

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 152, May 30, 1917 eBook

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CHARIVARIA.

Mr. *Will Thorne* declares that a hotel in Petrograd charged him twelve shillings for four small custards. After all, the war spirit of Russia, it would seem, is not wholly dead.

* * *

According to officials of the Food Ministry, "domestic pastry" may still be baked. The idea is that this kind of pastry tends to decrease the total number of food consumers.

* * *

Allied control officers have discovered fifteen hundred tons of potatoes hidden in Athens. The Salonika expedition is now felt to be justified.

* * *

A certain Kingston resident, when out walking, wears a white band on his hat, the with words, "Eat less bread. Do it now." Eyewitnesses report that the immediate rush of pedestrians to the tea-rooms to eat less bread is most gratifying.

* * *

"The British loaf," according to Mr. *Kennedy Jones*, "is going to beat the Germans." If grit can do it, we agree.

* * *

"Allotments under cultivation in Middlesex," says a weekly paper breathlessly, "if place end to end, would reach five miles." Of course it is not thought likely that they will be.

* * *

The father of a lad charged with embezzlement explained that since the boy was struck on the head with a cricket ball he could not keep a penny novel out of his hands. Speculation is now rife as to the nature of the accidents responsible for the passion that some people entertain for our more expensive fiction.

* * *

"It is possible," says a contemporary, "that an invention will one day be forthcoming which will make a clean sweep of the submarine." Meanwhile we must expect him to go on acting like the dirty sweep he is.

* * *

To meet the paper shortage, Austrian editors have determined to economise by reducing the daily reports of victories.

* * *

Le Matin states that at a Grand Council of War sharp disagreement on the conduct of operations arose between the *Kaiser* and *Hindenburg*. The Marshal, we understand, insisted upon the right to organise his own defeats without any assistance from the All-highest-but-one.

* * *

A London dairyman has been heavily fined for selling water containing a large percentage of milk.

* * *

"To tell the honest truth," said the Hon. *John Collier*, giving evidence in the Romney case, "we artists do not think much of the art critics." It is this dare-devil attitude which distinguishes your real genius.

* * *

Some surprise was recently caused in Liverpool when the residents learned from the *Cologne Gazette* that their port had been destroyed and all the inhabitants removed to another town. They consider that in common fairness the *Cologne Gazette* ought to have given them some idea as to where they were living.

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* * *

It is announced that four German War Correspondents have been decorated with the Iron Cross of the Second Class. We have always maintained that the War Correspondent, like his fighting brother, is not immune from the perils of warfare.

* * *

We are not surprised to learn that the mouth-organ is the favorite instrument among the soldiers in a certain Labour unit. The advantage of this instrument is that when carried in the pocket it does not spoil the figure like a cello.

* * *

Now that the shortage of starch supply will compel men to wear soft collars it is understood that Mr. *George Bernard Shaw*, who already wears them soft, proposes to give up collars altogether, so as not to be mistaken for an ordinary man.

* * *

City business houses, it is stated, are adopting the practice of closing during the dinner-hour. The old fashioned custom of doing business and dining on alternate days had much to recommend it.

* * *

There was no sugar in England when Crecy and Agincourt were fought, as Captain *Bathurst* told the House of Commons recently. How the War Office did without its afternoon tea in those barbarous days it is impossible to conjecture.

* * *

The forthcoming Irish Convention is to be held, it is stated, behind locked doors. Why not add a charming element of adventure to the affair by entrusting some thoroughly absent-minded person with the key?

* * *

Lord *esher* believes that "our home-coming is not far distant." Meanwhile it is cheering to know that quite a number of our fellows are getting home on the *Hindenburg* line.

* * *



“Walking canes for ladies with small round heads of ivory” are becoming increasingly popular, declared a contemporary. We ourselves would hesitate to lash the follies of smart Society in a manner quite so frank.

* * *

It appears that at the Bath War Hospital a hen lays an egg every day in a soldier's locker. Only physical difficulties prevent the large hearted bird from laying it in his egg-cup.

* * *

ZAMBI, a Zulu native, has just died at the age of a hundred-and-twelve. It seems that war-worry hastened his end.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Proprietress (as customer becomes obstreperous), “Now then, Willie, over the Top!”*]

* * * * *

=Professional Candour.=

From a dentist's advertisement:—

“Teeth extracted with the greatest pains”

* * * * *

“Wanted.—Good cook-general, for very small Naval officer's family.”

Isle of Wight Mercury.

Intending applicants should exercise caution. A very small Naval officer may have a very large family.



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* * * * *

“L5 *Reward*—Lost from Ruislip (July, 1214), half-persian dark tabby tom cat.”

Harrow Observer.

And they tell us that a cat has only nine lives!

* * * * *

=*The prophetic present.*=

“There is no Hindenburg line.”

Inspired German Press.

By nature they abhor the light,
But here in this their latest tract
Your parrot Press by oversight
Has deviated into fact;
If not (at present) strictly true,
It shows a sound anticipation
Born of the fear that's father to
The allegation.

For, though the boasted “line” of which
No trace occurs on German maps
Retains the semblance of a ditch,
It has some nasty yawning gaps;
It bulges here, it wobbles there,
It crumples up with broken hinges,
Keeping no sort of pattern where
Our Push impinges.

When the triumphant word went round
How that your god, disguised as man,
At victory's height was giving ground
According to a well-laid plan,
Here he arranged to draw the line
(As *Siegfried's* you were told to hymn it)
And plant *Nil ultra* for a sign—
Meaning the limit.



And now "There's no such thing," they say;
Well, that implies prophetic sense;
And, if a British prophet may
Adopt their graphic present tense,
I would remark—and so forestall
A truth they'll never dare to trench on:—
*There is no HINDENBURG at all,
Or none worth mention.*

O.S.

* * * * *

=*Ways and means.*=

I met her at the usual place, and she looked much the same as usual—which astonished me rather.

"Now that we're engaged," I began.

"Oh, but we aren't," said Phyllis.

"Are you by any chance a false woman?" I asked. "You remember what you said last night?"

"I do, and what I said I stick to. But that was pleasure, and this is business."

I looked at her in sudden alarm.

"You're—you're quite sure you aren't a widow, Phyllis?"

"Quite. Why?"

"Talking of business at a time like this. It sounds so—so experienced."

"Well, if you *will* try to settle our whole future lives in one short week-end leave, we must at least be practical. Anyway, it's just this. I'm not going to be engaged to you until there's some prospect of our getting married. I hate long engagements."

"That means not till after the War, then," said I disconsolately.

"I'm afraid it does. But when once the War's over it won't be long before you'll be able to keep me in the style to which I'm accustomed, will it?"

"Years and years, I should think," said I, looking at her new hat. "It'll take at least a pound a day even to start with."

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"Three hundred and sixty-five a year," said she thoughtfully.

"And an extra one in Leap Year," I warned her.

"Did I ever tell you," she asked with pride, "that I have money of my own?"

"Hurrah!" I shouted. "You darling! How splendid!"

"Jimmy," she said apprehensively, "you aren't marrying me for it, are you?"

"How can I tell till I know how much you've got?"

"Well, at a pound a day it would take us to February 19th. You'd have to begin from there."

"What an heiress! Promise you'll never cast it in my teeth, dear, that I've got less than you. I've got enough War Loan to take us on to the 23rd and halfway through the 24th; and Exchequer Bonds and things which will see us through—er—to about 7.15 P.M. on March 31st. Then there's my writing."

"Oh," she said in a surprised tone "do they pay you for that? I always thought you gave them so much a line to put things in—like advertisements, you know."

"Madam," I answered with dignity, "when you find yourself, from April 1st until April 20th, depending each year upon my pen for the very bread you eat, perchance you will regret those wounding words."

"Well, what else?"

I shook my head.

"That's all," I said. "We don't seem to have got very far, do we? Couldn't you—er—trim hats, or take in washing, or something?"

"No—but *you* could. I mean, we haven't counted in your salary yet, have we?"

"What salary?"

"Well, whatever they give you for doing whatever you do. What were you getting before the War?"

"Oh, nothing much."

"Yes, but *how* much?"

"Really," I began stiffly.

"If you're ashamed to say it right out, just tell me how far it would take us."

"To about the end of September, I should think."

"Oh, dear! Three more months to go." A frown wrinkled her forehead; then her brow cleared. "Why, of course we haven't counted in the holidays."

"They aren't usually an asset."

"Yes, they are—if you spend them with your rich relations. I've got lots, but I don't think they'd like *you* much."

"All right," said I shortly; "*keep* your beastly relations. I shall go to Uncle Alfred for October. *He* loves me."

"That leaves November and December," she mused. "Oh, well, there's nothing else for it—we must quarrel."

"What, now?"

"No, stupid. Every October 31st, by letter. Then I'll go home to mother, and you'll stay with Uncle Alfred some more. I hope he'll like it."

"Y-e-s," I said doubtfully. "That would do it, of course. But we shan't see very much of each other that way, shall we? Still, I suppose.... Good Heavens!"

"What's the matter?"

"Phyllis, we've forgotten all about income-tax. That means about another two months to account for."

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"My dear, how *awful!*"

There was a pause while we both thought deeply.

"Couldn't you ..." we began together at last, and each waited for the other to finish.

"Look here," I remarked, "we're both very good at finding things for the other to do. Isn't there anything we could do together—a job for 'respectable married couple,' you know?"

"Why, of course—caretaking! We'll look after ducal mansions in the silly season, when everybody's out of town. Then we'll see simply heaps of one another."

"Yes," I agreed. "And then in the evenings, when you've scrubbed the steps and the woodwork and polished the brass and dusted the rooms and cleaned the grate and cooked the meals and tidied the kitchen, and I've inspected the gas-meter and fed the canary, or whatever it is a he-care-taker does, we'll dress ourselves up and go and sit in the ducal apartments and pretend we're 'quality.'"

"And impress our relations by asking them to dinner there," added Phyllis. "I think it's a lovely idea. We don't seem to be going to have much money, but we *shall* see life. I'm beginning to be quite glad I listened to you yesterday, after all."

* * * * *

=An Accommodating Creature.=

"A Respectable woman wants situation as dairymaid, laundress, or fowl."

Cork Constitution.

* * * * *

[Illustration: =THE GREAT UNCONTROLLED.=

The Mutton. "I HEAR THEY WANT MORE OF US NOW THE MEATLESS DAYS ARE OFF."

The Beef. "DON'T YOU WORRY. THANKS TO THE PROFITEERS, PEOPLE CAN'T AFFORD TO EAT US."]

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE FIRST POTATO-LEAF!]

* * * * *

=THE WATCH DOGS.=

LXI.

My Dear CHARLES,—Have I ever, in the course of these SECRET and CONFIDENTIAL despatches, called your lordship's attention to the existence, the very marked existence, of our Hubert, "the little Captain," who, being out of the battle for the moment, relies upon argument for argument's sake to keep up his circulation? It has been said of him that he spends his office time in writing superior letters to his subordinates and insubordinate letters to his superiors; but that, I think, is over harsh. In any case, as he has now run short of grievances, and the authorities of the B.E.F. regard him as a joke and like him best when his little temper is hot, his fights out here have for some time lacked reality. I fancy that he was merely in search of a *casus belli* when, being on leave in the U.K., he conceived the idea of a day's extension and stepped round to the War Office to demand same as of right. But the War Office, Charles, is not as other places and War Officers are not like

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the common sort. Hubert, arriving in his best fighting trim, was at once ejected by the policeman at the door. He underestimated the importance of that official and his office, otherwise he would not have adopted the just-dropping-in-to-have-a-chat-with-a-friend-inside attitude. From the constable's cold response he realised that, in tackling the W.O. single-handed, he was attempting a big thing, whereas the W.O., in tackling him, was not under the same disadvantage. Then he did what was unusual with him; he paused to think before resuming the offensive. What he wanted, he felt, was big guns. The House of Commons caught his eye and reminded him of politicians. He recalled a slight acquaintance with one of the more important of these and went round to call upon him personally. It was not his idea to obtain any such authority as would demolish all opposition at the W.O.; he just hoped to get a personal chit, which would act as a smoke barrage and at least cover his advance right into the middle of the enemy defences. So Hubert asked for the politician in person, but only got his secretary. This gentleman, having elicited that Hubert's train for France left at 5 P.M., regretted that the politician would not be visible till 6. This opposition warmed Hubert's blood; he asked for a statement in writing. After some little discussion he got it, since the secretary, for all his caution, could see no harm in an unofficial note, addressed to no one in particular, and stating merely that Hubert wanted to see the politician and the politician was out till 6 P.M. The little captain is one of those who state their grievances to themselves, when no other audience is available. During his return journey to the W.O. mental processes of no little heat and significance took place in his busy head, he putting up an overwhelming case to show why his leave ought to be, and must be, extended. The force of this case gave him such a burning sense of justice as to carry him, this time, safely past the policeman. Five rows of barbed wire, two of them electrified, would be but a poor substitute for the barriers of the W.O. Before you set foot on the staircase you have to produce a ticket, and it is supposed that the porter, who has the forms to be filled in, forfeits a day's pay every time he parts with one. Hubert, gradually losing confidence, wrote upon the form all he could think of about himself, and handed it to the porter, who received it with reluctance, read it with suspicion, and disappeared with a grunt. What he did with it is not known; probably someone got into communication with the B.E.F. to know if such a person as Hubert existed, and, if so, why? Meanwhile Hubert had good time to realise that no one loved him and that this was cold brutal war at last. Bit by bit the porter drifted back and gave Hubert his form, now stamped and become his ticket. The porter having finished with him,

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he passed on and, after many wanderings, found the door of the room where his sentence would be passed. Bracing himself up and clearing his throat, he prepared to knock and enter. Fortunately, however, his audacious intention was observed by an official and frustrated. He was commanded to write something more about himself in the book provided for that purpose, and to go on waiting. Being now an expert at writing and waiting he did as he was bid, spending the next few hours of his life remodelling his case in less fierce and glowing terms. At last the door of the room persuaded itself to open and let out a real red god, who looked upon Hubert, took an instant dislike to him, relieved him of his ticket and went in again. During the ensuing period of suspense the last vestige of Hubert's personality departed from him. Again the door opened and another red one, even more godlike, emerged clamouring for Hubert and his blood. Had he still been in possession of his ticket (a necessary passport for egress) Hubert would have fled. There was nothing for it but to confess his identity and to hope for mercy. The god, who clearly had not more than three and a half seconds to spare, demanded an explanation of his presence. Hubert admitted that once, in a moment of impudent folly, he had thought of asking for a day's extension. The god said nothing, but a light smouldered in his eyes which intimated to Hubert that if he did not at once produce some paramount excuse for so monstrous a request the War would be held up and the military machine would be concentrated on punishing Hubert. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; even if it had been available it would have helped little, for it is more than mere words that the gods require. His hand searched in his pockets and produced the return half of his leave warrant, a five-franc note, a box of matches, a recently purchased paper flag and the politician's secretary's note. The first and the last were taken, the rest fell to the floor, the door closed once more and again Hubert was alone. Hubert doesn't know what he did next; probably, he thinks, he sat down and wept, and it was his tears that induced the gods not to convert his ticket into a death-warrant, but instead to give him the slip, "Leave extended one day for urgent private business." This was clearly one of Hubert's most decisive victories. He had his day's extension solely in order to interview the politician at 6 P.M.; he was to interview the politician solely in order to obtain his day's extension. But Hubert insists morbidly that his was a moral defeat, amounting to utter suppression. He called upon the politician at 6 P.M. to thank him personally. Again he could get no further than the secretary, who, learning that Hubert's train would not depart at all that day, regretted that the politician would, on second thoughts, be out for a week. "Now if I really *had* triumphed," said Hubert, "I should have got the secretary to put that also in writing, and should have stepped round to the War Office again to demand a further week's extension on the strength of it." This, however, he did not do.

Yours ever, HENRY.

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* * * * *

[Illustration: "GOOD 'EVINGS! WHERE YER GOIN'?"

"YE KEN YON THREE HUNS I JUST BROUGHT IN? WEEL, THEY WANT TO PLAY WHIST, AN' I'M GOING BACK TO TRY AND PICK UP A FOURRTH."]

* * * * *

"Southport, December 9th.—Miss —— presented vegetarian literature and a box of vegetarian sausages to a Sale of Work in connection with the United Methodist Church, High Park. The gifts led to much thought and inquiry."—*Vegetarian Messenger*.

In spite of a natural disinclination to look a gift sausage in the mouth.

* * * * *

A CALL TO THE COW PONIES.

They sent us from Coorong and Cooper
The pick of the Wallaby Track
To serve us as gunner and trooper,
To serve us as charger and hack;
From Budgeribar to Blanchewater
They rifled the runs of the West,
That whatever his fate in the slaughter
A man might ride home on the best.

We dealt with the distant Dominion,
We bought in the far Argentine;
The worth of our buyers' opinion
Is proved to the hilt in the line;
The Clydes from the edge of the heather,
The Shires from the heart of the grass,
And the Punches are pulling together
The guns where the conquerors pass.

So come with us, buckskin and sorrel,
And come with us, skewbald and bay;
Your country's girth-deep in the quarrel,
Your honour is roped to the fray;
Where flanks of your comrades are foaming
'Neath saddle and trace-chain and band,
We look for the kings of Wyoming
To speak for the sage-brush and sand.

W.H.O.

* * * * *

=Commercial Candour.=

From an Indian trade-circular:—

“All our goods are guaranteed made of the best material and equal to none in the market.”

* * * * *

“The approach of the storm was heralded by a magnificent display of, for a time, almost intermittent lightning.”—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

Followed, it may be presumed, by well-nigh interrupted peals of thunder and nearly occasional downpours of rain.

* * * * *

“One always feels humiliated when one is stumped about a quite common thing.... All you could see a little way off was that they were very dwarfy and very thick, and the peculiar colour baffled us....”

A Country Diary in “Manchester Guardian.”

Stumped we may be by the above, but humiliated—never!

* * * * *

=PETHERTON’S PUBLICATIONS.=

A glance at a well-known publisher’s window, during a recent visit to London, provided me with material for a little possible quiet amusement, and with this end in view I penned the following:—

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DEAR MR. PETHERTON,—When up in town the other day I was surprised and delighted to notice in Messrs. Egbert Arnwell's window two works of yours, one on Bi-Metallism and the other on the Differential and Integral Calculus. Nothing but the prices (really low ones for such works) prevented my purchasing a copy of each book at once.

I cannot resist writing to congratulate you on the publication of these volumes, which will, I am sure, add to the instruction if not to the gaiety of nations. Of course I knew—and have had the most complete olfactory proofs—that you were a chemist of at least strong views, but had no idea that your range of knowledge was so extensive as it apparently is.

With renewed congratulations,
Believe me, yours sincerely,
HENRY J. FORDYCE.

By the way, what is a calculus? Could one be obtained in Surbury, or would it be necessary to order from the Army and Navy Stores?

This brought forth:—

SIR,—I greatly regret that my latest publications should have caught your eye, and look on your congratulations as a studied insult.

I should hardly expect a person of your (as I imagine) limited intellect to know anything about the scientific subjects which interest me, but I feel sure that you are perfectly aware that the calculus is abstract and not concrete.

Had you tried to convey sincere congratulations to me I could have borne the infliction with resignation, but I strongly object to such flippant impertinences as are contained in your communication.

Faithfully yours,
FREDERICK PETHERTON.

I felt this was a good start, and so put out more bait:—

DEAR PETHERTON (I wrote),—Sorry you couldn't accept my letter in the spirit, *etc.*

I've had such a priceless idea since I wrote to you last, and it is this. I propose that we start a Literary Society in Surbury. I'm certain the Vicar would join in. Mr. Charteris, of the Manor, too would, I feel confident, welcome the idea. Dr. Stevenson, the only one to whom I have broached the subject, got keen at once, and the Gore-Langleys and others could no doubt be counted on—say a dozen altogether, including you and myself. I append a short list of suggested contributions, which will give some idea of the range of subjects which might be tossed into the arena of debate:—

The Binomial Theorem in its relation to the Body Politic (yourself).

Cows and their sufferings during the milk controversy in the newspapers (Charteris. This might be published in small quarto).

The attitude of the Manichean Heresiarch towards the use of Logarithms (The Vicar).

The effect of excessive Philately on the cerebral organisms of the young (Gore-Langley).

The introduction of the art and practice of Napery among the Dyaks of Borneo (Miss Eva Gore-Langley).

With a few additions I think we should have enough mental food to keep us going through the summer; and I may add that if you were put up for President of the Society I should certainly second the motion.

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Yours ever,
HARRY FORDYCE.

I notice that your writing has gone to pieces rather, old man—through writer's cramp, I fear. You say what looks like "you are perfectly aware that the calcalus is asphalt and not concrete." Of course I do know that much about it.

My letter kept the ball rolling all right, for Petherton replied:—

SIR,—Have you no sane moments? If you have any such, I should be glad if you would employ the next lucid interval in setting your affairs straight and then repairing to the nearest asylum with a request that they would protect you against yourself by placing you in a padded cell. This done and the key lost, the world, and Surbury in particular, would be a happier place.

You cannot seriously suggest that any society for literary discussion could be formed here or elsewhere which should include yourself, and even so you must know that your being a member would prevent my joining it.

Has the call for National Service not reached your ears yet? You appear to have plenty of leisure time on your hands which might be better employed. Or have you offered yourself and been rejected on the grounds of mental deficiency?

Faithfully yours,
FREDERICK PETHERTON.

I didn't feel called upon to make a song about my method of doing my bit, which, I am glad to say, has the approval of the authorities; but I was anxious to hear Petherton's joints crack once more, so I wrote:—

DEAR FREDDY,—Your letters get better and better in style as your writing deteriorates. I am very sorry to gather from your last that you look coldly on my scheme. I am sure that those to whom I have mentioned the idea would decline to entertain it if it lacked your active support, so I trust you will reconsider the matter.

I am thinking over your asylum stunt. It would certainly save some expense, and if this terrible War continues much longer it will, I fear, drive me to such a refuge; though I trust in that event that I shall be allowed to choose pleasanter wall hangings than those you suggest. I'm rather fond of light chintzy papers, aren't you? They're so cheerful.

Hoping to hear from you re our little society at your earliest ("The Surbury Literary and Scientific Society" would sound well, and would look rather nice on our note-paper—what?)—

I am, yours as ever,
HARRY.

Petherton saw red again and bellowed at me, thus:—

SIR,— —— you and your beastly society. I don't know who is the more execrable, you or the KAISER.

Faithfully yours,
FREDERIC PETHERTON.

Common decency compelled me to reply, so I wrote:—

MY DEAR OLD BOY.—You don't know how grieved I am to hear that you cannot entertain the scheme.

Of course I can read between the lines, and know that your heart is in it, and that it is only the many calls on your time which prevent your active co-operation with me in the matter. Of course, needless to say, your lack of support has killed what looked like being a promising scientific bantling (through stress of emotion I nearly wrote "bantam," which brings me to the subject of poultry. How are yours? I forgot to ask before).

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I hope the question of the S.L. & S.S. will now be dropped; it is too painful. If you insist on continuing the discussion I shall decline to answer the letter, so there!

Yours,
H.

But Petherton refused to be drawn.

* * * * *

From a Church appeal:—

“A recent collection revealed that, of 179 coins put in the plate, 176 were coppers, whilst not more than 15 people could have contributed anything above one shilling.”

The person who took the twelve silver coins by mistake will, we hope, return them next Sunday.

* * * * *

=THE SHERWOOD FORESTERS.=

Deep in the greenwood year by year
Bold ROBIN HOOD, a knightly ghost,
Has eased the purse that bulged the most
And stalked the wraiths of Rufford deer;

And, as the centuries speed away,
Has seen his oak and birk-land shrink,
Where teeming cities on its brink
Crowd in on Sherwood of to-day.

But still each year the outlaw-king,
By Normanton and Perlethorpe spire,
Has watched the beeches' emerald fire
Flare upward in the leaping spring;

Each heather-time has found his own
Eyrie of rest where Higger Tor
Shimmers in purple as before
KING COEUR-DE-LION held his throne.

And Foresters away “out there,”
Sons of his sons, have surely seen



A figure clad in Lincoln green
Glide by them swiftly, thin as air;

And, yarning in the creepy dark,
Have told of arrows, cloth-yard long,
Whistling before them clean and strong,
Of Huns that got them, pierced and stark;

How when their line is making good,
In charge or trench, as Sherwoods can,
Soft-footed, ever in the van,
Stalks the bold ghost of ROBIN HOOD.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Mrs. Jones (suspiciously, to Jones, who is kept on strict rations).*
"SOMEBODY HAS EATEN FIDO'S DINNER."]

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=THE SECRETS OF HEROISM.=

"Don't talk about heroism," said Sergeant William Bingley, "until you know what it is—and isn't.

"There were two men in my platoon over there that I'd match against any other two in the British, Allied, or Enemy armies for the biggest funks on earth; two boys from the same town, as unlike as cross-bred puppies, but cowards to the ankles.

"They were the only two that didn't volunteer for a listening picket one night, and I felt so ashamed of them that I decided to mention it.

"'You nickel-plated, glass-lined table-ornament,' I said to Ruggles when I found him alone, 'aren't you ashamed to form a rear rank alone with Jenks every time you're asked to do anything?'

"I knew they hated each other, and I thought I'd draw him, but he hadn't a word for himself.

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“Tell me what you joined for,’ I said more persuasively, for he had been in the Army over a year. ‘You’re the only man in the company, bar your friend Jenks, that turns white at the pop of a cork out of a Worcester sauce bottle.’

“He stroked the bit of hair behind his right ear and let slip a grin like the London and Country mail slots at the G.P.O.

“‘I’ll tell you, Sergeant,’ he said. ‘I never had much heart for soldiering, and I only joined up when I did to spite the girl that jilted me. She jilted me for Jenks, and no sooner did she say the word to him than she talked him into enlisting too.... That’s why I’m no good. Every time I remember I’m a soldier I think of her laughing at me, and I feel a fool.’

“‘Well,’ said I, ‘she must be proud of you both, for you’re the weariest, wonkiest pair of wash-outs I ever swore at.’

“I didn’t send for Jenks; I could guess his excuse. He had obviously about as much spirit for fighting as Ruggles, and he was just hanging on and trying not to get hurt before the War stopped.

“We had a few weeks out of the trenches after my chat with Ruggles, and one afternoon I came upon them enjoying a hearty, homely, ten-round hit, kick, and scramble in a quiet corner near their billet. They looked as if they meant it, but they finished up in about ten minutes, hugging each other in six inches of mud. Ruggles got up first, and while he waited for Jenks he turned on his Little Tich smile. It worked; Jenks smiled too, and the rivals went off together like brothers.

“I said nothing, and forgot them again—clean forgot them, until, a week later, Jenks came to me in Number Seven with a yarn about a crater and a sniper, and might he go and perforate him.

“I had noticed the sniper myself, so I sent Jenks to chase a broom and picked my own men for this job that mattered. I’d no sooner done it than Ruggles marched up and asked to be made one of the party.

“I just stared at him, and his grin stretched half an inch each way.

“‘I saw Jenks asking you,’ he told me, ‘and I won’t be behind Jenks. Besides, it was me told him of the sniper.’

“‘It’s a change for you two to be worrying over snipers,’ I said.

“‘Well, you’re not grumbling at that, are you, Sergeant?’ said he.

“‘I am not,’ I said. ‘And I hope you’ll keep it up until we’re relieved.’

“‘You watch us,’ he answered.

“I did. It was Ruggles that put his bayonet into the machine-gunner that had knocked out half the company. He took the last two bullets in his arm and side; and it was Jenks that put himself between Ruggles’ head and the revolver that would have made pulp of it if Jenks hadn’t got the hand that held it. He took the bullet in his cheek.

“I saw them in the dressing-station when the shouting was over. Ruggles was laughing at what Jenks’s face would look like when it was out of bandages. The bullet had taken away about a third of an ear. Jenks was cursing because it hurt to laugh back.

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“‘Never mind,’ I said to him with a wink at Ruggles, ‘I warrant there’s some little girl who won’t laugh at you when you get back home. She has more to be proud of now than your face.’

“‘Then you’re wrong, Sergeant,’ he answered quietly. ‘She’s changed her mind. She’s *his* girl now.’

“I looked at Ruggles. He wouldn’t catch my eye, but a blush was working round towards his neck.

“‘And I’ve changed my mind too,’ said Jenks. ‘D’you think I’d have taken those risks I took to-day if there was a girl at home worrying over every casualty list? A man’s a fool to risk breaking a heart to try to get a medal.’

“‘Ay, that’s the way you look at it,’ said Ruggles, as red as beetroot. ‘But I bet the Sergeant’s glad she’s changed her mind. I never knew your equal for a clammy coward, Jim, before she chucked you up.’

“Jenks began to look black. ‘There were two of us, anyway,’ he said.

“‘P’r’aps there were,’ Ruggles agreed cheerily. ‘But what’s the good of making a show of your soldiering unless there’s someone at home looking on and caring?’”

* * * * *

[Illustration: =INTENSIVE CULTURE FOR FLAT-DWELLERS.= SOWING EARLY MUSTARD AND CRESS ON WINTER UNDERCLOTHING.]

* * * * *

“The National War Savings Committee is issuing a two-penny cookery book, giving a host of simple remedies for economical dishes.”
Birmingham Daily Mail.

Some of them do upset the internal economy, no doubt.

* * * * *

“St. Quentin Canal, in spite of the damage reported to have been done to it by the Germans, will probably still be an important military obstacle. It is, for instance, when full of water, over eight feet deep.” *Daily News.*

When full of beer it becomes absolutely impassable.

* * * * *

Extract from a regimental notice:—

“I am glad to inform you that a Special Order ... guarantees your admission to this Regiment on your release from the Postal Service.... If attested and passed into Class A for Service, you should apply to your Recruiting Officer, who will post you and forward you here on an A.F. B. 216.”

An appropriate and convenient arrangement.

* * * * *

[Illustration: =ERIN TAKES A TURN AT HER OWN HARP.=

WITH MR. PUNCH’S SINCERE GOOD WISHES FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE IRISH CONVENTION.]

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[Illustration: IN HAPPY DAYS TO COME.

Non-Politician (in remote country-house, to wife on her midnight return from county town).

“MABEL, YOU’VE BEEN VOTING.”]

* * * * *

=ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.=

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Monday, May 21st.—Mr. MACCALLUM SCOTT complained that a question of his relating to the prohibition of “dropped scones”—which Captain BATHURST, that encyclopaedia of food-lore, described as falling “under the same category as the crumpet”—had been addressed to the Ministry of Munitions instead of the Ministry of Food. It was really a venial error on the part of the Clerk at the Table, for the modern scone distinctly suggests a missile of offence, and is much more like a “crump” than a crumpet. If HINDENBURG were acquainted with our London tea-shops (*consule* DEVONPORT) he would never have imagined that his famous phrase about “biting upon granite” would have any terrors for the British recruit.

When the PRIME MINISTER read from his manuscripts the proposed conditions of the Irish Convention—how it must include representatives not only of political parties, but of Churches, trade unions, commercial and educational interests, and of *Sinn Fein* itself; and must be prepared to consider every variety of proposal that might be brought before it—an Irish colleague whispered to me, “Sure, the Millennium will be over before we get it.”

Nothing could have been handsomer than Mr. REDMOND’S welcome to the proposal. All he was concerned for, I gathered, was that his Unionist opponents should be generously represented. Ulster, in the person of Sir JOHN LONSDALE, made no corresponding advance. He would submit the proposal to his constituents, but not apparently with letters commendatory.

I daresay Mr. WILLIAM O’BRIEN set out with the honest intention of blessing the Government plan, of which indeed he claims to be the “onlie begetter.” But the sound of his own voice—in its higher tones painfully provocative—stimulated him to proceed to a dramatic indictment of his former colleagues. I felt sorry for the prospective Chairman, charged with the task of attempting to reconcile these opposites.

Mr. HEALY, cowering beneath the shelter of his ample hat, as Mr. O’BRIEN’S arms waved windmill-like above him, must have felt like *Sancho Panza* when the *Don* was in an extra fitful mood; but he kept silence even from good words.

The briefest and most helpful speech of the afternoon came from Sir EDWARD CARSON, who, while declaring that he would never desert Ulster, nevertheless made it plain that Ulster on this occasion should take her place beside the rest of Ireland. Only Mr. GINNELL remained obdurate. In his ears the Convention sounds “the funeral dirge of the Home Rule Act.”

[Illustration: PESSIMIST’S DESIGN FOR COSTUME OF CHAIRMAN OF IRISH CONVENTION.]

Tuesday, May 22.—If you should happen to see of a Sabbath morning a stream of official motor-cars leaving London with freights of the brave and the fair you may be

sure they are going on some National business. Both the War Office and the Admiralty keep log-books, in which are faithfully entered—I quote Dr. MACNAMARA—“full particulars of each journey, the number and description of passengers carried and the amount of petrol consumed.” Do not therefore jump to the hasty and erroneous conclusion that the gallant fellows and their charming companions are “joy-riding;” such a thing is unknown in Government circles.

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The HOME SECRETARY moved the second reading of the Representation of the People Bill with a suavity befitting a CAVE of Harmony; and by the clearness of his exposition very nearly enabled the House to understand the mysteries of proportional representation, though even now I should not like to have to describe off-hand the exact working of “the single transferable vote.”

The opponents of the Bill were well-advised in selecting Colonel SANDERS as their champion. With his jolly round face, bronzed by the suns of Palestine, he looks the typical agriculturalist. He may, as he says, have forgotten in the trenches all the old tricks of the orator’s trade, but he has learned some useful new ones, and while delighting the House with his sporting metaphors struck some shrewd blows at a measure which he regards as unfair and inopportune.

For almost the first time since the War Lord HUGH CECIL was discovered in quite his best form. The House rippled with delight at his refusal to be forcibly fed with a peptonized concoction, prepared by the SPEAKER’S Conference in the belief that the Mother of Parliaments was too old and toothless to chew her own victuals. “This Bill is Bengers’s Food, and you, Sir, and your Committee are Bengers.”

The SOLICITOR-GENERAL’S solid and solemn arguments in favour of the Bill fell a little flat after this sparkling attack. He should have said, “The noble Lord reminds me, not for the first time, of GILBERT’S ‘Precocious Infant,’ who

’Turned up his nose at his excellent pap—

“My friends, it’s a tap

Dat is not worf a rap.”

(Now this was remarkably excellent pap).”

Wednesday, May 23rd—The Russian officers who adorned the Distinguished Strangers’ Gallery this afternoon must be a little puzzled by the vagaries of British politics. They had been informed, no doubt, that the most urgent problem of the day was caused by the desire of one of the British Isles to manage its own affairs. Yet the first thing they heard at Westminster was the petition of another of these Isles—that of Man—begging release from the burden of Home Rule and demanding representation in the Imperial Parliament. Perhaps this little incident will help our visitors to appreciate why Englishmen do not invariably form a just judgment of events in other countries—Russia, for instance.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Our Win-the-War Garden Suburb Enthusiast (as the storm bursts).*
“MADAM! MADAM! WILL YOU KINDLY PUT DOWN YOUR UMBRELLA? IT’S KEEPING THE RAIN OFF MY ALLOTMENT.”]



* * * * *

=SONGS OF FOOD PRODUCTION.=

V.

*Oh, for grapes a-growing
In Ludgate and the Fleet!
Cauliflowers blowing
Down Regent's Street!
Oranges and Lemons
Clustered by St. Clemen's,
And Sea Kale careering past the kerb on London Wall!
And oh, for private Mushroom beds rolling down the Mall!*

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Motor engines, motor engines, do not wear a bonnet!
You have artificial heat—grow something on it!
Precious artificial heat, costly to instal;
Turn it into a hot-bed, growing food for all!

Must you have a superstructure? Let it be a hot-house Forcing (say) some early peas
—the only decent pot-house; Oh, if I could only see in walking down the street No
unpatriotic waste of all that lovely heat!

Motor lorries for Marrows!
Taxis for Nectarines!
No more coster-barrows,
But lemon-house Limousines!
Oh, to see Tomaties
Skidding by Frascati's!
Grand heads of Celery passing the Carlton Grill,
And fine forced Strawberries—forced up Denmark Hill!

Hard's the fight with Nature in our uncongenial climate,
Cuddling plants and coaxing 'em, and oh, the weary time it
Takes to get a slender crop—we toil the Summer through;
England, needing quick returns, is looking now to you!

Food that comes from tropic lands, needing heat upon it,
You could grow without a thought, if you'd doff your bonnet;
Thousands of you, growing food on your daily trips,
Helping to economise the tonnage of our ships.

Oh, to count the numbers
Of Cabbages on the march,
Jostling with Cucumbers
Just at the Marble Arch!
Oh, for Piccadilly's
Capsicums and Chilies!
Oh, for Peckham's Peaches (not the sort that's canned),
And oh, for ripe Bananas roaring down the Strand!

* * * * *

"A reaper and binder was destroyed, also a foster mother incubator
with 43 young children."—*Chester Chronicle*.

The paragraph is headed "Fire at a Farm"—a baby-farm, we fear.

* * * * *

=IN A GOOD CAUSE.=

On Sunday, June 10th, Mr. GEORGE ROBEY is to give a Concert, at 7 P.M., at the Palladium, in aid of the Metropolitan and City Police Orphanage, which is in special need of funds on account of the losses sustained at the Front among members of the Police Force.

Mr. GEORGE ROBEY will be assisted by Miss IRENE VANBRUGH, Miss HELEN MAR, Mr. JOHN HASSALL, Mr. HARRY DEARTH and others, as well as by the Royal Artillery String Band, the Canadian Military Choir and the Metropolitan Police Minstrels.

Tickets are on sale at the National Sunday League Offices, 34, Red Lion Square, W.C., and applications for boxes will be received personally by Mr. ROBEY at the Hippodrome.

* * * * *

=The Domestic Problem—Two Extremes.=

“WANTED, Housemaid and Kitchenmaid; Paying Guests.”

“SCULLERY or Between Maid required immediately for Derbyshire; wages L218.”

Morning Post.

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“On Wednesday evening a fire broke out in Mr. J. Elkin’s scutch mill at Kilmore, near Omagh, which resulted in the complete destruction of the premises. It is surmised in the absence of anything which would indicate the origin of the outbreak that it resulted from a heated journal.”—*Belfast News Letter*.

An unusual quantity of inflammatory matter has been observed recently in the Irish Press.

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[Illustration: *Past*. THE ARTIST AND THE VILLAGE MAID.

Present. THE VILLAGE MAID AND THE ARTIST.]

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=HEART-TO-HEART TALKS.=

(*Marshal VON HINDENBURG; a Telephone.*)

The Telephone. RR-RR-RR-RR.

The Marshal. Curse the infernal telephone! A man doesn’t get a moment’s peace. Tush, what am I talking about? Who wants peace? If we were all to be quite candid there might be—

The Telephone. Rr-rr.

The Marshal. All right, all right, I’m coming. Yes, I’m Marshal VON HINDENBURG. Who are you? What? I can’t hear a single word. You really must speak up. Louder—louder still, you fool. What? Oh, I really beg your Majesty’s pardon. I assure you it was impossible to hear distinctly, but it’s all right now. I thank your Majesty, I am in my usual good health. Yes. No, not at all. Yes, I have good hope that we shall now maintain ourselves for at least two days. Yes, if we are forced to retire we must say it is according to plan. No, I don’t like it either, but what is to be done? Their guns are more numerous and heavier than ours, and weight of metal must tell. Will I hold the line? Yes, certainly, till your Majesty returns and graciously resumes the conversation. Oh, you didn’t mean that line? You meant the Siegfried line, or the Wotan line, or the Hindenburg line? Yes, I see, it was a *Witz*, a play of words. Yes, I am sorry I could not at once see what your Majesty was driving at, but now I see it is good. I must practise my joking. Ha-ha-ha! Are you there? No, he’s gone (*rings off*). (*To himself*) He is a queer Emperor who is able to make jokes while his soldiers are dying by thousands and thousands. It can’t last like this—and as for the Hindenburg line, I’m perfectly tired to death of the words; and the thing itself doesn’t exist.

The Telephone. Rr-rr-rr-rr.

The Marshal. What, again? This is too much—who are you? Who? WHO? General VON KLUCK? Impossible. General VON KLUCK's dead. What—not dead? Anyhow, nobody's heard of him for months. If you're really General VON KLUCK I'm afraid we must consider you to be dead. The EMPEROR won't regard it as very good taste on your part to come to life again like this. He's very unforgiving, you know. You don't care? But, my dear dead General VON KLUCK, you must care.

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What is it you say you wanted to do? Congratulate me? What on? My splendid defence of the Hindenburg line? Now, look here. As one German General to another do you mean to tell me you believe in the Hindenburg line? No, of course you don't. You thought I believed in it? Was that what you said? Come, don't wriggle, though you are a dead man. Yes, that was what you said. Well, then understand henceforth that there is no Hindenburg line and there never was anything of the sort. Why am I retreating then? Because I must. That's the whole secret. Why did *you* retreat after your famous oblique march during the Battle of the Marne? Because you had to, of course. There—that's enough. I can't waste any more time. What? Oh, yes, you can congratulate me on anything you like except that. And now you had better return to the grave of your reputation and remain there (*rings off*).

The Telephone. Rr-rr-rr-rr.

The Marshal. To h-ll with the telephone! Who is it now? What—an editor of a newspaper? That's a little bit too thick. What is it you want? To thank God for that masterpiece of bold cunning, the Hindenburg line? Is that what you want? Well, make haste, for the masterpiece doesn't exist. No, I'm not joking. I can't joke. Enough (*rings off*).

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[Illustration: *Nervous Recruit (on guard for the first time).* "HALT, FRIEND! WHO GOES THERE?"]

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=THE HOUSE-MASTER.=

Four years I spent beneath his rule,
For three of which askance I scanned him,
And only after leaving school
Came thoroughly to understand him;
For he was brusque in various ways
That jarred upon the modern mother,
And scouted as a silly craze
The theory of the "elder brother."

Renowned at Cambridge as an oar
And quite distinguished as a wrangler,
He felt incomparably more
Pride in his exploits as an angler;



He held his fishing on the Test
Above the riches of the Speyers,
And there he lured me, as his guest,
Into the ranks of the "dry-flyers."

He made no fetish of the cane
As owning any special virtue,
But held the discipline of pain,
When rightly earned, would never hurt you;
With lapses of the normal brand
I think he dealt most mercifully,
But chastened with a heavy hand
The sneak, the liar and the bully.

We used to criticise his boots,
His simple tastes in food and fiction,
His everlasting homespun suits,
His leisurely old-fashioned diction;
And yet we had the saving *nous*
To recognise no worse disaster
Could possibly befall the House
Than the removal of its Master.

For though his voice was deep and gruff,
And rumbled like a motor-lorry,
He showed the true angelic stuff
If any one was sick or sorry;
So when pneumonia, doubly dread,
Of breath had nearly quite bereft me,
He watched three nights beside my bed
Until the burning fever left me.

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He served three Heads with equal zeal
And equal absence of ambition;
He knew his power, and did not feel
The least desire for recognition;
But shrewd observers, who could trace
Back to their source results far-reaching,
Saw the true Genius of the Place
Embodied in his life and teaching.

The War's deep waters o'er him rolled
As he beheld Young England giving
Life prodigally, while the old
Lived on without the cause for living;
And yet he never heaved a sigh
Although his heart was inly riven;
He only craved one boon—to die
In harness, and the boon was given.

* * * * *

=Vicarious Parenthood.=

“DABRERA.—Yesterday, at 6.55 a.m. ‘Shernery,’ Bambalapitiya, to Mr. and Mrs. Ossy Dabrera a daughter. Grand parents doing well.”—*Ceylon Independent*.

* * * * *

“Mr. J.H. Minns (Carlisle) charged the brewers of his city with allowing their tenants to be placed under the heel of the Control Board.... It was the cloven hoof of the unseen hand that the trade had to face in Carlisle.”—*Derby Daily Express*.

Mr. MINNS must cheer up. The Trade has only to wait for

“That auspicious day when the velvet glove will be stripped for ever from the cloven hoof of the German Eagle.”—*London Opinion*.

* * * * *

“The fact that a few girls earn abnormal wages has obscured in the public mind the the Board to accept the gift a Bill is to be age girl working 48 hours a week earned only 18s. or 19s. a week.”—*Daily Paper*.

This statement should go far to clear up the obscurity in the public mind.

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“Mr. — gave one of his popular lectures on ‘Alcohol’ and its effects on March the 30th in the Wesleyan school.”—*True Blue Magazine*.

What exactly did happen on March 30th in the Wesleyan school?

* * * * *

“WANTED, Smart Workman, aged 80, and exempt from military service, as handy man; must be steady; a job for life for careful man.”—*Cambria Daily Leader*.

He must be particularly careful to guard against premature decease.

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[Illustration: *Waitress*. “WE HAVE A VERY REALISTIC MOCK-POTATO SOUP.”]

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=EMILY’S MISSION.=

It was all through Emily that I am to-day the man I am.

We were extraordinarily lucky to get her; there was no doubt about that. Her testimonials or character or references or whatever it is that they come to you with were just the last word. Even the head of the registry-office, a frigid thin-lipped lady of some fifty winters, with an unemotional cold-mutton eye, was betrayed, in speaking of Emily, into a momentary lapse from the studied English of her normal vocabulary.

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"Madam," she said to my wife, "I have known many housemaids, but never one like this. She is, I assure you, Madam, absolutely IT."

So we engaged her; and ere long I came to hate her with a hatred such as I trust I shall never again cherish for any human being.

In almost every respect she proved perfection. She was honest, she was quick, she was clean; she loved darning my socks and ironing my handkerchiefs; she never sulked, she never smashed, her hair never wisped (a thing I loathe in housemaids). In one point only she failed, failed more completely than any servant I have ever known. She would not make my shaving-water really hot.

Cursed by nature with an iron-filings beard and a delicate tender skin, I was a man for whom it was impossible to shave with comfort in anything but absolutely boiling water. Yet morning after morning I sprang from my bed to find the contents of my jug just a little over or under the tepid mark. There was no question of re-heating the water on the gas stove, for I never allowed myself more than the very minimum of time for dressing, swallowing my breakfast and catching my train. It was torture.

I spoke to Emily about it, mildly at first, more forcibly as the weeks wore on, passionately at last. She apologised, she sighed, she wrung her hands. Once she wept—shed hot scalding tears, tears I could gladly have shaved in had they fallen half-an-hour earlier. But it made no difference; next morning my water was as chill as ever. I could not understand it. Every day my wrath grew blacker, my reproaches more vehement.

Finally an hour came when I said to my wife, "One of two things must happen. Either that girl goes or I grow a beard."

Mildred shook her head. "We can't possibly part with her. We should never get another servant like her."

"Very well," I said.

On the morrow I started for my annual holiday, alone. It was late summer. I journeyed into the wilds of Wiltshire. I took two rooms in an isolated cottage, and on the first night of my stay, before getting into bed, I threw my looking-glass out of the window. Next morning I began. Day by day I tramped the surrounding country, avoiding all intercourse with humanity, and day by day my beard grew.

I could feel it growing, and the first scrubbiness of it filled me with rage. But as time slipped by it became softer and more pliable, and ceased to irritate me. Freed, too, from the agony of shaving, I soon found myself eating my breakfast in a more equable frame of mind than I had enjoyed for years. I began also to notice in my walks all sorts



of things that had not struck me at first—the lark a-twitter in the blue, the good smell of wet earth after rain, the pale gold of ripening wheat. And at last, before ever I saw it, very gradually I came to love my beard, to love the warm comfort and cosiness of it, and to wonder half timidly what it looked like.

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When I left, just before my departure for the six-miles-distant station, I called for a looking-glass. They brought me a piece of the one I had cast away. It was very small, but it served my purpose. I gazed and heaved a sigh of rapturous content; a sigh that came from my very heart. My beard was short and thick, its colour a deep glorious brown, with golden lights here and there where the sunbeams danced in some lighter cluster of its curling strands. A beard that a king might wear.

I have never shaved again. Every morning now, while untold millions of my suffering fellows are groaning beneath their razors, I steal an extra fifteen minutes from the day and lie and laugh inside my beard.

“And what of Emily?” you ask.

Almost immediately after my return she left us. She gave no reason. She was not unhappy, she said. She wished to make a change, that was all. To this day my wife cannot account for her departure. But I know why she went. Emily was a patriot with a purpose. A month after she parted from us I received a letter from her:—

“Dear Sir,—May I ask you to take into consideration the fact that by having ceased to shave you will in future be effecting a slight economy in your daily expenditure? Might I also suggest to you that during the remainder of the War you should make a voluntary contribution to the national exchequer of every shilling saved under this head? The total sum will not be large, but everything counts. Yours is, if I may be allowed to say so, the finest beard I have been instrumental in producing during my two and a half years’ experience in domestic service. I am now hard at work on my sixth case, which is approaching its crisis.

Apologising for any temporary inconvenience I may have caused you, I am,

Yours faithfully, EMILY JOHNSON,

*Foundress and President of the
Housemaids’ Society for the
Promotion of Patriotic Beards.”*

I never showed the letter to my wife, but I have acted on Emily’s suggestion. I often think of her still, her whole soul afire with her patriotic mission, flitting, the very flower of housemaids, from home to home, lingering but a little while in each, in each content for that little while to be loathed and stormed at by an exasperated shaver, whom she transforms into a happy bearded contributor to her fund.

* * * * *

=Another Impending Apology.=



“This terrible fire roused hundreds of people from their beds, and a great crowd gathered in the adjoining streets; but Sub-divisional Inspector Stock and Inspector Ping were on the spot within a few months after receiving the call.”—*Westminster and Pimlico News*.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Cowman (to new recruit, Women's Land Army)*. “YOU GET BEHIND THAT THERE WATER-BUTT. MEBBE COWS WON'T COME IN IF THEY SEE YOU IN THAT THERE RIG.”]

Page 22

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=THE FIFTEEN TRIDGES.=

Once upon a time there was a flourishing covey of fifteen: Pa Tridge, Ma Tridge, and thirteen little Tridges, all brown and speckled and very chirpy. They had been born in a hollow under some big leaves beside a hedge, and they now moved about the earth, pushing their way through the grass, all keeping close together when they could, and setting up no end of a piping when they couldn't and thought they were lost.

It was a large family from our point of view, and larger perhaps than a prudent French partridge would approve, but the world is wide, and there are no butcher's or baker's or tailor's or dress-maker's bills to pay for little birds. All that a Pa and Ma Tridge have to do after fledging is complete is to look out for cats and hawks and foxes, to beware of the feet of clumsy cattle, and to administer correction and advice. Above all there are no school bills, made so doubly ridiculous among ourselves by German measles and other epidemics during which no learning is imparted, but for which, educationalists being a wily crew, no rebate is offered.

There being so little to be done for their young, it is no wonder, in a didactic and over-articulate world, that parent Tridges take almost too kindly to sententiousness; and young Tridges, being so numerous as to constitute a public meeting in themselves, are specially liable to admonishment.

It was therefore that, strolling aimlessly amid the herbage or the young wheat with their audience all about them, Pa and Ma Tridge got into a habit of counsel which threatened to become so chronic that there was a danger of its dulling their sensibility to the approach of September the first.

"Never," Pa Tridge would say, "criticise anyone or anything on hearsay. See for yourself and then make up your own mind; but don't hurry to put it into words."

"Tell the truth as often as possible," Pa Tridge would say. "It is not only better citizenship to do so, but it makes things easier for yourself in the long run."

"Always bear in mind," Ma Tridge would say, "that after one has married one's cook she ceases to cook."

"Never tell anyone," Pa Tridge would say, "who it was you saw in the spinney with Mr. Jay or Mrs. Woodpecker."

"Indeed," he would add, "you might make a note that the world would not come to a miserable end if everyone was born dumb"—but he was very glad not to be dumb himself.

“Even though you should get on intimate terms with a pheasant,” Ma Tridge would say, “don’t brag about it.”

“Forgive, but don’t forget,” Pa Tridge would say.

“Remember,” Pa Tridge would say, “that, though it may be wiser to say No, most of the fun and all the adventure of the world have come from saying Yes.”

“Bear in mind,” Ma Tridge would say—but that is more than enough of the tiresome old bores.

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And after each piece of advice the little Tridges would all say, "Right-O!"

And then one night—these being English Tridges in an English early summer—a terrible frost set in which lasted long enough to kill the whole covey, partly by cold and partly by starvation, so that all the good counsels were wasted.

But on the chance that one or two of them may be applicable to human life I have jotted them down here. One never knows which is grain and which chaff until afterwards.

* * * * *

=OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.=

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

We have had many studies of the War, in various aspects, from our own army. Now in *My .75* (HEINEMANN) there comes a record of the impressions of a French gunner during the first year of fighting. It is a book of which I should find it difficult to speak too highly. PAUL LINTIER, the writer, had, it is clear, a gift for recording things seen with quite unusual sharpness of effect. His word-pictures of the mobilisation, the departure for the Front, and the fighting from the Marne to the Aisne (where he was wounded and sent home) carry one along with a suspense and interest and quite personal emotion that are a tribute to their artistry. His death (the short preface tells us that, having returned to the Front, he was killed in action in March, 1916) has certainly robbed France of one who should have made a notable figure in her literature. The style, very distinctive, shows poetic feeling and a rare and beautiful tenderness of thought, mingled with an acceptance of the brutality of life and war that is seen in the vivid descriptions of incidents that our own gentler writers would have left untold. The horror of some of these passages makes the book (I should warn you) not one for shaken nerves. But there can be no question of its very unusual interest, nor of the skill with which its translator, who should surely be acknowledged upon the title-page, has preserved the vitality and appeal of the original.

[Illustration: *Tommy (who has made a find in a German dug-out)*. "NOW, ALBERT, AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU CAME? WHY, THESE CIGARS IN LONDON WOULD COST YOU CLOSE ON A TANNER A PIECE."]

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The author of *Helen of Four Gates* (JENKINS) has chosen to hide her identity and call herself simply "An Ex-Mill Girl." I am sufficiently sorry for this to hope that, if the story meets with the success that I should certainly predict for it, a lady of such unusual gifts may allow us to know her name. Of these gifts I have no doubt whatever. As a tale *Helen of Four Gates* is crude, unnatural, melodramatic; but the power (brutality, if you

prefer) of its telling takes away the critical breath. Whether in real life anyone could have nursed a lifelong hatred as old *Mason* did (personally I cherish the belief that hatred is too evanescent an emotion

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for a life-tenancy of the human mind; but I may be wrong); whether he would have bribed a casual tramp to marry and torment the reputed daughter who was the object of his loathing, or whether *Day* and *Helen* herself would actually so have played into his hands, are all rather questionable problems. Far more real, human and moving is the wild passion of *Helen* for *Martin*, whom (again questionably as to truth) her enemies frighten away from her. A grim story, you begin to observe, but one altogether worth reading. To compare things small (as yet) with great, I might call it a lineal descendant of *Wuthering Heights*, both in setting and treatment. There is indeed more than a hint of the BRONTE touch about the Ex-Mill Girl. For that and other things I send her (whoever she is) my felicitations and good wishes.

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I wonder if Mr. (or Mrs. or Miss) E.K. WEEKES would understand me if I put my verdict upon *The Massareen Affair* (ARNOLD) into the form of a suggestion that in future its author would be well advised to keep quiet. Not with any meaning that he or she should desist from the pursuit of fiction; on the contrary, there are aspects of *The Massareen Affair* that are more than promising—vigorous and unconventional characters, a gift of lively talk, and so on. But all this only operates so long as the tale remains in the calm waters of the ordinary; later, when it puts forth upon the sea of melodrama, I am sorry to record that this promising vessel comes as near shipwreck as makes no difference. To drop metaphor, the group of persons surrounding the unhappily-wedded *Anthony Massareen*—*Claudia*, who attempts to rescue him and his two boys, the boys themselves, and the clerical family whose fortunes are affected by their proximity to the *Massareens*—all these are well and credibly drawn. But when we arrive at the fanatic wife of *Anthony*, in her Welsh castle, surrounded by rocks and blow-holes, and finally to that last great scene, where (if I followed events accurately) she trusses her ex-husband like a fowl, and trundles him in a wheel-barrow to the pyre of sacrifice, not the best will in the world could keep me convinced or even decorously thrilled. So I will content myself with repeating my advice to a clever writer in future to ride imagination on the curb, and leave you to endorse this or not as taste suggests.

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I am seriously thinking of chaining *Grand Fleet Days* (HODDER AND STOUGHTON) to my bookcase, for it is written by the author of *In the Northern Mists*, a book which has destroyed the morality of my friends. Be assured that I am not formulating any grave charge against the anonymous Chaplain of the Fleet who has provided us with these two delightful volumes; I merely wish to say that nothing can prevent people from purloining the first, and that drastic

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measures will have to be taken if I am to retain the second. In these dialogues and sketches I do not find quite so much spontaneity as in the first volume; once or twice it is even possible to imagine that the author, after taking pen in hand, was a little perplexed to find a subject to write about. But that is the beginning and the end of my complaint. Once again we have a broad-minded humour and the revelation of a most attractive personality. Above all we see our Grand Fleet as it is; and, if the grumblers would only read and soundly digest what our Chaplain has to say their question would be, "What is our Navy *not* doing?"

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"The sight was wonderful. From the grand lodge entrance to the lake-side quite 3,000 blue-breeched khaki-coated men and nurses lined one side of the long drive."—*Manchester Evening News*.

It must indeed have been a wonderful sight. Nevertheless we hope that nurses generally will stick to their traditional uniform.

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