

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 153, Nov. 28, 1917

Various

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PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI

VOL. 153

NOVEMBER 28, 1917

CHARIVARIA.

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"How the Germans never got wind of it," writes a correspondent of the British attack on the HINDENBURG line, "is a mystery." The failure of certain M.P.'s to ask questions about it in Parliament beforehand may have had something to do with it.

An order has been promulgated fixing the composition of horse chaff. The approach of the pantomime season is thought to be responsible for it.

"We are particularly anxious," writes the Ministry of Food, "that Christmas plum-puddings should not be kept for any length of time." A Young Patriots' League has been formed, we understand, whose members are bent on carrying out Lord RHONDDA'S wishes at any cost to their parents.

Another birthplace of ST. GEORGE has been captured in Palestine. It is now definitely established that the sainted warrior's habit of trying to carry-on in two places at the same time was the subject of much adverse criticism by the military experts of the period.

A Camberley man charged with deserting the Navy and joining the Army explained that he was tired of waiting for TIRPITZ to come out. We are informed that Commander CARLYON BELLAIRS, M.P., and Admiral W.H. HENDERSON have been asked to enlighten the poor fellow as to the true state of affairs.

A skull of the Bronze Age has been found on Salisbury Plain. Several hats of the brass age have also been seen in the vicinity.

Imports of ostrich feathers have fallen from L33,000 in 1915 to L182 in 1917. Ostrich farmers, it appears, are on the verge of ruin as the result of their inability to obtain scissors and other suitable foodstuffs for the birds.

"Measures are being taken to check pacifists," says Sir GEORGE CAVE. Prison-yard measures, we hope.

A Stoke Newington constable has discovered a happy method of taking people's minds off their food troubles. During the last month he has served fifty of them with dog-summonses.

Five hundred pounds have been sent to the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER by an anonymous donor. It is thought that the man is concealing his identity to avoid being made a baronet.

"What is the use of corporations if they can do nothing useful?" asks

Councillor STOCK, of Margate. It is an alluring topic, but a patriotic Press has decided that it must be postponed in favour of the War.

During trench-digging on Salisbury Plain the skeleton of a young man, apparently buried about the year 600 B.C., was unearthed. The skull was partially fractured, evidently by a battle-axe. Foul play is suspected.

Sugar was sold for half-a-guinea a pound at a charity sale in the South of England, and local grocers are complaining bitterly of unfair competition.

A contemporary points out that there is a soldier in the North Staffordshire Regiment whose name is DOUGLAS HAIG. Riots are reported in Germany.

"Can Fish Smell?" asks a weekly paper headline. We can only say that in our experience they sometimes do, especially on a Monday.

An employer pleading for an applicant before the Egham Tribunal stated that he had an oil-engine which nobody else would go near. We cannot help thinking that much might be done with a little tact, such as going up to the engine quietly and stroking its face, or even making a noise like a piece of oily waste.

Germany's new Hymn of Hate has been published. To give greater effect to the thing and make it more fearful, Germans who contemplate singing it are requested to grow side-whiskers.

It is rumoured that since his recent tirade at York against newspapers Dr. LYTTELTON has been made an Honorary Member of the Society of Correctors of the Press.

The Evening News informs us that Mr. HENRY WHITE, a grave-digger of Hellingly, has just dug his thousandth grave. Congratulations to our contemporary upon being the first to spread the joyful news.

Unfortunately, says The Daily Mail, Lord NORTHCLIFFE cannot be in four places at once. Pending a direct contradiction from the new Viscount himself, we can only counsel the country to bear this announcement with fortitude.

Only the other day The Daily Chronicle referred to the Premier as "Mr. George," just as if it had always been a penny paper.

The rush to a certain Northern suburb has died down. The rumour that there was a polite grocer there turns out to be cruelly at variance with the facts.

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[Illustration: JOY-RIDING UP-TO-DATE.

THE UNDEFEATED WAR-PROFITEER.]

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ANOTHER SEX-PROBLEM.

"Plaintiff was the daughter of an officer in the Royal Irish Constabulary, and was a grand-nephew of Dr. Abernethy, the famous surgeon."--_Evening Paper_.

* * * * *

From a recent novel:--

"His face was of the good oatmeal type, and grew upon one."

Useful in these days of rations.

* * * * *

From _The New Statesman's_ comment on Mr. LLOYD GEORGE'S Paris speech.

"He does try to be Biblical sometimes. In the Paris speech he used the unnatural word 'yea' twice. Each time it gave one shudders down the back."

No doubt next time, in view of our obligations to U.S.A., the PRIME MINISTER will say "Yep."

* * * * *

THE VICTORY.

[_For J.B., with the author's affectionate pride._]

HINDENBURG TO MACKENSEN.

Dear MAC, in that prodigious thrust
In which your valiant legions vie
With HANNIBAL'S renown, I trust
You go a shade more strong than I;
Lately I've lost a lot of scalps,
Which is a dem'd unpleasant thing;
You may enjoy the Julian Alps--
I do not like this JULIAN BYNG.

I find him full of crafty pranks:
Without the usual warning fire
He loosed his beastly rows of tanks
And sent 'em wallowing through my wire;
For days and days he kept the lid
Hard down upon his low designs,
Then simply walked across and did
Just what he liked with all my lines.

The fellow doesn't keep the rules;

Experts (I'm one myself) advise
That in trench-warfare even fools
Cannot be taken by surprise;
It isn't done; and yet he came
With never a previous "Are you there?"
And caught me--this is not the game--
Bending my thoughtful gaze elsewhere.

Later--My route is toward the rear.
Where I shall stand and stop the rot
Lord only knows; and now I hear
Your forward pace is none too hot;
Indeed, with BYNG upon the burst,
If at this rate I make for home,
I doubt not who will get there first,
I to the Rhine, or you to Rome.

O.S.

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THE LITERARY ADVISER.

No, he does not appear in the Gazette. War establishments know him not and his appointment throws no additional labour upon the staff of Messrs. COX AND CO. Unofficially he is known as O.C. Split Infinitives. His duties are to see that the standard of literary excellence, which makes the correspondence of the Corps a pleasure to receive, is maintained at the high level set by the Corps Commander himself. Indeed the velvety quality of our prose is the envy of all other formations.

Apart from duties wholly literary, he is also O.C. Code Names. The stock-in-trade for this skilled labour is an H.B. pencil and a Webster Dictionary. The routine is simplicity itself. As soon as anybody informs him of a new arrival in the area he fishes out the dictionary, plays Tit-Tat-Toe with the H.B., writes out the word that it lands upon at the end of his rhyme, and, hey presto! there is another day's work done.

But one day, for the sake of greater secrecy, it became necessary to rename all the units of the area, and the Literary Adviser suddenly found himself put to it to provide about three hundred new Code Names at once. Heroically he set to work with his dictionary, his H.B. pencil, and his little rhyme. For two days the Resplendent Ones in the General Staff Office bore patiently with the muttering madman in the corner. For two days he fluttered the leaves of his dictionary and whispered hoarsely to himself, "Tit-tat-toe, my-first-go, three-jolly-nigger-boys-all-in-a-row," picking out word after word with unerring accuracy until the dictionary was a waste of punctures and three generations of H.B.'s had passed away. Before the second day was out the jingle had done its dreadful work. It was as much as the clerks could do to avoid keeping step with it. The climax came when the Senior Resplendent One, looking down at the telegram he was writing, found to his horror that he had written, "Situation quiet Tit-Tat-Toe. Hostile artillery activity normal Tit-Tat-Toe," and so on, substituting this abomination in place of the official stop, ("Ack-Ack-Ack") throughout.

It was enough. Still gibbering, the Literary Adviser was hurled forth from the office and told to work his witchcraft in solitude.

Paler, thinner and older by years he emerged from his retirement triumphant, and the new code names went forth to a flourish of trumpets or rather of the hooters of the despatch-riders.

Then it began. For days he was subjected to rigorous criticisms of his selection. "Signals" tripped him up first by pointing out two units with

the same name, and they also went on to point out that the word was spelt "cable" in the first instance and "cabal" in the second. The gunners, working in groups, complained bitterly that a babel had arisen through the similarity of the words allotted to their groups. One infuriated battery commander said it was as much as he could do to get anyone else on the telephone but himself.

Touched to the quick by criticism (when was it ever otherwise amongst his kind?) the Adviser set aside his real work (he was, of course, writing a book about the War) and applied himself to the task of straightening the tangle. Obviously the ideal combination would be for each unit to have a code name that nobody could mistake no matter how badly it was pronounced. And to this ideal he applied himself. Often, on fine afternoons, the serenity of the country-side was disturbed by the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Soap--Silk--Salvage--Sympathy," to see if any dangerous similarity existed. At dinner a glaze would suddenly come over his eyes, his lips would move involuntarily and mutter, as he gazed into vacancy, "Mustard--Mutton--Meat--Muffin."

Histrionic effort played no small part in these attempts and led to a good deal of misunderstanding, for he felt it incumbent on him to try his codes in every possible dialect. Instead of the usual cheery "Good morning," a major of a famous Highland regiment was scandalised by an elderly subaltern blethering out, "Cannibal--Custard--Claymore--Caramel," in an abominable Scotch accent. Another day (on receipt of written orders) he was compelled to visit the line to see if things had been built as reported, or, if it was just optimism again. Half-an-hour later a sentry brought him down the trench at the point of the bayonet for muttering as he rounded the traverse, "Galoot--Gunning--Grumble--Grumpy," in pseudo-Wessex. Naturally, to Native Yorkshire this sounded like pure Bosch.

Ah! but he won through in the end. The man who has stood five years of unsuccessful story-writing for magazines is not the kind to let himself be beaten easily. There could be no doubt of the final result. When the revised list was issued the response to the inquiry, "Hullo, is that Sink?" was met by a "No, this is Smack," that crashed through the thickest intellect.

But vaulting ambition had o'erleapt itself. As a covering note to the new issue he had put up the following letter:--

"Ref. G K etc., etc., of 10th inst. On November 3rd all previous issues of Code Names will be cancelled in favour of the more euphonious nomenclature which is forwarded herewith."

A shriek of joy echoed through the corps. "Euphonious!" What a word! What a discovery in a foreign country! The joy of the signal operators, on whom something of the spirit of the old-time bus-drivers has descended, was indescribable. You had only to pick up the receiver at any time and the still small voices of the busy signal world could be heard chortling, "Hullo-oo? Hullo, Euphonious! How's your father? Yes, give me Crump." Or, "No, I can't get the General; he's left his euphonious receiver off."

Poor Euphonious (he has never been called by anything else since)--they have threatened to make him O.C. Recreations for Troops.

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[Illustration: BIRDS OF ILL OMEN.

MR. PUNCH. "ONLY GOT HIM IN THE TAIL, SIR."

THE MAN FROM WHITEHALL. "YES, BUT I MEAN TO GET THE NEXT ONE IN THE

NECK."]

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[Illustration: _Mistress_. "I HOPE YOU'RE DOING WHAT YOU CAN TO ECONOMISE THE FOOD."

Cook. "OH, YES'M. WE'VE PUT THE CAT ON MILK-AN'-WATER."]

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PARS WITH A PUNCH.

ALL THE REAL NEWS ABOUT MEN, WOMEN AND THINGS.

BY OUR RAMBLING GOSSIP.

(With acknowledgments to some of our contemporaries.)

A Long-Felt Want.

The opening, next week, of a Training School for Bus and Tube Travellers will, it is hoped, supply a long-felt want in the Metropolis. I understand that a month's course at the establishment will enable the feeblest of mortals to hold his own and more in the fearful melee that rages daily round train and vehicle. I have a prospectus before me as I write; here are some of its sub-heads: "The Strap-Hanger's Stranglehold," "Foot Frightfulness," "How to Enter a Bus Secretly," "The Umbrella Barrage," "Explosives--When their Use is Justified," "What to do when the Conductor Falls off the Bus." This certainly promises a speedy amelioration of present-day travelling conditions.

Timbuctoo Tosh.

Last week, when all those ridiculous rumours anent Timbuctoo were flying about, you will remember how I warned you to set no faith in them. You will admit that I was a good counsellor. Nothing _has_ happened at Timbuctoo. I doubt very much whether anything _could_ happen there.

Hush!

On the other hand, keep your eye on a spot not a thousand miles away from Clubland. Something will certainly happen there some day, and, when it does, bear in mind that I warned you.

Amazing Discovery.

Mr. ROOSEVELT'S discovery that, unknown to himself, he has been blind in one eye for over a year, is surely surpassed by the experience of Mr. Caractacus Crowsfeet, the popular M.P. for Slushington, who has just learnt, as the result of a cerebral operation, that he possesses no brain whatever. "It is indeed remarkable," said Mr. C. to me the other day, "for I can truthfully assert that in all my arduous political labours of the past ten years I have never felt the need or even noticed the absence of this organ." He coughed modestly. "I have always maintained that in politics it is the man, not the mind, that counts."

She Has One!

Mrs. Zebulon Napthaliski proposes to spend the winter on her Brighton

estate. "Yes--I _have_ received my sugar card," she told me, in answer to my eager query. "More than that I cannot say."

Fare and Foliage.

That charming fashion of decorating the dinner-table with foliage will be all the rage this winter. Well-known London hostesses, basket on arm, may daily be seen in Mayfair garnering fallen leaves from lawn, path or roadside. Some very daring Society women are dispensing altogether with a cloth, the table being covered with a complete layer of leaves. I doubt, however, whether this will become popular, guests showing a tendency to mislay their knives and forks in the foliage.

A Bon Mot.

Have you heard the latest _bon mot_ that is going the round of the clubs? Mrs. Savory Beet, of Pacifist fame, has, as you will recall, announced her intention of taking up war work. "Ah!" was the comment of a cynical bachelor, "it was a case of her taking up something or being taken up herself!" His audience simply screamed with laughter.

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Watch Out!

Don't be surprised if you hear of some sensational political developments in the near future. The Minister who said recently that the inevitable sequel to war was peace, was, in the opinion of those competent to judge but, by reason of their official position, unable to criticise, hinting at proposals which, if the signs and portents of the time go for anything, would have far-reaching effects on the question of Electoral Representation. I will say no more. Time alone will disclose my meaning.

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[Illustration: _Urchin (with an inborn terror of the Force). _"Oo, MUVVER! IT WON'T, WILL IT?"]

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OMINOUS.

"---went every morning to a firm of sausage-makers by whom he was employed as a horse-dealer."--_Irish Paper_.

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"Rome, Saturday.

"The announcement is made to-day of the award by the King [of Italy] of gold medals to Lieutenant Giuseppe Castruccio and I sentence him to three months' hard."--_Manchester Evening Chronicle_.

When will British journalists learn not to interfere with the internal affairs of friendly nations?

* * * * *

THE LAST MATCH.

This is the last, the very, very last.
Its gay companions, who so snugly lay

Within the corners of their fragile home,
All, all are lightly fled and surely gone;
And their survivor lingers in his pride,
The last of all the matches in the house;
For Mr. Siftings says he has no more,
And Siftings is an honourable man,
And would not state a fact that was not so.
For now he has himself to do without
The flaming boon of matches, having none,
And cannot furnish us as he desires,
Being a grocer and the best of men,
But murmurs vaguely of a future week
When matches shall be numerous again
As leaves in Vallombrosa and as cheap.
Blinks, the tobacconist, he too is spent
With weary waiting in a matchless land;
What Siftings cannot get cannot be got
By men like Blinks, that young tobacconist,
Who tried with all a patriot's fiery zeal
To join the Army, but was sent away
For varicose and too protuberant veins;
And being foiled of all his high intent
Now minds the shop and is a Volunteer,
Drilling on Sundays with the rest of them;
He too, amid his hoards of cigarettes,
Is void of matches as he's full of veins.
So here's a good match in a naughty world,
And what to do with it I do not know,
Save that somehow, when all the place is still,
It shall explode and spurt and flame and burn
Slowly away, not having thus achieved
The lighting of a pipe or any act
Of usefulness, but having spent itself
In lonely grandeur as befits the last
Of all the varied matches I have known.

* * * * *

OUR SAMSONS.

"Wanted at once.--Reliable Man for carrying off motor
lorry."--_Clitheroe Advertiser_.

* * * * *

"To-day the man possesses a second tumb, serviceable for all
ordinary purposes."--_Belfast Evening Telegraph_.

In these days of restricted rations it seems a superfluous luxury.

* * * * *

"Diamond Brooch, 15 cwt., set with three blue white diamonds; make a
handsome present; L9 9s."--_Derby Daily Telegraph_.

It seems a lot for the money; but personally we would sooner have the
same weight of coals.

* * * * *

THE WAY DOWN.

SYDNEY SMITH, or NAPOLEON or MARCUS AURELIUS (somebody about that time)
said that after ten days any letter would answer itself. You see what
he meant. Left to itself your invitation from the Duchess to lunch next

Tuesday is no longer a matter to worry about by Wednesday morning. You were either there or not there; it is unnecessary to write now and say that a previous invitation from the PRIME MINISTER--and so on. It was NAPOLEON'S idea (or Dr. JOHNSON'S or MARK ANTONY'S--one of that circle) that all correspondence can be treated in this manner.

I have followed these early Masters (or whichever one it was) to the best of my ability. At any given moment in the last few years there have been ten letters that I absolutely must write, thirty which I ought to write, and fifty which any other person in my position would have written. Probably I have written two. After all, when your profession is writing, you have some excuse on returning home in the evenings for demanding a change of occupation. No doubt if I were a coal-heaver by day, my wife would see to the fire after dinner while I wrote letters. As it is, she does the correspondence, while I gaze into the fire and think about things.

You will say, no doubt, that this was all very well before the War, but that in the Army a little writing would be a pleasant change after the day's duties. Allow me to disillusion you. If, three years ago, I ever conceived a glorious future in which my autograph might be of value to the more promiscuous collectors, that conception has now been shattered. Three years in the Army has absolutely spoilt the market. Even were I revered in the year 2,000 A.D. as SHAKSPEARE is revered now, my half-million autographs, scattered so lavishly on charge-sheets, passes, chits, requisitions, indents and applications would keep the price at a dead level of about ten a penny. No, I have had enough of writing in the Army and I never want to sign my own name again. "Yours sincerely, HERBERT ASQUITH," "Faithfully yours, J. JELLICOE"--these by all means; but not my own.

However, I wrote a letter the other day; it was to the bank. It informed them that I had arrived in London for a time and should be troubling them again shortly, London being to all appearances an expensive place. It also called attention to my new address--a small furnished flat in which Celia and I can just turn round if we do it separately. When it was written, there came the question of posting it. I was all for waiting till the next morning, but Celia explained that there was actually a letter-box on our own floor, twenty yards down the passage. I took the letter along and dropped it into the slit.

Then a wonderful thing happened. It went

Flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty--FLOP.

I listened intently, hoping for more ... but that was all. Deeply disappointed that it was over, but absolutely thrilled with my discovery, I hurried back to Celia.

"Any letters you want posted?" I said in an off-hand way.

"No, thank you," she said.

"Have you written any while we've been here?"

"I don't think I've had anything to write."

"I think," I said reproachfully, "it's quite time you wrote to your--your bank or your mother or somebody."

She looked at me and seemed to be struggling for words.

"I know exactly what you're going to say," I said, "but don't say it; write a little letter instead."

"Well, as a matter of fact I must just write a note to the laundress."

"To the laundress," I said. "Of course, just a note."

When it was written I insisted on her coming with me to post it. With great generosity I allowed her to place it in the slit. A delightful thing happened. It went

Flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty--FLOP.

Right down to the letter-box in the hall. Two flipperties a floor. (A simple calculation shows that we are perched on the fifth floor. I am glad now that we live so high. It must be very dull to be on the fourth floor with only eight flipperties, unbearable to be on the first with only two.)

"O-oh! How fas_cinating!" said Celia.

"Now don't you think you ought to write to your mother?"

"Oh, I must."

She wrote. We posted it. It went

Flipperty-flipperty_---However, you know all about that now.

Since this great discovery of mine, life has been a more pleasurable business. We feel now that there are romantic possibilities about letters setting forth on their journey from our floor. To start life with so many flipperties might lead to anything. Each time that we send a letter off we listen in a tremble of excitement for the final FLOP, and when it comes I think we both feel vaguely that we are still waiting for something. We are waiting to hear some magic letter go flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty_ ... and behold! there is no FLOP ... and still it goes on-- flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty_--growing fainter in the distance ... until it arrives at some wonderland of its own. One day it must happen so. For we cannot listen always for that FLOP, and hear it always; nothing in this world is as inevitable as that. One day we shall look at each other with awe in our faces and say, "But it's still flipperting!" and from that time forward the Hill of Campden will be a place holy and enchanted. Perhaps on Midsummer Eve--

At any rate I am sure that it is the only way in which to post a letter to Father Christmas.

Well, what I want to say is this: if I have been a bad correspondent in the past I am a good one now; and Celia, who was always a good one, is a better one. It takes at least ten letters a day to satisfy us, and we prefer to catch ten different posts. With the ten in your hand together there is always a temptation to waste them in one wild rush of flipperties, all catching each other up. It would be a great moment, but I do not think we can afford it yet; we must wait until we get even more practised at letter-writing. And even then I am doubtful; for it might be that, lost in the confusion of that one wild rush, the magic letter would start on its way-- flipperty-flipperty_--to the never-land, and we should forever have missed it.

So, friends, acquaintances, yes, and even strangers. I beg you now to give me another chance. I will answer your letters, how gladly. I still think that NAPOLEON (or CANUTE or the younger PLINY--one of the pre-Raphaelites) took a perfectly correct view of his correspondence ... but then he Never had a letter-box which went

_Flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-flipperty-
flipperty-flipperty-flipperty--FLOP._

A.A.M.

* * * * *

THE H.D. AND Q. DEPARTMENT.

"Major-General F.G. Bond is gazetted Director of Quartering at the
War Office."

Pacifists beware!

* * * * *

"DIRTY WORK AT DOWNING STREET. BY HORATIO BOTTOMLEY."

John Bull.

They shouldn't have let him in.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Officer._ "WHY WERE YOU NOT AT ROLL-CALL LAST NIGHT?"

Defaulter. "WELL, SIR, WITH THIS 'ERE CAMP CAMOUFLAGED SO MUCH, I
COULDN'T FIND MY WAY OUT OF THE CANTEEN."]

COUNTER TACTICS.

About a year ago I paid a visit to my hosier and haberdasher with the intention of purchasing a few things with which to tide over the remaining months of winter. After the preliminary discussion of atmospheric had been got through, the usual raffle of garments was spread about for my inspection. I viewed it dispassionately. Then, discarding the little vesties of warm-blooded youth and the double-width vestums of rheumatic old age, I chose several commonplace woollen affairs and was preparing to leave when my hosier and haberdasher leaned across the counter and whispered in my ear.

"If I may advise you, Sir, you would be wise to make a large selection of these articles. We do not expect to replace them."

He glanced cautiously at an elderly gentleman who was stirring up a box of ties, then, lowering his voice another semitone, added, "The mills are now being used exclusively for Government work." He insinuated the death-sentence effect very cleverly, and at that moment, coming to his support, as it were, the old gentleman tottered up, seized upon two garments and carried them off from under my very fingers. As he went out a middle-aged lady entered and made straight for the residue upon the counter. A feeling of panic came upon me. "Right you are," I exclaimed hurriedly, "I'll take the lot." As a matter of fact she only wanted a pair of gloves for her nephew in France.

A few days later, still having the wool shortage in mind, I approached my hosier and haberdasher on the subject of shirts. For a second or two he looked thoughtfully at the toe of his boot. Then coming suddenly to a decision he disappeared stealthily into the back premises, from which he presently emerged carrying a large bale of flannel, which he cast caber-wise upon the counter.

"There," he said triumphantly, "I don't suppose there's another piece of flannel like that in the country." He fingered it with an expert touch.

"You don't say so," I said as I rubbed it reverently between my finger and thumb, just to show that he wasn't the only one who could do it.

"I'm afraid it's only too true," he confessed, "and I may add that, after we have sold out our present stocks, flannel of any kind will be absolutely unobtainable."

"None at all?" I asked, horror-struck at the vision of my public life in 1920--a bow cravat over a double-width vestum.

He shook his head and smiled wisely.

I am instinctively against hoarding, but I knew that if I did not buy it Jones would, and then some fine day, when nobody else had a shirt left, he would swagger about and make my life intolerable. This decided me and I bought the piece.

A few days later it occurred to me that it might be advisable to lay down some socks. My idea was in perfect unison with that of my hosier and haberdasher. Socks were going to be unprocurable in a few months. I patted myself on the back and bought up the 1916 vintage of Llama-Llama footwear. The following week thirty-seven shirts arrived and I had to buy a new chest-of-drawers.

This, as I have stated before, was about a year ago. Yesterday I paid my hosier and haberdasher another visit. If all the bone factories had not been too exclusively engaged, etc., etc., I wished to buy a collar stud. There was an elderly man standing in the shop. He was quite alone, contemplating a mountain of garments. There were little vesties, double-width vestums, and ordinary woollen affairs.

You could have knocked me over with a dress-sock.

And where was my hosier and haberdasher? Had the stranger--just awakened to the value of his possessions--entered the shop and suddenly cast all this treasure upon the counter? I imagined the shock of this procedure on a man like my hosier and haberdasher, whose heart was perhaps a trifle woolly. Had he collapsed? I glanced surreptitiously behind a parapet of clocked socks.

A moment later, from somewhere in the back premises, he appeared carrying a large bale of flannel, which he cast caber-wise upon the counter. I was dumbfounded.

Then I knew the truth.

"Sir," I said, turning to the stranger, "I believe you are about to make a selection from these articles (I indicated them individually), which you imagine to be the last of their race?"

He nodded at me in a bewildered sort of way.

"In a few months," I continued remorselessly, "they will be absolutely unprocurable" (he gave a start of recognition), "and you, having bought them, will sneak through life with the feelings of a food-hoarder, mingled with those of the man who slew the last Camberwell Beauty. I know the state of mind. But you need not distress yourself. These garments (I indicated them again) will only be unprocurable because they are in your possession. I have about half-a-ton myself, which, until a few minutes ago, would have been quite unprocurable. But I have changed my mind and, if you will come with me, you can take your choice with a clear conscience, and (I glanced maliciously at my faded hosier and haberdasher) at the prices which were prevalent a year ago."

I linked my arm with that of the stranger, and together we passed out of the shop into the unpolluted light of day.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Mother (to child who has been naughty)._ "AREN'T YOU RATHER ASHAMED OF YOURSELF?"

Child. "WELL, MOTHER, I WASN'T. BUT NOW THAT YOU'VE SUGGESTED IT I AM."]

* * * * *

PRETENDING.

I know a magic woodland with grassy rides that ring
To strange fantastic music and whirr of elfin wing,
There all the oaks and beeches, moss-mantled to the knees,
Are really fairy princes pretending to be trees.

I know a magic moorland with wild winds drifting by,
And pools among the peat-hags that mirror back the sky;
And there in golden bracken the fronds that toss and turn
Are really little people pretending to be fern.

I wander in the woodland, I walk the magic moor;
Sometimes I meet with fairies, sometimes I'm not so sure;
And oft I pause and wonder among the green and gold
If I am not a child again--pretending to be old.

W.H.O.

* * * * *

It is understood that the FOOD-CONTROLLER has protested against the forcible feeding of hunger-strikers. If they want to commit the Yappy Dispatch, why shouldn't they?

* * * * *

[Illustration: ST. GEORGE OUT-DRAGONS THE DRAGON. [With Mr. Punch's jubilant compliments to Sir DOUGLAS HAIG and his Tanks.]]

* * * * *

ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, November 19th.--Such a rush of Peers to the House of Commons has seldom been seen. Lord WIMBORNE, who knows something of congested districts, arrived early and secured the coveted seat over the clock. Lord CURZON, holding a watching brief for the War Cabinet, was only just in time to secure a place; and Lord COURTNEY and several others found "standing room only." If we have many more crises Sir ALFRED MOND will have to make provision for strap-hangers.

There was very little sign of passion in Mr. ASQUITH'S measured criticism of the Allied Council and of the PRIME MINISTER'S speech on the subject in Paris. His foil was carefully buttoned, and though it administered a shrewd thrust now and again it was not intended to draw blood.

At first the PRIME MINISTER followed this excellent example, and contented himself with defending, and incidentally re-composing, his Paris oration. The Allied Council, as now depicted, was a horse of quite another colour from what it seemed in Paris. A further example of

camouflage, I suppose.

Only when he came to deal with his Press critics did he let himself go, to the delight of the House, which loves him in his swashbuckling mood. As he confessed, however, that he had deliberately made "a disagreeable speech" in Paris in order to get it talked about, the Press will probably consider itself absolved.

Tuesday, November 20th.--Like John Bull, as represented in last week's cartoon, Lord LAMINGTON has arrived at the conclusion that compulsory rationing must come, and the sooner the better. Lord RHONDDA, however, is still hopeful that John will tighten his own belt, and save him the trouble. "More Yapping and Less Biting" should be our motto. But if we fail to live up to it, the machinery for compulsory rationing is all ready. Indeed, according to Lord DEVONPORT, it has been ready since April last, when an "S.O.S." to the local authorities was on the point of being sent, but a timely increase in imports stopped it.

Nobody doubts Commander WEDGWOOD'S essential patriotism; he has proved it like a knight of old on his body; but he is unfortunate in some of his political associates, who take advantage of his good-nature. A book with a preface by himself had been seized by the police on suspicion of being seditious, and he loudly demanded to be prosecuted. But Sir GEORGE CAVE was not inclined to set up a legal presumption that the writer of a preface is responsible for the rest of the book. If he were, a good many "forewords" would, I imagine, never have been written.

Wednesday, November 21st.--By a strange oversight the Royal Marines were not specifically mentioned in the recent Vote of Thanks to the Services. Apparently the fact that this country is proud of them is one of those things that must not be told to the Marines. But Dr. MACNAMARA assured the House that the omission should now be repaired.

[Illustration: "His foil was carefully buttoned."

MR. ASQUITH.]

There has been a shortage of provisions in the city where _Lady Godiva_ suffered from a shortage of clothes. Mr. CLYNES was prompt with a remedy. A representative of the FOOD-CONTROLLER has already been sent to Coventry.

Conscientious Objectors found a doughty champion in Lord HUGH CECIL. Rarely has an unpopular case been fortified with a greater wealth of legal, historical and ethical argument. Only once, when he accused Mr. BONAR LAW of holding the same doctrine as Herr BETHMANN-HOLLWEG, did he lose, for a moment, the sympathy of his audience. But he soon recovered himself, and thereafter held the House rapt with Cecilian harmonies.

To such a lofty plane, indeed, had the debate been lifted that Mr. RONALD MCNEILL, tall as he is, had some difficulty in bringing it down to earth again; and when the division was called the spell was still working, and in a very big House the "Conchies" only lost their votes by thirty-eight.

Thursday, November 22nd.--Pending the introduction of the promised censorship of Parliamentary Questions, Mr. JOSEPH KING is working overtime. No story is too fantastically impossible to find a shelter under his hospitable hat. To-day it was a secret treaty between the Russian Government (old style) and the French Republic, by which Belgium was to be compensated at the expense of Holland. Lord ROBERT CECIL denounced it as an invention of the enemy. But I don't suppose the denial had the smallest effect upon Mr. KING, who probably went off and dined heartily on a magnum of mare's-nest soup.

A tremendous accession to the ranks of the Sinn Feiners has been narrowly averted. When Members read the menu which, according to Major NEWMAN, the Irish Government has adopted for political prisoners--three good square meals a day, including an egg, ten ounces of meat, a pound and a half of bread, two pints and a half of milk, and real butter--they were strongly minded to enlist under Mr. DE VALERA'S banner and get themselves arrested forthwith. But Mr. DUKE'S emphatic denial shattered their dream of repletion at the taxpayers' expense.

A final attempt to get proportional representation included in the Franchise Bill was heavily defeated. In a dashing attempt to save it Sir MARK SYKES declared that the old Eatanswill methods of electioneering had gone for ever--"no mouth was large enough to kiss thirty thousand babies." But the majority of the House seemed to be more impressed by the self-sacrificing argument of that eminent temperance advocate, Sir THOMAS WHITTAKER, who feared that "P.R." would lead to an increase in "milk-and-water politicians."

* * * * *

ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW FROM AFRICA.

"A Belgian East African communique says that before the converging advance of the Anglo-German Belgian columns, the enemy retired to the south bank of the Kilimbero."--_Mombasa Times._

We seem to have met some of these Anglo-German columns in the Pacifist Press.

"Our machines then bombed the General, in which the German Head-quarters at Constantinople are reported to be situated."--_Times._

The General must have been stout, even for a German.

"Not having regained consciousness the police are left with little tangible evidence to work upon."--_Daily Telegraph._

Let us hope they will soon come to.

* * * * *

[Illustration: HOW TO UTILISE OUR SKILLED CRAFTSMEN.

First Lieutenant. "WHAT WAS THIS MAN BEFORE HE JOINED?"

Petty Officer. "OPTICIAN, SIR."

First Lieutenant. "WHAT HAD WE BETTER GIVE HIM TO DO?"

Petty Officer. "THERE'S THEM PRISMATIC SPOTTING GLASSES, SIR. THE LEATHER STRAP IS BROKEN OFF THEM. HE COULD SPLICE IN A PIECE O' COD LINE."]

* * * * *

LE POILU DE CARCASSONNE.

THE _poilus_ of France on the Western Front are brave as brave can be,
Whether they hail from rich Provence or from ruined Picardie;
It's the self-same heart from the lazy Loire and the busy banks of Seine,
Undaunted by perpetual mud or cold or gas or pain;
And all are as gay as men know how whose wealth and friends are gone,
But the gayest of all is a little white dog that came from Carcassonne.

He was brought as a pup by a _Midi_ man to a sector along the Aisne,
But his man laid the wire one pitch-black night and never came back again.
The pup stood by with one ear down and the other a question mark,
And at times he licked his dead friend's face and at times he tried to bark,
Till the listening sentry heard the sound, and when the daylight shone
He looked abroad and cried, "_Bon Guieu! C'est le poilu de Carcassonne!_"

So the dead man's _copains_ kept the dog on the strength of the company.
And whoever went short it was not the pup, though a greedy pup was he;
They gave him their choicest bits of _sinje_ and drops of _pinard_ too;
He was warm and safe when he crept beneath a cloak of horizon-blue;
They clipped fresh _brisques_ in his rough white coat as the weary months
dragged on,
And all the sector knows him now as _le Poilu de Carcassonne_.

And in return he keeps their hearts from that haunting foe, _l'ennui_;
He's their plaything, friend, and sentry too, and a lover of devilry;
He helps them to hunt out rats or Boches; he burrows and sniffs for mines,
And he growls when the murderous shrapnel flies screaming above the lines;
His little black nose is a-quiver with glee whenever a raid is on,
And they say with pride, "_C'est la guerre elle-meme, notre Poilu de
Carcassonne!_"

There was none more glad when they went to rest in their billet, a
ruined shack,
But when they returned to the front-line trench he was just as pleased
to be back;
He's the spirit of fun itself, and so when other men feel blue,
His friends remark, "_Le cafard, quoi? On l'connait pas chez nous!_"
So when you drink to the valiant French and the glorious fights they've won
Just raise your glass to a little white dog that came from Carcassonne.

* * * * *

AT THE PLAY.

"LOYALTY."

If you are a pernickety intellectual (_soi-disant_) you may really permit yourself to be faintly amused at the fiery zeal of the mystery-wrapt author of _Loyalty_ for his (or, quite possibly, her) country's cause in this difficult hour. If you are cast in the common human mould that nowadays is seen for the glorious thing it is, you will respond to many single-minded, wholesome thoughts in the impassioned statement of his thesis. And if you happen to belong to that simple discredited breed, the English, so long overshadowed by the nimbler Britons, you may have quite a nice little private thrill of your own, a thrill of pride in your precious stone, and begin to think with seriousness of the advantages of "home rule all round" in an England-for-the-English mood, and of the value of a nationalism that is as irrational as conjugal or mother love--and as fine.

The author's hero is an Englishman of the wandering type, assistant editor on a crank paper. The play is a protracted debate in four sessions, June, 1914; July, 1914; August, 1914; September, 1916. And here the author makes his most serious mistake, the mistake made by Mr. HENRY ARTHUR JONES in his recent squib. If he had contrived his Little Navy folk, the proprietor, editor and revolving cranks as something more than mere caricatures, brands of straw prepared for his consuming bonfires, he would have strengthened, not weakened, his excellent case. He has quoted his enemies' mistakes without their excuses, their texts without their contexts. And that is a form of propaganda which can only touch the converted, or such of them as are not stirred by a sporting instinct to a certain mood of protest and a wish that the other fellow should be given a better start in the heresy hunt.

The dramatis personae, then, divide themselves into the men of straw and the right sort. Of the former you have first Sir Andrew Craig, chairman of the party in his constituency and editor of The New Standard (there were indeed altogether new standards of efficiency, mentality and hospitality in that rather imaginative newspaper office of the First Act). Mr. FISHER WHITE gave us the courtly-obstinate old man to the life (this player has a way of removing straw). In the dramatic passage in which, returning after being broken in a German prison, he relates some of the horrors of which it is good for us to be reminded, he rose to the height of his fine talent. His exquisite elocution—a remarkable feat of virtuosity—was in itself a sheer delight.

Mr. Stutchbury, the editor, pacifist and sentimental democrat, was dealt to Mr. LENNOX PAWLE. He played his hand well. There was never such an editor outside Bedlam; but Mr. PAWLE is a resourceful person and by a score of clever tricks of gesture and business made a reasonable figure of fun for our obloquy. All but broken in the end, but still claiming that he had "the larger vision" (as he certainly had the larger diameter), there was a certain dignity of pathos in his exit, a late amende by an otherwise remorseless puppet-maker. Mr. SYDNEY PAXTON as a pillar of Nonconformity offered a clever study in the unctuous-grotesque; Mr. VINCENT STERNROYD sketched a portrait of a nut-consuming impenitent disarmamentist. The author is the first, so far as I know, to give public emphasis to the queer fact of natural history that there is some connection between extreme opinions and the prominence of the Adam's apple of the holder of them—a fact on which I have often pondered.

Mr. M. MORAND, the aggressive Scots member of the election committee, inspired to great heights of insobriety by the return of his London-Scottish nephew from the Front, sounded a welcome human note, as did Mr. SAM LIVESEY, the Labour Member of the committee, shaken out of his detachment into an extreme explicitness of language by a Zeppelin raid experience. Mr. GEORGE BELLAMY'S Welsh Disestablisher and Mr. GRIFFITH HUMPHREYS' exuberant German press-agent of the pre-war period were both really shrewd studies.

Of the right sort there were but five—and one of these, the editor's secretary, at heart an honest patriot, but in fact eating the bread of shame, was perhaps not altogether of the right sort. Still he did get off his chest at last the pent-up passion of years, and very well he did it, with the help of Mr. RANDLE AYRTON, whose subtle little touches, building up a picture of a disheartened hack, were very adroit indeed.

Then there was young Henry Craig, at the beginning an undergraduate in his last term, at the end a V.C. in his last resting-place. Mr. PERCIVAL CLARKE'S was an adequate pleasant study. So also was Mr. PHILIP ANTHONY'S of a Canadian, full of strange idioms, who butted in to just the wrong corner of Fleet Street to put the editor wise about the intentions of a Germany in which he had spent his last two years. And then there was splendidly English Frank Aylett, exile returned, unspoilt by the cynicism of party and paper, whose fortune came to him just at the psychological moment, enabling him to give his proprietor notice and fight and win a by-election in the astonished man's own constituency, besides carrying off his daughter (Miss VIOLA TREE), who was the fifth of the right sort. What more plausible English hero than Mr. C. AUBREY SMITH, except that he had to talk a good deal more than seemed appropriate to his type? There was a well-managed post-election scene when he was at his best (as was the author). And all through there was good and sometimes glorious sense for those to hear who had ears.

The programme promised us about a month's interval between Acts I. and II. It was actually less than that; but if Mr. J.H. SQUIRE'S musicianly orchestra had not been there to charm us we might conceivably have been

bored.

T.

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[Illustration: THE LIGHTER SIDE OF EDITORIAL LIFE.

Frank Aylett MR. C. AUBREY SMITH.

Anthea Craig MISS VIOLA TREE.]

* * * * *

MORE COMMERCIAL CANDOUR.

"FOR SALE.--A 45 H.P., 6 cyl.--Car, touring body, fitted with every latest convenience. Exceptionally well sprung. Just purchased by owner and run under 1,000 miles. Guaranteed over 25-galls. to the mile by Agents. Rs. 11,000."--_Indian Paper_.

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[Illustration: "DIVERSION" IN THE BALKANS.]

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HEROES.

If the question were put to a company of young women, "What is the most thrilling experience you can have in a London street?" the odds are a thousand to one that they would reply that nothing could be more thrilling than to meet a famous actor in plain clothes and identify him. I am not a young woman myself, but I should be inclined to share their opinion. There is something about an actor in real life, moving along like a human being--one of us--that always stirs my pulse. It is exciting enough to see Mr. LLOYD GEORGE or Mr. ASQUITH or Sir OLIVER LODGE; but no one stirs the imagination like an actor.

That is why I still tremble a little whenever I think of my good fortune the other afternoon in the Haymarket, and why my pen shakes as I commit the adventure to paper. For I met face to face two of the most successful actors in London--at the present moment, in the world.

I was walking up the Haymarket in the rain, hoping, in spite of the new prohibitive rates, that I might see an empty cab, when I met them coming down. They were walking with a man whom I did not recognise, and, like me, were getting wet. One thinks of successful actors as riding always in taxis; but taxis are very rare nowadays, particularly in the wet, and somehow it did not seem unnatural that they should be on foot. I am glad enough that they were, or I should have missed my _frisson_; and others would have suffered a similar loss, for the recognition was not only on my part but on that of several passers-by, and it was instantaneous. Indeed, I heard one lady tell her companion the name of the play they are in and the extraordinary length of its run, and since she spoke loudly I thought how delightful it must be to be a theatrical celebrity and hear cordial things like that as you move about. Neither of them paid any attention, however, although their friend showed signs that the flattery had not escaped him; the two Illustrions (to coin a word) merely walked on, superior to our homage, and disappeared into Charles Street, where the stage door of His Majesty's is.

Pouring though it was, and grovelling admirer of footlight favourites as I am, somehow I never thought to offer either of them my umbrella. But then one doesn't offer an umbrella to a donkey or a camel, even though

they are two of the stars of _Chu Chin Chow_.

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ANOTHER INJUSTICE.

From a Sinn Fein speech:--

"When Ireland was silent England did not hear her cry out."--_Wicklow News-Letter_.

* * * * *

"WHY SHOULD A RABBIT COST 2s. 3d.?"

"This question from a reader induces me to postpone until next week my analysis of the high cost of onions."--_Empire News_.

On the principle that it is better to make sure of the rabbit before arranging about the stuffing.

* * * * *

"Stockholm, Tuesday.

"News from Finland shows that the Socialist leaders have lost control of the workmen, and all kinds of excesses are taking place. The present Commandant at Tornea was a sailor, the head of the passport office was a tailor, and the chief telegraphic censor a tinker."--_Central News_.

We miss the soldier, to say nothing of "apothecary, ploughboy, thief."

* * * * *

"Scholars and tragedians between them seem to have appropriated the right to keep Shakespeare's memory green. But there are other Richmonds in the field, humble Richmonds, not well read ... John of Gaunt, crying that his England 'never did nor never shall lie at the proud foot of a conqueror....'"--_The Times_.

The writer who thus deprived the _Bastard_ in _King John_ of his famous lines was, we infer, one of the "other Richmonds."

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SUGAR.

AN ELEGIAC ODE.

Queen of the palate! Universal Sweet!
Gastronomy's delectable Gioconda!
Since with submission loyally I greet
And follow out the regimen of RHONDDA,
I cannot be considered indiscreet
If I essay, but never go beyond, a
Brief elegiac tribute to a sway
By sterner needs now largely swept away.

Thy candy soothes the infant in its pram;
Thou addest mellowness to old brown sherry;
Thou glorifiest marmalade, on Cam
And Isis making breakfast-tables merry;
Thou lendest magic to the meanest jam
Compounded of the most insipid berry;

And canst convert the sourest crabs and quinces
To jellies fit for epicures and princes.

Thou charmest unalloyed, in loaf or lumps
Or crystals; brown and moist, or white and pounded;
I never was so deeply in the dumps
That, once thy fount of sweetness I had sounded,
Courage returned not; even with the mumps
I still could view with gratitude unbounded
The navigators of heroic Spain
Who found the New World--and the sugar-cane.

Sprinkled on buttered bread thou dost excite
In human boys insatiable cravings;
On Turkish (I regret to say) Delight
Thou lurest them to dissipate their savings,
Instead of banking them, or sitting tight,
Or buying useful books and good engravings;
And lastly, mixed with strawberries and cream,
Thou art more than a dish, thou art a dream.

Before necessity, that knows no ruth,
Ordained thy frugal use in tea and coffee,
Some Stoics banned thee--men who in their youth
Showed an unnatural dislike of toffee;
For sweetness charms the normal human tooth,
Sweetness inspires the singer's tenderest strophe,
Since old LUCRETIVS musically chid
The curse of life--_amari aliquid_.

Eau sucrée, I admit, is rather tame
Compared with beer or whisky blent with soda;
But gallant Frenchmen, experts at this game,
Commend it highly either as a _coda_
Or prelude to their meals, and much the same
Is sherbet, which the Gaekwar of Baroda
And other Oriental satraps quaff
In preference to ale or half-and-half.

Nor must I fail, O potent saccharin!
Thou chemic offspring of by-products coaly,
Late comer on the culinary scene,
To hail thy aid, although it may be lowly
Even compared with beet; for thou hast been
Employed in sweetening my roly-poly--
Thou whom I once regarded as a dose
And now the active rival of glucose!

But still I hear some jaundiced critic say,
Some rigid self-appointed _censor morum_,
"Why harp upon the pleasures of a day
When freely sweetened was each cup and jorum,
Ere stern controllers had begun to stay
The genial outflow of the _fons leporum?_
Now sugar's scarce, and we must do without it,
Why let regretful fancy play about it?"

True, yet it greatly goes against the grain,
Unless one has the patience of Ulysses,
Wholly and resolutely to refrain
From dwelling on the memory of past blisses;
Forbidden fruits allure the strong and sane;
Joys loved but lost are what one chiefly misses;
This is my best excuse if I deplore
"So sad, so _sweet_, the days that are no more."

* * * * *

'TATERS.

SCENE: _At "The Plough and Horses_"

"You seen Parson lately, George?"

"Not lately I ain't, Luther."

"Not since 'is 'taters be out o' ground?"

"No. Finest crop in village, some do say."

"That be right--sev'ral ton of 'em there be."

"What to goodness do 'e want 'em all for, then? 'Im an' 's wife an' a maid 'll never eat all them 'taters."

"'ll tell you what 'e says to me, for 'appen 'e'll say it to you, George, when 'e comes acrost you next. 'E says to me, 'I've growed as many potatoes as I've had strength to grow, an' they've prospered exceedin'ly,' 'e says, 'thank God! So if any deservin' folk in my parish gets through wi' their own crop an' wants more later on they 'as only to come to me, for I've growed more 'an my 'ouse'old 'll eat if they was to eat all day.'"

"'E be proud o' that?"

"Fine an' proud 'e be."

"An' yet it be some'at unfort'nate too. For all of us as is left in this 'ere parish 'as growed as many 'taters as they'll be like to need, same as 'e. So I don't see nought but disappointment for Parson an' a lot o' good 'taters lyin' to rot in their pies."

"Some there be too fond o' Parson to let that 'appen. Me an' my wife be sendin' few of ours to London ev'ry week or so. So in due season we shall be free to go to Parson an' 'elp 'im through wi' 'is, same as 'e wants us to. I 'ears as others is doin' some'at the same as us--fear is as too many'll tumble to the idea, which is why I'd 'ave you keep it fro' goin' further, George."

"Silent as th' grave I'll be. So you're givin' your 'taters 'way to please Parson? Yet I do allus say as 'taters what a man grows wi' sweat of 'is own brow do beat all others in t' eatin'."

"That may be; but us can't afford to be so mighty pernickety in time o' war. Nor we ain't givin' nothin' 'way in manner o' speakin'. Fair market price they gives for 'em in London. So it be somethin' in 'and in these 'ard times as well as savin' Parson from a bitter disappointment what 'e ain't done nothin' to deserve, so far as I can see."

* * * * *

"Two organ grinders, aged 23 and 16, were taken to Charing Cross Hospital to-day with bad injuries and severe shock, the result of a barrel organ getting out of control in Rosebery-avenue."--_Evening Paper_

They should try a less dangerous instrument next time.

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"'Seed potatoes' means potatoes grown in Scotland or Ireland in the year 1917, or grown in England or Wales in the year 1917 from seed grown in Scotland or Ireland in the year 1916, which will pass through a riddle having a 1-5/8-in. mesh, and will not pass through a riddle having a 1-5/8-in. mesh."--_Journal of the Board of Agriculture_.

We ourselves cannot get through any riddle of this kind.

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[Illustration: _Sergeant (instructing squad of volunteers in physical drill)._ "THIS 'ERE HEXERCISE IS INTENDED TO 'ARDEN THE MUSCLES OF THE STUMMICK AND MAKE IT HIMPERVIOUS TO GERMAN BULLETS HIN CASE OF HINVASION."]

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OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

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

It is difficult within the ordinary limits of a review in these columns to say all that one feels or even to express adequately one's gratitude after reading the two volumes of Lord MORLEY'S generous and delightful _Recollections_ (MACMILLAN). I seem to have been sitting with him in a large and comfortable library while the great Viscount rolled me out his mind, now breaking out into a glowing eulogy of GEORGE MEREDITH, JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN or LESLIE STEPHEN, or again dashing off with a few firm and skilful strokes a portrait of JOHN MILL or HERBERT SPENCER, or some other intellectual giant of that nineteenth century which Lord MORLEY nobly defends and of which he himself was _grande decus columenque_. The book is crammed with passages that arouse and maintain pleasure in the reader and clamour for quotation on the part of the reviewer. "Meredith," we are told, "who did not know Mill in person, once spoke to me of him, with the confident intuition proper to imaginative genius, as partaking of the Spinster. Disraeli, when Mill made an early speech in Parliament, raised his eye-glass and murmured to a neighbour on the bench, 'Ah, the Finishing Governess.'" Or we are introduced to SPENCER at MILL'S table: "The host said to him at dessert that Grote, who was present, would like to hear him explain one or more of his views about the equilibration of molecules in some relation or other. Spencer, after an instant of good-natured hesitation, complied with unbroken fluency for a quarter-of-an-hour or more. Grote followed every word intently, and in the end expressed himself as well satisfied. Mill, as we moved off into the drawing-room, declared to me his admiration of a wonderful piece of lucid exposition. Fawcett, in a whisper, asked me if I understood a word of it, for he did not. Luckily I had no time to answer." Or again: "Another contributor [to _The Saturday Review_] was the important man who became Lord SALISBURY. He and I were alone together in the editorial anteroom every Tuesday morning, awaiting our commissions, but he too had a talent for silence, and we exchanged no words, either now or on any future occasion." How charming a picture is this of two shy British publicists maintaining towards one another, against every possible discouragement, an inviolable silence. Not even the weather could tempt them to break it. Yet the great characteristic of this book is the large-hearted tolerance of comment and judgment which makes it emphatically a friendly book. As such I commend it with all the warmth in my power.

* * * * *

For her new story, _Missing_ (COLLINS), Mrs. HUMPHRY WARD has used her knowledge, already proved elsewhere, of two settings, the English Lakes and a Base Hospital somewhere in France. Also perhaps her knowledge

of human nature, though I like to think that there are not many elder sisters so calculatingly callous as Bridget. The bother about her was that she sadly wanted her attractive younger sister to marry a sufficient establishment, not, I fear, from wholly altruistic motives. So she was not altogether sorry when the impecunious soldier-husband, whom Nelly had personally preferred, was reported missing, thus leaving that to chance once again open. Then, just as her plans seemed to be prospering, word came secretly to her that there was a man shattered and with memory lost in a base hospital who might possibly be the brother-in-law whom she so emphatically didn't want. What happens upon this you shall find out for yourself. Mrs. HUMPHRY WARD, as you will notice, has no fear of a dramatic, even melodramatic, situation; handles it, indeed, with a skill that the most popular might envy. Thence onwards the story, perhaps a trifle slow in starting, gathers force. The two visits to the camp at X---- (a very thin disguise for a place that no Englishman of our time will ever forget) are admirably vivid; the last chapters especially being as moving as anything that Mrs. WARD has given us, whether in her popular, profound or propagandist manner.

* * * * *

Lately, Mr. E.F. BENSON seems to have been devoting himself almost wholly to chronicling the short and simple annals of the middle-aged. With one exception, all his recent protagonists have been, if not exactly in the sere and yellow, at least ripely mature. So that such a title as that of his latest novel, An Autumn Solving (COLLINS), produced in me rather a feeling of familiar expectancy than of surprise. Also when the wrapper artist clothes a volume with a picture of an elderly gentleman obviously giving up an attractive young woman of perhaps one-third his years it is idle to pretend that the contents retain all the thrill of the unforeseen. Having said so much, I can let myself go in praise (as how often before) of those qualities of insight and gently sub-acid humour that make a BENSON novel an interlude of pure enjoyment to the "jaded reviewer." In case the indiscreet cover may happily have been removed before the volume reaches your hands, I do not propose to give away the plot in any detail. The autumn sowing of course produces a crop not exactly of wild oats, but of romantic tares that springs in the hitherto barren heart of one Keeling, prosperous tradesman, husband, father, mayor, public benefactor and baronet, by reason of the too sympathetic damsel who types his letters and catalogues his library. That library shows Mr. BENSON'S genius; without it I should hardly have been able to believe in the subsequent happenings, but, given this "secret garden," all the tragedy is explained. I have left myself no space in which to do justice to some admirable characterization. Keeling's wife is worthy of a place in the author's long gallery of woolly-witted matrons; while in Silverdale he has given a study of clerical futility and egotism almost savage in its detestability, a portrait at which one laughs and shudders together. Of course the book will have, and deserve, a huge welcome.

* * * * *

The union of scholarship and sympathy, enthusiasm and eloquence, is rare; yet these qualities are to be found in perfect harmony in the stately volume on the poets' poet which has just been published under the style, on the cover, Life of John Keats, and on the title-page, John Keats, His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics and After-Fame (MACMILLAN)--a volume upon which Sir SIDNEY COLVIN has been engaged ever since his retirement from the Print Room of the British Museum, and may be said to have been preparing to write all his days, ever since, as a boy, he first opened the "magic casement." A book representing so long and ardent a devotion, and written by one whose loyalties have always been so cordially sustained and acknowledged, could not but glow; and it is its warmth of feeling which, to my mind, peculiarly marks this very

distinguished work. It is more than a life; it is a "companion" to KEATS so complete and understanding that one can with confidence apply to it the abused word, "definitive." Critical essays on the poet no doubt will continue to appear, but this is the last biographical monument likely to be raised to him.

* * * * *

Your enjoyment of The Head of the Family (METHUEN) may in a measure depend upon your capacity to appreciate William Linkhorn and the glory of his "great flaming beard." To me, unhappily, William was an uncouth rustic, just that and very little else; but he possessed some mysterious attraction for women; so, at any rate, Mrs. HENRY DUDENEY tells me, though she does not explain to my satisfaction what it was.

Phoebe-Louisa married him partly because she wanted a man to help in her greengrocery; but what charm he had for her soon waned, and she smote hard when she caught him philandering with Beausire Fillery. It was all the lady's fault; William had, so to speak, only to wave his beard and she was at his feet. But if the hirsute feature of this story leaves me cold it is easy enough to enjoy and admire the rest. The Firebraces, spoken of here as "The Family," are most admirably drawn. Never has the condescension of county people to those less exalted in birth been described with more delightful irony. True that some of the Firebraces kicked over the traces and married whom they listed, but the family as a whole was rooted deep enough to stand shocks which would have devastated people of less assured position. The scenes of the story are laid in and around Lewes, a part of England dear to Mrs. DUDENEY'S heart, and of which she writes with real comprehension and devotion.

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By a self-denying ordinance Mr. Punch declines, as a general rule, to review in these columns the work of his Staff. But he may permit himself to announce to all lovers of the gay humour of "A.A.M." that Messrs. HODDER AND STOUGHTON have just brought out a new novel, Once on a Time, by Mr. ALAN A. MILNE, with illustrations by Mr. H. M. BROCK.

* * * * *

[Illustration: A CONSOLING THOUGHT.

Belated Traveller (surprised by a bull when taking a short cut to the station). "BY JOVE! I BELIEVE I SHALL CATCH THAT TRAIN AFTER ALL."]

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"Alexander had his 'Plutarch' always under his pillow."--British Weekly.

This must have been a very early edition.

* * * * *

"Colombo is suffering from an attack of rabies and there have been 38 cases reported so far. In the first six months of the year 1,300 days were destroyed."--Singapore Free Press.

Let us hope that every day had its dog.

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