

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 153, Oct. 3, 1917

Various

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PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

VOL. 153.

OCTOBER 3, 1917.

CHARIVARIA.

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There is no truth in the rumour that the Imperial Government is trying to secure from KING ALFONSO an agreement that German prisoners shall not escape on Sundays or in batches of more than fifty at a time.

"Far better another year of war," said the Bishop of LONDON in a recent sermon, "than to leave it to the baby in the cradle to do it over again." Too much importance should not be attached to these ill-judged reflections on the younger members of the Staff.

In Berlin a crowd of people attempted to do some injury to an officer on the paltry excuse that he ordered the execution of thirty people for alleged espionage. The German people have always been a little jealous of the privileges of the military.

Captain N. BERNIERS, who has just returned to Quebec, reports that the Eskimos had not heard of the War. We should be the last to worry Lord NORTHCLIFFE at present, but it certainly looks as if the Circulation Manager of _The Daily Mail_ has been slacking.

We really think more care should be taken by the authorities to see that, while waging war on the Continent, they do not forget the defence of those at home. The fact that Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL and Mr. HORATIO BOTTOMLEY were away in France at the same time looks like gross carelessness.

"Next to the field of Mars we must pay homage to the forge of Vulcan," said the KAISER in a recent speech. A stout fellow, this Vulcan, but as a forger not really in the ALL-HIGHEST'S class.

Taxicabs are to be entitled to charge a shilling for the first mile. The bus fare for the remainder of the distance will be the same as heretofore.

It is stated that fifty per cent. of the sugar forms have been filled in wrong. On the other hand a number of our youthful hedonists are complaining that as far as sugar is concerned their forms have never been anywhere near filled in.

A Wood Green gentleman has written to an evening paper to say that he has grown a vegetable marrow which weighs forty-three pounds. There is some talk of his being elected an Honorary Angler.

A Grimsby lady who has just celebrated her hundredth birthday states that she has never visited a cinema theatre. We felt sure there must be an explanation somewhere.

It seems a pity that the Willesden Health Committee should have troubled to pass a resolution about the decreasing birth-rate. When we remember air-raids and the shortage of sugar it is only natural that people should show a disinclination to be born just now.

"I don't care how soon a General Election comes," says Mr. JOHN DILLON, M.P. It is this dare-devil spirit which has made so many Irishmen what they are. The recruiting officer has no terrors for them.

HENRY ELIONSKY, of New York, has succeeded in swimming seven miles with his legs tied to a chair and with heavy boots and clothing. It is not known why he did it, but we gather that CHARLIE CHAPLIN is now wondering whether he was wise, after all, in becoming a naturalised American.

The wave of crime still sweeps the country. On top of the L30,000 jewel robbery comes the news that a man has been charged with breaking into a London tobacconist's shop and stealing a box of matches value 1/2d. (price 11/2d.).

A letter has just reached a City office addressed to the tenants who occupied the premises twenty years ago. Fortunately such cases of loitering on the part of our postmen are extremely rare.

An infuriated bull has been killed in High Street, Tonbridge, after wrecking several shop windows. It is thought that the animal had misread the directions on its sugar card.

A number of people have complained that they could hear nothing of the recent air-raids over London, owing to the noise of the firing being drowned by the admonitory activities of the police.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE BULLDOG BREED.

Company Commander (_making sure of his men before the show_). "NOW, WHEN WE GO OVER THE TOP TO-MORROW, YOU ALL KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TO MAKE FOR?"

Chorus of Tommies. "YUSS, SIR."

C.C. "WHAT IS IT, THEN?"

Chorus. "THEY GERMANS, SIR.]"

* * * * *

OUR CENTRIPETISTS.

"Mrs. Eckstein and Miss Eckstein have returned to London from Scotland, and they are leaving London immediately for London."--_Brighton Standard and Fashionable Visitors' List_.

* * * * *

"The Irish farmers are confident that the Food Controller's declared intention to fix the price of cattle at 6s. per cwt. for next January will not be carried into effect. They believe that Lord Rhondda must realise the necessity of making a substantial increase on this figure."--_Saturday Herald (Dublin)_.

Lord RHONDDA, we understand, has already met the Irish farmers more than halfway by fixing the price at 60s.

* * * * *

"The Apia Blacksmiths, Ltd., will undertake contracts for the building of houses, with or without material."--_Samoa Times_.

"And gives to airy nothing
A local habitation."--_Shakspeare_.

* * * * *

TAKING OUR PLEASURES SADLY.

A correspondent informs us that the playbill of IBSEN'S _Ghosts_ at the Pavilion Theatre bears the following words: "Mr. Neville Chamberlain says, 'It is essential there should be provided amusements and recreations which can take people for an hour or so out of themselves and return them to their work refreshed and reinvigorated.'"

* * * * *

SOCIETY NOTES.

BY THE HANGER-ON.

AIR-RAIDS AND OTHER DIVERSIONS.

A promising young poet of my acquaintance, who in the midst of war's obsessions still finds time and taste for the exercise of his art (he is in a Government office), has allowed me to see the opening couplet of what I understand to be a very ambitious poem. It runs as follows:--

"Though overhead the Gothas buzz,
Stands London where it did? It does."

Many good judges of poetry to whom I have quoted these lines think them very clever.

* * * * *

A witty friend of mine tells me that he is thinking of bringing out a handy and up-to-date edition of the Almanach de Gotha, special attention being paid to the changes of the Moon.

* * * * *

Society is always on the look-out for some new distraction from the tedium of War. The latest vogue with smart people is to get up little air-raid parties for the Tube, to be followed by auction or a small boy-and-girl dance. Sections of tunnel or platform can be engaged beforehand by arrangement with the Constabulary.

* * * * *

I hear that my friend, ARTHUR BOURCHIER, continues to draw crowds to the Oxford. I was dining the other day with a young and brilliant officer, who has seen two months' active service in the A.S.C. and won golden opinions at the Base, and he assured me that there is no "Better 'Ole" than the Oxford during an air-raid.

* * * * *

Now that London is part of the Front, with a barrage of its own, one has to be careful to censor one's correspondence. It is advisable not to mention your actual address, but just to write "Somewhere in the West-End. B.S.F." (British Sedentary Force).

* * * * *

The Winter season has begun exceptionally early. Last Sunday at Church Parade I saw Lady "Nibs" Tattenham, looking the very image of her latest photograph in The Prattler, where she appears with her pet Pekie over the legend, "Deeply interested in War-work."

* * * * *

A gallant Contemptible has been complaining to me that the Press shows no sense of proportion in the space that it allots to air-raids. Our casualties from that source, he said, are never one tenth as heavy as those in France on days when G.H.Q. reports "Everything quiet on the Western Front." I naturally disagreed with his attitude. Nothing, I told him, is more likely to discourage the Hun than to see column after column in our papers proving that these visitations leave us totally unmoved. Besides it must be very comforting to our troops in the trenches to learn in detail how their dear ones at home are sharing the perils of the other fronts. In any case nobody who knows our Press would doubt the purity of their motive in reporting as many air-raid horrors as the Censor permits.

* * * * *

A propos of the Patriotic Press, no praise can be too high for some of our society weeklies. They have set their faces like flint against

any serious reference to the War. When I see them going imperturbably along the old pre-war lines, snapping smart people at the races or in the Row, or reproducing the devastating beauty of a revue chorus, I know that they have their withers unwrung and their heart in the right place. I always have one of these papers on my table to be taken as a corrective after the daily casualty lists.

* * * * *

A striking feature of the Photographic Press is to be seen in the revival of the *vie intime* of popular idols of the stage. The human life of our great actors and actresses as revealed in some simple rustic *villeggiatura* has always had a fascination for a public that does not enjoy the privilege of their private friendship. And in these strenuous War-days it is well to bring home to the theatre-goer how necessary is domestic repose for those who are doing their courageous bit to keep the nation from dwelling on the inconveniences of Armageddon.

* * * * *

One of the most profound after-the-war questions that is agitating the mind of the Government is what eventually to do with the miles of wooden and concrete villages that have sprung up all over London like Jonah's mushroom. I hear a rumour that the House of Commons tea-terrace will shortly be commandeered for the erection of yet another block of buildings to accommodate yet another Ministry--the Ministry of Demobilization of Temporary Departmental Hutments.

O. S.

* * * * *

THE TUBE HOTELS, LTD.

[Mr. Punch has been fortunate enough to secure in advance a prospectus of the enterprising managements.]

THE CENTRAL LONDON RAILWAY

offers splendid night accommodation in its magnificently appointed stations. Every modern convenience. Luxurious lifts conducted by the Company's own liveried attendants convey guests to the dormitories. Constant supply of fresh ozone. Reduced terms to season ticket holders.

HOTEL EMBANKMENT.

All lines converge to this Hotel, which is therefore the most central in London. Frequent trains convey visitors direct to their beds. For the convenience of patrons arriving above ground or by District, the Directors have installed a superb moving staircase, thereby obviating the inconvenience of crowded lifts.

The platforms and passages are tastefully decorated with coloured pictures by the leading firms.

Visitors are respectfully requested not to sleep on the moving

staircase.

HOTEL PICCADILLY CIRCUS.

IN THE HEART OF FASHIONABLE LONDON.

This Hotel, which is one of the deepest in London, is composed of four magnificent platforms and nearly a mile of finely tessellated corridors. Electric light. Constant temperature of sixty-five degrees Fahrenheit. Excellent catering under the control of the Automatic Machine Company. Reduced terms during moonless nights.

HOTEL HAMPSTEAD TUBE.

Situated in a commanding position, underlooking the Heath, this hotel is positively the deepest in London. The Management has decided to extend the accommodation during one week in each month by offering beds on the steps of the staircase. No one has ever been known to walk either up or down this staircase, and patrons are therefore assured of an uninterrupted night's repose. Extremely moderate terms are quoted for the higher flights.

THE GILLESPIE ARMS.

Ensure an undisturbed night's sleep by putting up at the Gillespie Road Station Family and Commercial Hotel. Large numbers of trains pass this station without stopping, and residents are comparatively free from the annoyance caused by the arrival and departure of passengers.

Special terms for Aliens, who are requested to bring their own mattresses.

* * * * *

[Illustration: A PLACE IN THE MOON.

HANS. "HOW BEAUTIFUL A MOON, MY LOVE, FOR SHOWING UP ENGLAND TO OUR GALLANT AIRMEN!"

GRETCHEN. "YES, DEAREST, BUT MAY IT NOT SHOW UP THE FATHERLAND TO THE BRUTAL ENEMY ONE OF THESE NIGHTS?"]

* * * * *

CODES.

It began like the noise of rushing water, and for a moment the Brigade Major hoped that somebody had taken it upon himself to wash the orderly. The noise, however, was followed by a succession of thumps which put an end to this pretty flight of fancy. Aghast he surveyed the scene before him. Close to the Brigade Headquarters' dug-out was an old French dump of every conceivable kind of explosive made up into every known form of projectile. No longer was it a picture of Still Life. The Sleeping Beauty was awake indeed. The Prince had come in the form of a common whizz-bang.

As he looked (and ducked) a flock of aerial torpedoes, propelled by the explosion of one of their number, rose and scattered as if at the approach of a hostile sportsman. Another explosion blew what seemed to be a million rockets sizzling into the air.

The store was on fire!

The Brigade Major retired.

* * * * *

Everybody was in the Signal dug-out (Signals build deep and strong). Secretly the clerks were praying for the disintegration of the typewriter and the total destruction of the overwhelming mass of paper (paper warfare had been terrible of late). The Staff Captain and the O.C. Gum Boots, who had been approaching the Headquarters, were already half a mile down the road and still going strong.

The Division rang up. One need hardly have mentioned that. In times of stress the higher formations rarely fail.

"What's going on?" they asked.

The Brigade Major was just going to say, when suddenly he remembered. That very morning he had been severely strafed for speaking of important things over the telephone when so near the enemy. "Had he not read the Divisional G 245/348/24 of the 29th inst.? What was the good of issuing orders to defeat the efficiency of the Bosch listening apparatus if they were not obeyed?" etc., etc.

True, it was conceivable that even without the aid of a delicate listening apparatus the Bosch was cognisant of an explosion that made his whole front line quiver; still orders is orders. So the Brigade-Major swallowed hard.

"C-can't tell you over the wires. Your G 245/348/24...."

"Yes, yes, we know all about that. Don't say it definitely, but give us an idea. Where is all this noise?"

"Here!--Oh!" piped the B.M. as a crump shook the receiver out of his hand.

"Send it in code at once. The G.O.C. is strafing horribly to know."

To encode a message which may be your last words on earth is not the easiest of tasks. It has no romance about it. Who would relish an obituary such as: "He died like a hero, his last words being 'XB35/067K'"?

To the ramping of the continuous crump the B.M. scraped away the dirt and stuff that had fallen from the throbbing walls of his dug-out and fished out the Code-Book. Hurriedly he turned over the pages to "Ammunition" and read down the set phrases and their code equivalents. Four times he relit the candle. There seemed nothing under this heading applicable to the situation. "Send up" was one, but that had already been done. "Am/is/are/running short of" was another, but it was doubtful if the Division would see the real meaning of it.

"Ah, here we are," he muttered, relighting the candle for the fifth time. "Dumps." Alas, there was nothing to convey the situation very

clearly even under this heading. Finally he picked out the nearest he could find and sent it over the wires.

This is what they decoded to the expectant G.O.C. of the Division:
"_Advanced ammunition depot has moved_."

The G.O.C. said something which impelled the entire Divisional Staff to the telephone, where they all grabbed for the receiver.

"What the devil is this code message? We can't understand it. You've sent in something about the dump at your Brigade Headquarters."

"Ah!" said the B.M. meaningly, "there is not a dump at Brigade Headquarters now."

"Well, I don't care. We want to know what all this noise is about."

"It's the dump. It's m-moved."

"Moved? Moved where? Give the map reference."

"Map reference?" murmured the B.M. "Oh, my sacred aunt, what fools ... I'm sorry" (he smiled at them through his teeth) "I can't give you the m-map reference, but I can give you the area roughly."

"Barmy!" was the word he heard spoken to a bystander at the other end.

"Look here, old man," they said kindly, "we know you're all very tired and worried, but just try to think a moment. Never mind dumps now. You can't be making all that noise moving a dump--what?" (Specimen of Divisional joke--very rare.) "Tell us, is the Bosch shelling?"

"No. They've stopped."

"Good. Then it's all over?"

"No. It's still going on."

"But you just said that it had stopped."

"Yes, it has. But the dump hasn't. It keeps m-moving."

"Poor old bird," they said, "his nerve's gone at last. All right," they shouted, "don't you worry. The storeman will look after the dump. You go to bed and have a good sleep."

"Have a g-good sleep!" muttered the B.M., "that's just like the Divis--Oh!" and he sat down as a torpedo flopped into his bedroom a few doors away and made a hole of it.

Then he sat up. The storeman of the Brigade dump was not two hundred yards away from the active one. The poor fellow was to have gone on leave that night. Presently it occurred to him that, instead of trying to decide who should have the reversion of the storeman's leave, it would be better to go and see if there really was a vacancy. Fifteen boxes of melinite delayed him but a moment. With melinite you know the worst at once; it doesn't hang round like boxes of ammunition, for instance. He called a clerk and together they raced over to the storeman's dug-out.

"Jock!" cried the clerk. "Are ye there, Jock?"

"Is he quite dead?" said the B.M., making up his mind to use his leave warrant for himself.

"No, Sir, he's very deaf, that's why he's a storeman. Jo-ock!!"

"Hello!" came from the ground.

"Are ye all right, Jock?"

"Na. There's an awfu' to-do here."

"What's wrong then?"

"Ma candle keeps going oot."

"Are ye all right, though, Jock?"

"Na."

"Well, what's up with ye?"

"I told ye. Ma candle keeps going oot. What's up yon?"

* * * * *

When the B.M. got back he found a one-sided war in progress on the telephone. The G.O.C. had heated up the wires to red-heat.

"Is that you, Nessel? Where the devil have you been? This noise is still going on. Tell me what it is. No-dam-nonsense-now. Let's have it."

"If you want to know and you don't mind the Bosch hearing what I say, Sir, the dump, the French dump, has b-blown itself to b-blazes."

"Why the _devil_ couldn't you say so before?"

Every dog has his day. With a full and fatuous smile the Brigade-Major picked up a paper and began: "Reference your G. 245/348/24 of the 29th inst. It says that--"

Somebody must have taken a bone away from a dog at the other end. He growled horribly.

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[Illustration: _Flapper (shyly)._ "COULD YOU TELL ME WHAT A STAMP STUCK ON AT _THAT_ ANGLE MEANS IN THE LANGUAGE OF POSTAGE-STAMPS?"]

* * * * *

From an account of the Ministerial crisis in Sweden:--

"Two imperialist minstrels, however, Von Melsted and Lengquist, did quite enough mischief."--_Daily Mail_.

Members of the pro-German band, no doubt.

* * * * *

Mr. Punch desires to record thanks to the innumerable correspondents who have drawn his attention to the statement in The Daily Chronicle that among the German officers who escaped and were afterwards recaptured was "Von Thelan, a lieutenant in the lying corps." The existence of this unit in the German Army has, as most of them point out, been long suspected, but never officially confirmed till now.

* * * * *

[Illustration: The Colonel's Daughter. "WHAT A WONDERFUL VOICE AND WHAT A PERFECT ARTIST!"

The Colonel. "DON'T THINK MUCH OF HIM! HE'S GOT A POCKET UNBUTTONED."]

* * * * *

TIPS FOR NON-TIPPERS.

["If taxi-cab fares are increased it will put a stop to tipping."--Evening Paper.]

Only really robust men should refuse to tip the taxi-driver. Many a City man has set out in the morning intent on giving no tips and has not been heard of afterwards.

To enable timid men to avoid a tip, the police are providing taxi-drivers with antiseptic mouthpieces, through which their words may be sterilised.

If the driver insists on a tip do not threaten to take his number. Just take it and run. If you haven't time for both, just run.

* * * * *

"ALL-WOOL Black Cashmere Stockings, winter weight. 1/111/2 and 2/6 per yard." Advt. in Scotch Paper.

We had always thought hosiery was sold by the foot.

* * * * *

"On the estate of the late Hon. Lionel Walrond, Uffculme, Devon, Robert James, 97, is felling for the purpose of aeroplane construction aspen trees which he helped to plant 80 years ago."--The Times.

Three cheers for Mr. ROBERT JAMES! "For he's a jolly good feller!"

* * * * *

BEASTS ROYAL.

II.

CAESAR'S GIRAFFE. B.C. 46.

From Egypt, Africa and Gaul
CAESAR his Roman triumph brings:
Dark queens and ruddy-bearded kings,
And scowling Britons led in thrall,
And elephants with silver rings;
But oh, more excellent than all,
This pensive beast, this mottled beast,
From the marshes of the East.

Patres conscripti, hail him now
Divine! Through Rome his triumph rolls;
Oysters in barrels, pearls in bowls,
Chariots and horsemen, moving slow
Where purple garlands droop on poles.
Patres conscripti, crown his brow,
Who brought us from the golden East
This unimagined peerless beast!

Never has CAESAR made our foes
Weep more than he has made us laugh;
He who divides the world in half
With the long shadow of his nose,
And bridges oceans with his staff,
Brings now, with pomp of vine and rose,
This wondering and wondrous beast
From the subjugated East.

In bronze and basalt let us raise
The bust of CAESAR; he has done
Great things for Rome; but here is one
Above the rest, o'ertopping praise.
The elephants and kings are gone,
But still the roaring tumult sways--
Much for the Conqueror of the East,
More for the incomparable beast.

* * * * *

AN INVOLUNTARY RAID.

Life in a convalescent hospital for officers is not one continuous round of gaiety, but it has its incidents for all that.

The other day Sister took Haynes, Ansell and myself to have tea with some people in the neighbouring village of Little Budford. We were waiting in the hall for the car when Seymour came along. Seymour is an adjutant when he is not at home, and he likes to see things done with proper military precision.

"Here," he said, "you can't go off casually like that. Fall in, tea-party."

We fell in, and he went to the smoking-room and woke Major Stanley.

"Party for tea ready for inspection, Sir," he reported.

"Who? What? Where?" asked the Major confusedly. "Good Lord, you young idiot, what a scare you gave me! Thought I was back in France for a moment. Where's this party paraded?"

"Hout in the 'all, Sir." Seymour led him to where we were standing at ease.

"Party!" he roared. "Shunsuwere!" We gave two convulsive jerks. "Smarten up there, smarten HUP! Get a move on! This ain't a waxwork. Shunsuwere!... Shun!! Party present, Sir."

The Major inspected us.

"I don't like this smear, Sergeant," he said, pointing to Ansell's upper lip.

Seymour examined the feature in question.

"It don't appear to be dirt, Sir. Some sort o' growth, I think. You try sand-papering it, me lad, an' you'll find it come orf all right."

"Very good, Sergeant," answered Ansell solemnly.

The Major proceeded to Haynes, and eyed him with disfavour.

"We can't do nothing with this man, Sir," said Seymour deprecatingly. "Is legs is that bandy."

"What do you mean, Private Haynes, by appearing on ceremonial parade with a pair of bandy legs?"

"It wasn't my fault, Sir. 'Strewth, it wasn't. They got wet, Sir, an' I went an' dried 'em at the cook'ouse fire, Sir, an' they got warped, Sir."

"Well," said the Major, "don't bring 'em on parade again. Tell your Q.M.S. I say you're to have a new pair."

"Very good, Sir."

The Major passed on to me, and surveyed my left arm more in anger than in sorrow.

"Why has this man got his blue band fastened on with pins?" he demanded. "Why isn't it sewn on? Why hasn't he fastened it on with elastic? D'you hear me? Are you deaf? Why isn't it sewn on? Why don't you speak?"

"Please, Sir...."

"Don't answer me back! Sergeant, take this man's name. He is insolent. Take his name for insolence. You are insolent, Sir. You're a disgrace to the Army. You're a ..."

"If you've quite finished with my squad, Major," put in Sister in a quiet voice from the door, "the car is here, and we're late already. I shall have to push a bit."

I promptly made for the seat beside the driver, explaining that I wanted to see the speedometer burst. Sister does a good many things, and does most of them well; but her particular accomplishment is her motor-driving. After my experiences in different cars at the

Front--especially those driven by Frenchmen--I thought at first that motoring had no new thrills to offer me; but when Sister takes corners I still clutch at anything handy.

Surrey began to stream past us. The landscape was extremely beautiful, but only the more distant parts of it were visible except as a mere blur. After five or six miles we turned into a long straight stretch of road.

"The Hepworths live somewhere along this," said Sister. "There's a lovely sunken garden just in front of the house which I want you to notice. Hallo! here we are; I thought it was further on."

The car whizzed round and through a drive gateway half hidden in trees. When I opened my eyes again I looked for the sunken garden; but except for a few very prim-looking flower-beds the grounds in front of the house consisted entirely of a lawn, round which the drive took a broad circular sweep.

"It must be the wrong house," said Sister, and without pausing an instant in our centrifugal career we rushed round the complete circle and disappeared through the gate as suddenly as we had come. As we passed the house I had a fleeting glimpse of an old, hard-featured and furious female face glaring at us from one of the windows.

On the road we stopped the car so as to regain some measure of gravity before presenting ourselves at our real destination--next house--but were still rather hysterical when we arrived.

"You'll hear more of this," said our hostess, when we had reported our raid. "Old Miss Mendip lives there--a regular tartar; all kinds of views; writes to the papers."

* * * * *

In a subsequent issue of the local weekly we found the following:--

To the Editor of "The Inshot Times, Great and Little
Budford Chronicle and Home Counties Advertiser_."

SIR,--Even in war-time_, when one cannot call our souls our own, we may surely expect the privacy of individuals and the rights of property to receive some_ respect. An Englishman's home is still his castle, though the debased morals and decayed manners of modern Society_ (?) seem to blind its members to the fact.

I wish to give publicity in your pages to a disgraceful outrage_ of which I have been made the victim. On Tuesday last I was rudely awakened from my afternoon rest by the sound of a large motor-car. As I did not expect visitors I proceeded to the window in order to discover to what the intrusion_ might be due. What was my astonishment_ to discover that the vehicle contained a party of four perfect strangers_. Three of them, I regret to state, were wounded officers; they were being driven by one of the modern games-playing cigarette-smoking young women to whom the old-fashioned word "lady_" seems so singularly_ inapplicable. Their sole object in entering appeared to be the perpetration of a senseless practical joke_, for after careering_ round my garden at a pace which I can only describe as unwomanly_, they went off by the way they had come.

My gardener, who witnessed the incident, tells me that on reaching the road they stopped the vehicle and celebrated the success of their inane efforts by _shrieking_ with that unrestrained mirth which jars so painfully on refined ears.

Can _nothing_ be done?

I am, Sir, Yours faithfully,

LYDIA MENDIP.

Manor Lodge, Little Budford.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Orderly Officer_. "HOW MANY HORSES ARE HERE, PICKET?"]

Picket (a little fed-up). "ER--HORSE LINE, 'SHUN! FROM THE RIGHT--NUMBER!!"]

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THE FOOD SHORTAGE IN GERMANY.

"While the horse doevures were being served, the Kaiser, etc."

At the Imperial table, it will be observed, they put the horse before the _carte_.

* * * * *

"He held several Court appointments, including those of Keeper of the Privy PuPrse to the Prince"--_The Star_.

It is not every Keeper of the Privy Purse who thus manages to double the initial capital.

* * * * *

THE P.-P.-D.

Henry is in the War Office, where he takes a hand in the Direction of Military Aeronautics. To meet him you might almost think that Military Aeronautics was a one-man show. He has, at any rate in the eyes of the layman, an encyclopaedic knowledge of aircraft and all appertaining thereto. When he is out for a walk on Sunday with his wife and daughter, and a British aeroplane passes over them with the usual fascinating roar, Henry is very superior. Mummy (who is of coarse clay) and Betty (aged 11/2, and coarser still) are frankly excited every time.

"Look at the pretty airship!" says Mummy.

"Oo-ah!" says Betty.

"B. E. 4 X.," snaps Henry, without looking at it.

* * * * *

Or rather this is what Henry used to do; but now things are different.

It was Betty who, so to speak, brought him down to earth again. He had great ambitions for Betty, whom he fondly believed to be possessed of intelligence above the lot of woman, and he always laboured prodigiously to advance her education. Betty took to it philosophically, however, and refused to be hurried; and Henry almost despaired of getting her beyond two syllables. The "Common Objects of the Farmyard" were rapidly assimilated, and all the world of mechanical traction was comprehended in the generic "puff-puff." But Henry wouldn't be satisfied with this very creditable repertoire. "Out of respect for her father, if for no other reason," he would insist, "she _must_ learn to say 'aeroplane.'"

"How ridiculous!" said Mummy, who always called them "airships," to annoy Henry; "and anyhow it's no use going on at her; she never will say things to order. If you'll only leave her alone for a bit she'll probably say it, and then your sordid ambition will be gratified."

But Henry cared for none of these things, and when Sunday came, and with it Sunday's promenade and Sunday's aeroplane, he went at it as hard as ever.

"Say 'air-ye-play,'" he commanded, as the pram was brought to a standstill and the droning monster passed overhead.

Betty gazed raptly at the entrancing thing. Then suddenly she raised a fat hand and pointed. "Oo-ah!" she said, "puff-puff-dicky!"

* * * * *

And nowadays Henry's omniscience is decently obscured under a capacious bushel. If you meet an aeroplane when you are walking with him and ask humbly for his verdict thereon, in the expectation of an explosion of clipped technical jargon, he will stop and study its outline with great attention, and will eventually inform you, to your respectful mystification, that it is a "P.-P.-D." Thereafter he will chuckle most unofficially.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Lady_. "WELL, MRS. GUBBINS, WHAT IS THE WEATHER GOING TO BE TO-DAY?"

Charwoman. "OH, I DON'T KNOW, MUM. I'M NOT MUCH OF A WEATHERCOCK."]

* * * * *

MORE SEX PROBLEMS.

"Wanted, a Blue Bull (Nilgai or Rojh). Apply, stating sex, age, height and price."--_Pioneer_.

* * * * *

From a German _communique_:--

"On the eastern bank of the Mouse desperate fishing continues."--_Edinburgh Evening Paper_.

And the Bosch has caught more than he bargained for.

* * * * *

From the report of the meeting, in London, of the Executive Committee of the National Farmers' Union:--

"Farmers had hundreds of acres of grass which they were willing to turn into meat, but were prevented from doing so."

Mr. Punch thinks that the difficulty might be overcome if the meat were turned into the grass.

* * * * *

THE H.Q. TOUCH.

Command Headquarters (who, of course,
Ride us as Cockneys ride a horse--
I mean, without considering
The animal; the ride's the thing)
On Army Form--I cannot think
Precisely which; the form was pink--
Instructed Captain So-and-so,
With certain other ranks, to go
And at a given hour report,
With rifles, such-and-such a sort,
So many rounds of S.A.A.
Per man, and so much oats and hay
Per horse (as specified and charged
On War Establishments, enlarged,
Revised and issued as amended);
And here the said instruction ended,
"Signed, Eustace Blank, G.S.O.3,
For D.A.Q.A.M.A.G."

The reason why the form was thus
Truncated was--alas for us!--
That Major Blank, a hasty man,
Neglected his accustomed plan
And failed, in short, to P.T.O.,
So never told us where to go.

We drafted a polite reply:--
"Your such a number, Fourth July;
Instructions touching destination
Requested, please, for information."
And Captain So-and-So and men
Donned and inspected kits.

And then
Command Headquarters went and wired:
"The draft in question not required.
When any draft is wanted you
Will hear precisely what to do;
No error ever passes through
This office. You will therefore not
In future tell US what is what;
WE know; and WE are on the spot.
The G.O.C.-in-C. is much
Displeased."

The old Headquarters' touch.

* * * * *

OUR SPOILT PETS.

"Cottage, suitable for pigs and poultry."--_Birmingham Daily Mail_.

* * * * *

"SUSAN'S PUDDING.--This is a super-excellent pudding, and, as times go, the cost of the material used is not excessive. Required: One cup each of flour, breadcrumbs, raisins (stoned and chopped), currants (washed and dried), also a teacupful of baking powder.... If served only on occasion--a special occasion--the most scrupulously careful housewife should not be troubled by uneasy sensations."--_Bristol Times and Mirror_.

We should--after a teacupful of baking powder.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE BELGIAN "MENACE."

KAISER. "IF I GRANT YOU MY GRACIOUS PARDON, WILL YOU PROMISE NOT TO TERRORISE ME AGAIN?"

{"Belgium would be required to give a guarantee that any such menace as that which threatened Germany in 1914 would in future be excluded."--_German Foreign Secretary to Papal Nuncio at Munich_.}]

* * * * *

RAID JOTTINGS.

A good deal of dissatisfaction is expressed with the state of the cellars to which people have been invited during the raids. "Surely," writes one of our correspondents, "it is a scandal that, at this time in the world's history, some cellars should be totally destitute of wine. That there should be no coal in the coal-cellars is understandable enough; but to ask the timid public into empty wine cellars is a travesty of hospitality."

* * * * *

Every effort will be made when the House reassembles to provide separate cellars for the SPEAKER and Mr. PEMBERTON BILLING.

* * * * *

Mr. JIMMY WILDE, the Welsh boxer, it has been widely announced, had a marvellous escape from an air-bomb. The little champion (for once not in a position to hit back) was standing in the door of his hotel when the projectile dropped, and blew him along the passage, but inflicted no injuries. The world will therefore hear from Mr. WILDE again, whose future antagonists should view with a shudder this inability of the Gothas to knock him out.

* * * * *

Mr. WILDE is, however, not alone in his good fortune. From all the bombarded parts, and from some others, come news of remarkable pieces of good luck, due almost or wholly to the fact that the bombs fell on spots where our correspondents were not standing, although they might easily have been there had they not been elsewhere. The similarity of their experience is indeed most striking.

* * * * *

Mr. HAROLD BEGBIE, for example, who disapproves of soldiers laughing, happened to be in the country on the night of the 24th. Had he been in town he might, in a melancholy reverie caused by the incorrigible light-heartedness of his fellow-countrymen, have wandered bang into the danger zone. No one can be too thankful that he did not.

* * * * *

Sir HENRY WOOD'S project to play TCHAIKOVSKY'S "1812" in such perfect time that the audience will have the pleasure of hearing our anti-aircraft men supply the big-gun effects, although laudable, is, it is feared, doomed to failure.

* * * * *

There was no air raid over London on Wednesday the 26th. The sudden noise (which happily produced no panic) in His Majesty's Theatre was merely Miss LILY BRAYTON dropping the clothes she was not wearing.

* * * * *

A CONSTANT RAIDER writes:--"It is understood that the German airmen's motto--borrowed, without acknowledgment, from the dental profession--is "We spare no panes."

* * * * *

In view of recent events Miss TENNYSON JESSE is considering whether her new novel, Secret Bread, should be renamed Air-raided Bread.

* * * * *

Mr. CHARLES COCHRAN is very anxious that it should be known that not a single bomb hit him. Had any of them done so, the consequences might have been very serious. This happy immunity being his, he wishes it also to be known that his various and meritorious theatres are doing even more astonishing business than before.

* * * * *

Mr. COCHRAN, however, together with other theatrical managers, has a dangerous rival. The raids are threatening to ruin the matinees now so prevalent by setting up counter attractions. The thousands of people (not only errand-boys) who now stand all day to watch the workmen mend a hole in the roadway caused by a bomb would otherwise, but for this engrossing and never tedious spectacle, be in this theatre or that.

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Mr. HALL CAINE telegraphs from the Isle of Man that no bombs having

fallen there he remains intact.

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[Illustration: "GOOD NEWS, LADS; WE'VE GOT A CHANGE FER TEA TO-NIGHT."
"WHAT IS IT?" "ROUND BISCUITS INSTEAD O' SQUARE ONES."]

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THE IDEAL LODGER.

"Wanted, two Single Rooms, in private or boarding house; special
arrangements for constant absence."--_Australian Paper_.

* * * * *

LETTERS OF A GENERAL TO HIS SON

(_ON OBTAINING A JUNIOR STAFF APPOINTMENT_).

MY DEAR BOY,--We both congratulate you heartily on your appointment.
Acting on your suggestion, I have hinted to your mother that her
anxieties for your safety may be considerably lessened in consequence.
You will, of course, continue to address letters likely to cause her
any apprehension to my club. On entering this new phase of your career
you will not take it amiss if I offer you a few words of practical
advice:--

1. Do not neglect your advantages. Always visit the line with a double
mission, one for the right of the line and one for the left--and see
which they are shelling.
2. If they are strafing all along the line, inspect Transport.
3. Cultivate the detached manner when dealing with all but the very
senior. This will give you what is called distinction. Charm will come
later.
4. What you don't know, guess. If wrong, guess again.
5. Always put off on to others what you cannot do yourself.
6. What little you do, do well--and see that it gets talked about.
Medals are going round, and you may as well have them as anybody else.
7. Belong to a good Mess and invite people who are inclined to
criticise.
8. When rung up on a subject of which you know nothing, learn
to conduct the conversation so that you abstract the necessary
enlightenment from the questioner himself (while appearing to be
perfectly conversant with what he is talking about), and, if possible,
get him to suggest the answer to his own conundrum. In other words,
bluff as in poker (which I trust you don't play).

These are just a few little hints that have occurred to me. Your own
good sense will guide you as to the rest. Everybody at home is taking
a tremendous interest in the War, I'm glad to say. Hardly a day passes
but I am asked at least a dozen times when it is going to be over.

Your affectionate Father, etc., etc.

* * * * *

From an order recently issued at the Front:

"Great care must always be exercised in tethering horses to trees, as they are apt to bark, and thereby destroy the trees."

Wow, wow!

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE PERFECT LIFE.

"YES, GAFFER. ME AN' MY OLE WOMAN 'ERE 'AVE LIVED TOGETHER THESE FORTY YEAR, AN' NEVER 'AD A QUARREL--FORTY YEAR, MIND YER, AN' NEVER BIN BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE!"]

* * * * *

SIGNS OF INNS.

The Herald lives in cloister grey;
He lives by clerkly rules;
He dreams in coats and colours gay,
In _argent_, _or_ and _gules_;
He blazons knightly shield and banner
In dim monastic hall,
And in a grave and reverend manner
He earns his bread withal.

Were I a herald fair and fit
So featly for to limn
As though I'd learnt the lore of it
Among the seraphim,
I'd leave the schools to clerkly people
And walk, as dawn begins,
From steeple unto distant steeple,
And paint the signs of inns.

The Dragon, as I'd see him, is
A loving beast and long,
And oh, the _Goat and Compasses_,
'Twould fill my soul with song;
The Bell, _The Bull_, _The Rose and Rummer_,
Such themes should like me still
At Yule, or when the heart of Summer
Lies blue on vale and hill.

Let others' blazonry find place
Supported, scrolled with gold,
A glowing dignity and grace
On honoured walls and old;
And let it likewise be attended
In stately circumstance
With mottos writ o' Latin splendid
Or courtly words of France;

But I would paint _The Golden Tun_
And others to my mind,
And mellow them in rain and sun,
And hang them on the wind;
And I would say, "My handcraft creaking
On this autumnal gale
Unto all wayfarers is speaking
In praise of rest and ale."

Then bless the man who puts a sign
Above his wide door's beam,
And bless the hop-root, fruit and vine,
For still I dream my dream,
Where, as the flushing East turns pinker
And tardy day begins,
I take the road like any tinker
And paint the signs of inns.

* * * * *

"INSTANT DEMAND FOR WARNINGS.

"MAYORS OF LONDON MOVING."

Evening News.

They ought to set a better example.

* * * * *

"Certain people seem to have misread the statement last week that flour would be reduced 1s. 11/2d. that flour would be reduced to 1s. 11/2d. but that that that flour would be reduced to 1s. 111/2d. but that amount or somewhere about it would be taken off the former price."--_Rossendale Free Press_.

There ought to be no misunderstanding after this.

* * * * *

"At such close quarters were attackers and attacked that to have used grenades would manifestly have been equally dangerous to both. So, after a brief pause to collect the means, our men began to pelt the Huns with bottles filled with water. Apparently the enemy thought this was some new form of 'frightfulness,' for they speedily threw down their arms and tossed up their hands."--_Daily Telegraph_.

Our contemporary, while rightly applauding the resourcefulness of our bombers, might have given the Germans credit for their remarkable feat of acrobacy.

* * * * *

FOR SERVICES RENDERED.

If ever, in a railing mood, I have unjustly aspersed the Army; if, by reason of deferred pay, over-diluted stew, or leave adjourned, I

have accused the Powers That Be of a step-motherly indifference to my welfare, I hereby withdraw unreservedly all such aspersions and accusations. For since my discharge tokens of kindly interest and affection have reached me in such rapid succession that I am kept wondering what the next will be. With a quarter of a million men in his care (as I suppose, since my number was 256801), my fatherly Record Officer has yet time for frequent correspondence with "crocks" like me. He registers all his letters; he makes his instructions so plain that a very suckling might understand them; he takes every precaution lest, in the press of business, I should be overlooked.

I had been at home about a week when his first communication arrived--an unexpected windfall purporting to represent the balance of my pay and allowances. The method of computation would probably have transcended my intelligence if it had been indicated; but there was no attempt at explanation, nor did I desire it. I stamped and signed the receipt form according to unmistakable directions, and returned it to Headquarters. A few days later certain arrears of Separation Allowance came to hand--arrears whose existence our own unaided sagacity would never have revealed. Guided by an illustrative diagram we signed the receipt in due form and returned it. Before we had ceased congratulating ourselves on these accessions, yet another instalment of pay was delivered, with form of receipt as in the previous case. We were almost convinced that the country cottage and the leisured ease of our dreams were within our grasp, but the well ran dry at that point. Some of my balance may yet lurk in the coffers of the Paymaster, but I dare not throw off the yoke of my bondage on the strength of a bare possibility.

After a brief interval, Records returned to the charge with a bulky envelope containing matter of great interest. One of the enclosures certified that, for the term of three months, I was transferred to Class W.P., Army Reserve. I made various conjectures as to the meaning of "W," and so did Cinderella. On the whole we favoured "Warrior," but perhaps we were wrong. At all events, the interpretation of "P" was clearly set forth by another document, which explained that I was entitled to a pension of eight shillings and threepence per week so long as I remained among the happy W.P.'s. There was also an identity certificate, whereon some clergyman, magistrate or policeman must attest that I was alive when I brought it to him, and a form of receipt for all the papers in the batch. I signed it according to instructions and returned it to Headquarters.

The identity certificate went back to a specified address, where it set in motion machinery by which my pension paper was presently delivered to me--accompanied by a form of receipt. This paper was covered with mystic circles, whose meaning I discovered when I presented myself at the post-office. They were apparently intended to appease the presiding divinity by gratifying her passion for stamping things. She hit my paper accurately in four of its rings, and then, with a pleased smile, handed me thirty-three shillings.

Meanwhile Records had stirred up a benevolent neighbour to call upon me. He belonged to an organisation for assisting discharged soldiers; he was Opportunity in person for anyone who might need him; but, as Cinderella explained, I was at that moment engaged upon work of national importance and could not claim his help. Nevertheless she thanked the gentleman and placed the incident to the credit of the Powers That Be.

No acknowledgment was required for this visit; but a week later my war services' badge was delivered per registered post, and I confessed the fact both on the usual green slip and on the form of receipt which was enclosed. Henceforth I was able to appear in public with an outward and visible sign of the ferocity which underlies my demeanour, and my most lurid tales had a substantial witness.

Two months went by, during which the O. i/c Records made no further additions to our postbag. There are mornings when your friends appear to have forgotten you, when a Levitical postman bangs your neighbour's gate mockingly and forthwith crosses the street. On such mornings our thoughts may have turned to Records with a certain yearning; but mainly we felt his care like the air about us, and had no need that it should materialise in idle correspondence.

At last my term of probation came to an end. In response to a note from Records (with form for receipt) I returned my Transfer Certificate and received in its place my final Discharge Papers--with a form for receipt. At the same time I heard that the Commissioners were in earnest consultation as to the continuance of my pension.

Thus goodness and loving-kindness have followed me ever since I handed in the uniform. To this day I am the subject of anxious consideration. Not a week ago the early post brought me my character. Imagine the incessant parental watchfulness of an authority which can testify concerning one two hundred and fifty thousandth of its charge that he is "a good soldier, willing and industrious, honest, sober, trustworthy and well-conducted." Think of the kindly interest which prompted the O. i/c Records to insert a form of receipt--"to guard against impersonation." My character might have got into base hands; some unworthy person might have gone about professing to possess that willingness, that industry, that sobriety, that trustworthiness and that elegance of conduct which are mine alone; but the form of receipt would baffle him. I cannot explain how, but Records knows.

What is yet in store for me the future bides; but this I know: while England endures and Records continues to record, I shall not walk alone.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Lady farm-help, being shown her new duties, notices fowls having dust-bath._ "DEAR ME! I EXPECT THEY'LL WANT WASHING EVERY NIGHT BEFORE I PUT THEM TO ROOST. I'D NO IDEA FOWLS WERE SUCH DIRTY THINGS."]

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Aunty (wishing to be sympathetic)._ "I'M GLAD TO HEAR YOU'VE GOT YOUR SEA-LEGS, JACK, AND I HOPE YOUR FRIEND IS GETTING ON EQUALLY WELL AND HAS GOT HIS TRENCH-FEET."]

* * * * *

PURE ENGLISH.

[A writer in _The Daily Express_ has been discussing the questions where and by whom the purest English is spoken

and written, and pronounces strongly in favour of East Anglia, FITZGERALD, BORROW and Mr. CONRAD.]

Once more 'tis discussed
What guides we should trust
If we wish to write prose to perfection;
Is it BORROW or "FITZ,"
The Times or _Tit Bits_?
And how should we make our selection?

Once on NEWMAN and FROUDE
We were bidden to brood
If we aimed at distinction and purity;
And, when we escaped
From their influence, aped
GEORGE MEREDITH'S vivid obscurity.

The remarkable style
Of old THOMAS CARLYLE
Found many a lover and hater;
And precious young men
Who made play with the pen
Were devoted disciples of PATER.

But these idols we've burned
And have latterly learned
That "distinction"'s an utter delusion;
For if you would aim
At a popular fame
You must cultivate "vim" or effusion.

JOSEPH CONRAD (a Pole)
Some place on the whole
At the top of the tree for his diction;
But his style, I opine,
Is a little too fine
For the average reader of fiction.

If you can't be a WELLS,
Or aspire to Miss DELL'S
Impassioned and fervid variety,
You still may attain
To CHARLES GARVICE'S strain
And leaven Romance with propriety.

For democracy shies
At the artist who tries
To express himself subtly or darkly;
And the man in the street
In a fair plebiscite
Would probably crown Mrs. BARCLAY.

* * * * *

Extract from a sermon:--

"We meet here to-day under circumstances which are not ordinary ... We seem to hear 'the sound of a gong in the tops of the mulberry trees.'"--_The Record_.

This must be some air-raid warning by the rural police.

* * * * *

"On the roads near by 'a Verdun' signposts have been replaced by new ones reading 'A Glorieux Verdun.' The name of France herself might well be altered to 'Glorieux France.'"--_Canadian Paper_.

Vive le France!

* * * * *

From a report of the British Cotton-growing Association:--

"The negotiations with the Government for the development of the irrigation scheme for the Gezira plain are still under consideration."--_The Field_.

We trust we shall hear no more of this vexatious project.

* * * * *

A lodging-house keeper at Whitby
Saw a couple of Zeppelins flit by;
Though she felt a sharp sting,
It's a curious thing
That she never knew which she was hit by.

* * * * *

"War conditions have given occasion in Germany for the study of an oedema disease (swelling) unknown in peace times. Among the civil population it has been generally located in the feet and legs, and in more than one-half of the cases studied some degree of facial swelling was present."--_Daily Paper_.

This last symptom is especially noticeable in the case of the KAISER.

* * * * *

"Prior to the meeting [of the Irish Convention] in Cork the members of the secretariat attended in Sir Horace Plunkett's private room, and presented him with a solid ivory chairman's mantle."--_Dublin Evening Mail_.

But we are glad to state that the proceedings were quite orderly, and that the Chairman did not need this protective garment.

* * * * *

GOING BACK.

"In these days," I began, but Francesca interrupted me.

"When anyone starts like that," she said, "I know he's going to make the War an excuse for doing something rather more paltry than usual."

"Paltry' is not," I said, "a very nice word."

"I'll take the phrase back and substitute 'rather less noble and generous.'"

"Yes, I like that better. I'll pass it in that form as your comment on what you haven't yet allowed me to say."

"Quick," she said; "what was it? Don't leave me in suspense."

"In these days," I said, "one mustn't spend too much on railway companies."

"True," she said. "I'm with you there in these or any other days."

"And therefore," I continued, "it will be quite enough if one of us accompanies Frederick, our lively ten-year-old, to begin his second term at school. There is no necessity whatever for both of us to go with him."

"Hear, hear!" said Francesca; "your idea is better than I thought. I will go with Frederick and you can stay at home and look after the girls."

"No," I said firmly, "I will take Frederick, and you must remain behind and keep an eye on Muriel, Nina and Alice."

"No," she said.

"Yes," I said; "my eye's not good enough for the job; it hasn't been trained for it. I should be sure to mislay one of the girls, and then you'd never forgive yourself for having put upon me a burden greater than I could bear. Besides," I added, "goings back to school are in the man's department, with football, cricket, boxing and things of that kind."

"And what," she said scornfully, "are you graciously pleased to leave in my department?"

"Oh, I thought you knew. I leave to you table-manners, tidiness (that's a tough one), hand-washing (that's a tougher), reading aloud from Kipling and tucking him up in bed."

"Quite a good list, if by no means a complete one; but in these days one mustn't be too critical. Anyhow it proves that I must take the boy back to school."

"It proves just the contrary."

"No," she said, "it proves what ought to be there by leaving it out."

"That," I said, "is a record even for you, Francesca."

"Well, it's logical anyway. How, for instance, could you talk to the Matron? You'd be utterly lost before you'd been at it for half a minute."

"Don't you worry about that," I said. "I have accomplishments of which you don't seem to be aware, and one of them is talking to Matrons at

preparatory schools."

"Anyhow, you're not going to have a chance of showing it off this time, _because I am going to take the boy back to school_. That's final."

It was, and in due time Francesca took the boy back. Her account of the farewell moments was not without a certain amount of pathos, several other mothers and their boys being involved in the valedictory scene. Four or five days afterwards, however, we received the following letter, which put to flight any idea that Frederick might be pining:--

"I am very happy this term, and I am getting on fairly well in my work. I like football much better than cricket. I have three or four times just not got a goal, once it was when I kicked into goal the goalkeeper (3 st. 4 lb.!) rushed out and kicked it away, and once when we were playing Blues and Reds, and I was on the Blue side, and I managed by good luck to get through a crowd of shouting Reds and followed it up amidst shouts from the Blues and shot it to the Red goal; but the goalkeeper (a different one) came out and hit it away, at which I twisted my knee and collapsed (not with pain, because it wasn't anything, but with anger and _desparation!_) Am I to learn boxing this term? I am sorry to hear the hens are not behaving well."

I should like to have seen the bold goalkeeper of 3 st. 4 lb. It is a proud weight.

R. C. L.

* * * * *

YESTERDAY IN OXFORD STREET.

Yesterday in Oxford Street, oh, what d'you think, my dears?
I had the most exciting time I've had for years and years;
The buildings looked so straight and tall, the sky was blue between,
And, riding on a motor-bus, I saw the fairy queen!

Sitting there upon the rail and bobbing up and down,
The sun was shining on her wings and on her golden crown;
And looking at the shops she was, the pretty silks and lace--
She seemed to think that Oxford Street was quite a lovely place.

And once she turned and looked at me and waved her little hand,
But I could only glare and stare, oh, would she understand?
I simply couldn't speak at all, I simply couldn't stir,
And all the rest of Oxford Street was just a shining blur.

Then suddenly she shook her wings--a bird had fluttered by--
And down into the street she looked and up into the sky,
And perching on the railing on a tiny fairy toe
She flashed away so quickly that I hardly saw her go.

I never saw her any more, although I looked all day;
Perhaps she only came to peep and never meant to stay;
But oh, my dears, just think of it, just think what luck for me
That she should come to Oxford Street and I be there to see!

R. F.

* * * * *

LIGHT ON THE SITUATION.

"Dr. Michaelis is the trusted no-hold-out until their plans of annexation have been carried out, and they always receive a gracious telegram in reply. So he who cares to hear knows what the hour is striking."--_Egyptian Mail_.

* * * * *

JOURNALISTIC HUMILITY.

"Two years ago The Daily Mail begged our sluggish authorities to study the question of daylight air-raids as well as night attacks. We pointed out their risk; we asked that the best means of meeting them should be considered and the best method of warning the public investigated. The result was that nothing was done."--_Daily Mail_.

* * * * *

"Of old was it written that they who taketh up the sword shall perish by the sword, and the written word remaineth."--_The Daily Mirror_.

But it hath been a little damaged in the interval.

* * * * *

"It may be estimated the Germans opposing our troops represented an average concentration of more than four men to every yard of front."--_Liverpool Echo_.

Never could it have been done with four pre-war Germans!

* * * * *

"Up to July 26 1,559 lists had been issued officially of German casualties. Each list contained 19,802 pages of three columns per page, and each column contained between 80 and 90 names of dead, wounded, and missing officers and men--a total of nearly 6,000,000."--_Daily Sketch_.

We trust our spirited contemporary has not joined the Hide-the-Truth Press, for we make the sum approximately 7,872,186,090.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Old Gentleman (to father of conscientious objector)._] "BUT SUPPOSING A GERMAN WAS GOING FOR YOUR SON WITH A BAYONET--WOULDN'T HE GO FOR THE GERMAN?"

Father of C.O. "AY! I DOUBT HE'D SAY SUMMAT. 'E'S GOT A SHARP TONGUE WHEN 'E'S VEXED."]

* * * * *

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

(_BY MR. PUNCH'S STAFF OF LEARNED CLERKS_.)

I think I prefer Mr. WELLS'S recent essay in the Newest Theology to this too concrete illustration of _The Soul of a Bishop_ (CASSELL). It's not that I object to the irreverence of stripping a poor tired bishop of cassock and gaiters, pursuing him to a sleepless bed and cinematographing all his physical twistings and turnings, his moral misgivings, his torturing doubts. I owe too much to Mr. WELLS' irreverences to mind that sort of thing; and I must say that, for a man who can't have had very much to do with the episcopacy in his busy life, he does manage to give a confoundedly plausible atmosphere to the whole setting. There are two letters from an older bishop to _Dr. Scrope_, the one, yieldingly tolerant, to dissuade him from resignation, the other, written after the accomplished fact, with touches of exquisitely restrained yet palpable malice, which strike me as masterly projections. Mr. WELLS also contrives a wonderful impressiveness in certain passages of the bishop's three visions. But I can't, even after careful re-reading, see the point of making the bishop's enlightenment depend upon a mysterious drug. This has an effect of impishness. There is nothing in _Dr. Scrope's_ development that might not have taken place without this fantastic assistance.... I suppose the general suggestion of this rather wayward and hasty but conspicuously sincere book is, that if only an occasional bishop would secede it would make it easier for the plain man to listen to the rest. And there may be something in this.

To those who are in love with Mr. W.J. LOCKE'S incurable romanticism or who have a taste for heroines that "stiffen in a sudden stroke of passion looking for the instant electrically beautiful," let me commend _The Red Planet_ (LANE). As a matter of fact _Betty_, the heroine, is quite a dear, and the narrator, _Major Meredyth_, a maimed hero of the Boer War, who looks at this one from the tragic angle of an invalid chair, is, apart from a habit of petulant and not very profound grouching at Governments in _The Daily Rail_ manner, a sport who thoroughly deserves the reward of poor widowed _Betty's_ hand on the last page but one. Perhaps he does not show a very ready understanding of the phenomenon of physical cowardice in the case of a brother-officer, though later he makes amends. But I take it that it was Mr. LOCKE'S idea to present a very ordinary decent sort with the common man's prejudices and frank distrust of subtleties. A sinister mystery of love, death and blackmail runs, a turbid undercurrent, through the story. The publisher's pathetic apology for the drab grey paper on which, in the interests of War Economy, the book is printed, makes one wonder how the other publishers who still issue books in black and white manage to live.

* * * * *

Of the literary reputations that the War has, so to speak, dug in, I suppose none to be more firmly consolidated than that of Mr. PATRICK MACGILL. The newest of his several battle-books is _The Brown Brethren_ (JENKINS), a title derived from the campaigning colour that has amended a popular quotation till it should now read "the thin brown line of heroes." I can hardly tell you anything about Mr. MACGILL'S new book that you have not probably read or said for yourself of the previous volumes. For my own part, if the War is to

be written about at all (a question concerning which I preserve an open mind), I say let it be, as here, the real thing, and the hotter and stronger the better. There is rough humour in these sketches of soldier types, and just enough story to thread them together; but it is the fighting that counts. Certain chapters, for example that about Benner's struggle with the Hun sniper, seem to leave one bruised and breathless as from personal conflict. Mr. MACGILL writes about war as he knows it, horribly, in a way that carries conviction like a charge of bayonets, and with an entire disregard of the sensibilities of the stay-at-home reader. For all which reasons The Brown Brethren and their French friends are assured of the success that they certainly deserve. Here's wishing them the best of it!

* * * * *

In The Sentence of the Court (WARD, LOCK) Mr. FRED M. WHITE contrives effectively to entangle our interest in one of those webs of facile intrigue from which the reader escapes only at the last line of the last page, muttering at he lays the volume down and observes with concern that it is 2.30 A.M., "What rot!" The title of the story is misleading. There is no Court, and nobody is sentenced, though the eminent specialist of Harley Street who essays the role of villain richly deserves to be. However, as he is left a bankrupt, discredited in his practice and detached from the heroine whom he had sworn to appropriate, it would perhaps be straining a point to cavil at his remaining at large. The idea upon which the story is based, and which enables the author to clothe his characters and their actions with bewildering mystery, is essentially good and, I believe, new, though far be it from me to do either Mr. WHITE or the reader the disservice of saying what it is. Suffice that we are introduced to some quite charming people, as well as two extremely unpleasant ones, and if the web of mystery is held together in places by a somewhat generous share of obtuseness on the part of the persons concerned it is not for us to complain, since we become aware of the defect only after the affair is over.

* * * * *

Apart from the greater complaint that I do not like her subject, which probably is entirely my own fault, I have nothing but praise for Mrs. STANLEY WRENCH'S latest volume, Beat (DUCKWORTH), except as regards her amazing fondness for drooping the corners of her characters' mouths, generally either "wistfully" or "sullenly." It only made one annoyed when Beatrix's unpleasant sisters developed the trick, but when poor little Beat herself was affected that way, in spite of the magnificent courage with which she faced the burden of deputy-motherhood, it made one miserable as well. The task she had undertaken was a prodigious one, for the sisters she had to rear were, you must understand, vexed with sex instincts of the type of the modern novel, and so in a large measure she failed, even though she sacrificed strength, happiness and even her own love-story in the effort to keep them straight. The tale is set out with every circumstance of sordid misery, in which the spiritual beauty of the heroine is meant to shine, and undeniably does shine with real strength and purity. The successive deaths of the mother and step-mother, the shabby London lodgings, the fall of Veronica, the selfishness of Beat's boy-friend, and the loathsome trade of her lover--these, and more horrors and lapses beside, are all taxed for the general effect in so able and vivid a fashion that the authoress

succeeds to admiration in making her readers nearly as uncomfortable as her characters, long before the climax is reached. The end comes rather less wretchedly than could have been expected, but even so surely this is genius partly run to seed. The greatest tragedies are not written in these minor keys. _Beat_, woman and heroine, is so admirable that one fain would know her apart from all this unredeemed welter of sex and selfishness.

* * * * *

I confess I should have thought that the fictional possibilities of being as like as two peas to Royalty were fairly exhausted. But apparently Mr. EDGAR JEPSON does not share this view; and it is only fair to admit that in _The Professional Prince_ (HUTCHINSON) he has contrived to give a novel twist to the already well laboured theme. _Prince Richard_ (precise nationality unstated) was so bored with the common round of his exalted duties that, hearing of a convenient double, he engages him, at four hundred a year and pickings, to represent him at dull functions, and incidentally to pay the requisite attentions to the young woman, reported by photograph as depressingly plain, whom political considerations have marked as the _Prince's fiancée_. When later one of the characters points out to His Highness that this conduct showed some lapse from the finer ideals of taste, I am bound to say that I could find no words of contradiction. However the originality arrives when _John Stuart_, the deputy, instead of falling in love with the bride-elect in Ruritanian fashion, develops a marked liking for the prosaic side of his job, and insists upon lecturing his supposed relations upon the political crisis of the moment. Capital fun this. When the _fiancée_ in her turn proved wholly different from the photograph I permitted myself to hope that we were in for a double masquerade--but this was to expect too much. Still, Mr. JEPSON has handled his wildly-preposterous plot with great verve; and even if the central situation is one that has been often encountered before, this only proves again that HOPE springs eternal.... But I wish he had avoided the War.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Manager of Automatic Dreadnought Pianofortissimo Company (enthusiastically to Literary Gentleman who has written a moving appeal to the public in favour of the Company's goods)._ "MY DEAR SIR, THIS IS MAGNIFICENT. IT ALMOST MAKES ME DECIDE TO BUY ONE OF THE THINGS FOR MYSELF."]

* * * * *

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