

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 156, March 12, 1919

Various

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, by Various, Edited by Owen Seamen

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PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

VOL. 156.

MARCH 12, 1919.

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CHARIVARIA.

The spread of influenza is said to be greatly assisted by "germ-carriers." We can't think why germs should be carried. Let 'em walk.

According to The Sunday Express a young American named Frisco states that he invented the Jazz. There was also a murder confession in the Press last week.

"Whitehall," says a Society organ, "has succumbed to the Jazz, the Fox-trot and the Bunny-hug." It still shows a decided preference, however, for the Barnacle-cling.

A man charged at the Guildhall with being drunk said he was suffering from an attack of influenza and had taken some whisky. Yes, but where from?

We understand that the heading, "Whisky for Influenza," which appeared in a daily paper the other day, misled a great number of sufferers, who at once wrote to say that they were prepared to make the exchange.

It is good to know that a perfectly noiseless motor car has been produced. Even that nasty grating sound experienced by pedestrians when being run over by a car is said to have been eliminated.

Shrove Tuesday passed almost unheeded. Even the pancake thrown to the boys at Westminster School in the presence of the KING and QUEEN appeared to fall flat.

We are glad to learn that the little Kensington boy who was tossed by a huge pancake on Shrove Tuesday is stated to be going on nicely.

Five hundred and twenty-seven pounds of American bacon have been declared unfit for food by the Marylebone magistrate. Why this invidious distinction?

"A man," says Mr. Justice KUNKEL of Pennsylvania, "has full rights in his own home against everyone but his wife." It is surmised that his Honour never kept a cook.

We are informed that the dispute between the Ministry of Labour and

the Irish Clerical Workers' Union has been settled by the latter name being changed to the "Irish Clerical Employees' Union."

Mr. LLOYD GEORGE is said to favour the creation of a new Order for deserving Welshmen. The revival of the Order of the Golden Fleece is suggested.

A writer in a ladies' journal refers to the present fashion of "satin-walnut hair." We have felt for some time that mahogany had had its day.

Charged at Hove with bigamy a soldier stated that he remembered nothing about his second marriage and pleaded that he was absent-minded. A very good plan is to tie a knot in your boot-lace every time you get married.

A sorry blow has been dealt at those who maintain we are not a commercial race. "You gave me prussic acid in mistake for quinine this morning," a man told a chemist the other day. "Is that so?" said the chemist; "then you owe me another twopence."

For the benefit of those about to emigrate we have pleasure in furnishing the exclusive information that very shortly there will be big openings in America for corkscrew-straighteners.

We are now able to state that the wedding of Princess PATRICIA and Commander RAMSAY passed off without a hymeneal ode from the POET LAUREATE.

We understand that a lady operator who was impudent to the District Supervisor on the telephone the other day would have been severely reprimanded but for her plea that she mistook him for a subscriber.

It is reported that the paper shortage is soon to be remedied. In these days of expensive boots this should be good news to people who travel to and from the City by Tube on foot.

We hear privately that one of our leading dailies has fixed April 14th as the date on which its office "correspondent" will first hear the note of the cuckoo in Epping Forest.

Several suspicious cases of sickness are reported among the aborigines of New South Wales. It is not yet known whether they are due to influenza or to the native custom of partaking heavily of snakepie on the eve of Lent.

Nottingham will hold its six hundred and fifty-eighth annual Goose Fair this year, and a local paper has made a distinct hit by stating that it is "the oldest gathering of its kind except the House of Commons."

President EBERT, according to the _Frankfort Gazette_, is to have a Chief Master of Ceremonies. One of his first duties, in which he will have the advice of prominent musicians, will be to fix an authorised style of eating _Sauerkraut_ which shall be impressive yet devoid of ostentation.

* * * * *

[Illustration: [Taxi-drivers who consent to pick up fares at a certain London restaurant at night have supper given to them by the management.]

First Taxi. "WHATEVER 'AVE YER GOT THEM TOGS ON FOR, ALBERT?"

Second ditto. "ALWAYS DRESS FOR SUPPER DOWN TOWN NOWADAYS, OLD BEAN.]"

* * * * *

"A woman's sphere was her own home, that she should earn her own living was inimical to domestic happiness; it was almost contra bonus morus, which is a very serious thing indeed."--_Scots Paper_.

It certainly would be for Smith mi. if he said it in class.

* * * * *

"The speaker of the evening was Dr. Charles ----, a full-blooded Sioux Indian, and the only full-blooded literary man among the North American Indians."--_American Paper_.

We could spare some of our full-blooded, literary men if there is a shortage in America.

* * * * *

MONUMENTS OF THE WAR.

Let those who fear lest Memory should mislay
Our triumphs gathered all across the map;
Lest other topics--like the weather, say,
Or jazzing--should supplant the recent scrap;
Or lest a future race whose careless lot
Lies in a League of Nations, lapped amid
Millennial balm, be unaware of what
(Largely for their sakes) we endured and did;--

Let such invite our architects to plan
Great monumental works in steel and stone,
Certain to catch the eye of any man
And make our victories generally known;
Let a new bridge at Charing Cross be built,
In Regent Street a deathless quadrant set,
And on them be inscribed in dazzling gilt:--

"IN CASE BY INADVERTENCE WE FORGET."

Or, eloquent in ruin unrestored,
Leave the Cloth Hall to be the pilgrim's quest,
Baring her ravaged beauty to record
The Culture of the Bosch when at his best;
At Albert, even where it bit the ground,
Low let the Image lie and tell its fate,
Poignant memento, like our own renowned
ALBERT Memorial (close to Prince's Gate).

For me, the tablets of my heart, I ween,
Sufficiently recall these fateful years;
I need no monument for keeping green
All that I suffered in the Volunteers;
Therefore I urge the Army Council, at
Its earliest leisure, please—next week would do—
To raze the hutments opposite my flat,
That still impinge on my riparian view.

O.S.

* * * * *

A PAIR OF MILITARY GLOVES.

It was in Italy, on my way home from Egypt to be demobilised, that I decided to buy a pair of warm gloves from Ordnance.

After being directed by helpful other ranks to the A.S.C. Depot, the Camp Commandant's Office and the Y.M.C.A., I found myself, at the end of a morning's strenuous walking, confronted by notices on a closed door stating that this was the Officers' Payment Issue Department; that this was the Officers' Entrance to the Officers' Payment Issue Department; that smoking was strictly prohibited; and that the office would re-open at 14.00.

I went away to lunch.

At 14.01 I knocked out my pipe conscientiously and entered. From 14.01 to 14.50 I watched a Captain of the R.A.F. smoking cigarettes and choosing a pair of socks, and studied notices to the effect that this was the Officers' Payment Issue Department; that only Officers were permitted to enter the Officers' Payment Issue Department; that smoking was strictly prohibited; and that the office would close at 16.00.

At last I heard the B.A.F. man explain that, by James, he had an appointment at three, and would return, old bean—er, Corporal—in the morning to see about those dashed socks. The Corporal behind the counter blew away a pile of cigarette ash and regarded me distrustfully.

"Only one pair of gloves left, Sir," he said. "Gloves, woollen, knitted, pairs one, one-and-tenpence."

"Thank you very much," I said. "They'll do nicely. I'll take them now."

But of course I didn't. At 15.00 was in another building, watching another Corporal make out an indent in quadruplicate for gloves, woollen, knitted, officers, for the use of, pairs one. At 15.05 I was in another building, getting the indent stamped and countersigned. At 15.12 I was in another building, exchanging it for a buff form in duplicate. At 15.20 I re-entered the Issue Department and went through

the motions of taking up the gloves.

"Excuse me, Sir," said the Corporal, skilfully sliding them away; "you must first produce your Field Advance Book as a proof of identity."

"I'm afraid I haven't a proper Field Advance Book," I explained. "You see, in Egypt, where I come from--that is, I was attached, you know, to the--well, in short, I haven't a proper Field Advance Book, as I said before. But I have here an A.B. 64 issued in lieu thereof--they do that in Egypt, you know--and I have my identity discs, my demobilisation papers, my cheque-book--oh, and heaps of other things which would prove to you that I am really me. Besides, my name is sewn inside the back of my tunic. And my shirt," I added hopefully.

"If you haven't a Field Advance Book, Sir," said the Corporal coldly, "your only course is to obtain a certificate of identity from the Camp Commandant."

"But, look here, Corporal," I protested, "it would take me a quarter-of-an-hour to get to the Commandant's office and another quarter to get back. I'm sure I couldn't get a certificate of identity under an hour and a-half. It is now twenty-five past three. You close at four. To-morrow morning at five ac emma I entrain for Cherbourg.... You see how impossible it all is, Corporal."

"Sorry, Sir," said the Corporal. "I'm not allowed to issue the gloves without your Field Advance Book or a certificate of identity."

"But what am I to do?" I asked weakly. "Think, Corporal, how cold it will be across Italy and France without gloves. I've been in the East for over four years, and I might get pneumonia and die, you know."

"I should try the Camp Commandant, Sir," he said. "It may not take so long as you think."

* * * * *

At 15.41 I was outside the Camp Commandant's office with my A.B.64, identity discs, demobilisation papers and cheque-book ready to hand, and my tunic loosened at the neck.

At 15.42 I entered the office with some diffidence.

At 15.43 I was outside again, dazed and a little frightened, with a certificate of identity in my hand. It was the fastest piece of work I have ever known in the Army. And I might have been Mr. GEORGE ROBEY in disguise for all they knew in the office--or cared.

* * * * *

"Sorry, Sir," said the Corporal in the Officers' Payment Issue Department at 15.59, "the gloves were sold to another officer while you were away."

ONE OF THE PUNCH BRIGADE.

* * * * *

ON HALF RATIONS.

"Two officers will be received as paying guests. Comfortable home. Treated as one of the family."--Daily Paper.

The italics emphasize our own feeling with regard to this niggardly arrangement.

* * * * *

"V.A.D.--Required for Shell-shock Hospital under B.R.C.S., Piano, Billiard Table and Gramophone. Will any hospital closing down and having same for sale, kindly communicate with Secretary."--_Times_.

We do not know what sort of work the V.A.D. is expected to do under the piano and billiard table, but we presume that her consent would be required, and that she would not be sold, so to speak, over her own head.

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[Illustration: THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

JOHN BULL. "I DON'T SAY I'M QUITE COMFORTABLE YET, BUT I CERTAINLY DO SEEM TO BE GETTING IT A LITTLE LESS IN THE NECK."]

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[Illustration: SCENE.--_AMATEUR THEATRICAL REHEARSAL_.

Author. "NOT SO MUCH 'GAGGING,' MY LAD. JUST SPEAK _MY_ LINES, AND THEN WAIT FOR THE LAUGH."

Tommy (on short leave). "WHAT! AND RISK C.B. FOR OVERSTAYING MY LEAVE?"]

* * * * *

ON THE RHINE.

I.

"Fee-Fi-Fo-Fum, I am a bold and infamous Hun, I am, I am."

We are obliged to repeat this continually to ourselves in order to present the stern and forbidding air which is supposed to mark our dealings with the inhabitants. For, look you, we have usurped the place of the Royal Jocks on the "right flank of the British Army," and are on outpost duty, with our right resting on the bank of the Rhine, while in front the notice-boards, "Limit of Cologne Bridgehead," stare at us.

No longer are we the pleasant, easy-going, pay-through-the-nose people that we were. No longer does our daily routine include the smile for Mademoiselle, the chipping of Madame, or the half-penny for the little ones. No, we steel ourselves steadily to the grim task entrusted to us, and struggle to offer a perfect picture of stolid indifference to anybody's welfare but our own. "Fee-fi-fo-fum."

What does Thomas think of it all? Well, to tell the truth, I haven't caught him thinking very much about it. Gloating seems foreign to his nature somehow, and I don't think he will ever make a really good Hun. He is rather like a child who for four years has been crying incessantly for the moon. Having got it, he says, "Well, I'm glad I've got it; now let's get on with something else," and takes not the slightest interest in the silly old moon he has acquired with so much trouble.

There are two things to which he cannot quite accustom himself: not being allowed to fraternize with the inhabitants and the realisation that his laboriously acquired knowledge of the French language is no

longer of any avail. He will never quite get over the former of these two disabilities, but he is coping courageously with the latter. For instance, in place of the "No bon" of yesterday, "Nix goot" now explains that "Your saucepan I borrowed has a hole in it; please, I didn't do it." For the rest, change of environment makes very little difference to him. Given a cooker, a water-cart and the necessary rations, a British oasis will appear and be prepared to flourish in any old desert you like.

No, I am wrong. There is another difficulty which as yet he has not been able entirely to overcome. I cannot describe the consternation which came over the Company when I informed them that there was no longer any need to scrounge; in fact, I forbade it. At first they thought it was just a Company Commander's humour and paid it the usual compliments of the parade; but when they found I was serious they were simply appalled. It was as if I had taken the very spice out of their existence. Not to be able to go out and "win" a handful of fuel for the evening's fug and for the brewing of those unwholesome messes in the tin canteen? Bolshevism itself could not have propounded a more revolutionary principle. Heartbroken some of the old soldiers came to me afterwards. "What are we to do, Sir?" they said. "We only go on guard four hours in sixteen; we must do something the rest of the time." Sternly I bade them think of scrounging as a thing of the past—a thing of glorious memory only to be spoken of round the fires at home. If they wanted anything in the meantime to add to their material comfort they were to come to me for it.

For let me tell you, all you demobilised wallahs who know only those countries where the necessities of life were matters of private enterprise—let me tell you that in this village, if I say that I require coal, coal is here, and with it the Buergermeister inquiring politely if my needs are satisfied. We must have beds? The spare beds of the village are forthcoming. If we want baths for the men, our Mr. Carfax, who speaks a language which the inhabitants pretend to understand, goes round to the householders and explains the necessity. Should there be any difficulty he explains further that it would be much better, don't they think, and much more convenient if the men visited the houses, rather than that baths should be carried to some central place? It is invariably found to be preferable for all concerned.

Bathing has now become a pleasure to all, except, perhaps, to Nijinsky, our Pole from Commercial Road, East. On being presented (for the first time, I gather) to a first-class bathroom with geyser complete, he evinced signs of great uneasiness. In fact he seemed to think that this was making a parade of a purely private matter. The Sergeant-Major, being called in, exhorted him to "get in and give the thing a trial," at which Nijinsky flung up his hands in characteristic fashion and said, "Vell, it's somethink fur nothink, anyhow," and they left him to it. The rest of the story is concerned with his turning off the water in the geyser and leaving the gas on, of a loud explosion and the figure of Nijinsky, fat and frightened, fleeing through the main street dressed in an Army towel. Subsequently I heard him expressing forcibly a fixed determination never, never to be persuaded against his will again.

Oh, yes, it is a wonderful thing to be a Hun. Every day we go about telling one another what Huns we are and how we love our hunnishness. And yet, you know, as a matter of fact, I don't believe all our efforts amount to anything really; they wouldn't deceive a child—and in fact they don't. For ever since we came here one can't help noticing that the little tiny natives have acquired an extraordinarily good imitation of Tommy's salute, and, though Subalterns and Sergeant-Majors may go about gnashing their teeth and wearing expressions of frightful ferocity, still the youngsters grin

fearlessly as they raise their tiny fingers. They know it isn't real.
They know a Hun when they see him all right; what child doesn't?

And I caught our Mr. Carfax picking one of them up from the gutter the
other day and soothing its tears with the baby-talk of all nations. I
told him he was fraternising abominably and was not being a true Hun.

"Well," he said, "you can't leave a child yelling in a puddle, can
you?"

And, damn it, you can't, so what's the use of trying to be hunnish?

L.

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[Illustration: _Restaurant Commissionaire (to departing client, who is
searching for a tip)_. "NOW THEN, SIR, HURRY UP; DON'T KEEP ME WAITING
HERE ALL NIGHT."]

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RAPID PROMOTION.

From a Parliamentary report:--

"Colonel Seely mentioned ... Major-General Seely said ... General
Seely, replying ..."--_Daily Chronicle_.

* * * * *

"The canonical proceedings for the beatification of Pope Pius IX.
and Christopher Columbus have been definitely abandoned. As the
result of a very close investigation, it was decided that these
two candidates lacked certain necessary qualifications; Pius IX.
had signed death sentences and Christopher Columbus was held
responsible for massacres."--_Sunday Paper_.

This news, we understand, has caused a painful impression at
Amerongen.

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[Illustration: _Cook (allowing herself to be engaged)_. "ONE MORE
QUESTION, M'LADY. CAN _YOU_ COOK?"

Her Ladyship. "REALLY, I DON'T THINK THAT NEED MATTER."

Cook. "OH--DON'T IT? I WANT TO KNOW WHO'S GOING TO BE THE REAL
MISTRESS."]

* * * * *

THE GREAT COLD-CURE DEBATE.

In view of the prevalence of colds and the varying counsels given to
their patients by our leading so-called healers, a mass meeting of
doctors and public men was recently convened, with the hope that some
useful results might follow.

None did.

The Chairman in his opening remarks said that colds were at once
the commonest complaints to which human beings were subject and the
least understood by the faculty. It was scandalous that so little

serious attention should be paid to them by physicians. A scientific investigator should be as proud of discovering a preventive for colds as a scheme of wireless telegraphy. But it was not so. Researchers were applauded for compounding new and more deadly explosives and poisonous gas, while the whole mystery of colds remained unplumbed. The situation was scandalous. (Loud sneezes.)

Letters were read, among others, from Lord NORTHCLIFFE, Mr. SNOWDEN and Sir JOHN SIMON, all saying that from recent experience they could affirm that an equable cold temperature was conducive to the avoidance of catarrh. In short, an excellent means of escaping cold was to be out in the cold.

A representative of the Board of Trade said that all that was necessary to avoid colds was to keep fit and not approach infection. Having offered this very practical advice the speaker gathered up his papers and left the room.

Sir Septicus Jermyn, the famous physician, urged that the best preventive for colds was to keep warm. One should wear plenty of thick clothing and especially cover the neck and throat. A respirator was an excellent thing. He even went so far as to recommend earflaps to his patients, with beneficial results. A night-cap was also a great help.

Sir Eufus Hardy, the famous physician, protested that colds were for the most part negligible. People took them much too seriously. The best treatment was to be Spartan—wear the lightest clothes, abjure mufflers, and, whenever you could find a draught, sit in it.

Mr. BERNARD SHAW said that all this cold-catching was nonsense. He personally had never had a cold in his life. And why? Because he lived healthily; he wore natural wool, retained his beard, ate no meat and drank no wine. Lunatics who wore fancy tweeds, shaved, devoured their fellow-creatures and imbibed poisonous acids were bound to catch cold. Resuming his Jaeger halo, Mr. SHAW then left.

Sir Bluffon Gay, the famous physician, stated that in his experience colds were necessary evils which often served useful ends in clearing the system. For that reason he was against any treatment that served to stop them. The "instantaneous cold cures" which were advertised so freely filled him with suspicion. Colds should be unfettered.

Mr. Le Hay Fevre, K.C., representing the Ancient Order of Haberdashers, said that he was in entire agreement with the last speaker. Colds should be allowed to take their course. Nothing was so bad as to check them.

Sir Romeo Path, the famous physician, asserted that colds were far more serious things than people thought. As a matter of fact there was no such thing as a cold pure and simple; colds were invariably manifestations of other and deeper trouble. His own specific was a long period of complete rest and careful but not meagre dieting, followed by change of air, if necessary travel to the South of France. (Loud coughs and cheers.)

Mr. Bolus, K.C., representing the Chemists and Druggists' Union, said that it was felt very strongly that the seriousness of colds should not be minimised, but that foreign travel was an error. No malady was so much helped by the timely and constant employment of remedies at home. He trusted that the remarks of the last speaker would speedily be contradicted by a competent authority.

Sir Consul Tait, the famous physician, held that alcohol was the greatest provocative of colds; aspirin was their greatest enemy.

Sir Tablloyd George, the famous physician, observed that a glass of hot whisky and lemon-juice on going to bed was a sovran remedy. Aspirin was to be avoided, but quinine had its uses.

Mr. ARNOLD BENNETT said that probably no one knew more about the way that other people should behave than he did. He had written twelve manuals on the subject and intended to write twenty-six more, by which time he would have covered the whole field of human endeavour. Any one who had read his book, The Plain Man and his Wife and their Plainer Children, would remember that one chapter was devoted to the cause, evasion and cure of colds. He would not at the moment say more than that the work was procurable at all bookshops. He should like to address the meeting at fuller length, but as he was suffering from a very stubborn cold he must hurry back to bed.

Mr. H.G. WELLS remarked that he always found that the best corrective for a cold was to write another novel of modern domestic life. He had even heard of the perusal of some of his novels as a substitute for coal.

Mr. BONAR LAW said that there was no prophylactic against colds so efficacious as fresh air and plenty of it. Since he had formed the habit of flying backwards and forwards from Paris he had been free from any trouble of that kind. He recommended a seat at the Peace Conference and constant aviation to all sufferers.

Sir Blandon Swaive, the famous physician, contended that there was no sense in the fresh-air theory. Rooms should be hermetically sealed.

Mr. SMILLIE said that he had given the matter the closest attention, and he had come to the conclusion that there was no preventive of a cold in the head so complete and drastic as decapitation.

The meeting was considering Mr. SMILLIE'S suggestion when our reporter, who had contracted a chill during Mr. BERNARD SHAW'S remarks, took his departure.

* * * * *

[Illustration: Officer (to N.C.O. in charge of Chinese labour party). "I SUPPOSE THESE CHINKS BLOW THEMSELVES UP SOMETIMES, DON'T THEY?"

Corporal. "OH, NOTHING TO SPEAK OF, SIR--NOT NEAR AS MUCH AS THEY USED TO."]

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JOURNALISTIC ENTERPRISE.

"NEWS BY TELEGRAPH AND TELEPHONE.

"To-day is Pancake Day."--Daily Mail, March 4.

* * * * *

"HIGH-CLASS FISH DURING THE LENTEN SEASON.

"All kinds arrive daily direct from the coast, and prices the maximum when possible."--Advt. in Provincial Paper.

To judge by our own fishmonger, they always are possible.

* * * * *

From the report of a prosecution for selling eggs above the controlled price:

"Mr. ----, for the defence, contended that the lay mind could assume that new-laid eggs laid by the vendor's fowls were not within the scope of the Order."--_Birmingham Daily Post_.

In a poultry case the opinion of the "lay mind" should have been conclusive, but the Bench decided otherwise.

* * * * *

"When is the State going to help mothers with large families? If the cost of living has increased 100 per cent., then for eight persons the increase is 800 per cent.

"How many mothers with eight in family have received an increase of 800 per cent. in their income since 1914?--W.W., London."--_Daily Sketch_.

"W.W., London," should not be allowed to squander his gifts on the daily Press. We want a statistician like this to tot up the German indemnity.

* * * * *

THE WATCH DOGS.

LXXX.

My Dear Charles,--You are a lawyer and you ought to know. Yet to myself, when I compare my profits with those of the Government in this deal, I seem a model of innocence.

Let me refresh your memory of the facts.

In the Spring of 1918 I was dispensing passports to deserving cases in the name of His Majesty's Government. In the neutral country where I was doing this there was a very wicked and a very plausible man, whom we will call Mr. Abrahams (he has had so many surnames at one time and another that a new one cannot do him any harm). Rate of exchange stood at the figure of twenty local francs to the pound sterling, and, as you would put it, other things were equal.

Mr. Abrahams was obsessed with a desire to see England, entirely for its own sake. England, also thinking entirely of itself, was obsessed with a desire not to see Mr. Abrahams. Mr. Abrahams came to my office, said nice things about me to my face and begged me to let him go. I said nice things to him, and told him I would if I could, but I couldn't. He took this to mean I could if I would, but I wouldn't. He offered me cash down; a cheque for five pounds sterling, or a note for a hundred francs; I could have it which way I liked. We should call it for appearance' sake a gift to His Majesty's Government for the better prosecution of the War.

I thanked him cordially on behalf of His Majesty's Government, but regretted that I was the victim of circumstances over which I had no control. Refusing to believe there could be any circumstances which could stand up against an officer of my power, position and force, he produced a note for a hundred francs and put it on my table. He then withdrew, meaning (I gathered) to return to the attack as soon as the money had sunk in. From this point on, Mr. Abrahams disappears from the story. It is not the first or only story, as the police will tell you, from which Mr. Abrahams has disappeared.

My report to His Majesty's Government did not omit a full mention of the matter of the five pounds or hundred francs offered. It begged for instructions as to the disposal of the booty which, it stated, lay in my "Suspense" basket. No instructions could be got, though frequent messages, saying, "May we now have an answer, please?" were sent. Weeks passed, and every morning I was tempted by the sight of that note for a hundred francs lying in the basket. My moral gradually declined. So did the rate of exchange. So did the barometer.

There came a day, the weather being such that any man who could sin would sin, when I had in my pocket a cheque made out for five pounds which I was about to cash for lack of ready francs, and when the rate of exchange had got as low as nineteen francs to the pound, which would mean (I rely entirely on the evidence of the bank man) ninety-five francs for my five pounds. Charles, I fell. Explaining to myself that Mr. Abrahams had clearly intimated that his gift to the Government was alternatively a cheque for five pounds or a note for a hundred francs, I put my cheque into the "Suspense" basket and pocketed the note, thus making five francs profit.

More weeks passed; no instructions came, and every day I was tempted by the sight of that cheque. One bright summer morning, when any man who had any goodness in him could not help being good, and when the rate of exchange had risen to twenty-one, I came to my office full of noble intentions and hundred franc notes of my own. I may mention in passing that it takes very little money to fill me up. I had just cashed a cheque of my own at the rate of a hundred-and-five francs to the five pounds, and I felt robust and self-confident and ready to do it again. There, on the top of my "Suspense" basket, lay just the very cheque for the purpose. Charles, I fell again. Explaining to myself that Mr. Abrahams had clearly intimated that his gift to the Government was alternatively a note for a hundred francs or a cheque for five pounds, I put a note for a hundred francs into the "Suspense" basket, and pocketed the cheque, thus making another five francs profit.

That, my Lord, is the case for the prosecution; but you may as well have the rest of the story. Instructions or no instructions, I thought it was now time to send the note for a hundred francs to the Government. The Government said it had no use for francs in England, sent back the note to me and told me to buy, locally, an English cheque, which I was to hold, pending further instructions. It took some time to arrive at this point, and meanwhile rate of exchange had had a serious relapse. The hundred franc note bought a cheque for five guineas. Not feeling strong enough to pend further instructions, I at once sent this home. More haste, less speed: I forgot to endorse it. After another period the cheque came back, with a memo. The memo said: (1) His Majesty's Government had no love or use for unendorsed cheques drawn in favour of other people. (2) His Majesty's Government requested me to endorse the cheque, cash it locally and put the proceeds to the credit side of my expenses account. (3) His Majesty's Government trusted that Mr. Abrahams would not cause this sort of trouble again.

Whether it was the stimulus given by this memo, or whether it was merely a case of giving up the drink and becoming a reformed character, rate of exchange had, I found when I went to carry out orders, risen to and stuck at the dizzy height of twenty-three francs and twenty centimes to the pound. His Majesty's Government has drawn in the long run (the very long run) the sum of one hundred and twenty-one francs and eighty centimes, thus making more than twice as heavy a profit as I had. And yet you have the impudence to tell me that I am guilty of embezzlement, with corruption.

I can only say I should be ashamed to be a lawyer.

I can only add that I should be happy to be His Majesty's Government.

With all best wishes and enclosing stamps for eighty centimes as representing your share of the proceeds (including fee for opinion),

I remain,

Yours sincerely, HENRY.

* * * * *

PIVOTS.

"Bermondsey Bill," who used to be
The idol of the N.S.C.,
Began to fight in 17--
P.T. instructor, very keen,
Teaching recruits to jab the faces
Of dummy Germans at the bases.
But Bill, I see, is booked to box
Tomkins, the Terror of the Docks,
And nobody should feel surprised
That Bill has been demobilised.

Although the War upset, I fear,
John Jones's pacifist career,
He did not murmur or repine,
But hurried to the nearest mine,
And stuck it till the "refugees"
Were all transplanted overseas.
In France he saw some dreadful scenes
As salesman in E.F. canteens;
But when the Bosch had been chastised
He was at once demobilised.

A most diverting person, Brown--
The "star" comedian in Town,
And, since he donned a posh Sam B.,
O.C. Amusements, L. of C.
He steadfastly refused to whine
Because he never saw the Line,
But carried on, stout fellow, and
Is now at home, I understand.
A pivot so well-paid and prized
Just _had_ to be demobilised.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Officer (on leave)_. "YOU'LL BE GLAD TO HAVE THE
BISLEY MEETING REVIVED?"

Veteran Volunteer Marksman. "YES; BUT THERE'LL BE SOME POOR SCORING.
YOU SEE THERE'S BEEN NO SERIOUS SHOOTING FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS."]

* * * * *

OCCUPIED OPERA.

It was a chilly morning early in January. The Opera at Cologne had just become recognised as the principal attraction of the place, and as yet there was no suave interpreter in attendance to mediate between the queue of representatives of Britain's military power and the German clerk in the box-office.

I suppose that in some handsome suite of apartments in one of the best hotels in Cologne an exalted personage with red trimmings spends his whole time—office hours, of course—in devising fresh schemes for the sale and distribution of opera tickets to the British troops. The demand for them is always far in excess of the number reserved for the military, and fresh schemes for their distribution are inaugurated every week.

We were still in the days when officers and men of every rank and every branch of the Army of Occupation used to wait in a democratic queue for the box-office to open at 10 A.M. It was 9.15 when I took up my position, beaten a short neck by a very young and haughty officer, a Second-Lieutenant of the Blankshires. There is always a cold wind round that corner of the Rudolfplatz, but every officer and every O.R. turned up his coat-collar, stamped his feet and determined to stick it. After all, from the time when he waits his turn to receive his first suit of khaki, every soldier is inured to standing in queues, and when he has so often stood half-an-hour in a queue for the chance of a penny bowl of Y.M.C.A. tea he will think nothing of standing for an hour for a seat at the Opera. For the officers no doubt the situation had the attraction of novelty.

By the time the office opened the queue reached from the Opera House steps nearly to the tramway Haltestelle, and much speculation was going on as to how many would be sent empty away. Inch by inch we moved forward, mounted the steps one by one, and came within the relative warmth of the vestibule. At last the weary waiting-time was over; the young subaltern stepped before the guichet and, pointing to a handbill, demanded in a loud and dignified voice a ticket for next Monday's performance of "KEINE VORSTELLUNG!"

How shall I describe the painful scene that followed—a scene in which, as a mere Tommy, I had too much discipline to intervene? In vain the obsequious purveyor of tickets offered a selection of the world's most popular and celebrated operas for any other day but Monday. Nothing would do for my officer but Keine Vorstellung. Indeed, as he explained in his best and loudest English, Monday was his only free evening. Keine Vorstellung he wanted and Keine Vorstellung he must have. Followed reiteration, expostulation, vituperation in yet louder English than before, and when at last he turned away without his ticket he was still convinced that the authority of the Britische Besatzung had been outraged and defied by the man behind the window.

I often wonder what he said when the precise meaning of those two mystic words was revealed, to him. I like to think that it may have happened at the Requisition Office, whither he had gone to procure an order to compel that recalcitrant square-head to supply him with the ticket so unwarrantably withheld.

* * * * *

"Wanted a good Cook; kitchen-maid kept; small fairy."--Provincial Paper.

It is pleasant to come upon a really appreciative mistress.

* * * * *

[Illustration: Little Girl (to Bride at wedding reception). "YOU DON'T LOOK NEARLY AS TIRED AS I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT."

Bride. "DON'T I, DEAR? BUT WHY DID YOU THINK I SHOULD LOOK TIRED?"

Little Girl. "WELL, I HEARD MUMMY SAY TO DAD THAT YOU'D BEEN RUNNING

AFTER MR. GOLDMORE FOR MONTHS AND MONTHS."]

* * * * *

PTERO-DACTYLS.

(_OF THE PIONEERS OF THE AIR._)

Daedalus, once in the island of Crete,
Finding his host tried to limit his scenery,
Foiled in his efforts to flee on his feet,
Went and invented some flying machinery;
Then, when he thought it was time to make tracks
Free from pursuit, for he felt he could dodge any,
Brought out his wings, which he fastened with wax,
Fitting another pair on to his progeny;
So, if the legend to credence can wheedle us,
First of air-pilots was old Father Daedalus.

Just a few kicks and they're off in full sail
(Science of old wasn't hard on her votary,
So little mention you find in the tale
Made of propeller or joy-stick or rotary);
Silently skimming along in the air
Spoke the paternal and prototype pioneer,
"Mind that your altitude's low, and beware
Fiery Phoebus you don't go and fly a-near!"
Cautious the counsel, but Icarus flouted it,
Flew in the face of his father and scouted it.

Lifting his nose in the eye of the sun,
Waved he his hand to his wary progenitor;
Higher and higher he banked and he spun,
Mounting aloft as away from his ken he tore.
"Who's this," said Phoebus, "my kingdom affronts?
Doubtless, young fellow, your conduct you think witty;
I'll find a method of stopping your stunts;
Dear shall you pay for precocious propinquity."
Forth shot his beams ere the flier detected 'em,
Melting the wax on his wings (that connected 'em).

Down to the depths of the bottomless sea
Icarus crashed with a lightning celerity,
Leaving a name for the ages to be.
"Ha!" chortled Phoebus, "that comes of temerity."
See from the sequel the fitness of things:
Nearly forgotten this early adventure is;
Phoebus is beaten; Time's whirligig brings
Still its revenge in the course of the centuries.
Over the sky, from the east to the west of it,
Man has decidedly now got the best of it.

R.A.F.

* * * * *

TO PSYCHICAL MEDIUMS.

Extract from a tradesman's circular:--

"Mr. ----, who has just been disembodied, hopes to call quite shortly and will, we trust, be allowed to book forward your Spring term requirements."

* * * * *

"A letter sent by a Government Department to the Hornsey Borough Council was so long that it was not read at all."--_Daily Paper_.

But if you think that will discourage them you don't know our bureaucrats.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE FOCH-TERRIER. "I KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT SILLY DOG IN AESOP. I'M NOT TAKING ANY CHANCES."]

* * * * *

ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, March 3rd.--The terrors of the Statute of Anne having been temporarily removed, Mr. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN headed a little _queue_ of Ministers coming up to take the Oath. How the already crowded Treasury Bench is to accommodate the new-comers it is difficult to see, but presumably a system of reliefs will be arranged.

The present epidemic was discussed by Captain NEWMAN and Sir JOHN REES who were not agreed as to whether port is a "preventative" or a "preventive" of influenza, but were unanimous in thinking that far too little of it was available.

[Illustration: MR. MCCALLUM SCOTT. "SH-H! DON'T YOU KNOW THERE'S A DEMOBILISATION ON?"]

On bearing that the liability of agricultural shows to the Entertainment Tax depended on whether instruction was combined with amusement, Colonel WEIGALL pertinently asked who was to decide where amusement ends and education begins. Talking of education, I shall in future, following Mr. H.A.L. FISHER, try to pronounce Thibetan with a long "e," but, I hesitate, even on the authority of the MINISTER OF EDUCATION, to speak of "Febuary."

Since Mr. CHURCHILL became War Minister he has developed a remarkable likeness to Lord HALDANE. Happily the resemblance extends only to the _rondeurs_, and not to the occasional _longueurs_, of his predecessor. How long his Lordship would have taken to elucidate the present position and future composition of the British Army I cannot estimate, but it would have been several hours. Mr. CHURCHILL'S survey of the World, from Siberia to the Rhine, occupied a brief sixty minutes and included some attractive speculations on the kind of Army we should need in the future. He hopes, among other things, for an improved General Staff, composed of officers acquainted with war in all its phases--land, sea and air--who could give the Cabinet expert advice on war as a whole, and save it (we inferred) from such hesitations as led to the glorious tragedy of Gallipoli.

"I thought we had given up war," interjected Mr. HOGGE; and other Members twitted the Minister with having left out of his account the League of Nations. But Mr. CHURCHILL, in reply, while expressing the utmost respect for the League, pointed out that it was not yet in being, and that meanwhile Britain must continue to be a strong armed Power.

A number of maiden speeches were delivered during the evening. The SPEAKER was not in the Chair, but I hope he was somewhere in the precincts to hear the cheers which greeted the initial effort--commendably brief and to the point--of his son, Major LOWTHER, on the subject of courts-martial.

[Illustration: A NEW FORCE IN POLITICS. THE DE VALERA GIRL.]

Tuesday, March 4th--Lord SINHA OF RAIPUR delivered his maiden speech in a style which promises well for his Parliamentary career. Accepting the _dictum_ of Lord SYDENHAM that frankness is essential in Indian affairs, he proceeded to act upon it by administering a dignified rebuke to his lordship for having suggested that one of the periodical affrays between Mahomedans and Hindoos was occasioned by the MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD report.

No fewer than forty-six questions were addressed to the War Office. But obviously this sort of thing cannot go on. The SECRETARY OF STATE cannot devote so much of his valuable time to satisfying Parliamentary curiosity. Accordingly he has appointed a "Members' friend" to hear complaints and answer questions. Mr. McCALLUM SCOTT has been rewarded for his consistent admiration--did he not publish a eulogy of "Winston Churchill in Peace and War" when his hero's fortunes were temporarily clouded?--and on two days a week will have the privilege of acting as lightning-conductor.

The most intriguing detail in the story of DE VALERA'S escape from Lincoln Gaol was the beguilement of the guards by two sweet girl-graduates from Dublin. But this afternoon Mr. SHORTT curtly stated--with a twinkle in his eye--that the sentries disclaimed all knowledge of the ladies. Still, is this conclusive?

Wednesday, March 5th--The friends of the new LORD CHANCELLOR were becoming anxious lest his natural gaiety should be permanently suppressed by the necessity of keeping up the dignity of the Woolsack. They need be under no further apprehensions. A motion in favour of Home Rule All Round, introduced by Lord BRASSEY and supported by Lord SELBORNE, furnished him with his chance. Metaphorically flinging his full-bottomed wig on to the floor he skipped into the arena, executed a war-dance around his amazed victims, and, before they knew where they were, got their heads into Chancery and knocked them together until they were compelled to give in. Talk of the congestion of Parliament! Why, now that party spirit was in abeyance, Bills went through with incredible rapidity. As for the supposed ambitions of the "little nations," what, he asked, did Scotsmen and Welshmen care about subordinate Parliaments when they were governing the whole Empire? If the advocates of the proposal really believed in it let them go out as missionaries into the wilderness, and, if they escaped the proverbial fate of missionaries, convert the heathen voters to their creed. Thereupon Lord BRASSEY, his brow bloody but unbowed, intimated that "a time would come," and meanwhile withdrew his motion.

At Question-time Mr. BONAR LAW indignantly denied a newspaper rumour from Paris that the British delegates had decided not to demand any money-indemnity from Germany, but took occasion later on to discount somewhat freely the election-promises made on this subject by himself and other Ministers. It would be better, he implied, to accept a composition than to put the debtor into the Bankruptcy Court. This is common sense, no doubt, always provided that the Hun does not misinterpret his reprieve, and, instead of laying golden eggs for our benefit, resume the practice of the goose-step.

On the Civil Service Estimates, swollen to five times their pre-war magnitude, Mr. BALDWIN made an earnest appeal for economy. If every man would ask himself, "What can I do for the State?" instead of "What can I get out of it?" we might yet emerge safely from our financial straits. The House, as usual, cheered this fine sentiment to the echo, and, to show how thoroughly it had gone home, Mr. ADAMSON, the Labour leader, immediately pressed for an increase in the salaries of Members of Parliament.

Thursday, March 6th--The CHIEF SECRETARY FOR IRELAND announced that the Government had decided to release such of the Sinn Fein prisoners as had not already saved them the trouble.

History does not always repeat itself. The first JOSIAH WEDGWOOD enhanced his fame by a faithful reproduction of the Portland Vase. JOSIAH the Second, essaying a fancy portrait of the present Duke of PORTLAND (in his capacity of a coal-owner), was less fortunate in the likeness, and this afternoon handsomely withdrew it from circulation.

The Second Reading of the new Military Service Bill brought a storm of accusations against the Government for having broken its election-pledges. Had not the PRIME MINISTER and his colleagues gone to the country on a cry of "No Conscription"? The Member for Derby was particularly emphatic in his denunciation; but Mr. CHURCHILL effectually countered him by quoting Mr. THOMAS'S own translation of the pledges in question as meaning "Militarism and Conscription."

A little rift within the Coalition lute was revealed when Mr. SHAW remarked that some people seemed to want "to make this country a fit place for casuists to live in;" but the House as a whole took the view that without an assured peace it would be no place for any one, and passed the Second Reading by an overwhelming majority.

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[Illustration: _Conductor_. "OUTSIDE ONLY!"]

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THE SENTINELS.

Up and down the nurs'ry stair
All through the night
There are Fairy Sentinels
Watching till it's light;
If they ever went to sleep
The Big Clock would tell;
But, Left-Right! Left-Right!
They know their duty well;
I needn't mind a Bogey or a Giant or a Bear,
The Sentinels are watching on the nurs'ry stair!

Up and down the nurs'ry stair
All through the day
There the Fairy Sentinels
Sleep the time away;
If you were to wake them up,
Think how tired they'd be,
So Tip-toe! Tip-toe!
Go upstairs quietly.
Yes, that's the very reason we have carpets on the stair--
The Sentinels are sleeping, and we must take care.

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[Illustration: _She_. "THEY SAY THE VICAR TALKS IN HIS SLEEP."]

He. "VERY LIKELY. HE TALKS IN MINE."]

* * * * *

THE SPACE PROBLEM.

The sad queues shiver in the drains

And do not get upon the bus;
Men battle round successive trains,
And each is yet more populous;
Twelve times a week I pay the fare,
But know not when I last sat down;
It almost looks as if there were
Too many people in the town.

I know not where they all may dwell;
I know my lease is up in May;
I know I said, "Oh, very well,
I'll take a house down Dorking way;"
I scoured the spacious countryside,
I found no residence to spare,
And it is not to be denied
There are too many people there.

They say the birth-rate's sadly low;
They say the death-rate tends to soar;
So how we manage I don't know
To go on growing more and more;
Let statistology prefer
To think the race is nice and small,
But how do all these crowds occur,
And who the dickens are they all?

Where do they come from? Where on earth
In olden days did they reside,
When there was really lots of birth
And hardly anybody died?
Where had this multitude its lair?
Some pleasant spot, I make no doubt;
I only wish they'd go back there
And leave me room to move about;

And leave some little house for me
In any shire, in any town,
Or, otherwise, myself must flee
And build a dug-out in a down;
If none may settle on the land,
Yet might one settle underground
(Provided people understand
They must not come and dig all round).

There will I dwell (alone) till death
And soothe my crowd-corroded soul;
And, when I breathe my latest breath,
Let no man move me from my hole;
Let but a little earth be cast,
And someone write above the tomb:
"Here had the poet peace at last;
Here only had he elbow-room."

A.P.H.

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THE SWEET-SHOP.

It was a mean street somewhere in the wilderness of Fulham. How I got there I don't exactly know; all that I am clear about is that I was trying, on insufficient data, to make a short cut. Twilight was falling, there was a slight drizzle of rain and I told myself that I had stumbled on the drabest bit of all London.

Here and there, breaking the monotony of dark house-fronts, were little isolated shops, which gave a touch of colour to the drabness. I paused before one of them, through whose small and dim window a light shed a melancholy beam upon the pavement. Nothing seemed to be sold there, for the window was occupied by empty glass jars, bearing such labels as "peppermint rock," "pear drops" and "bull's-eyes." Apparently the shop had sold out.

I was on the point of turning away when I noticed that someone was moving about inside, and presently an ancient dame began to take certain jars from the window and fill them with sweets from boxes on the counter. Evidently a new stock had just arrived. Then I remembered that sweets had been "freed."

A little girl stopped beside me, stared through the window and then ran off at top speed. Within a couple of minutes half-a-dozen youngsters were peering into the shop, and a pair of them marched in, consulting earnestly as they went. The news spread; more children arrived. I distributed a largesse of pennies which gave me a popularity I have never achieved before. The street seemed to take on a different aspect. I almost liked it.

* * * * *

AN OLD DOG.

There can be no doubt about it. Not merely is Soo-ti getting to be an old dog, but he has already got there. He is an old dog. Yet the change in the case of this beloved little Pekinese has been so gradual that until it was accomplished few of us noticed it. Yesterday, as it seemed, Soo-ti was a young dog, capable of holding his own for frolics and spirits with any Pekinese that ever owned the crown of the road and refused to stir from it though all the hooters of Europe endeavoured to blast him off it. To-day he is still a challenger of motor-cars; but he hurls his defiance with less assurance and has been seen to retire before the advance of a motor-bicycle.

Moreover, there are other signs of what his master calls, let us hope with accuracy, a cruda viridisque senectus. Quite a short time ago his muzzle, like the rest of him, was as black as ebony. Now he wears a pair of thick white moustachios, which are comparable only with those worn by that great chieftain, Monsieur le Marechal JOFFRE.

In another way too our little dog gives proof that his years are advancing. He used to welcome ecstatically the moment of the promenade; not that he intended thus to show any deference to the humans who were inviting him to take a walk, but that he thought it was a fine manly thing to do, and one that might bring about that fight of his against a neighbouring and detested deer-hound to which he looked forward as to one of his unachieved pleasures. He therefore fell not more than one hundred yards behind his accompanists, and when this was pointed out to him made a very creditable effort to hurry up and rejoin. Now, however, when taken for a duty-walk, he still barks a little at the outset, but thereafter begins at once to lag, and is found in an armchair when the party returns. It is vain to remind him that in the old days he was called the little black feather for the lightness of his gait when puffed along by the gusts of a fierce nor'-easter. Here is one of the complimentary stanzas that were lavished upon him by his young mistress:--

"Attend to your duty,
My brave little Soo-ti,
There isn't much sun in the sky:
But we've sported together
In all kinds of weather,

My little black feather and I."

It would be quite useless to lure him out with verse, and plain prose is equally ineffective when once he has made up his mind that he doesn't mean to move.

One more sign of old age there is, which I may briefly describe. He is always much agitated when his mistress packs her boxes to depart to an institution for higher education of which she is a member. While this is going forward, Soo-ti will not stir from her room except it be to couch in the passage outside. Thence he re-transfers himself to her room, and has been known, when the chief box is full of garments, to leap into it, to pad round in a circle three times, and to sink down with a sigh of satisfaction on what was once a very artistic bit of packing. I do not say that this trick is entirely due to old age. Nearly all dogs do it. Only there was on the last occasion a special anxiety, and a more than usual persistence and querulousness which seemed to say, "Don't go too far away, and come back soon, so that we may meet again before my eyes grow dim and my ears lose their keenness."

* * * * *

"In future all unmarried men and women having an income of \$1,000 will be taxed by the city. Married men will not be taxed unless their income is over \$1,500,000."--_Canadian Gazette_.

The poor fellows must have some compensation.

* * * * *

THE TEST OF FRIENDSHIP.

["C.K.S.," in The Sphere, describing his numerous visits to GEORGE MEREDITH at Box Hill, tells us that in no real sense can he claim to have been an intimate friend; "but then," he adds, "I always make the test of intimate friendship when people call one another by their Christian names."]

The use of Christian names, says "C.K.S."
Is intimacy's truest test; but "George,"
When he was down at Dorking, (as you guess)
Stuck quite inextricably in his gorge;
And to the end he never got beyond
The Mister, though a faithful friend and fond.

How sad to think this barrier was never
Demolished, broken down and swept away,
But still remained to sunder and to sever
Two of the choicest spirits of our day!
For MEREDITH, though radiant, genial, kind,
On this one point showed an inclement mind.

The case was simplified in days of old;
HOMER, for instance, had no Christian name,
And an Athenian bookman, if impelled
To visit him at Chios, when he came
Across the blind old poet and beach-comber,
Addressed him probably tout court as HOMER.

PYTHAGORAS was never Jack or Jim--
Names all unknown in ages pre-Socratic;
And SHORTER could not have accosted him
By sobriquets endearing or ecstatic;
It would have certainly provoked a scene,

For instance, to have hailed him as "Old bean."

Then at the "Mermaid," had he been invited
As an illustrious brother of the quill,
Would "C.K.S.," I wonder, have delighted
To honour WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE as "Old Bill,"
And in the small uproarious hours A.M.
Have been in turn acclaimed as "Bully CLEM"?

Perchance; who knows? The mystery is sealed;
Hypothesis, though plausible, is vain;
What might have been can never be revealed,
But one momentous fact at least is plain:
We know from an authoritative quarter
That MEREDITH was never "George" to SHORTER.

* * * * *

THE TWOPENNY EGG.

The daily press informs us that we are "in sight of the twopenny egg."
On making inquiries we learn that this phenomenon will be invisible
at Greenwich, but may be viewed from the North of Scotland, a region
happily less inaccessible than many to which scientific expeditions
have in the past been made. At the time of writing opinions differ as
to the best point for observation, but it is probable that the island
of Foula, in the Shetland group, will be chosen.

* * * * *

"Masters and men are visibly strained by the crisis. They all
know that they are sitting on a volcano. The prelude is all
icy suspicion."--_Mr. JAMES DOUGLAS in "The Star"._

It won't be the volcano's fault if the ice doesn't get melted.

* * * * *

"The complainant was ascending the staircase of the club when he
met the defendant, who, speaking of Lemberg, said Lemberg belonged
to Russia. Complainant replied: 'No, it is in Poland; it cannot
belong to Russia,' when the defendant struck him with some sharp
instrument on the top of the head, and the stars had not yet
completely healed."--_Evening Paper_.

The constellation referred to must, we think, have been the Great
Bear.

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[Illustration: THE DOPED LION. A STORY OF ANCIENT ROME.]

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THE GAME OF THE TELEPHONE.

True sportsmen will regret Mr. ILLINGWORTH'S statement, made recently
in the House, when he said, "I have every expectation that the
[telephone] service will improve."

By "improve" he no doubt meant that when we ring up a number in future
we shall simply get it; that people who want us will be able to get
us, and so on. It is a dismal prospect.

I only hope the improvement will be delayed until I get my own back. I

have been playing rather a bad line lately, and only this morning lost a set by one game to two.

* * * * *

The operator won the first game before I could get into my stride. She rang me up three times in five minutes, and each time put me on to nobody. This was a very bad start, and I determined that I must at least give her a game. So the third time I held on, mechanically knocking the semi-circular ring arrangement up and down. There is always a chance that your signal may be working, and it annoys the operator. But she beat me by a swift stroke.

"What number do you want?" she asked cynically. I said, "Well played, Sir--Madam!" Then she rubbed it in with a parting shot: "Sorry you have been terroubled," she said, and cut me off. Love--one.

* * * * *

"Hullo!" I said, when my bell rang the next time.

"Put me through to Extension 8, please."

The only thing to do with this sort of shot is to return it safely.

"Sorry, old chap," I said, "I haven't got one."

"Haven't _what_?" he said.

"Got one."

"One what?"

"Extension."

Then he became annoyed and shouted, "Aren't you the War Office?"

"No," I answered, "I am not the War Office."

"Aren't you the War Off--"

But I clapped on my receiver. In fact I clapped it on so violently that I thought I had silenced the thing for good and all.

A series of tugging ineffective clicks on the part of my bell decided me to investigate. This move on my part was to win me the game.

I took off my receiver and listened. No answer. I banged the rigging. No answer. I banged and thumped.

"Yes, yes," she said rather peevishly, "I am attending to you as quickly as I can. What number do you want?"

"Well," I explained, "as a matter of fact I don't want a number. I only wondered if my line was all right. Sorry you have been terroubled," and I cut her off. One--all.

* * * * *

The third and last game started briskly. In the course of the first ten minutes I was rung up and asked if I was--

1. The Timber Control.
2. Mr. Awl or All.

3. The Timber Control (again).

4. The London Diocesan Church Schools. (At this point I rather lost my head and answered, "D---- the London Diocesan Church Schools.")

My impiety offended the Bishop (I assume it was a Bishop), and he, rather unfairly, must have incited the gods to take sides against me. In a lucid interval, while I was doing a call of my own, the operator, without giving me any warning, switched me on to the supervisor. This must have been an inspiration from Olympus. However I was equal to the emergency; nay, took advantage of it. Experience has taught me that it is always best to talk to the person you get, whether you want that person or not. So I explained to the supervisor that I was a busy man, although the rumour which ascribed to my shoulders the War Office, the Timber Control and the L.D.C.S. was, at the moment, unfounded.

She played up magnificently; took my number, my name, my address, the date, the time of the day, how many times I had been rung up, whom by and when, and was going to ask me the date of my birth and whether I was married or single, when I protested. Then she calmed down and said she would have my line seen to.

The game seemed to be going well; but again I was beaten by a swift stroke. My bell rang.

"Telephone Engineering Department speaking," it said. "We have received a report that your line is out of order. We are sending a man and hope he will finish the job before luncheon."

This was the end, as anyone knows who has ever got into the clutches of the Telephone Engineering Department.

"Please," I said (my spirit was quite broken)--"please, for God's sake, don't send a man. Not this morning at any rate. Put it off, there's a good fellow."

"But I thought there was something wrong--"

"Oh, no, not at all. It's a hideous mistake. My line never behaved better in its life. It's a positive joy to me."

I have it on Mr. BALFOUR'S authority that all truth cannot be told at all times. But I had lost the set.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE THIRST FOR EDUCATION.

Mother. "Wot's all this 'ubbub goin' on indoors?"

Daughter. "Baby's bin and licked 'Erbert's 'ome lessons orf 'is slate."]

* * * * *

"On Friday, March 7th, Messrs. ----, on the instructions of the executors of the late Mr. ----, are selling by auction in pneumonia and acute influenzal pneu-built cottages situate in Chapel Street.--_Provincial Paper_.

Personally we were not bidding.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Staff Officer (accustomed to staff-car pace)._ "HERE, CABBY--LET ME OUT. I'D RATHER WALK."

Antique Jehu (who thinks he has to do with a "shell-shock" case). "IT'S ALL RIGHT, SIR. I'M GOING VERY CAREFUL."

S.O. "I KNOW. BUT I'M SO AFRAID OF SOMETHING RUNNING INTO US FROM BEHIND."]

* * * * *

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

(_BY MR. PUNCH'S STAFF OF LEARNED CLERKS._)

When a story bears the attractive title of _The House of Courage_ (DUCKWORTH); when it begins in the Spring of 1914 with a number of pleasantly prosperous people whose faith in the continuance of this prosperity is frequently emphasised ("as if they had a contract with God Almighty" is how an observant character phrases it); and when, in the first chapter, the hero has an encounter with two Germans in a Soho restaurant--well, it requires no great guessing to tell what will happen before we are through with it. And, in fact, Mrs. VICTOR RICKARD'S latest is yet another war-story; though with this novelty, that the hero's experiences of service are almost entirely gained in a German prison-camp. As perhaps I need not say, both divisions of the tale are admirably written. It is hardly the author's fault that the earlier half, with its pictures of a genial hunting society in County Cork, is distinctly more entertaining than the scenes of boredom and brutality at Crefeld, well-conveyed as these are and almost over-realistic and convincing. Inevitably too the scheme is one of incident rather than character. One has never any very serious doubt that in the long run the hero, _Kennedy_, will marry the girl of his choice, despite the fact of her engagement to the clearly unworthy _Harrington_. But as part of the long run was from Crefeld to the Dutch frontier, over every obstacle that you can imagine (and a few more, including an admirable thrill almost on the post), one is left with the comfortable feeling that the prize was well earned. You will rightly judge that most of _The House of Courage_ is rather more frankly sensational than Mrs. RICKARD'S previous war-work; but it remains an excellent yarn.

* * * * *

When _Esme Hillier_, possessed by _The Imp_ (HODDER AND STOUGHTON), was only ten, in a fit of annoyance she pushed the hero (to whom she had had no previous introduction) into the sea. I have some sympathy with her energetic protest, for a Highland Chieftain even at the age of sixteen should know better than to row about in an open boat kissing a young lady. _Esme_, a pained spectator, showed her public spirit by punishing his bad form, but in the act she sealed her own fate, for after this it was inevitable that they should ultimately marry each other, the girl of the kissing episode notwithstanding. The immediate incentive to their union, which was by the Scotch method, was that _Esme_ had applied mustard-plasters to a Cabinet Minister's person by affixing them to his dress-suit, and _Tourntourq_, the Chieftain, had nobly attempted to bear the blame. Though married in haste they did not wait for leisure before they repented, but commenced quarrelling at once, until _Esme_, in order to test his love and that of an admirer who was helping to complicate matters, "bobbed" her hair and threw the severed tresses at her husband. After this they separated. Presently the War came, and the admirer, who was really quite a nice person, was killed, and _Tourntourq_, who was apparently a lunatic, though that is not stated in so many words, was blinded. It seems quite superfluous to add that _Tourntourq_ wins the V.C. and

recovers both sight and wife in the last chapter; but there are such good patches in the book that I cannot help hoping that some day WILSON MACNAIR will try her hand (I feel it is _her_ hand) at another, which I shall really believe in all through.

* * * * *

Of late our costume-romancers have become strangely unprolific. So I was the more pleased to find Mrs. ALICE WILSON FOX bravely keeping the old flag flying with a story bearing the gallant title, _Too Near the Throne_ (S.P.C.K.). I daresay its name may enable you to give a fairly shrewd guess at its plot. This is an agreeable affair of a maid, reputed Catholic heir to the English Crown, and used as pretext for an abortive rising against KING JAMES I. You can see that in practised hands (as here) and decorated with a pretty trimming of sentiment, abductions, witch-finding and other appropriate accessories, this furnishes a theme rich in romance. Perhaps I was a thought disappointed that more was not made of the actual conspiracy, and that, having started "too near the throne," the tale subsequently gave it so wide a berth. But this is no great fault. I can witness that Mrs. WILSON FOX has at least one essential quality of the historical novelist in her appreciation of picturesque raiment. Almost indeed she emulates those jewelled paragraphs in which the creator of _Windsor Castle_ would fill half a chapter with a riot of sartorial coruscations. As a birthday present, say for an appreciative niece, I can think of few volumes whose welcome would be better assured.

* * * * *

Mr. JOHN MASEFIELD has brought together in _St. George and the Dragon_ (HEINEMANN) a speech "given" by him in New York on last St. George's Day, and a lecture on The War and the Future which he delivered up and down America from January to August of last year. Since then many things have happened. But nothing has happened that can make Mr. MASEFIELD other than proud of the part he has played in explaining and glorifying his country's cause and commending it to the hearts and minds of all good Americans. I confess that when I took up the book and read the first few lines I was afraid that Mr. MASEFIELD had yielded to the temptation of delivering his speech in poetical prose of a faintly Biblical character, as thus: "Friends, for a long time I did not know what to say to you in this my second speaking here. I could fill a speech with thanks and praise--thanks for the kindness and welcome which have met me up and down this land wherever I have gone, and praise for the great national effort which I have seen in so many places and felt everywhere." Mr. MASEFIELD however soon abandoned this manner and made the rest of his way in a good solid pedestrian style. But he did not disdain to go so far in flattery of the Americans, his audience, as to use the word "gotten" for the past tense of the verb "to get."

* * * * *

There can be few Irishmen who look at their England with such affectionate eyes as Lord DUNSANY. _Tales of War_ (FISHER UNWIN) is full of this sweet theme. The first of the tales is a fine story of the Daleswood men who, cut off from their supports and worried because there would be none left in their native village to carry on the Daleswood breed, were for sending out their youngest boy to surrender. But, deciding that that wasn't good Daleswood form, they (for their last hours, as they thought) fell to recalling the familiar beauties of their old home and to cutting in the Picardy chalk the roll of their names for remembrance. You get it again, that calling-up of the home memories, when, in another marooned party, the Sargeant that was keeper begins with a vision of sausages and mashed and goes on to the birds and beasts and flowers and soft noises of English woods

at night. And in a half-dozen other sketches. And it is good to find an Irishman and a poet to say things which stick on our embarrassed tongues. Lord DUNSANY has a happy trick of compressing a great deal into a little space, and his vignettes, sketched in with a conscious art, should find a place on our shelves among the war records which our children are to read.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT.

War Profiteer. "Stow that row, 'Orace. 'Ow did _I_ know yer wanted a toy?"]

* * * * *

"When the wife of President Wilson was in London she spent hours shopping in Regent Street and other quaint sections of London."--_Daily Gleaner_.

Regent Street _will_ be pleased.

* * * * *

"Captain Hayes, of the Olympic, in receiving a loving cut from Halifax citizens, described how the Olympic sank the U-boat 103, a few months ago. The liner cut through the submarine without losing a single revolution of the propellers."--_Australian Paper_.

One good cut deserves another.

* * * * *

THE INFLUENZA-MASK.

"Shall I," he cried, "who made the Hun skedaddle
And caused the _Wacht an Rhein_ to lose its job,
Taught Johnny Turk the use of boot and saddle
And fetched out FERDINANDO for a blob--
Shall I allow each little grinning urchin
To move me from my purpose? Shall I shrink
For fear of idle Rumour wagging her chin?
No, no! I do _not_ think.

"My high emprise may set the suburbs hooting
And lay me under Balham's local curse;
There be--I know it--those in Upper Tooting
Would lynch the prophet and insult his hearse;
But when my feet have kicked this mortal bucket
Millions will bless me!--more I cannot ask;
So, John, distract me not! Jemima, chuck it!
And, Jane, bring forth the mask!"

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