

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 153, Dec. 19, 1917

Various

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PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI

VOL. 153

DECEMBER 19, 1917

CHARIVARIA.

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GENERAL ALLENBY having announced that all the holy places in Jerusalem will be protected, the KAISER is about to issue a manifesto to his Turkish subjects, pointing out that so much time has elapsed since he was there in 1898 that the place can no longer be considered as holy as it was.

It is now stated that the leader of the Sinn Feiners is an American citizen. It is hardly likely, however, in view of the friendly relations prevailing between ourselves and the United States, that the point will be pressed.

Another lengthy pamphlet on the subject of cheese has been issued by the FOOD-CONTROLLER. The Department now claims that there is no excuse for even the simplest grocer failing to recognise a cheese when he sees it.

A painful story comes from the North of England. It appears that a man left his home saying that he would obtain a pound of Devonshire butter or die. He was only thirty-four years of age.

A leaflet containing President WILSON'S recent speech to Congress has been passed by the CENSOR, who, however, does not wish it to be understood that he could not have improved on it if he had cared to.

A grave state of affairs is reported by a New York paper. It appears that America will shortly ask Mexico to make revolutions a criminal offence. They'll be stopping baseball next.

A question put by Mr. FIELD in the House of Commons suggested that M.P.s should travel on railways free of charge. The chief objection seems to be that they would be sure to want return tickets.

A domestic servant points out in a contemporary that she has worked from seven in the morning until ten o'clock at night for six months without a break. Another domestic who holds the smash-as-smash-can record wonders where this poor girl learnt her business.

Discussing the London taxi strike a contemporary remarks that both sides ought to meet. Failing that, we think that at least one side might meet.

Writing to The Evening News a Maidstone gentleman protested against the action of the authorities who covered up the Tank in Trafalgar Square on Sundays. On the first Sunday it seems that somebody tripped over it.

There appears to be an epidemic of trouble in the animal world. An elephant at the Zoo has just died, while only a few days ago a travelling crane collapsed at Glasgow.

Burglars who looted an Oxford Street shop last week obtained admission by making a hole through a brick wall. It is supposed the shop door was closed.

Surely it is only hindering matters for people to keep writing to the Press on the matter of the appointment of a Minister of Health. It seems to be overlooked that so far _The Daily Mail_ has not indicated who should be appointed to that position.

The Government having reaffirmed their statement that they have "no further fear of submarines," it is felt to be high time that someone in authority should break it to the U-boats that they might as well give it up and go home.

The gentleman who wrote to the Press offering to sell eggs at _4s. 7d._ a dozen has since explained that he merely wanted to show how much higher the market price is than his would have been if he had really had any eggs to sell.

We understand that it has not yet been decided in Berlin what the Sultan of TURKEY thinks of the capture of Jerusalem.

Four letters of QUEEN ELIZABETH have just been sold by auction. Strangely enough, nothing is said in them about her having no quarrel with the Spanish people, but only with their Monarch.

"Is the potato the saviour of the Fatherland?" asks the _Deutsche Tageszeitung_. Another slight to the ALL-HIGHEST.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Both together_. "NOW, MY MAN, WHY DON'T YOU SALUTE WHEN YOU PASS AN OFFICER?"]

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From a review of Lord LISTER'S "Life":--

"It was in Edinburgh that he struck his most famous patient, Henley, who has a record of the 'Chief' in his rhymes and rhythms, 'In Hospital.'"--_Daily Paper_.

But it was not in reference to this incident that HENLEY wrote, "My head is bloody but unbowed."

* * * * *

"If all fools were rationed there could be no fixed scale."--_Star_.

Of course not; we have always noticed that the bigger the fool the more he eats.

* * * * *

"Bassano is a nice town, by a dam site."--_Canadian Paper_.

But a Canadian friend tells us there are others "a dam sight nicer."

* * * * *

"The German government has a terrific explosive, which is being held in reserve to the last.... It is said that a bomb weighing scarcely ten kilometres can annihilate everything within a radius of two thousand feet."--_New York Herald_.

We do not mind saying that we are frankly afraid of a bomb that weighs about six miles.

* * * * *

"TIPPERARY BURGLARY.--Tipperary Temperance Club premises have been gurgled."--_Cork Examiner_.

GILBERT'S burglar up-to-date: "He loves to hear the Temperance Club a-gurgling."

* * * * *

"General Allenby, no doubt, will go in due time to the House of Lords, and military men are taking a jocular interest in his selection of a title. Lord Bathsheba might serve, or Lord Hebron. Lord Jerusalem smacks of the jocose."--_Birmingham Daily Post_.

For our part we thought "Lord Bathsheba" rather funny too.

* * * * *

AN HISTORICAL CURIOSITY.

"At Blenheim is a small glass-topped table, which contains the sword of the great Duke of Marlborough, also a letter addressed by him to Sarah Duchess from the field of Waterloo."--_The Queen_.

* * * * *

OUR PACIFISTS.

Far as my humble daily round extends,
There's none but longs to see us lay the foe low;
I cannot trace upon my list of friends
A solitary instance of a Bolo;
So that I've sometimes nursed a doubt
Whether there are such lots of them about.

But now, when that _Gazette_ in which I read
(To learn its views on any given matter
And so avoid 'em) hints that no such breed
Exists among us, save in idle chatter,
I am convinced the country reeks

With these unnatural and noisome freaks.

Only the worst are out for German pay;
Some claim ideals on the loftiest level;
Peace (and a fig for Honour) is their lay--
Peace and the Brotherhood of man and devil;
They love all sorts beneath the sun--
Even an Englishman; but best a Hun.

They save the choicest of their tears to shed
For those who break all laws divine and human;
They'd bid the dead past cover up its dead,
Forgetful of our murdered, child and woman;
Forgetful of our drowned who sleep
Without a grave beneath the wandering deep.

I know not how or when this War will close,
But this I know: unless my brain goes rotten,
Never will I clasp hand with hand of those,
False to their blood, who'd have these things forgotten,
Who want a peace untimely made
Before the uttermost account is paid.

Thirty years on, when weak with age, I might
Possibly talk to some repentant Teuton;
But, while I still can tell a knave at sight
And have enough of strength to keep a boot on,
Only in one way will I get
In touch with samples of the Bolo Set.

O.S.

* * * * *

THE CADET'S FRIEND.

MISUNDERSTOOD.--You were in the wrong. The custom of throwing chicken-bones over the right shoulder is practised only in the mess of the 13th Bavarian Landsturm Regiment. Still, considering that you had only joined that day, we think your colonel acted hastily.

AS YOU WERE (and several other Correspondents).--The executive order for the new combined movement of "About turn and left incline" is given when the joint of the left big toe is opposite the right instep (in Rifle regiments substitute right for left and left for right).

SUBALTERN.--Your company commander is without authority for reproving you for shaving off your moustache. All the same, judging by the photograph you enclose, we think you would be wise to keep as much of your face covered as possible.

FIELD-MARSHAL'S BATON.--No, you are mistaken in supposing that a private soldier under close arrest may spend two hours daily in the regimental canteen. The only stimulant allowed him is one glass (2 oz., Mark IV.) of port daily with the orderly officer when the latter inspects the guardroom.

SUFFERER.--(1) No, White Star gas is never employed by army dentists. (2) No, you need not take your respirator with you. You hire the anaesthetist's at a small charge.

PINK RATS.--You assume that if you were appointed a mopper-up you would ex-officio be put in charge of the rum-ration. This is not the case. The function of moppers-up is to collect souvenirs for the new Great War Museum, to be housed in one of the four remaining London

hotels.

OBSERVER.--German minnenwerfer are not dangerous if their flight is carefully watched, as they swerve to the left, and their landing-place can thus be fairly accurately judged. Two varieties, however--the windupwerfer and the hoppitwerfer--swerve to the right. The googliwerfer swerves both ways.

SOCIABLE.--The correct method of dealing with snipers in a house is to ring the front-door bell with the thumb and forefinger of the right hand, at the same time smartly inserting a charge of cordite into the letter-box with the left. Indents for postmen's uniforms for this purpose should be rendered to D.A.D.O.S. in triplicate.

STATISTICIAN.--The world's record is held by the adjutant of the pioneer battalion of the 371st Silesian Foot Regiment. There is unimpeachable evidence to prove that he was heard drinking gravy soup from a distance of 477 metres. The night was calm.

* * * * *

IF THE PAPER SHORTAGE INCREASES.

(_SOME FUTURE PRESS ITEMS._)

FICTION FAMINE IN THE PROVINCES.

From many districts come reports of great difficulty in obtaining novels. Yesterday in a well-known Midland town the unusual sight was observed of long queues outside the chief booksellers'. Several libraries displayed notices bearing the words, "No GARVICE to-day"; and quite early in the afternoon best quality BENSONS were practically unobtainable, even by regular customers.

FIRST CONDITIONAL SALE PROSECUTION.

Much interest has been roused in East Anglia over the fine of one hundred pounds inflicted by the Bench upon a local bookseller, found guilty of the Conditional Sale of Fiction. The chief witness, a retired stockbroker, proved that defendant refused to supply his order for a shilling's worth of O. HENRY unless he also purchased a remainder copy of Wanderings Round Widnes (published at twelve-and-six net). The Chairman, remarking that the case was a specially flagrant one, expressed a hope that the result would protect the public from such imposition in future.

VALUABLE DISCOVERY.

In view of the serious shortage in reliable fiction, nothing less than a sensation is likely to result from the reported discovery of an entirely satisfactory BARCLAY substitute in tabloid form. Should the tidings prove well authenticated, the patrons of circulating libraries will have good reason for satisfaction. The new preparation is said to be even sweeter than the original article, and equally sustaining.

FICTION CARDS COMING.

On inquiry at the Albert Hall (recently taken over as offices by the Literature Control Committee), our representative was emphatically assured that, should the system of voluntary romance-rationing prove unsatisfactory, some form of compulsion will become inevitable. It was pointed out that the indicated maximum of one novel or magazine per head weekly is amply sufficient for all reasonable requirements. The attention of the public is further called to the need of making the fullest and most economical use of the allowance, and not wasting

the advertisement pages, which contain much readable and stimulating matter, the patent medicine paragraphs especially being rich in the finest imaginative fiction.

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[Illustration: THE NEED OF MEN.

MR. PUNCH (_to the Comber-out_). "MORE POWER TO YOUR ELBOW, SIR. BUT WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO FILL UP THAT SILLY GAP?"

SIR AUCKLAND GEDDES. "HUSH! HUSH! WE'RE WAITING FOR THE MILLENNIUM."]

* * * * *

"CHOCKCHAW;"

OR, BIG-WIGS AT PLAY.

Somebody in the Old Country discovered, with the aid of a hint or two, that the tooth (exact molar not specified) of the General Staff Officer 3 was sweet. As a natural result a certain famous firm of confectioners was indented upon heavily. Day in, day out, perspiring orderlies arrived festooned with parcels containing all kinds of wonderful things crammed with all sorts of wonderful surprises. Life in the General Staff Office resolved itself into four meals a day between sweetmeats. The whole routine underwent a complete change. Everyone who visited the place made, as a matter of course, a bee line for the General Staff Canteen cupboard, and while searching for the particular dainty he fancied broached the subject of his visit in general terms. He then turned to the officer he was addressing and politely offered him the kind of delicacy he thought would blend best with the matter in hand.

And then Chockchaw arrived. It began by letting the G.S.O.3 down badly the first day. All unsuspecting of its properties he rang up a Division, popped a piece into his mouth and waited. In due time the call came through, but no word could he utter. "Chockchaw lockjaw" had set in. Only a horrible sound like the squelching of ten gum-boots in the mud reached the indignant Staff at the other end. After a minute's monologue they rang off in disgust.

Yet in spite of all difficulties the vogue of Chockchaw swept through the Corps. It is such a ripe, rich, full-flavoured irresistible concoction. Disadvantages there are, of course, but, on the other hand, if you want to be quiet, it is easy to lure the unsuspecting intruder on to Chockchaw and leave it at that. After vain efforts the poor fellow usually creeps away like a cat with too big a bone and chews himself back to speech round the corner. He seldom returns, and if he does--there is always more Chockchaw. Should he refuse it this time you can take a piece yourself and save the trouble of answering, anyway.

Chockchaw entailed more perilous chances than at first appeared probable. Indeed at one time it looked like seriously impeding the course of final victory.

On a certain brown November day the G.S.O.2 suddenly jumped up from his chair, ran to the Canteen cupboard, popped a piece of Chockchaw into his mouth (because he had a difficult March Table to make out and needed sustenance) and fell to work whistling like an ordinary human being (who cannot whistle). I.O. (not the gadfly, but the Intelligence Officer) dropped in with his usual list of suspected hostile emplacements. He took Chockchaw in case he was asked pertinent questions. He has to be _so_ careful what he gives away unofficially.

He knows so much. Germans try to steal his summaries to find out what their own intentions really are. The A.D.C. dropped in for his usual morning chat and Chockchaw. The Staff Officer R.A. (S.O.R.A.), that inveterate sweet-guzzler, also dropped in.

"Hullo, what are you fellows munching?" asked the General, coming in muddled all over. "Give me a bit; I've had no breakfast. What's the news, Intelligence?" (No answer) "Is that Move Order done, by the way?" (No answer.) "Why, what the--Good Lord, I'm stuck! What stuff is this you've given me?" And there they all stood chumping in silence.

The telephone rang. The absurdity of a dumb Staff tickled everybody. They winked their appreciation of the situation at one another. Not to be able to say "Thank you" on being instructed "with reference to my telegram of to-day for L/Cpl. Plunkett read L/Cpl. Plonkett," appealed to them. Amidst the chuckles and gluggels of all, the G.S.O.3 was obliged to lift the receiver. Something of the seriousness of the occasion must have communicated itself to the others, for they crowded round him, mumbling and munching sympathetically. Speechless, the poor fellow wrote hastily on a buff slip of paper a Name, and passed it round. It was the name of an Excessively Resplendent One, whose lightest word results in headlines in the less expensive daily press.

A frightful panic came over all. What--a General Staff ceasing to function even for a minute? It was unthinkable. The news would be flashed through to all concerned and become the subject of conversation in ten thousand messes that evening. It must not be. Never was there such a kneading and gnashing of teeth. But to no purpose. You cannot hurry Chockchaw; time, and time alone, will defeat it. The General tried to pack it all into one cheek. Useless; to attempt to sculpture in seccotine would have been a simpler task. The G.S.O.2 tried a frontal swallow, but only lined his throat more and more thickly until respiration became difficult. The S.O.R.A. nearly swallowed his tongue. The A.D.C., having cricked his jaw in the first five seconds, counted ten and threw up the sponge. The voice at the telephone became louder and more insistent. Flushed, hot and flurried, the G.S.O.3 thrust the receiver into the hands of the G.S.O.2, who handed it on to the General, who dropped it. Nobody spoke. Only the crackling and cackling voice could be heard from the receiver as it hung face downwards at the end of its cord.

It was a moment demanding imagination. Naturally the Intelligence Officer felt the responsibility. He stepped forward, slapped the mouthpiece three times with the palm of his hand, rang off, rang on and slapped it again. The effect at the other end must have been horrible, but it achieved its purpose. By the time connection had been restored and the blood of the Signal Master demanded, the A.D.C. had cheated with a handkerchief and was able to gasp out that the Corps Commander would enjoy seeing the Resplendent One any time that day.

Thus the honour of the General Staff was saved, the Intelligence Officer vindicated and the vogue of Chockchaw brought to an untimely end.

"You ought," said the General severely to the G.S.O.3--"you ought to be unstuck for bringing such stuff into the office."

"I have never wished so hard in my life, Sir, to be unstuck," said he.

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[Illustration: IN THE TOWER DISTRICT.

"SAY, GUV'NOR, YER MIGHT RESERVE A COUPLE OF FIRST-CLASS DUNGEONS FOR

ME AN' MY FRIENDS ON THE NEXT RAID NIGHT."]

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THE SUPERIOR SEX.

"You are late again," said Clara, as I entered our domestic portal.
"What is it this time?"

Gently but firmly I explained the reason. A certain amount of tact was necessary, for my wife does not care for any remarks that appear to reflect upon her sex.

"Owing to the present abnormal state of things, my dear," I said, "our office is now almost entirely staffed by women. In many ways this is an improvement. Their refining influence upon the dress and deportment of the few remaining male members of the staff is distinctly noticeable. But there are, I regret to say, certain drawbacks. Admittedly our superiors in many respects, in others they are not, I am afraid, equal to the situation. Take, for instance, matters of detail where you--I mean they--should excel. I asked Miss Philpott to write a letter--"

"Did you post that letter for me this morning?" said Clara. "If Mrs. Roberts doesn't get it she won't know where to meet me to-morrow."

It is a woman's privilege to wander from the point at issue. I told Clara somewhat shortly that I had posted the letter, although naturally I did not remember doing so. A man who has hundreds of petty details to deal with every day, as I have, develops an automatic memory--a subconscious mechanism which never fails him.

I explained this to Clara. "Not once in five thousand times would it allow me to pass the pillar-box with an unposted letter in my pocket. Perhaps it is the vivid red--"

"And perhaps your vivid imagination," said my wife. "Well, I am glad you posted the letter, for Mrs. Roberts, as you know, never received the one you posted ten days ago."

"I took that matter up very firmly with the local postmaster," I said. "He explained to me that letters are now almost entirely sorted and delivered by women, and he was afraid mistakes sometimes happened. And just to satisfy you about this last one, which I put as usual in my breast pocket at the back of my other papers--" I produced the contents of my pocket. As I expected the letter was not there.

"Why do you carry so many papers in your pocket? What are they all about?"

"Candidly, my dear, I do not know. Without the element of surprise life would be unbearably monotonous. That element I deliberately carry with me in my breast pocket. When a dull moment comes I empty my pockets. It would surprise you--"

"Nothing you do surprises me," said Clara. "Now go upstairs, please, and make yourself tidy. Have a dull moment--not more than one, for dinner is nearly ready--and get rid of those papers."

Although my wife has not a logical process of thought, at times she makes sensible remarks. I took her advice. As I anticipated I had some surprises.

A few important business memoranda, a sugar form, two income tax demands, a number of private letters and an unpaid coal account made

up the collection. There was really nothing I could part with. Luckily I found two duplicates of the coal account. These I could spare. As I opened one of them Mrs. Roberts's letter fell out of it.

I had just time to catch the post. I managed to reach the front-door unobserved. My wife opened the dining-room window to tell me that dinner was ready. I told her I had forgotten to post a very important business letter.

"A most unusual occurrence," I said.

"Mary can post it for you. Dinner's on the table." Clara extended her hand for the letter. I explained that it was so very important that I could not even trust Mary.

"Mary's sex is, of course, against her," said my wife, "but I'll tell her to hold the letter out at arm's length. You can see her all the way from the window and watch her put it in the pillar-box."

A little candour is sometimes necessary.

"Strangely enough," I said, "the five-thousandth chance has come off. It is true the letter is important, but the business is yours, and the letter is addressed to Mrs. Roberts. I forgot to post it this morning."

"I know you did," said Clara. "You left it behind, and I posted it myself."

Here I saw that I was going to score. "Then what is this?" I asked in triumph.

"This," said Clara, taking it from me, "is the letter you forgot to post ten days ago."

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[Illustration: _Mrs. Judkins_ (_beating up against the draught in the Tube_). "THANK GOODNESS WE SHAN'T 'AVE NO AIR-RAID TO-NIGHT, MRS. 'ARRIS. IT SEEMS TO BE BLOWIN' UP NICELY FOR RAIN."]

* * * * *

TO "MARTIN ROSS."

(_AFTER READING "IRISH MEMORIES."_)

Two Irish cousins greet us here
From BUSHE "the silver-tongued" descended,
Whose lives for close on thirty year
Were indistinguishably blended;
Scorning the rule that holds for cooks,
They pooled their brains and joined their forces,
And wrote a dozen gorgeous books
On men and women, hounds and horses.

They superseded _Handley Cross_;
They glorified the "hunting fever;"
They purged their pages of the dross,
While bettering the fun, of LEVER;
With many a priceless turn of phrase
They stirred us to Homeric laughter,
When painting Ireland in the days
Before Sinn Fein bewitched and "strafed" her.

With them we watched good _Major Yeates_
Contending with litigious peasants,
With "hidden hands" within his gates,
With claims for foxes and for pheasants;
We saw _Leigh Kelway_ drop his chin--
That precious English super-tripper--
In shocked amazement drinking in
The lurid narrative of _Slipper_.

Philippa's piercing peacock squeals,
Uttered in moments of expansion;
The grime and splendour of the meals
Of _Mrs. Knox_ and of her mansion;
The secrets of horse-coping lore,
The loves of _Sally_ and of _Flurry_--
All these delights and hundreds more
Are not forgotten in a hurry.

Yet the same genial pens that freight
Our memories with joyous magic
Gave us the tale of _Francie's_ fate--
So vulgar, lovable and tragic;
Just to the land that gave them birth
They showed her smiling, sad and sullen,
And turning from the paths of mirth
Probed the dark soul of _Charlotte Mullen_.

Alas! the tie, so close, so dear,
Two years ago death rent asunder;
Hushed is the voice so gay and clear
Which moved us once to joy and wonder;
Yet, though they chronicle a loss
Whose pang no lapse of time assuages,
The spirit of brave "MARTIN ROSS"
Shines like a star throughout these pages.

Here in her letters may one trace
The generous scorn, the gentle pity,
The easy unaffected grace,
The wisdom that was always witty;
Here, mirrored in a sister soul,
One sees the comrade, strong yet tender,
Who marched unfaltering to her goal
Through sacrifice and self-surrender.

* * * * *

THE FOOD OF THE FAMOUS.

The publication of Lord RHONDDA'S daily menu will, we hope, lead other prominent people who are striving to follow his good example to divulge the details of their dietary. But in case their natural modesty may prevent them from doing so, Mr. Punch ventures to supply a few unauthorised particulars.

The source of Mr. LLOYD GEORGE'S boundless energy has long been a mystery. It is now known to be derived from a raw leek eaten on rising, and a dinner of Welsh rabbit, made from a modicum of Government cheese and half a slice of war bread.

With Mr. BONAR LAW all meals are oatmeals. A plate of porridge at daybreak, bannocks slightly margarined, when possible, for lunch, and a stiff cup of gruel just after Question time keep him alert and smiling.

Thanks to the Spartan habits formed during his connection with both services, belt-tightening has no terrors for Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL. A quid of Navy tobacco suffices for breakfast, and his only other meal consists of a slice of bully beef with a hard biscuit served on an inverted packing-case.

The wild rumours recently current as to the amount of nutriment required for the upkeep of Mr. G.K. CHESTERTON have now been happily set at rest. The needful calories for twenty-four hours of his strenuous existence are supplied by two cups of cocoa, a shred of dried toast, a Brazil nut, a glass of sodawater and a grilled banana.

* * * * *

"In one case the good cows from one herd had an average production of 9,592 lbs. milk, and 406 lbs. of fat, while the poor cows had a production of only 3,098 lbs. of milk and 119 lbs. of tea."--_Farming News_.

Give us the poor cows every time.

* * * * *

From a Church paper:--

"EARLY CHRISTIANS.' I am sorry you cannot get these from the Army and Navy Stores."

It sounds like the old tiger story.

* * * * *

"A certain company commander, looking out of his quarters, saw several Germans in possession of a dump not far away. Although still in his sleeping clothes, he seized his trench tick and rushed towards them. Why they did not fire upon him is one of those little mysteries which will probably never be explained."--_Daily Paper_.

Unless by the learned author of _Minor Horrors of War_, who knows all about the fauna of the trenches.

* * * * *

THE PERFECT CUSTOMER.

It was a very ordinary country sale of work. The Countess of Bilberry declared it open in a neat little speech, and then bought generously from every stall: her daughter, whose smile nobody could resist, did a fine trade with raffle tickets for the record pumpkin produced by the local allotments: Mrs. Dodd, the Rector's wife, presided over a pair of scales and a strictly rationed tea, and all the rest of the village sold vegetables and socks and pincushions, and tried to pretend that antimacassars and shaving tidies and woolwork waistbelts were the most desirable things in the world when they were made by wounded men at the nearest Red Cross Hospital, in whose aid the sale was held.

But there was one unique figure amongst all the folk who knew each other, and each other's clothes, and each other's clothes' cost, so well. She arrived at the Village Hall in a pony-carriage, drawn by the ugliest little pony that ever sniffed oats. She was very quietly and very tastefully dressed, and, instead of concentrating on the well-laden stalls of garden produce or the orderly stacks of knitted comforts, or the really useful baskets, she went straight to the stall which even Mrs. Dodd, who had the kindest heart in the countryside,

had been compelled to relegate to a dark corner. There was woolwork run riot over cushions of incredible hardness; there were candle-shades guaranteed to catch alight at the mere sight of a match; there were crochet dressing-table mats, and there was a three-legged stool on which even a fairy could not have sat without danger of a break-down.

The youngest Miss Dodd, a severely practical young lady of sixteen, who was presiding at this stall, jumped up in surprise at the sight of a customer, and in doing so knocked over a glass box bound with red and white and blue ribbon, with "Handkerchiefs" painted across the corner in a design of forget-me-nots. There was very little glass box left when she picked it up, and the splinters had made a good many little craters in the surface of a big bowl of clotted cream, labelled "Positively the last appearance for the Duration of the War," which was at the corner of the next stall.

The little stranger said that she would take the box and the damaged cream too; she bought a whole family of crochet mats with centres of orange woollen loops; three pincushions made of playing cards discharged as no longer fit for active service; a table-centre with pen-painting of the Allied flags, and a letter-case with the badges of the Dominions worked in wool and "Across the sea, A letter from thee," straggling wearily across one corner. Then there was an antimacassar in purple and magenta sateen, with yellow daffodils making a brave attempt to flourish in unlikely surroundings.

At the next stall she bought a photograph frame which had lost its prop in an unequal contest with a tea-tray which had collapsed from the heartiness of the Rector's clapping at the conclusion of the Countess's speech; and a Noah's Ark from which the star performer and his very best beasts had somehow disappeared.

Then the little lady paused before the live-stock stall.

"There isn't anything really hideous here," she murmured to herself; "but I think that puppy--it's never had its tail cut, and nobody will ever know whether it's a sealyham, a spaniel or even a dash of a setter--I will take the puppy, please," she added, "as soon as I've had some tea. After that I will see what is left. You have such nice things."

After tea she went back to the youngest Miss Dodd and collected a few more of the more glaring atrocities, paid her bills, and then went off to her pony-carriage; the youngest Miss Dodd, very much inclined to giggle, bearing armfuls of odd purchases in her wake, crowned by the bowl of cream and the mongrel pup. She handed them in and was just going away when the little old lady pressed a piece of paper into her hand.

"I don't like to worry people," she said gently, "but if you have time you might read this. It has been a great opportunity to-day; I don't often find so much to be done--and I shall love the puppy."

The youngest Miss Dodd watched the start of the ugly pony with a snigger and then went back into the lighted hall to read the pamphlet. It was a touching little document--many people know it well--and the youngest Miss Dodd, who had never been known to sentimentalize over anything before, blew her nose rather violently when she had read it.

"Bless her dear little soul!" she said to herself: "I don't wonder that pup was trying to kiss her. I only hope she won't try to eat that cream with the glass in it, or give it to the pup." For the pamphlet was the Rules for Membership and a treatise on the Objects and Methods of the "Society for Buying What Nobody Wants."

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MORE PROFITEERING.

"Beautiful champagne broche silk crepe de chine blouse; open neck; one button; cost 2s. 6d.; accept 15s."--_The Lady_.

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[Illustration: INEFFICIENCY IN THE NAVY.

First Bluejacket. "HULLO, MATE, I THOUGHT YOU WAS ASHORE WITH THE CAPTAIN, PLAYING GOLF."

Second Bluejacket. "WELL, SO I WAS. IT'S LIKE THIS 'ERE. 'E GIVES ME 'IS STICKS TO CARRY, AND THEN TAKES ONE AND PUTS A LI'L WHITE BALL ON TOP OF A BIT O' SAND AND, MY WORD! HE CATCHES THAT BALL A FAIR SWIPE. MUST 'A' GONE MILES. THEN 'E TURNS TO ME AND SEZ, 'DID YER SEE WHERE THAT WENT TO?' SO I SEZ, SMART LIKE, 'OUT O' SIGHT FROM THE MOMENT OF HIMPACT, SIR,' AN' 'E SEZ, 'GO BACK ON BOARD, YE BLINKIN' FATHEAD!'"

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CONVERSIONS.

There was an exuberant flapper
Who made people anxious to slap her;
She uttered loud squeals
And she smoked at all meals;
Now she's married an elderly sapper.

There was a mild don who was muddy
In mind and complexion by study;
Now he flies fast and far,
With a cross and a bar,
And his face and his language are ruddy.

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"BRITISH FRONT REINFORCED.

"BY PERCIVAL PHILLIPS."

Daily Paper.

Intrepid fellows, our war correspondents. What a pity there are so few of them!

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"A long, keen dagger will be supplied to every American infantryman going to France. This weapon will be fitted into one of the fighting men's leggings when he goes into action, so he will have something to fall back on should his bayonet fail."--_Canadian Paper_.

If he's going to fall back on it, we hope the sharp end won't be at the top.

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[Illustration: _The Sub_. "I SAY, SERGEANT-MAJOR, DO YOU REALISE THAT THAT CHAP WITH THE BARROW IS A MEMBER OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY?"
The Sergeant-Major. "WELL, SIR, 'E MAY BE WHAT YOU SAY. PERSONALLY

I'VE ALWAYS FOUND 'IM QUIET AND WELL-BE'AVED."]

* * * * *

THE CLYDE-BUILT CLIPPER.

[Many of the fast-sailing clippers which were making fine passages in the Australian wool trade in the 'seventies and onwards were laid up or turned into hulks before the War. Recently, however, several have been re-fitted for sea and are once more doing good service.]

A ship there was, and she went to sea
(Away O, my Clyde-built clipper!)
In eighteen hundred and seventy-three,
Fine in the lines and keen in the bow,
The way they've forgotten to build 'em now:
Lofty masted and heavily sparred,
With stunsail booms to every yard,
And flying kites both high and low
To catch the wands when they did blow
(And away, my Clyde-built clipper!).

Fastest ship on the Colonies run--
(Away O, my racing clipper!)
That was her when her time begun;
Sixteen knots she could easily do,
And thirteen knots on a bowline too;
She could show her heels to anything made
With sky-sails set in a favouring trade,
Or when she was running her easting down
From London River to Hobart Town
(And away, my racing clipper!).

Old shellbacks knew her near and far
(Away O, my old-time clipper!)
From Circular Quay to Mersey Bar,
And many a thundering lie they told
About her runs in the days of old;
But the time did come and the time did go,
And she grew old as we all must grow,
And the most of her gear was carried away
When caught aback in a gale one day
(And away, my old-time clipper!).

Her masts were sprung from fore to mizen
(Away O, my poor old clipper!)
And freights was poor and dues had risen,
And there warn't no sense in rigging her new,
So they laid her up for a year or two;
And there they left her, and there she lay,
And there she might have been laying to-day,
But when cargoes are many and ships are few
A ship's a ship be she old or new
(And away, my poor old clipper!).

So in nineteen hundred and seventeen
(Away O, my brave old clipper!)
They've rigged her new and they've scraped her clean
And sent her to sea in time of war
To sail the seas as she sailed before.
And in nineteen hundred and seventeen
She's the same good ship as she's always been;
Her ribs are as staunch and her hull's as sound
As any you'd find the wide world round

(And away, my brave old clipper!).

The same as they were when she went to sea
(Away O, my Clyde-built clipper!)
In eighteen hundred and seventy-three,
Fine in the lines and keen in the bow,
The way they've forgotten to build 'em now;
Lofty masted and heavily sparred,
With stunsail booms to every yard,
And flying kites both high and low
To catch the winds when they did blow--
(And away, my Clyde-built clipper!).

C.F.S.

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[Illustration: THE LAST CRUSADE. COEUR-DE-LION (_looking down on the Holy City_). "MY DREAM COMES TRUE!"]

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ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, December 10th--One would gather from the hoardings that the Government wished to encourage the sale of War Bonds by every possible means. Yet the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER threw cold water on the efforts of certain firms to increase the sale by the offer of cash prizes, and thought it undesirable that this inducement should be imitated. The advocates of Premium Bonds were a little depressed by this announcement, but cheered up somewhat on observing that the conscientious CHANCELLOR has no intention of refusing the millions already raked into the Treasury by these "schemes of doubtful legality."

[Illustration: THE BAD BOYS OF BROMPTON AND OXFORD STREETS.]

On the vote for an increase of fifty thousand men for the Navy Mr. GEORGE LAMBERT solemnly announced that the Admiralty was "fumbling with a magnificent weapon." It is distressing to think that a body which for nearly ten years enjoyed his services as Civil Lord should have deteriorated so rapidly since he left it.

Mr. LYNCH does not think much of the new scheme for securing unity of effort among the Allies. He called it "the analogue of the Aulic Council" (pronounced "Owlic," to give more effect to the description).

The Chequers Estate Bill passed through all its stages amid a chorus of praise, despite the injunction of the generous donors that there should be "no flowers."

Tuesday, December 11th--After all, London is to have the BARNARD statue, despite the protest of Lord CHARNWOOD, LINCOLN'S latest biographer, that it is not a portrait of his hero, but of a man whose only connection with the PRESIDENT was that he was born in the same neighbourhood. Against this Lord WEARDALE quoted Mr. ROOSEVELT'S description of the statue as "the Lincoln we all knew and loved." As Mr. ROOSEVELT had reached the mature age of six when LINCOLN was assassinated the COMMISSIONER OF WORKS seems to have regarded his testimony as conclusive.

At the request of Mr. KING the Peers are to be allowed to listen to the secret debates of the Commons, if any of them desire to do so. The hon. Member having expressed a hope that the Peers would grant reciprocal facilities to the Commons, Mr. HOGGE kindly suggested that

the Government should grant him "all the privileges of the House of Lords." But Mr. BONAR LAW declined to deprive the House of Commons in that way of one of its brightest ornaments; so the "Mad Hatter" will not be called upon just yet awhile to exchange his traditional headgear for a coronet.

I presume some Members of Parliament know what "non-ferrous metals" are, and what is the object of the Bill which the Government has introduced to deal with them. But the views which they took on the subject were so obscurely divergent that all I could gather from the debate was that in some way or other the measure was intended to be a nasty knock for German trade. That was good enough for the House at large, which passed the Second Reading by a substantial majority.

[Illustration: A HORRIBLE MENACE. MR. JOSEPH KING.]

Wednesday, December 12th--Mr. PRINGLE, having asserted that candidates for appointments under the War Office were successful simply on account of possessing a "pull" with the Selection Department, was quietly reminded by the UNDER-SECRETARY that he himself had attempted to use his influence on behalf of a candidate. Mr. PRINGLE was righteously indignant. He had never asked favours of the War Office; he had merely "recommended men personally known to me." This delicate distinction, which should have convinced Members of Mr. PRINGLE'S disinterestedness, only made them laugh.

On the Vote of Credit for 550 millions the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER was invited by Mr. DILLON to make a survey of the military situation. He replied that all the relevant facts were known already. "The War is going on; the Government and the country intend it shall go on; and money is necessary to make it go on." It is, perhaps, a pity that he did not content himself with this epitome and refuse to be drawn into a discussion of the recent operations near Cambrai. What has Mr. DILLON done to promote the prosecution of the War that he should receive special consideration?

There was a renewed discussion of the censorship of pamphlets. Sir GEORGE CAVE ably defended the regulations, but did not convince everyone that his preference for confiscation over prosecution was entirely sound. The idea that the publishers of these pamphlets would welcome advertisement is probably erroneous, or why was it necessary to insist that they should put their names to them?

Mr. SPENCER HUGHES'S humorous attack upon the CENSOR was much applauded on the Liberal benches. Some of the more brilliant passages would have received even wider appreciation if a good many Members had not heard them a week before from the lips of Mr. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL at a non-political luncheon.

Thursday, December 13th--Lord BERESFORD charged the PRIME MINISTER with having two voices, like _Caliban's_ monster. Lord CURZON flatly declined to accept the suggestion that Cabinet Ministers were collectively responsible for one another's speeches--"they had far more serious things to think of." The phrase seems a little depreciatory, but as Mr. LLOYD GEORGE, according to his candid colleague, is "constitutionally an optimist" he will no doubt make the best of it.

Mr. HOUSTON was informed that sweets "for military, naval or civil consumption" were still being imported, but that the Ministry of Shipping made no special provision for their carriage. No one, therefore, need grudge Sir ERIC GEDDES the lozenge which he so ostentatiously popped into his mouth just before making his speech on Admiralty administration, or inquire too curiously whether it was consumed by him in his capacity of Major-General, Vice-Admiral

or Civilian Minister.

Despite the warning of the SPEAKER that it was not in the national interest to embarrass the Administration, Mr. KING insisted on trying to discuss forbidden topics. At last Lord ROBERT CECIL "espied strangers," and we must assume that, without the vivifying presence of the reporters, Mr. KING'S oratory wilted, for an hour afterwards the House was up.

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[Illustration: _Polite Stranger_. "EXCUSE MY TURNING MY BACK UPON YOU, SIR."

Curmudgeon. "SIR, I KNOW OF NO OBLIGATION ON YOUR PART TO LOOK AT ME."]

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THE REWARD OF PATRIOTISM.

"Major ---- has placed the mansion at the disposal of the War Office, and will be in charge of Sister ----."--_Provincial Paper_.

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THINGS OVERHEARD IN WAR-TIME.

"There couldn't be room there for _all_ the Jews, could there?"

* * * * *

"After waiting two hours I got half-a-pound."

* * * * *

"It should be made compulsory."

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"Wherever else these matches strike, they won't strike on the box."

* * * * *

"I just turned over and went to sleep again."

* * * * *

"I wish the Government would tell _me_ what I could do for them."

* * * * *

"Oh, another three years."

* * * * *

"What puzzles me is--Where is the paper shortage?"

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"We keep a gramophone in the basement now."

* * * * *

"No one is more willing than I am to do something."

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"It's the children's festival--that's what I always say."

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HERBS OF GRACE.

IX.

PENNYROYAL.--A CAROL.

_"Far away in Sicily!"--
_A home-come sailor sang this rhyme,
Deep in an ingle, mug on knee,
At Christmas time._

In Sicily, as I was told,
The children take them Pennyroyal,
The same as lurks on hill and wold
In Cotsall soil.

The Pennyroyal of grace divine
In little cradles they do weave--
Little cradles therewith they line
On Christmas Eve.

And there, as midnight bells awake
The Day of Birth, as they do tell,
All into bud the small plants break
With sweetest smell.

All into bud that very hour;
And pure and clean, as they do say,
The Pennyroyal's full in flower
On Christmas Day.

_"Far away in Sicily!"--
_Hark, the Christmas bells do chime!
So blossom love in thee and me
This Christmas time!_

W.B.

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[Illustration: Lady (to uniformed friend). "I SHOULDN'T A BIT
MIND WEARING UNIFORM IF ONLY ONE COULD CHOOSE ONE'S OWN COLOURS AT
THE WAR OFFICE."]

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THE V.C.

My cousin Agatha has been a bad correspondent ever since she married my old friend, George Thimblewell, which means for the past five-and-twenty years, so in ordinary circumstances I do not expect more from her than a "hasty line" to tell me how the youngsters are doing (George, of course, never writes at all). But I must say I was surprised and not a little hurt when, in the skimpy margin of a letter dealing mainly with the difficulty of devising breakfast-dishes, she scribbled in the most casual manner conceivable, "George has got the V.C. at last."

George, my dear old school-chum, with the V.C., and his wife tells me of it as casually as if it had been a gumboil! I sat with her letter before me and looked back through the years, seeing us two--George and myself--as we were long before Agatha even knew him. Had I not fostered the yearning for heroic deeds in his young bosom? Was it not possible, nay probable, that the influence of his boyhood's companion had helped to mould his character and prepare it for this glorious if belated achievement? Upon my word it seemed to me that I myself might well take a certain amount of credit for that decoration. And here was his wife mentioning it as though she scarcely expected me to be interested. Never a date, never a detail.

I was so ruffled that I decided, since she vouchsafed no information, to ask for none, as became a man with proper pride. I adopted a semi-jocular vein to meet the case.

"I have known your V.C. longer than you have, Agatha," I wrote, "and am as pleased and proud as you can be. The strong silent type--you can rely upon them. Quiet and domesticated, requiring little attention, helpful about the house, undemonstrative perhaps, but all the time ready for the most desperate emergency. Let me know when George is to be at home, and I shall come to dinner and hear all about it."

As I sealed my note it occurred to me that George must be the first special constable to win the Cross, and I felt a glow of satisfaction to realise that we must now be eligible for that most glorious of all decorations.

A few days later came another note from Agatha, about sugar-cards this time, but with a postscript which said, "It isn't like you to chaff me, James. I don't see that there is anything particularly funny about George having got the Vacuum Cleaner which he promised me long ago."

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BIG GAME.

"General Allenby reports that Budrus and Sheikh Obeid Rahid, to the north of Midieh, were captured by Gurkhas, 50 Tanks being killed and 10 taken prisoners."--_Evening Paper_.

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"Ruler wanted, experienced, male or female (male preferred); wages according to ability; removal assistance; away from raid area; permanency to suitable applicant."--_Eastern Daily Press_.

This might suit the KAISER, when Sir DOUGLAS HAIG has provided the necessary "removal assistance."

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"WHERE EX-TSAR KEEPS HIS GLOOMY COURT.

"Built mostly of wood, the Imperial family occupies a brick mansion."--_News of the World_.

We are intended to infer, presumably, that if the Imperial Family had been constructed of stouter material it might still be in the Winter Palace.

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[Illustration: _Motor Driver_. "NAH, THEN, WHERE'S YOUR REAR LIGHT?"]

Countryman. "NOW, THEN, YE OWD ZEPPERLEEN, DO YE THINK I'M GOING TO
SHOW YE WHERE I BE?"]

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TO THE REGIMENT.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE.

So Christmas comes and finds you yet in Flanders,
And all is mud and messiness and sleet,
And men have temperatures and horses glanders,
And Brigadiers have trouble with their feet,
And life is bad for Company-Commanders,
And even Thomas's is not so sweet.

Now cooks for kindlewood would give great riches,
And in the dixies the pale stew congeals,
And ration-parties are not free from hitches,
But all night circle like performing seals,
Till morning breaks and everybody pitches
Into a hole some other person's meals.

Now regiments huddle over last week's ashes
And pray for coal and sedulously "rest,"
Where rain and wind condemn the empty sashes,
And blue lips frame the faint heroic jest,
Till some near howitzer goes off and smashes
The only window that the town possessed.

Yet somehow Christmas in your souls is stirring,
And Colonels now less viciously upbraid
Their Transport Officers, however erring,
And sudden signals issue from Brigade
To say next Tuesday Christmas is occurring,
And what arrangements have Battalions made?

And then, maybe, while everyone discusses
On what rich foods their dear commands shall dine,
And (most efficiently) the Padre fusses
About the birds, the speeches and the wine--
The Corps-Commander sends a fleet of 'buses
To whisk you off to Christmas in the line.

You make no moan, nor hint at how you're faring,
And here in turn we try to hide our woe,
With taxis mutinous, and Tubes so wearing,
And who can tell where all the matches go?
And all our doors and windows want repairing,
But can we get a man to mend them? No.

The dustman visits not; we can't get castor;
In vain are parlour-maids and plumbers sought,
And human intellect can scarcely master
The time when beer may lawfully be bought,
Or calculate how cash can go much faster,
And if one's butcher's acting as he ought.

Our old indulgences are now not cricket;
Whate'er one does some Minister will cuss;
In Tube and Tram young ladies punch one's ticket,
With whom one can't be cross or querulous;
All things are different, but still we stick it,
And humbly hope we help a little thus.

So, Fellow-sufferers, we give you greeting--
All luck, all laughter and an end of wars!
And just to strengthen you for Fritz's beating,
I'm sending out a parcel from the Stores;
_They mean to stop my annual over-eating,
But it will comfort me to think of yours._

A.P.H.

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THE BANK'S MISTAKE.

"I wish," said Francesca, "you would explain something to me."

"I am full," I said, "of explanations of every conceivable difficulty. You have only to tap me and an explanation will come bubbling out."

"I am not sure that I want the bubbling sort. On the whole I think I prefer the still waters that run deep."

"Those too can be provided for you. All you have got to do is to ask."

"What a comfort it is," she said, "to live constantly in the mild and magnificent eye of an encyclopaedia."

"Yes," I said, "it saves a lot of running about, doesn't it? Come now, fire off your question."

"What is your opinion of the Bank of England?"

"The Bank of England?" I gasped. "One doesn't have opinions of the Bank of England. One just accepts it, you know, and there you are."

"Yes," she said, "that's exactly what I felt about it. I thought it was one of the signs of our superiority to everybody else, with its crisp banknotes and all that."

"You mustn't forget its detachment of the Guards to protect it. Many's the good dinner I've had with the officer of the Bank Guard in the old days."

"I'm afraid that leaves me cold, not being able to take part in it."

"If it gave me pleasure to dine at the Bank, I should have thought the subject would have interested you."

"Well, it wasn't exactly what I wanted to consult you about."

"What was it then?" I said. "You know you mustn't cast doubts on the financial stability of the Bank. You'll be put in prison if you do."

"I shouldn't dream of doing anything of the sort."

"Come, then, be quick about it. This suspense is making me tremble for my War Loan Bonds."

"Is the Bank," said Francesca, "a generous institution?"

"Banks," I said, "cannot afford to be generous. They are just and accurate and there's an end of it."

"The Bank of England," she said, "being so great, is an exception to the rule. Anyhow, it has been generous to me, for it has given me one hundred pounds."

"Do you mean," I cried, "one hundred pounds that don't belong to you?"

"Of course I do. If they had belonged to me there wouldn't have been anything to make a fuss about."

"This," I said, "is one of the most breathless things ever known. A mere woman, who is unskilled in finance and has only the dimmest recollection of the rule of three and compound interest, gets the better of the greatest banking institution in the world to the tune of one hundred pounds. It's incredible. Of course you've made a mistake."

"That's right," she said. "Always go against your wife and think her wrong, even when it is only an institution that she's contending with."

"It's precisely because it is an institution that I doubt your statement."

"You're not very helpful; you don't tell me whether I'm to sit down under the burden of owning one hundred pounds of the bank's money that doesn't belong to me."

"Francesca," I said, "you must calm yourself and tell me as clearly as possible how you came into possession of this extra hundred pounds which is apparently burning a hole in your pocket—if indeed you have a pocket, which I doubt."

"You're quite wrong; I've got two pockets in the dress I'm wearing at this moment."

"I will not," I said, "discuss with you the number of your pockets. Now tell me your pathetic story. I am all ears."

"Well," said Francesca, "it's this way. I put one hundred pounds in the old War Loan, and then Exchequer Bonds came along, and I put one hundred pounds of my very best savings into them, and then came the new Five per Cent. War Loan, and somehow or other I got converted into that. And after that there was what they called a broken amount, which I brought up to fifty pounds or a multiple of fifty pounds. That cost me about forty pounds. I don't know why they wanted me to do it or why I did it."

"Probably they thought it would be easier for the Bank."

"That's paltry; easiness ought to have nothing to do with it."

"Anyhow," I said, "I make out from your statement that you ought to have two hundred and fifty pounds of Five per Cent. Stock to your credit."

"Precisely," said Francesca impressively, "but yesterday morning I received from the bank a dividend thing--"

"You may call it a warrant," I said.

"A dividend warrant," continued Francesca, "for eight pounds fifteen shillings on three hundred and fifty pounds, so what have you got to say now for your precious Bank of England?"

"Your tale," I said, "has interested me strangely, but there is one point you omitted to mention."

"I am innocent, my Lord," said Francesca. "I have told you the truth."

"But not the whole truth, prisoner at the bar. Don't you remember that when the new Loan came out you borrowed money from me in order to take up one hundred pounds of it?"

"Is _that_ it?" said Francesca. "No, I hadn't remembered that."

"Of course," I said, "a financial magnate like yourself would easily forget so wretched a sum; but the Bank has done no wrong."

"Yes, it has; it sent out a lot of papers that were very confusing, and it's no wonder I made a mistake."

"The question in my mind," I said, "is this: when are you going to repay what you owe me--with interest?"

"We'll talk about that another time," said Francesca.

R.C.L.

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FOR OUR SAILORS AND SOLDIERS.

The Veterans Association is giving a Special Entertainment at the Alhambra on Sunday afternoon, December 30th, on behalf of their Imperial Memorial Fund which is being raised to expand the Veterans Club into an adequate Institution for the comfort of ex-sailors and ex-soldiers, and to provide an Imperial Memorial for those who have given their lives in the War. The Veterans Club in Hand Court, Holborn, has already done a great work during the six or seven years of its existence in looking after sailors and soldiers. Free medical and legal advice is given, and the homes of the men are protected by the storing of their furniture while they are on active service. Employment is also found for soldiers and sailors whose service is done. For the Entertainment at the Alhambra on the 30th, the following artistes, among others, have generously volunteered their services: Miss VIOLET LORAINÉ, Miss PHYLLIS MONCKMAN, Miss WISH WYNNE, Miss ESME BERINGER, Messrs. LAURI DE FRECE, MARK LESTER, HERBERT GROVER and GEORGE ROBEY.

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ANOTHER SEX PROBLEM.

"Henry III. was Queen Mary's brother-in-law, she having been for a short time the husband of his predecessor, Francis II."--_The Sphere._

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[Illustration: THE SPREAD OF THE QUEUE HABIT.]

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OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

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

One of the most interesting features, to an English observer, in the impressive spectacle of America girding herself for war is the sight of our great Ally passing through all those phases of initiation that to us are now remote memories. Such a phase is the coming of the first war-books, exemplified for me by the appearance of _From the Fire Step_ (PUTNAM'S). As his sub-title indicates--_Experiences of an American Soldier in the British Army_--the writer, Mr. ARTHUR GUY

EMPEY, has proved himself something of a pioneer. In a singularly vivacious opening chapter he tells how, after waiting with decreasing expectation during the months that followed the Lusitania crime, he decided to be a law unto himself, and came alone to offer his personal service in the cause of freedom. You will hardly read unmoved (by laughter as much as by sympathy) his story of how this offer was at first refused, then accepted. Throughout indeed you must prepare to find Mr. EMPEY an entirely independent, though generous, critic of our men and methods; it is precisely this attitude that gives his book its chief interest as a survey of all-too-familiar things from a refreshingly new angle. I hardly suppose there will be anything in the actual matter, from church parade to gas-attacks, which readers on this side will not by now have seen or heard about, times beyond number; but one can imagine sympathetically with what concern it will all be received in the homes oversea; and after turning its high-spirited and encouraging pages can warmly echo the admonition of their writer: "Pacifists and small-army people please read with care!"

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Since there is probably no writer who can approach Mrs. FLORA ANNIE STEEL in the art of telling Indian tales about Indian people, one is specially happy to find her in Mistress of Men (HEINEMANN) with her foot once more upon her special terrain. Not for the first time, I think, she has gone to the records of the House of AKBAR for her material; the result here is hardly to be called a novel so much as amplified history, since it is really the life story of an actual (and wonderful) woman, NURJAHAN THE BEAUTIFUL, wife of the Emperor JAHANGIR. Naturally the writer has experienced not only the great advantages but the hazards of such a building upon fact. To explain the marriage of your heroine with the Imperial lover by whose orders her first husband was killed, and not to lessen sympathy for her in the process, is a problem to test the skill of any novelist. One sees, however, even without Mrs. STEEL'S own declaration, that it has been for her a grateful task to set down "a record of the most perfect passion ever shown by man for woman." This was the adoration of the EMPEROR for his consort, an amazing romance of Oriental domesticity, which makes the story of the pair stranger and more fascinating than fiction. A love-tale indeed; and, since 'tis love that makes a book go round, one may trust the circulating libraries to see to it that Mistress of Men is well represented on their shelves. As a study of an alluring, dazzling and masterful personality it was well worth writing.

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There is a sad interest in the title-page of Irish Memories (LONGMANS), since only by a pathetic fiction does it bear the names, as joint authors, of E. OE. SOMERVILLE and "MARTIN ROSS," those two gifted ladies whose association has been such a happy chance for them and for us all. Really the book, though in part compiled from the letters and journals of "MARTIN," is an eloquent tribute by Miss SOMERVILLE to the partner whose death has robbed her of a friend and the world of so much kindly laughter. But, haunted as it is by this shadow of bereavement, you must in no way think of it as wholly a thing of gloom. Looking back into the good years, the writer has recalled many incidents and scenes full of that genial and most infectious merriment that we have learnt to expect from her--tales of the wonderful peasant chorus that one remembers first in the pages of An Irish R.M., exploits after hounds (it needs no telling how well both authors loved them), and much besides. There will be interest also for many uninitiated admirers in the account here given of how the famous stories came first into being. Of its more intimate and personal side I hesitate to speak; those who loved "MARTIN ROSS," either through her writings or in the closer relationship of friend,

must be glad that her *ave atque vale* has been spoken, as she would have wished it, by her whose right it was. It will send many to read again those delightful volumes with a new appreciation of the sympathetic and lovable personality that helped in their making.

* * * * *

I am afraid that something of the charm which, in a sympathetic preface, M. HENRI BORDEAUX claims for *A Crusader in France* (MELROSE) is veiled by a rather faltering translation. I would counsel all who appreciate the exquisitely sensitive *Recit d'une Soeur*, with which he not unfavourably compares it, to go rather to the French original of these letters of a young captain of the famous Chasseurs Alpains. Captain FREDERIC BELMONT fell near the stubbornly-contested Hartmannsweilerkopf in 1916. He was the third of his family to give his life for France. The letters reveal a character that hardships and dangers not only strengthened but refined. He writes with a noble French ardour of his country in the crisis of her fate. He dreads, but rises greatly to the height of, his heavy responsibility as Captain at the age of twenty-one. The coveted cross of the Legion of Honour comes to him before the end, and he wins the affection and confidence of his men--a soldier's highest prize. A deep religious conviction unclouded by superstition sustains his courage. He is a product of the French Catholic tradition at its best. He writes intelligently of his work, and with a greater freedom as to detail than our more exigent censorship allows; so that you get an excellent picture of the daily life of a campaigner in the greatest of all wars. He met the English in Flanders, admired and liked their looks and ways.... A very charming record of a gallant soldier, a chosen soul.

* * * * *

In the first few pages of *At the Serbian Front in Macedonia* (LANE), Mr. E.P. STEBBING tells so many little anecdotes that I began to wonder if he was ever going to get there. When, however, he has got into his stride, he gives us information which is all the more valuable because we hear so little of the Macedonian campaign. Mr. STEBBING was appointed Transport Officer to a unit of the Scottish Women's Hospitals that was sent to the Serbian Front. Naturally he has much to say of the work done by these brave and untiring women. Under exceptionally difficult circumstances their courage never failed, and it is good to remember that their arrival at Ostrovo was of the greatest possible service to the Serbs. That is one part of the book, and it is well told. The other is of actual war, and here Mr. STEBBING was given ample opportunities to observe. No one can read his account of the taking of Kajmakalan without feeling the keenest admiration for the gallantry of the Serbs. He also describes very graphically the frontal attack by the French upon the Kenali lines in October, 1916. The British public is too apt to look upon the Macedonian campaign as a prolonged picnic, and for them a dose of Mr. STEBBING would be excellent medicine. I wish someone with our own troops would do as sound a service for them as is done here for the Serbs and French. But let him avoid anecdotes.

* * * * *

I am a little puzzled about *A Bolt from the East* (METHUEN). The publishers, who surely should know, call it "A modern and up-to-date romance, which deals mystically but boldly with the greatest and most pertinent of all questions--'Is Life Worth Living?'" But for my own part the greatest and most pertinent question suggested by Mr. G.F. TURNER'S up-to-date romance was whether it could possibly have been intended as serious. I despair of giving you any adequate idea of its contents. There are lots and lots of characters, and, as several of them seem to own more than one personality, it is often more than a

little hard to say who is what. The central figure is an Indian Prince of marvellous beauty and mysterious powers, who, being jilted by the girl of his heart, wishes to be revenged upon the human race. To this end he employs the activities of a German Professor, who produces what one might call a _Kultur_ of the sterility germ. However, these cheery projects go astray, though in precisely what manner I have no very clear idea. But the end came at a gathering where the _Prince_ played psychic music, and a chance union of hands between hero and heroine transmuted the former from "a dilettante" and "polished ladies' man" to "a virile male filled with the blasting vehemence of primary passions." Incidentally it proved altogether too much both for the _Professor_ and his inoculated rabbits, all of whom expired on the spot. Just about here that most pertinent question became more acute than ever. Fortunately it was the last page but one of the story.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _The Visitor_. "I HEAR YOUR BOY IS IN PALESTINE. HOW INTERESTING IT MUST BE FOR HIM TO MOVE AMONG THOSE SCENES WHERE EVERY SPOT BEINGS UP SOME RECOLLECTION OF THE WONDERFUL EVENTS OF BIBLICAL HISTORY!"

The Mother. "TED DON'T SAY MUCH ABOUT THAT IN 'IS LETTERS. 'E SEEMS TO THINK THE COUNTRY IS SUFFERIN' FROM A FLY-PAPER SHORTAGE."]

* * * * *

"Senhor Rodrique Bettencourt will be Premier, and Senhor Adinterin, President of the Republic."--_Dublin Daily Express_.

But is nothing to be done for Senhors Defacto and Dejure?

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