap and plentiful, was hardly heard. The second reading was carried, but by a majority substantially less than the normal.

Thursday, July 1st.—Unfortunately the House of Lords does not contain a representative of Sinn Fein and therefore had no opportunity of learning the opinion of the dominant party in Ireland regarding Lord MONTEAGLE'S Dominion of Ireland Bill. Other Irish opinion, as expressed by Lords DUNRAVEN and KILLANIN, was that it would probably cause the seething pot to boil over. Lord ASHBOURNE made sundry observations in Erse, one of which was understood to be that "Ireland could afford to wait." The Peers generally agreed with him, and, after hearing from the LORD CHANCELLOR that of all the Irish proposals he had studied this contained the most elements of danger, threw out the Bill without a division.

"A sinecure, whose holder is in receipt of a salary of five thousand pounds per annum," was Mr. BONAR LAW'S description of his office as Lord Privy Seal. The House rewarded the modesty of its hard-working Leader with laughter and cheers. None of his predecessors has excelled him in courtesy and assiduity; as regards audibility there is room for improvement. Mr. LAW rarely plays to the Gallery; but he might more often speak in its direction.

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[Illustration: "THERE—THAT'S WHAT COMES O' ARGUING ALONG O' YOU; I'VE LAID FOUR BRICKS OVER ME THREE 'UNDRED!"]

* * * * *

"The funniest game in the world is chicken."—*Provincial Paper.*

We should like to hear more of this humorous pastime.

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A daily paper describes the contest at Henley for the "Silver Giblets." It is rumoured that the Goose that laid the Golden Eggs has become a bimetallist.

* * * * *

THREE EXCEPTIONAL MEN.

“If these men are types, how London has changed!” I said to myself. But can they be? I fear not; I fear that “exceptional” is the only word to use. Yet it was very remarkable to meet them all on the same day, Friday, June 25th.

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The first was on an omnibus. A big man with a grey beard who was alone on the seat. Several other seats had only one passenger; the rest—mine among them—were full. At Westminster came up a youth and a girl who very obviously were lovers. Owing to the disposition of the seats they had to separate, the girl subsiding into the place beside the big man immediately in front of me. At first he said nothing, and then, just as we were passing the scaffolding of the Cenotaph, he did something which proved him to be very much out of the common, a creature apart. Reaching across and touching the youth on the shoulder, he said, "Let me change places with you. I expect you young people would like to sit together."

That was exceptional, you will agree. He was right too; the young people did like to sit together. I could see that. And the more the omnibus rocked and lurched the more they liked it.

The second exceptional man was a taxi-driver. I wanted to get to a certain office before it shut, and there were very few minutes to do it in. The driver did his best, but we arrived just too late; the door was locked.

"That's a bit of hard luck," he said. "But they're all so punctual closing now. It's the daylight-saving does it. Makes people think of the open-air more than they used."

As I finished paying him—no small affair, with all the new supplements—he resumed.

"I'm sorry you had the journey for nothing," he said. "It's rough. But never mind—have something on Comrade for the Grand Prix" (he pronounced "Prix" to rhyme with "fix") "in France on Sunday. I'm told it's the goods. Then you won't mind about your bad luck this afternoon. Don't forget—Comrade to win and one, two, three."

After this I must revise my opinion of taxi-drivers, which used not to be very high: especially as Comrade differed from most racehorses of my acquaintance by coming in first.

The third man perhaps was more unexpected than exceptional. His unexpectedness took the form not of benevolence but of culture. He is a vendor of newspapers. A pleasant old fellow with a smiling weather-beaten face, grey moustache and a cloth cap, whom I have known for most of the six years during which he has stood every afternoon except Sundays on the kerb between a lamp-post and a letter-box at one of London's busiest corners. I have bought his papers and referred to the weather all that time, but I never talked with him before. Why, I cannot say; I suppose because the hour had not struck. On Friday, however, we had a little conversation, all growing from the circumstance that while he was counting out change I noticed a fat volume protruding from his coat pocket and asked him what it was.

It was his reply that qualified him to be numbered among Friday's elect. "That book?" he said—"that's *Barchester Towers*."

I asked him if he read much.

He said he loved reading, and particularly stories. MARIE CORELLI, OUIDA, he read them all; but TROLLOPE was his favourite. He liked novels in series; he liked to come on the same people again.

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"But there's another reason," he added, "why I like TROLLOPE. You see we were both at the Post Office."

Some day soon I am going to try him with one of Mr. WALKLEY'S criticisms.

E.V.L.

* * * * *

[Illustration: "A—AH! D'YOU K—KNOW YOU'RE S—STANDING ON MY FOOT?"

"WELL, WOT YER GOIN' TO DO ABAHT IT?"]

* * * * *

From an article on the Lawn Tennis Championship, purporting to be written by *Mlle.* SUZANNE LENGLEN:—

"Quelle journées ils etait!" "Mon dieu, comme etait beau!" "C'est le partie le plus dispute." *Sunday Paper.*

We can only hope that the Entente is now strong enough to survive even these shocks.

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[Illustration: IT'S ALL IN THE GAME.]

[Illustration: IT'S ALL IN THE GAME.]

* * * * *

PRISCILLA PAINTS.

"There was a lot of men in the boat," said Priscilla from behind the table, where she sat daubing with little energetic grunts.

"Oh, there were, were there?" I answered from behind *The Times*.

Confident of arousing my enthusiasm in the end, she continued to issue tantalising bulletins about the progress of the great work.

"It was an all-colour boat," she told me, "purple and yellow and green."

"A very nice kind of boat too," I agreed.

"And the biggest man of all hadn't got *any* body at all."

I suggested weakly that perhaps the biggest man of all had left his body behind on the table at home. The suggestion was scorned.

“No, he hadn’t never had any body at all, *this* man,” she replied. And then, as my interest seemed to be flagging again, “They all had *very* rosy faces; and do you know why they had?”

“I don’t, I’m sure.”

“Because they’d eaten up all their greens.”

Vanquished at last, I went over to visit the eupeptic voyagers. Seven in all, they stood in their bright boat on a blue sea beneath a round and burning sun. Their legs were long and thin, their bodies globular (all save one), and their faces large. They were dressed apparently in light pink doublets and hose, and on his head each wore a huge purple turban the shape of a cottage loaf, surmounted by a ragged plume. They varied greatly in stature, but their countenances were all fixed in the same unmeaning stare. Take it all in all, it was an eerie and terrible scene.

“I don’t quite see how the boat moves along, Priscilla,” I said; “it hasn’t any oars or sail.”

It was a tactless remark and the artist made no reply. I did my best to cover my blunder.

“I expect the wind blew very hard on their feathers,” I said, “and that drove them along.”

“What colour is the wind?” inquired Priscilla.

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She had me there. I confessed that I did not know.

"It was a brown wind," she decided, impatient at my lack of resource, and slapped a wet typhoon of madder on the page. There was no more doubt about the wind.

"And is the picture finished now?" I asked her.

"No, it isn't finished. I haven't drawn the pookin yet."

The pookin is a confusion in the mind of Priscilla between a pelican and a toucan, because she saw them both for the first time on the same day. In this case it consisted of an indigo splodge and a long red bar cutting right through the brown wind and penetrating deeply into the yellow sun.

"It had a very long beak," observed Priscilla.

"It had," I agreed.

I am no stickler for commonplace colours or conventional shapes in a work of art, but I do like things to be recognisable; to know, for instance, when a thing is meant to be a man and when it is meant to be a boat, and when it is meant to be a pookin and when it is meant to be a sun. The art of Priscilla seems to me to satisfy this test much better than that of many of our modern *maestri*. Strictly representational it may not be, but there are none of your whorls and cylinders and angles and what nots.

But I also insist that a work of art should appeal to the imagination as well as to the eye, and there seemed to me details about this picture that needed clearing up.

"Where were these men going to, Priscilla?" I asked.

"They was going to Wurvin," she answered in the tone of a mother who instructs her child. "And what do you think they was going to do there?"

"I don't know."

"They was going to see Auntie Isabel."

"And what did they do then?"

"They had dinner," she cried enthusiastically. "And do you know what they did after dinner?"

"I don't."

"They went on the Front to see the fire-escape."

It seemed to me now that the conception was mellow, rounded and complete. It had all the haunting mystery and romance of the sea about it. It was reminiscent of the *Ancient Mariner*. It savoured of the books of Mr. CONRAD. It reminded me not a little of those strange visitations which come to quiet watering-places in the novels of Mr. H.G. WELLS. When I thought of those seven men—one, alas, disembodied—so strangely attired yet so careful of elementary hygiene, driven by that fierce typhoon, with that bird of portent in the skies, arriving suddenly with the salt of their Odyssey upon their brows at the beach of the genteel and respectable Sussex town, and visiting a perhaps slightly perturbed Auntie Isabel, and afterwards the fire-escape, I felt that here was the glimpse of the wild exotic adventure for which the hearts of all of us yearn. It left the cinema standing. It beat the magazine story to a frazzle.

“And who is the picture for, Priscilla?” I asked, when I had thoroughly steeped myself in the atmosphere.

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"It's for you," she said, presenting it with a motley-coloured hand; "it's for you to take to London town and not to drop it."

I was careful to do as I was told, because I have a friend who paints Expressionist pictures, and I wished to deliver it at his studio. It seems to me that Priscilla, half-unconsciously perhaps, is founding a new school of art which demands serious study. One might call it, I think, the Pookin School.

EVOE.

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WHEN CHARL. COMES OVER.

It is said that Mr. CHARLES CHAPLIN, a prominent citizen of Los Angeles, Cal., has employed the greater part of the last few days in mopping his brow, sighing with relief and exclaiming "Gee!"

Mr. CHAPLIN declares that missing the boat for England recently was the narrowest escape from death he has ever enjoyed. But for having been thus providentially prevented from visiting his native land in the company of Miss MARY PICKFORD and Mr. DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS (better known as "MARY" and "DOUG." respectively) he would have come back to the dear homeland all unprepared for what would surely have happened to him no less than it happened to his illustrious colleagues in the film world.

Since his promised visit to our shores cannot long be delayed, he has already begun elaborate preparations for travelling in safety. He is growing a large beard and is learning to walk with his toes turned in. A number of his teeth will be blackened out during the whole of his European tour, and his hair will be kept well-ironed and cropped short.

He has engaged a complete staff of plain-clothes pugilists to travel with him everywhere and to stand on guard outside his bathroom door. They will also surround him during meal-times to prevent admirers from grabbing his food to hand down to their children as heirlooms.

He is being measured for a complete outfit of holeproof clothing, and his motor will be a Ford of seventeen thicknesses, with armoured steel windows, and fitted with first-aid accessories, including liniment, restoratives and raw steak. His entourage will include a day doctor, a night doctor, a leading New York surgeon and a squad of stretcher-bearers.

It has been suggested to him that a further precaution would be not to advise the Press of the date of his arrival; but that he considers would be carrying his safety-first measures to a foolish extreme.

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[Illustration: STOP-PRESS NEWS.

Observant Visitor. “I SAY—EXCUSE ME, BUT YOUR HAT IS KNOCKED IN.”

Farm Hand. “WHOI, I’VE KNOWED THAT FOR THE LAST SEVEN YEAR.”]

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A TRAGEDY OF REACTION.

It was a super-poet of the neo-Georgian kind
Whose fantasies transcended the simple bourgeois mind,
And by their frank transgression of all the ancient rules
Were not exactly suited for use in infant schools.

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But, holding that no rebel should shrink from fratricide,
His gifted brother-Georgians he suddenly defied,
And in a manifesto extremely clear and terse
Announced his firm intention of giving up free verse.

The range of his reaction may readily be guessed
When I mention that for Browning his devotion he confessed,
Enthroned above the SITWELLS the artless Muse of "BAB,"
And said that MARINETTI was not as good as CRABBE.

At first the manifesto was treated as a joke,
A boyish ebullition that soon would end in smoke;
But when he took to writing in strict and fluent rhyme
His family decided to extirpate the crime.

Two scientific doctors declared he was insane,
But likely under treatment his reason to regain;
So he's now in an asylum, where he listens at his meals
To a gramophone recital of the choicest bits from *Wheels*.

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THE RETURN TO WOAD.

"The bride's mother was handsomely attired in heliotrope stain."—
Canadian Paper.

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OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

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

Whatever else may be said about Mr. ARTHUR COMPTON-RICKETT as a novelist, it can at least be urged for him that he displays no undue apprehension of the too-facile laugh. For example, the humorous possibilities (or perils) in the plot of *The Shadow of Stephen Wade* (JENKINS) might well have daunted a writer of more experience. *Stephen Wade* was an ancestor, dead some considerable time before the story opens, and—to quote the old jest—there was no complaint about a circumstance with which everybody was well satisfied. The real worry over *Stephen* was twofold: first, that in life he had been rightly suspected of being rather more than a bit of a rip, and secondly that his grandson, *Philip*, the hero of the story, had what seemed to him good cause for believing that *Stephen's* more regrettable tendencies were being repeated in himself. Here, of course, is a theme capable of infinite varieties of development; the tragedies of heredity have kept novelists and dramatists busy since fiction began. The trouble is

that, all unconsciously, Mr. COMPTON-RICKETT has given to his hero's struggles a fatally humorous turn. *Philip's* initial mistake appeared to be the supposition that safety could be secured by flight. But it has been remarked before now that Cupid is winged and doth range. *Philip* dashed into the depths of Devonshire, only to discover that even there farmers have pretty daughters; seeking refuge in the slums he found that the exchange was one from the frying-pan to the fire. In short, there was no peace for him, till the destined heroine.... Well, you can now see whether you are likely to be amused, edified, or bored by a well-meaning story, told (I should add) with a rather devastating solemnity of style.

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M. HENRI DOMELIER, the author of *Behind the Scenes at German Headquarters* (HURST AND BLACKETT), must also be accounted among the prophets, for he foretold the invasion of Belgium. Before the War he edited a newspaper in Charleville, and when the Ardennes had been "inundated by the enemy hordes" and the local authorities had withdrawn to Rethel, he stayed in Charleville and acted as Secretary to the Municipal Commission. This organisation was recognised by the Germans, but to be secretary of it was still a dangerous post, and M. MAURICE BARRES in eloquent preface tells us of some of the sufferings that M. DOMELIER had to endure while trying to carry out his difficult duties. The French who remained in Charleville had more than ample opportunities of seeing both the EX-KAISER and his eldest son, and M. DOMELIER writes of them with a pen dipped in gall. No book that I have read puts before one more poignantly the miseries which the inhabitants of invaded France had to bear during "the great agony." For the most part they bore them with a courage beyond all praise; but some few, giving way under stress of physical suffering or moral temptation, forgot their nationality; and these M. DOMELIER makes no pretence to spare. I think that even those of us who have definitely made up our minds regarding the Hun and want to read no more about him will welcome this book. For if it is primarily an indictment of Germans and German methods, it is hardly less a tribute to those who held firm through all their misery and never gave up hope during the darkest days.

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I have before now met (in books) heroes who wore dungaree and had as setting an engineer-shop or a foundry, but never one who equalled *Jim Robinson* (HUTCHINSON) in the strictness of his attention to business. *Jim* is the managing director of *Cupreouscine, Limited*, a firm which deals in a wonderful copper alloy which he himself has invented, and the book tells the story of his long and losing fight against the other directors, who are all in favour of amalgamation with another and much larger concern. Sketched in so few words the book's subject sounds unattractive, but Miss UNA L. SILBERRAD has a genius for making "shop" as interesting in her novels as it usually is in real life, and *Jim's* plans and enterprises and the circuitous ways of the other directors provide material for quite an exciting story. When I say "other directors," *Mary Gore*, representing a brother on the board of *Cupreouscine* and backing *Jim* through thick and thin to the limit of her powers, must be excepted. In spite of her gracious reserve and self-possession, it is plain that *Mary* loves the busy managing director; but *Jim's* feelings are more difficult to fathom. In fact he is so long in mentioning his passion that it is quite a relief when, on the last page but one, what publishers call the "love interest" suddenly strengthens and their engagement is announced, very suitably and to her entire satisfaction, to the charwoman at the foundry.

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Open the Door won the two hundred and fifty pounds prize offered by Messrs. MELROSE, and without troubling to inquire into the merits of its rivals I wholeheartedly commend the award. For some curious reason its length (one hundred and eighty thousand words—no less) is insisted upon by the publishers, but as a matter of fact Miss CATHERINE CARSWELL'S novel would have been even more remarkable if it had been of a less generous bulk. Her style is beyond reproach and she has nothing whatever to learn in the mysteries of a woman's heart. The principal scenes are placed in Glasgow, and the *Bannermann* family are laid stark before us. *Mrs. Bannermann* was so intent on the next world that for all practical purposes she was useless in this. Having been left a widow with two sons and two daughters, she was incapable of managing the easiest of them, let alone such an emotional complexity as *Joanna*. It is upon *Joanna* that Miss CARSWELL has concentrated her forces; but she is not less happy in her analysis of the many lovers who fell into the net of this seductive young woman. Indeed I have not for many a day read a novel of which the psychology seemed to me to be so thoroughly sound.

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I hope "Miss M.E. FRANCIS" will take it as a compliment when I say that *Beck of Beckford* (ALLEN AND UNWIN) should form part of the holiday equipment of all of us whose brows are not too exalted to enjoy it. In her unostentatious way Miss FRANCIS knows how to provide ample entertainment, and she has nothing to learn in point of form. When we are introduced to the *Becks* they are proud and poor, having impoverished themselves in the process of removing a blot from their escutcheon. *Sir John* is a working farmer, and *Lady Beck* does menial duties with an energy that most servants of to-day would not care to imitate. The apple of their old eyes is their grandson, *Roger*, and the story turns on his struggle between pride and love. No true Franciscan need be told that he comes through his struggle, with flying colours. So quietly and easily does the tale run that one is apt to overlook the art with which it is told. But the art is there all the time.

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[Illustration: *Countrywoman (her first glimpse of the sea)*. "AIN'T IT ASTONISHIN', WILLIUM? WHO'D 'AVE THOUGHT THEER COULD BE AS MUCH WATER AS THAT?"

William. "YES; AN' REMEMBER, MARIA, YE ONLY SEE WHAT'S ON TOP.]"

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“You can greet an acquaintance while you are cycling by smiling and nodding your head or by waving. Which you do depends on the depth of your acquaintanceship.”—*Home Notes*.

And not, as you might think, on your proficiency as a cyclist.