

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 153, October 31, 1917

Various

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PUNCH,
OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.
VOL. 153.

October 31, 1917.

CHARIVARIA.

The Ministry of Food has informed the Twickenham Food Control Committee that a doughnut is not a bun. Local unrest has been almost completely allayed by this prompt and fearless decision.

Many London grocers are asking customers to hand in orders on Monday to ensure delivery within a week. In justice to a much-abused State department it must be pointed out that telegrams are frequently delivered within that period without any absurd restriction as to the

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day of handing in.

No more hotels in London, says Sir ALFRED MOND, are to be taken over at present by the Government, which since the War began has commandeered nearly three hundred buildings. We understand, however, that a really spectacular offensive is being prepared for the Spring.

Several parties of Germans who escaped from internment camps have been recaptured with comparative ease. It is supposed that their gentle natures could no longer bear the spectacle of the sacrifices that the simple Briton is enduring in order that they may be well fed.

The Globe has just published an article entitled "The End of the World." Our rosy contemporary is far too pessimistic, we feel. Mr. CHURCHILL'S appointment as Minister of the Air has not yet been officially announced.

The Vossische Zeitung reports that the KAISER refuses to accept the resignation of Admiral VON CAPELLE. The career of Germany's Naval chief seems to be dogged by persistent bad luck.

Another scoop for The Daily Telegraph. "On October 14, 1066, at nine A.M.," said a recent issue, "the Battle of Hastings commenced."

We fear that our allotment-holders are losing their dash. The pumpkin grown at Burwash Place, which measured six feet in circumference, is still a pumpkin and not a potato.

The Grimsby magistrates have decided not to birch boys in the future, but to fine their parents. Several soft-hearted boys have already indicated that it will hurt them more than their parents.

A female defendant at a London police court last week was given the choice of prison or marriage, and preferred to get married. How like a woman!

A correspondent protests against the high prices paid for old postage-stamps at a recent sale, and points out that stamps can be obtained at one penny each at most post-offices, all ready for use.

A North of England lady last week climbed to the top of the chimney-stack of a large munition works and affixed a silver coin in the masonry. The lady is thought to be nervous of pickpockets.

A contemporary wit declares that nothing gives him more pleasure than to see golfers at dinner. He loves to watch them doing the soup course, using one iron all the way round.

There is no truth in the rumour that during a recent air-raid a man was caught on the roof of a certain Government building in Whitehall signalling to the Germans where not to drop their bombs.

It should be added that the practice of giving air-raid warnings by notice published in the following morning's papers has been abandoned only after the most exhaustive tests.

The Home Office announces that while it has not definitely decided upon the method of giving warnings at night it will probably be by gun fire. To distinguish this fire from the regular barrage it is ingeniously suggested that the guns employed for the latter purpose shall be painted blue, or some other distinctive colour.

It is reported that Sinn Fein's second-best war-cry, "Up the KAISER," is causing some irritation in the Wilhelmstrasse, where it is freely admitted that the KAISER is already far higher up than the circumstances justify.

The Lambeth magistrate recently referred to the case of a boy of fifteen who is paying income-tax. Friends of the youth have since been heard to say that there is such a thing as carrying the spirit of reckless bravado too far.

"Farm work is proceeding slowly," says a Midland correspondent of the Food Production Department. Those who recall the impetuous abandon of the pre-war agriculturist may well ask whether Boloism has not been work at again.

Railway fares in Germany have been doubled; but it is doubtful if this transparent artifice will prevent the KAISER from going about the place making speeches to his troops on all the fronts.

It is announced that promotion in the U.S. services will be based solely on fitness, without regard to seniority. These are the sort of revolutionists who would cover up grave defects in army organisation by the meretricious expedient of winning the War.

Inquiries, says The Pall Mall Gazette, disclose a wide-spread habit among customers of bribing the assistants in grocery shops. The custom among profiteers of giving them their cast-off motor cars probably acted as the thin end of the wedge.

A dear old lady writes that she is no longer nervous about air-raids,
now that her neighbourhood has been provided with an antiaircraft airgun.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE AIR-RAID SEASON.

THE RESULT OF A LITTLE UNASSUMING ADVERTISEMENT: "CELLARMAN
WANTED.--APPLY, 82, --- STREET, W."]

* * * * *

FOOD ECONOMY IN IRELAND.

"Gloves, stockings, boots and shoes betoken the energy and meal
of the day, something tasty is desirable, and a very economical
dish of this kind can be made by making..."--_Belfast Evening
Telegraph._

* * * * *

ZEPP-FLIGHTING IN THE HAUTES ALPES.

TO J.M.

Recall, dear John, a certain day
Back in the times of long ago--
A stuffy old estaminet
Under the great peaks fledged with snow;
The Spring that set our hearts rejoicing
As up the serried mountains' bar
We climbed our tortuous way Rolls-Roycing
From Gap to Col Bayard.

Little we dreamed, though that high air
Quicken's imagination's flight,
What monstrous bird and very rare
Would in these parts some day alight;
How, like a roc of Arab fable,
A Zepp _en route_ from London town,
Trying to find its German stable,
Would here come blundering down.

The swallows--you remember? yes?--
Northward, just then, were heading straight;
No hint they dropped by which to guess
That other fowl's erratic fate;
An inner sense supplied their vision;
Not one of them contused his scalp
Or lost his feathers in collision
Bumping against an Alp.

But they, the Zepp-birds, flopped and barged
From Luneville to Valescure
(Where we of old have often charged
The bunkers of the Cote d'Azur);
And half a brace--so strange and far a
Course to the South it had to shape--
Is still expected in Sahara
Or possibly the Cape.

In happier autumns you and I

(You by your art and I by luck)
Have pulled the pheasant off the sky
Or flogged to death the flighting duck;
But never yet--how few the chances
Of pouching so superb a swag--
Have we achieved a feat like France's
Immortal gas-bag bag.

O.S.

* * * *

PURPLE PATCHES FROM LORD YORICK'S GREAT BOOK.

(SPECIAL REVIEW.)

Lord Yorick's Reminiscences, just published by the house of Hussell, abound in genial anecdote, in which the "personal note" is lightly and gracefully struck, in welcome contrast to the stodgy political memoirs with which we have been surfeited of late. We append some extracts, culled at random from these jocund pages:--

THE SHAH'S ROMANCE.

"I don't suppose it is a State secret--but if it is there can be no harm in divulging the fact--that there was some thought of a marriage in the 'eighties' between the Shah of PERSIA and the lovely Miss Malory, the lineal descendant of the famous author of the Arthurian epic. Mr. GLADSTONE, Mme. DE NOVIKOFF and the Archbishop of CANTERBURY were prime movers in the negotiations. But the SHAH'S table manners and his obstinate refusal to be converted to the doctrines of the Anglican Church, on which Miss Malory insisted, proved an insurmountable obstacle, and the arrangement, which might have been fraught with inestimable advantages to Persia, came to nought. Miss Malory afterwards became Lady Yorick."

PRACTICAL JOKING AT OXFORD IN THE "SIXTIES."

"Jimmy Greene, afterwards Lord Havering, whose rooms were just below mine, suffered a good deal from practical jokers. One day I was chatting with Reggie Wragge when we heard loud cries for help just below us. We rushed down and found Jimmy in the bath, struggling with a large conger-eel which had been introduced by some of his friends. I held on to the monster's tail, while Wragge severed its head with a carving-knife. Poor Jimmy, who was always nervous and not very 'strong in his intellects,' was much upset, and was shortly afterwards ploughed for the seventh time in Smalls. He afterwards went into diplomacy, but died young."

MRS. MANGOLD'S COMPLEXION.

"At one of these dances at Yorick Castle Mrs. Mangold, afterwards Lady Rootham, was staying with us. She was a very handsome woman, with a wonderful complexion, so brilliant, indeed, that some sceptics believed it to be artificial. A plot was accordingly hatched to solve the problem, and during a set of Kitchen Lancers a syphon of soda-water was cleverly squirted full in her face, but the colour remained fast. Mrs. Mangold, I am sorry to say, failed to see the point of the joke, and fled to her room, pursued as far as the staircase by a score or more of cheering sportsmen."

THE ORDEAL OF LADY VERBENA SOPER.

"Mr. GOSCHEN, as he then was, was entertaining a large party to dinner at Whitehall. He was at the time First Lord of the Admiralty, and an

awkward waiter upset an ice-pudding down the back of Lady Verbena Soper, sister of Lady 'Loofah' Soper and daughter of the Earl of Latherham, The poor lady cried out, 'I'm scalded!' but our host, with great presence of mind, dashed out, returning with a bundle of blankets and a can of hot water, which he promptly poured on to the ice-pudding. The sufferer was then wrapped up in the blankets and carried off to bed; The waiter was of course sacked on the spot, but was saved from prosecution at the express request of his victim and assisted to emigrate to America, where I believe he did well on an orange farm in Florida."

* * * * *

IN A GOOD CAUSE.

There is no War-charity known to Mr. Punch that does better work or more quietly than that which is administered by the Children's Aid Committee, who provide homes in country cottages and farm-houses for children, most of them motherless, of our soldiers and sailors, visit them from time to time and watch over their needs. Here in these homes their fathers, who are kept informed of their children's welfare during their absence, come to see them when on leave from the Front, and find them gently cared for. Since the War began homes have been provided for over two thousand four hundred children. A certain grant in aid is allowed by the London War Pensions Committee, who have learned to depend upon the Children's Aid Committee in their difficulties about children, but for the most part this work relies upon voluntary help, and without advertisement. Of the money that came into the Committee's hands last year only about two per cent. was paid away for salaries and office expenses.

More than a year ago Mr. Punch appealed on behalf of this labour of love, and now he begs his readers to renew the generous response which they made at that time. Gifts of money and clothing, and offers of hospitality, will be gratefully acknowledged by Miss MAXWELL LYTE, Hon. Treasurer of the Children's Aid Committee, 50, South Molton Street, London, W.

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[Illustration: VIVE LA CHASSE!]

[With Mr. Punch's compliments to our gallant Allies on their bag of Zepps.]

* * * * *

STRONGER THAN HERSELF.

In an assortment of nieces, totalling nine in all--but two of them, being still, in Sir WALTER'S phrase, composed of "that species of pink dough which is called a fine infant" do not count--I think that my favourites are Enid and Hannah. Enid being the daughter of a brother of mine, and Hannah of a sister, they are cousins. They are also collaborators in literature and joint editors of a magazine for family consumption entitled _The Attic Salt-Cellar_. The word "Attic" refers to the situation of the editorial office, which is up a very perilous ladder, and "salt-cellar" was a suggestion of my own, which, though adopted, is not yet understood.

During the search for pseudonyms for the staff--the pseudonym is an essential in home journalism, and the easiest way of securing it is to turn one's name round--we came upon the astonishing discovery that Hannah is exactly the same whether you spell it backwards or forwards. Hannah therefore calls herself, again at my suggestion, "Pal,"

which is short for "palindrome." We also discovered, to her intense delight, that Enid, when reversed, makes "Dine"--a pleasant word but a poor pseudonym. She therefore calls herself after her pet flower, "Marigold."

Between them Pal and Marigold do all the work. There is room for an epigram if you happen to have one about you, or even an ode, but they can get along without outside contributions. Enid does most of the writing and Hannah copies it out.

So much for prelude to the story of Enid's serial. Having observed that all the most popular periodicals have serial stories she decided that she must write one too. It was called "The Prairie Lily," and begun splendidly. I give the list of characters at the head of the first instalment:--

The Duke of Week, an angry father and member of the House of Lords.

The Duchess of Week, his wife, once famous for her beauty.

Lady Lily, their daughter, aged nineteen and very lovely.

Mr. Ploot, an American millionaire who loves the Lady Lily.

Lord Eustace Vavasour, the Lady Lily's cousin, who loves her.

Jack Crawley, a young farmer and the one that the Lady Lily loves.

Fanny Starlight, a poor relation and the Lady Lily's very closest friend.

Webb, the Lady Lily's maid.

Such were the characters when the story began, and at the end of the first instalment the author, with very great ingenuity--or perhaps with only a light-hearted disregard of probability--got the whole bunch of them on a liner going to America. The last sentence described the vessel gliding away from the dock, with the characters leaning over the side waving good-bye. Even Jack Crawley, the young farmer, was there; but he was not waving with the others, because he did not want anyone to know that he knew the Lady Lily, or was on board at all. Lord Eustace was on one side of the Lady Lily as she waved, and Mr. Ploot on the other, and they were, of course, consumed with jealousy of each other.

Having read the first instalment, with the author's eye fixed embarrassingly upon me, and the author giggling as she watched, I said that it was very interesting; as indeed it was. I went on to ask what part of America they were all going to, and how it would end, and so on; and Enid sketched the probable course of events, which included a duel for Lord Eustace and Mr. Ploot (who turned out to be not a millionaire at all, but a gentleman thief) and a very exciting time for the Lady Lily on a ranche in Texas, whither she had followed Jack Crawley, who was to become famous throughout the States as "The Cowboy King." I forgot about the Duke and Duchess, but a lover was to be found on the ranche for Fanny Starlight; and Red Indians were to carry off Webb, who was to be rescued by the Cowboy King; and so on. There were, in short, signs that Enid had not only read the feuilletons in the picture papers but had been to the Movies too. But no matter what had influenced her, the story promised well.

Judge then my surprise when on opening the next number of The Attic Salt-Cellar I found that the instalment of the serial consisted only of the following:--

THE PRAIRIE LILY.

CHAPTER II.

All went merrily on the good ship Astarte until the evening of the third day out, when it ran into another and larger ship and was sunk with all hands. No one was saved.

THE END.

"But, my dear," I said, "you can't write novels like that."

"Why not, Uncle Dick?" Enid asked.

"Because it's not playing the game," I said. "After arousing everyone's interest and exciting us with the first chapter, you can't stop it all like this."

"But it happened," she replied. "Ships often sink, Uncle Dick, and this one sank."

"Well, that's all right," I said, "but, my dear child, why drown everyone? Why not let your own people be saved? Not the Duke and Duchess, perhaps, but the others. Think of all those jolly things that were going to happen in Texas, and the duel, and--"

"Yes, I know," she replied sadly. "It's horrid to have to give them up, but I couldn't help it. The ship would sink and no one was saved. I shall have to begin another."

There's a conscience for you! There's realism! Enid should go far.

I have been wondering if there are any other writers of serial stories whose readers would not suffer if similar visitations of inevitability came to them.

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[Illustration: "DO TELL ME, UNCLE, ALL ABOUT THIS PERSIFLAGE YOU PUT ON YOUR TENTS."]

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ANOTHER IMPENDING APOLOGY.

"SOME OF THE FREAKS FOUND IN NATURE
DOG MOTHERS TURKEYS
IRISH PEERESS IN KHAKI."

Toronto Star Weekly.

* * * * *

"Attracted by anti-aircraft guns the Zeppelin bounded upwards."--Daily Chronicle._

That was in France. In England the lack of firing (according to our pusillanimous critics) was positively repulsive.

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[Illustration: Tommy._ "ANDS UP, ALL OF YER, I'M GOIN' ON LEAVE TERMORRER. AIN'T GOT NO TIME TO WASTE."]

* * * * *

OUR INNOCENT SUBALTERNS.

The leave-boat had come into port and there was the usual jam around the gangways. On the quay at the foot of one of them was a weary-looking officer performing the ungrateful task of detailing officers for tours of duty with the troops. He had squares of white cardboard in his hand, and here and there, as the officers trooped down the gangway, he picked out a young and inoffensive-looking subaltern and subpoenaed him.

I chanced to notice a young and rosy-cheeked second-lieutenant, innocent of the ways of this rude world, and I knew he was doomed.

As he passed out on to the wharf I saw him receive one of those white cards; he was also told to report to the corporal at the end of the quay.

I saw him slip behind a truck, where he left his bag and haversack, his gloves and his cane, and when he reappeared on the far side he had on his rain-coat, without stars. He had also altered the angle of his cap.

He waited near the foot of the other gangway, which was unguarded. I drew nearer to see what he would do. Presently down the plank came an oldish man--a lieutenant with a heavy moustache and two African ribbons. My young friend stepped forward.

"You are detailed for duty," I heard him say. "You will report to the N.C.O. at the end of the quay." His intonation was a model for the Staff College.

"Curse the thing! I knew I should be nabbed for duty," I heard the veteran growl as he strode off with the white card...

I met the young man later at the Hotel ----, where he had had the foresight to wire for a room. As I had failed to do this, I was glad to avail myself of his kind offer to share his accommodation. After such hospitality I could not refuse him a lift in my car, as we were both bound for the same part of the country.

I did not learn until afterwards that a preliminary chat with my chauffeur had preceded his hospitable advances. Whenever anybody tells me that our subalterns of to-day lack *savoir faire* or that they are deficient in tactical initiative, I tell him that he lies.

* * * * *

"A Bachelor, 38, wishes meet Protestant, born 4th Sept., 1899, or 17th, 18th Sept., 1886, plain looks; poverty no barrier; view matrimony."--*The Age (Melbourne)*.

For so broad-minded a man he seems curiously fastidious about dates.

* * * * *

HUMOURS OF THE WAR OFFICE.

THE EXCHANGE.

Captain A. and Captain B.,
The one was in F, the other in E,
The one was rheumatic and shrank from wet feet,
The other had sunstroke and dreaded the heat.

"If we could exchange," wrote B. to A.,
"We should both keep fitter (the doctors say),"
And, A. agreeing, they humbly prayed
The great War Office to lend its aid.

In less than a month they got replies,
A letter to each of the self-same size;
A.'s was: "Yes, you'll exchange with B. "
B.'s was: "No, you'll remain in E."

* * * * *

OUR MODEST PUBLICISTS.

"I felt it to be my duty to say that and I said it; and, of course, nobody took any notice."--_Mr. Robert Blatchford, in "The Sunday Chronicle."_

* * * * *

"CHRISTIANA, Thursday.

Several hours' violent cannonading was heard in the Skagerack.

Norwegian torpedoes proceeded thither to investigate."--_Toowoomba Chronicle_ (_Queensland_).

Intelligent creatures, they poke their noses into everything.

* * * * *

BEASTS ROYAL.

VI.

KING GEORGE'S DALMATIAN. A.D. 1823.

Yellow wheels and red wheels, and wheels that squeak and roar,
Big buttons, brown wigs, and many capes of buff ...
Someone's bound for Sussex, in a coach-and-four;
And, when the long whips crack,
Running at the back
Barks the swift Dalmatian, whose spots are seven-score.

White dust and grey dust, fleeting tree and tower,
Brass horns and copper horns, blowing loud and bluff ...
Someone's bound for Sussex, at eleven miles an hour;
And, when the long horns blow,
From the wheels below
Barks the swift Dalmatian, tongued like an apple-flower.

Big domes and little domes, donkey-carts that jog,
High stocks and low pumps and admirable snuff ...
Someone strolls at Brighton, not very much incog.;
And, panting on the grass,
In his collar bossed with brass,
Lies the swift Dalmatian, the KING's plum-pudding dog.

* * * * *

CAMOUFLAGE CONVERSATION.

It came as a shock to the Brigade Major that the brigade on his left had omitted to let him know the time of their projected raid that night. It came as a shock all the more because it was the General

himself who first noticed the omission, and it is a golden rule for Brigade Majors that they should always be the first to think of things.

"Ring 'em up and ask," said the General. "Don't, of course, mention the word 'raid' on the telephone. Call it--um--ah, oh, call it anything you like so long as they understand what you mean."

At times, to the casual eavesdropper, strange things must appear to be going on in the British lines. It must be a matter of surprise, to such a one, that the British troops can think it worth their while to inform each other at midnight that "Two Emperors of Pongo have become attached to Annie Laurie." Nor would it appear that any military object would be served in passing on the chatty piece of information that "there will be no party for Windsor to-morrow." This habit of calling things and places as they most emphatically are not is but a concession, of course, to the habits of the infamous Hun, who rightly or wrongly is supposed to overhear everything one says within a mile of the line.

Thinking in the vernacular proper to people who keep the little knowledge they have to themselves, the Brigade Major grasped the hated telephone in the left hand and prepared to say a few words (also in the vernacular) to his fellow Staff Officer a mile away.

"Hullo!" Br-rr--Crick-crick. "Hullo, Signals! Give me S-Salmon."

"Salmon? You're through, Sir," boomed a voice apparently within a foot of his ear.

"OO!" An earsplitting crack was followed by a mosquito-like voice singing in the wilderness.

"Hullo!"

"Hullo!"

"This is Pike."

"This is Possum. H-hullo, Pike!"

"Hullo, Possum!"

"I say, look here, the General w-wants to know" (here he paused to throw a dark hidden meaning into the word) "what time--_it--is."

"What time it is?"

"Yes, what time _it_ is! _It_. Yes, what time it is"--repeated fortissimo ad lib.

"Eleven thirty-five."

"Eleven thirty-five? Why, it's on now. I don't hear anything on the Front?"

"No, you wouldn't."

"Why not?"

"Because it's all quiet."

"But you said s-something was on?"

"No, I didn't. You asked me what time it was and I told you."

Swallowing hard several times, Possum girded up his loins, so to speak, gripped the telephone firmly in the right hand this time, and jumped off again. His "Hullo" sent a thrill through even the Bosch listening apparatus in the next sector.

"Hullo! L-look here, Pike, we--want--to--know--what time it is."

"Eleven thir--"

"No, no, it--it"

"What?"

"It! You know what I mean. Damit, what can I call it? Oh--er, sports; what time is your high jump?" he added, nodding and winking knowingly. "Well, what time's the circus? When do you start for Berlin?"

"I say, Possum, are you all right, old chap?" said a voice full of concern.

A crop of full-bodied beads appeared on the Brigade Major's brow. His right hand was paralysed by the unceasing grip of the receiver. There was a strained look in his eyes as of a man watching for the ration-party.

"S-something," he said, calmly and surely mastering his fate--"s-something is happening to-night."

"You're a cheery sort of bloke, aren't you?"

"Good God, are you cracked or what? There's a--"

"Careful, careful!" called the General from his comfortable chair in the other room.

"O-oh!" sang the mosquito voice, "now I know what you mean. You want to know what time our--er--ha! ha! you know--the--er--don't you?"

"The--ha! ha! yes"--they leered frightfully at each other; it was a horrible spectacle. No one would think that Possum had so much latent evil in him.

"We sent you the time mid-day."

"Well, we haven't had it. C-can you give me any indication, w-without actually s-saying it, you know?"

"Well now," said the mosquito, "You know how many years' service I've got? Multiply by two and add the map square of this headquarters."

"Well, look here," it sang again, "you remember the number of the billet where I had dinner with you three weeks ago? Well, halve that and add two."

"Half nine and add two" (aside: "These midnight mathematics will be the death of me--ah! that's between six and seven?"). Aloud: "But that's daylight."

"No, it isn't. Which dinner are you thinking of?"

With the sweat pouring down his face, both hands now clasping the telephone--his right being completely numbed--he called upon the gods to witness the foolishness of mortals. Suddenly a hideous cackle of

mosquito-laughter filtered through and, by some diabolical contrivance of the signals, the tiny voice swelled into a bellow close to his ear.

"If you really want to know, old Possum," it said, "the raid took place two hours ago!"

"I hope," said Possum, much relieved, but speaking with concentrated venom, "I h-hope you may be strafed with boiling-- Are you there?" Being assured that he was he slapped his receiver twice, and, much gratified at the unprintable expression of the twice-stunned-one at the other end, went to tell the General--who, he found, had gone to bed and was fast asleep.

* * * * *

"The customary oats were administered to the new Judge."--Perthshire Constitutional.

There had been some fear, we understand, that owing to the food shortage he would have to be content with thistles.

* * * * *

[Illustration: Stout Lady (_discussing the best thing to do in an air-raid_). "WELL, I ALWAYS RUNS ABOUT MESELF. YOU SEE, AS MY 'USBAND SEZ, AN' VERY REASONABLE TOO, A MOVIN' TARGIT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO 'IT.'"]

* * * * *

THE OLD FORMULA.

Private Brown lay upon his pillows thoughtfully sucking the new pencil given him by his mate in the next bed. Propped against the cradle that covered his shattered knee was a pad, to which a sheet of paper had been fixed, and he was about to write a letter to his wife.

It was plainly to be an effort, for apart from the fact that he was never a scholar there was the added uncertainty of his long disused right hand to be reckoned with; but at last he grasped the pencil with all the firmness he could muster and began:--

"DEAR WIFE,--I got your letter about Jim he ought to gone long ago, shirking I calls it. This hospital is very nice and when you come down from London youll see all the flowers and the gramophone which is a fair treat. My wounds is slow and I often gets cramp."

No sooner was the fatal word written than the fingers of his right hand began to stiffen, the pencil fell upon the bed, then rolled dejectedly to the floor, where the writer said it might stay for all he cared.

"You must let me finish the letter," said I, when his hand had been rubbed and tucked away in a warm mitten.

"Thank you, Miss; I was getting on nicely, and there's not much more to say," he returned ruefully, scanning the wavering lines before him.

"Well, shall I go on for a bit and let you wind up," said I, unscrewing my pen and taking the pad on my knee.

"Me telling you what to put like?" he asked with a look of pleased relief.

"That's it. Just say what you would write down yourself."

He cleared his throat.

"DEAR WIFE," he resumed, "the wounds is ... awful, not letting me write at all. The one in my back is as long as your arm, and they says it will heal quicker than the one in my knee, which has two tubes in which they squirts strong-smelling stuff through. The foot is a pretty sight, as big as half a melon, and I doubts ever being able to put it to the ground again, though they says I shall. I gets very stiff at nights and the pain sometimes is cruel, but they gives me a prick with the morphia needle then which makes me dream something beautiful...."

There was a pause while he indulged in a smiling reverie.

"Perhaps we have said enough about your pains," I ventured, when, returning from his visions, he puckered his brows in fresh thought.
"Your wife might be frightened if--"

"Not her," he interrupted proudly. "She's a rare good nurse herself, and it would take more than that to turn her up."

I shook my pen; he shifted his head a little and continued:—

"DEAR WIFE,--If you could see my shoulder dressed of a morning you would laugh. They cuts out little pieces of lint like a picture puzzle to fit the places, and I've got a regular map of Blighty all down my arm; but that's not so bad as my back, which I cannot see and which the wound is as long--"

I blotted the sheet and turned over, and Private Brown eyed the space left for further cheerful communications.

"Shall I leave this for you to finish?" I suggested, thinking of tender messages difficult to dictate. "Your fingers may be better after tea, or perhaps to-morrow morning."

"That's all right, Miss. There's nothing more to put except my name, if you'll just say, "Good-bye, dear wife, hoping this finds you well as it leaves me at present."

* * * *

FAIR WARNING.

Friday, 3rd November."

CURRAGH MEETING

Provincial Paper .

From which it is to be inferred
The angry printer backed the third.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

[Illustration: "WELL, UPON MY WORD! AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE I HAD TO GET A QUARTER OF A POUND OF BUTTER, THE COOK'S SENT UP MARGARINE. I SHOULD

HATE THE MAIDS TO GO SHORT, BUT I _DO_ THINK WE OUGHT TO _SHARE_ THINGS.]

* * * * *

THE ULTIMATE OUTRAGE.

I had a favourite shirt for many moons,
Soft, silken, soothing and of tenderest tone,
Gossamer-light withal. The Subs., my peers,
Envied the garment, ransacking the land
To find a shirt its equal--all in vain.
For, when we tired of shooting at the Hun
And other Batteries clamoured for their share
And we resigned positions at the front
To dally for a space behind the line,
To shed my war-worn vesture I was wont--
The G.S. boots, the puttees and the pants
That mock at cut and mar the neatest leg,
The battle-jacket with its elbows patched
And bands of leather, round its hard-used cuffs,
And, worst of all, the fuggy flannel shirt,
Rough and uncouth, that suffocates the soul;
And in their stead I donned habiliments
Cadets might dream of--serges with a waist,
And breeches cut by Blank (you know the man,
Or dare not say you don't), long lustrous boots,
And gloves canary-hued, bright primrose ties
Undimmed by shadows of Sir FRANCIS LLOYD--
And, like a happy mood, I wore the shirt.
It was a woven breeze, a melody
Constrained by seams from melting in the air,
A summer perfume tethered to a stud,
The cool of evening cut to lit my form--
And I shall wear it now no more, no more!

There came a day we took it to be washed,
I and my batman, after due debate.
A little cottage stood hard by the road
Whose one small window said, in manuscript,
"Wasching for soldiers and for officers,"
And there we left my shirt with anxious fears
And fond injunctions to the Belgian dame.
So it was washed. I marked it as I passed
Waving svelte arms beneath the kindly sun
As if it semaphored to its own shade
That answered from the grass. I saw it fill
And plunge against its bonds--methought it yearned
To join its tameless kin, the airy clouds.
And as I saw it so, I sang aloud,
"To-morrow I shall wear thee! Haste, O Time!"
Fond, futile dream! That very afternoon,
Her washing taken in and folded up
(My shirt, my shirt I mourn for, with the rest),
The frugal creature locked and left her cot
To cut a cabbage from a neighbour's field.
Then, without warning, from the empurpled sky,
Swift with grim dreadful purpose, swooped a shell
(Perishing Percy was the name he bore
Amongst, the irreverent soldiery), ah me!
And where the cottage stood there gaped a gulf;
The jewel and the casket vanished both.

* * * * *

Were there no other humble homes but that
For the vile Hun to fire at? Did some spy,
In bitter jealousy, betray my shirt?
What boots it to lament? The shirt is gone.
It was not meant for such an one as I,
A plain rough gunner with one only pip.
No doubt 'twas destined for some lofty soul
Who in a deck-chair lolls, and marks the map
And says, "Push here," while I and all my kind
Scrabble and slaughter in the appointed slough.
But I, presumptuous, wore it, till the gods
Called for my laundry with a thunderbolt.

* * * * *

[Illustration: HOW TO LOSE THE WAR AT HOME.]

* * * * *

ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, October 22nd. --The fact that a couple of German raiders contrived to slip through the North Sea patrol the other night was made the excuse for an attack upon the Admiralty. Sir Eric Geddes came down specially to assure the House that if it viewed things "in the right perspective" it would realise that such isolated incidents were unavoidable. Members generally were convinced, I think, by the sight of the First Lord's bulldog jaw, even more than by his words, that the Navy would not lose its grip on the enemy's throat.

If "darkness and composure" are, as we have been told, the best antidotes to an air-raid, where would you be more likely to find them than in a CAVE? The HOME SECRETARY'S explanation did not, of course, satisfy "P.B."--initials now standing for "Pull Baker"--who, in a voice of extra raucosity, caused by his al-fresco oratory in East Islington, demanded that protection should be afforded to--ballot-boxes. But he and Mr. JOYNSON-HICKS and Mr. DILLON--whose sudden solicitude for the inhabitants of London was gently chaffed by Mr. CHAMBERLAIN--were deservedly trounced by Mr. BONAR LAW, who declared that if their craven squealings were typical he should despair of victory.

Who says that the removal of the grille has had no effect upon politics? Exposed to the unimpeded gaze of the ladies in the Gallery the House decided with great promptitude that the female voter should not be called upon to state her exact age, but need only furnish a statutory declaration that she was over thirty.

Tuesday, October 23rd. --So far as I know, the duties of a Junior Lord of the Treasury have never been exactly defined. Apparently those of Mr. PRATT include the compilation of a "London Letter," to be sent to certain favoured newspapers. In one of them he appears to have stated that Mr. ASQUITH'S condition of health was so precarious that there was little likelihood of his resuming an active part in politics. It was pleasant, therefore, to see the ex-Premier in his place again, and able to contribute to the Irish debate a speech showing no conspicuous failure either of intellect or verbal felicity.

[Illustration: Mr. Duke. "HERE, I SAY--"

Mr. Redmond. "SURE AN' I'M SORRY, BUT THE GINTLEMAN BEHIND PUSHED ME.]

Both Mr. REDMOND and Mr. DUKE had drawn a very gloomy picture of present-day Ireland--the former, of course, attributing it entirely

to the ineptitudes of the "Castle," and being careful to say little or nothing to hurt the feelings of the Sinn Feiners, while the latter ascribed it to the rebellious speeches and actions of Mr. DE VALERA and the other hillside orators whom for some inscrutable reason he leaves at large.

I hope Mr. ASQUITH was justified in assuming that the Sinn Fein excesses were only an expression of the "rhetorical and contingent belligerency" always present in Ireland, and that in spite of them the Convention would make all things right.

Meanwhile the Sinn Feiners have refused to take part in it. And not a single Nationalist Member dared to denounce them to-night. Mr. T.M. HEALY even gave them his blessing, for whatever that may be worth.

Wednesday, October 24.--The strange case of Mrs. BESANT and Mr. MONTAGU was brought before the Upper House by Lord SYDENHAM, who hoped the Government were not going to make concessions to the noisy people who wanted to set up a little oligarchy in India. The speeches of Lord ISLINGTON and Lord CURZON did not entirely remove the impression that the Government are a little afraid of Mrs. BESANT and her power of "creating an atmosphere" by the emission of "hot air." Apparently there is room for only one orator in India at a time, for it was expressly stated that Mr. MONTAGU, who got back into office shortly after the delivery of what Lord LANSDOWNE characterised as an "intemperate" speech on Indian affairs, has given an undertaking not to make any speech at all during his progress through the Peninsula.

Thursday, October 25th.--Irish Members have first cut at the Question-time cake on Thursdays, and employ their opportunity to advertise their national grievances. Mr. O'LEARY, for example, drew a moving picture of a poor old man occupying a single room, and dependent for his subsistence on the grazing of a hypothetical cow; he had been refused a pension by a hard-hearted Board. Translated into prosaic English by the CHIEF SECRETARY it resolved itself into the case of a farmer who had deliberately divested himself of his property in the hope of "wangling" five shillings a week out of the Treasury.

According to Mr. BYRNE the Lord Mayor of DUBLIN has been grossly insulted by a high Irish official, who must be made to apologise or resign. Again Mr. DUKE was unreceptive. He had seen the LORD MAYOR, who disclaimed any responsibility for his self-constituted champion. Mr. BYRNE should now be known as "the cuckoo in the mare's nest."

An attack upon the Petroleum Royalties was led by Mr. ADAMSON, the new Chairman of the Labour Party, who was cordially congratulated by the COLONIAL SECRETARY on his appointment. Mr. LONG might have been a shade less enthusiastic if he had foreseen the sequel. His assurance that there was "nothing behind the Bill" was only too true. There was not even a majority behind it; for the hostile amendment was carried by 44 votes to 35, and the LLOYD GEORGE Administration sustained its first defeat. "Nasty slippery stuff, oil," muttered the Government Whip.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE UNSEEN HAND.

Bill. "A FELLER IN THIS HERE PAPER SAYS AS WE AIN'T FIGHTING THE GERMAN PEOPLE."

Gus. "INDEED! DOES THE BLINKIN' IDIOT SAY WHO WE'VE BEEN UP AGAINST ALL THIS TIME?"]

* * * * *

"Wanted, at once, three Slack Carters; constant employment."--Lancaster Observer.

We fear that intending applicants may be put off by the conditions.

* * * * *

"WHERE MY CARAVAN HAS RESTED--in A flat."--Advt. in Provincial Paper.

And, in the recent weather, a very good place for it.

* * * * *

WAR-TIME TAGS FROM "JULIUS CAESAR."

A "TAKE COVER" CONSTABLE TO A "SPECIAL."

"I'll about,
And drive away the vulgar from the streets;
So do you too, where you perceive them thick."--Act I. Sc. 1.

A WISE MAN.

"Good night, then, Casca: this disturbed sky
Is not to walk in."--Act I. Sc. 3.

A RASH MAN.

"For my part, I have walked about the streets...
Even in the aim and very flash of it."--Act I. Sc. 3.

TO A MUNITION STRIKER.

"But wherefore art not in thy shop to-day?"--Act I. Sc. 1.

TO A LADY CLERK.

"Is this a holiday?
What dost thou with thy best apparel on?"--Act I. Sc. 1.

TO LORD RHONDDA
(with a whear and potato war-loaf).

"Till then, my noble friend, chew upon this."--Act I. Sc. 2.

* * * * *

THE TRANSLATOR SEES THROUGH IT.

Announcement by a French publisher:--

"Vient de paraître:--'M. Britling commence a voir clair.'"

* * * * *

"MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

A Large Quantity of Old Bricks for Sale."--Dublin Evening Herald.

Do not shoot the pianist. Throw a brick at him instead.

* * * * *

Regarding a certain judge:--

"Hence so many reversals by the Court of Appeal that suitors were often more uneasy if they lost their case before him than if they won it."--_Irish Times_.

We assume that they were Irishmen.

* * * * *

"Elderly Lady Requires Post, as companion, Secretary or any position of trust, would keep clergyman's wife in Parish, etc."--_Church Family Newspaper_.

But the difficulty with the parson's wife in some parishes, we are told, is just the reverse of this.

* * * * *

"Duck and drake (wild) wanted; must be tame."--_Scotsman_.

We dislike this frivolity in a serious paper.

* * * * *

[Illustration: OUR YOUNG VETERANS.

Grandfather. "JUST HAD A TOPPING BIT OF NEWS, OLD DEAR. GERALD'S WANGLED THE D.S.O."

Granny. "ABSOLUTELY PRICELESS_, OLD THING. ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT CHILD WAS _SOME_ NIB."]

* * * * *

THE MUD LARKS.

Albert Edward and I are on detachment just now. I can't mention what job we are on because HINDENBURG is listening. He watches every move made by Albert Edward and me and disposes his forces accordingly. Now and again he forestalls us, now and again he don't. On the former occasions he rings up LUDENDORFF, and they make a night of it with beer and song; on the latter he pushes the bell violently for the old German god.

The spot Albert Edward and I inhabit just now is very interesting; things happen all round us. There is a tame balloon tied by a string to the back garden, an ammunition column on either flank and an infantry battalion camped in front. Aeroplanes buzz overhead in flocks and there is a regular tank service past the door. One way and another our present location fairly teems with life; Albert Edward says it reminds him of London. To heighten the similarity we get bombed every night.

Promptly after Mess the song of the bomb-bird is heard. The searchlights stab and slash about the sky like tin swords in a stage duel; presently they pick up the bomb-bird--a glittering flake of tinsel--and the racket begins. Archibalds pop, machine guns chatter, rifles crack, and here and there some optimistic sportsman browns the Milky Way with a revolver. As Sir I. NEWTON'S law of gravity is still in force and all that goes up must come down again, it is advisable to wear a parasol on one's walks abroad.

In view of the heavy lead-fall Albert Edward and I decided to have a

dug-out. We dug down six inches and struck water in massed formation. I poked a finger into the water and licked it. "Tastes odd," said I, "brackish or salt or something."

"We've uncorked the blooming Atlantic, that's what," said Albert Edward; "cork it up again quickly or it'll bob up and swamp us." That done, we looked about for something that would stand digging into. The only thing we could find was a molehill, so we delved our way into that. We are residing in it now, Albert Edward, Maurice and I. We have called it "Mon Repos," and stuck up a notice saying we are inside, otherwise visitors would walk over it and miss us.

The chief drawback to "Mon Repos" is Maurice. Maurice is the proprietor by priority, a mole by nature. Our advent has more or less driven him into the hinterland of his home and he is most unpleasant about it. He sits in the basement and sulks by day, issuing at night to scrabble about among our boots, falling over things and keeping us awake. If we say "Boo! Shoo!" or any harsh word to him he doubles up the backstairs to the attic and kicks earth over our faces at three-minute intervals all night.

Albert Edward says he is annoyed about the rent, but I call that absurd. Maurice is perfectly aware that there is a war on, and to demand rent from soldiers who are defending his molehill with their lives is the most ridiculous proposition I ever heard of. As I said before, the situation is most unpleasant, but I don't see what we can do about it, for digging out Maurice means digging down "Mon Repos," and there's no sense in that. Albert Edward had a theory that the mole is a carnivorous animal, so he smeared a worm with carbolic tooth-paste and left it lying about. It lay about for days. Albert now admits his theory was wrong; the mole is a vegetarian, he says; he was confusing it with trout. He is in the throes of inventing an explosive potato for Maurice on the lines of a percussion grenade, but in the meanwhile that gentleman remains in complete mastery of the situation.

The balloon attached to our back garden is very tame. Every morning its keepers lead it forth from its abode by strings, tie it to a longer string and let it go. All day it remains aloft, tugging gently at its leash and keeping an eye on the War. In the evening the keepers appear once more, haul it down and lead it home for the night. It reminds me for all the world of a huge docile elephant being bossed about by the mahout's infant family. I always feel like giving the gentle creature a bun.

Now and again the Bosch birds come over disguised as clouds and spit mouthfuls of red-hot tracer-bullets at it, and then the observers hop out. One of them "hopped out" into my horse-lines last week. That is to say his parachute caught in a tree and he hung swinging, like a giant pendulum, over my horses' backs until we lifted him down. He came into "Mon Repos" to have bits of tree picked out of him. This was the sixth plunge overboard he had done in ten days, he told us. Sometimes he plunged into the most embarrassing situations. On one occasion he dropped clean through a bivouac roof into a hot bath containing a Lieutenant-Colonel, who punched him with a sponge and threw soap at him. On another he came fluttering down from the blue into the midst of a labour company of Chinese coolies, who immediately fell on their faces, worshipping him as some heavenly being, and later cut off all his buttons as holy relics. An eventful life.

PATLANDER.

* * * * *

A PRECOCIOUS INFANT.

"Will any kind lady adopt nice healthy baby girl, 6 weeks old,
good parentage; seen London."--_Times_.

* * * * *

"The King has given £100 to the Victoria Station free buffet
for sailors and soldiers."--_The Times_.

In the days of RICHARD I. it was a commoner who furnished the King in
this respect. Vide Sir WALTER SCOTT'S Ivanhoe, vol. ii., chap.
9: "Truly, friend," said the Friar, clenching his huge fist, "I will
bestow a buffet on thee."

* * * * *

[Illustration: Prisoner (on his dignity). "BUT YOU VOS NOT KNOW
VOT I AM. I AM A SERGEANT-MAJOR IN DER PRUSSIAN GUARD."

Tommy. "WELL, WOT ABAHT IT? I'M A PRIVATE IN THE WEST KENTS.]

* * * * *

RHYMES OF THE TIMES.

There was an old man with otitis
Who was told it was chronic arthritis;
On the sixth operation,
Without hesitation
They said that he died of phlebitis.

A school just assembled for Prep.
Were warned of an imminent Zepp,
But they said, "What a lark!
Now we're all in the dark
So we shan't have to learn any Rep."

Mr. BREX, with the forename of TWELLS,
Against all the bishops rebels,
And so fiercely upbraids
Their remarks on air-raids
That he rouses the envy of WELLS.

The American miracle, FORD,
By pacifists once was adored;
Now their fury he raises
By winning the praises
Of England's great super-war-lord.

* * * * *

"Wanted--a Pair of Lady's Riding Boots, black or brown, size of
foot 4, diam. of calf 14 inches."--_Statesman_ (Calcutta).

Great Diana!

* * * * *

"WANTED--Late Model, 5-passenger McLaughlin, Hudson, Paige, or
Cadillac car, in exchange for 5-crypt family de luxe section,
value \$1,500, in Forest Lawn, Mausoleum."--_Toronto Daily Star_.

With some difficulty we refrain from reviving the old joke about the
quick and the dead.

* * * * *

THE NEW MRS. MARKHAM.

III.

CONVERSATION ON CHAPTER LXX.

Mary_. Do tell us something more, Mamma, about the Great Rebellion and how it began.

Mrs. M_. Well, my dear, you must know that in the previous reign it had been the fashion for middle-aged and elderly people to behave and dress as if they were still juvenile. Mothers neglected their daughters and went to balls and theatres every night, where they were conspicuous for their extravagant attire and strange conversation. They would not allow their daughters to smoke, or, if they did, provided them with the cheapest cigarettes. Fathers of even advanced years wore knickerbocker suits on all occasions and spent most of their time playing a game called golf. This at last provoked a violent reaction, and the Great Rebellion was the consequence. Although there was no bloodshed many distressing scenes were enacted and something like a Reign of Terror prevailed for several years.

Richard_. Oh, Mamma, please go on!

Mrs. M_. Parents trembled at the sight of their children, and fathers, even when they were sixty years old, stood bareheaded before their sons and did not dare to speak without permission. Mothers never sat down in the presence of their grown-up daughters, but stood in respectful silence at the further end of the room, and were only allowed to smoke in the kitchen.

George_. That cannot have been very good for the cooking.

Mrs. M_. The daughters of the family were seldom educated at home, and when they returned to their father's roof their parents were only admitted into the presence of their children during short and stated periods.

Mary_. And when did the English begin to grow kinder to their parents?

Mrs. M_. I really cannot say. Perhaps a climax was reached in the Baby Suffrage Act; but after that matters began to improve, and the Married Persons Amusements Act showed a more tolerant spirit towards the elderly. But even so lately as when my mother was a child young people were often exceedingly harsh with their parents, and she has told me how on one occasion she locked up her mother for several hours in the coal-cellars for playing a mouth-organ in the bathroom without permission.

Richard_. Pray, Mamma, did the English speak Irish then, as they do now?

Mrs. M_. Compulsory Irish was introduced under ALFRED as a concession to Ireland for the services rendered by that kingdom to art and literature and the neutrality which it observed during England's wars. There was a certain amount of opposition, but it was soon overcome by ALFRED'S wisely insisting on the newspapers being printed in both languages. Since then the variations in dialect and pronunciation which prevailed in different districts of England have largely disappeared, and from Land's End to John o' Groat's the bilingual system is now securely established, though my mother told me that as a child she once met an old man in Northumberland who could only speak a few words of Irish, and had been deprived of his vote in consequence.

Richard. What were the Thirty-Nine Articles? I don't think I ever heard of them before.

Mrs. M. When you are of a proper age to understand them they shall be explained to you. They contained the doctrines of the Church of England, but were abolished by Archbishop WELLS, who substituted seventy-eight of his own. But as Mary is looking tired I will now conclude our conversation.

* * * *

THE MOTH PERIL.

[*"Fruit growers are warned to be on their guard against the wingless moth, for lime-washing the trees is almost useless."*-- Evening Paper]

If the brute ignores the notice, "Keep off the trees," order him away in a sharp voice.

Sulphuric acid is a most deadly antidote; but only the best should be used. If the moth be held over the bottle for ten minutes it will show signs of collapse and offer to go quietly.

This pest abhors heat. A good plan is to heat the garden-roller in the kitchen fire to a white heat and push it up the tree.

A gramophone in full song, is also useful. After a few minutes the moth will come out of its dug-out with an abstracted expression on its face, and commit suicide by jumping into the mouth of the trumpet.

* * * *

A COMFORTING THOUGHT FOR USE ON WAR-TIME RAILWAYS.

"To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."--R.L.
STEVENSON.

* * * *

From a parish magazine:--

"I know 'the war' still continues but these do not explain everything. The large water tank at the schools is for sale--price L5 10s. The sermons and as far as possible the music and hymns on 21st (Trafalgar Day) will bear on the work of our incomparable Navy."

It is believed in the village that the parson is suffering from a rush of Jumble Sales to the head.

* * * *

HERBS OF GRACE.

SWEET WOODRUFF.

VII.

Not for the world that we know,
But the lovelier world that we dream of
Dost thou, Sweet Woodruff, grow;
Not of this world is the theme of
The scent diffused

From thy bright leaves bruised;
Not in this world hast thou part or lot,
Save to tell of the dream one, forgot, forgot.

Sweet Woodruff, thine is the scent
Of a world that was wise and lowly,
Singing with sane content,
Simple and clean and holy,
Merry and kind
As an April wind,
Happier far for the dawn's good gold
Than the chinking chaffer-stuff hard and cold.

Thine is the odour of praise
In the loved little country churches;
Thine are the ancient ways
Which the new Gold Age besmirches;
Cordials, wine
And posies are thine,
The adze-cut beams with thy bunches fraught,
And the kist-laid linen by maidens wrought.

Clean bodies, kind hearts, sweet souls,
Delight and delighted endeavour,
A spirit that chants and trolls,
A world that doth ne'er dissever
The body's hire
And the heart's desire;
Ah, bright leaves bruised and brown leaves dry,
Odours that bid this world go by.

W.B.

* * * * *

"Once or twice Mr. Dickens has taken the place of circuit judge
when the King's Bench roll has been repleted."--_Evening Paper_

This, of course, was before the War. Our judges never over-eat
themselves nowadays.

* * * * *

From a list of current prices:--

"Brazil nuts 1s. 2d., Barcelona nuts 10d. per lb.; demons
11/2d."--_Derbyshire Advertiser_

No mention being made of the place of origin of the last-named, it
looks very much as if there had been some trading with the enemy.

* * * * *

What America says to-day--

"Feminist circles are greatly interested in the announcement made
by Dr. Sargent, of Harvard University, that women make as good
soldiers as men."--_Sunday Pictorial_

Canada does to-morrow--

"The Canadian Government has issued a proclamation calling up ...
childless widows between the ages of 20 and 34 comprised in Class
1 of the Military Service Act."--_Yorkshire Evening Paper_

* * * * *

[Illustration: Mike (in bath-chair). "DID YE SAY WE'LL BE TURNING BACK, DENNIS? SURE THE EXERCISE WILL BE DOING US GOOD IF WE GO A BIT FURTHER."]

* * * * *

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

(BY MR. PUNCH'S STAFF OF LEARNED CLERKS.)

The numerous members of the public who like to take their printer's ink with something more than a grain of sea-salt will welcome Sea-Spray and Spindrift (PEARSON), by their tried and trusted friend, TAFFRAIL, the creator of Pincher Martin, O.D. TAFFRAIL, it must be admitted, has a dashing briny way with him. He doesn't wait to describe sunsets and storm-clouds, but plunges at once into the thick of things. Consequently his stories go with a swing and a rush, for which the reader is duly grateful--that is, if he is a discerning reader. Of the present collection most were written some time ago and have no reference to the War. Such, for instance, is "The Escape of the Speedwell," a capital story of the year 1805, which may serve to remind us that even in the glorious days of NELSON the English Channel was not always a healthy place for British shipping. "The Channel," says TAFFRAIL, "swarmed with the enemy's privateers.... Even the merchant-ships in the home-coming convoys, protected though they were by men-of-war, were not safe from capture, while the hostile luggers would often approach the English coast in broad daylight and harry the hapless fishing craft within a mile or two of the shore." Yet there does not appear to have been a panic, nor was anyone's blood demanded. Autres temps autres moeurs. In "The Gun-Runners" the author describes a shady enterprise undertaken successfully by a British crew; but nothing comes amiss to TAFFRAIL, and he does it with equal zest. "The Inner Patrol" and "The Luck of the Tavy" more than redress the balance to the side of virtue and sound warfare. Both stories are excellent.

* * * * *

Among the minor results following the entry of America into the War has been the release from bondage of several diplomatic pens, whose owners would, under less happy circumstances, have been prevented from telling the world many stories of great interest. Here, for example, is the late Special Agent and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States, Mr. LEWIS EINSTEIN, writing of his experiences Inside Constantinople, April-September, 1915 (MURRAY). This is a diary kept by the Minister during the period covered by the Dardanelles Expedition. As such you will hardly expect it to be agreeable reading, but its tragic interest is undeniable. Mr. EINSTEIN, as a sympathetic neutral, saw everything, and his comments are entirely outspoken. We know the Dardanelles story well enough by now from our own side; here for the first time one may see in full detail just how near it came to victory. It is a history of chances neglected, of adverse fate and heroism frustrated, such as no Englishman can read unmoved. But the book has also a further value in the light it throws upon the Armenian massacres and the complicity of Germany therein. "Though in later years German officialdom may seek to disclaim responsibility, the broad fact remains of German military direction at Constantinople ... during the brief period in which took place the virtual extermination of the Armenian race in Asia Minor." It is one more stain upon a dishonoured shield, not to be forgotten in the final reckoning.

* * * * *

I never met a story more aptly named than Mrs. BELLOC LOWNDES' Love and Hatred (CHAPMAN AND HALL). Oliver Tropenell worshipped Laura Pavely, who returned this attachment, despite the fact that she was already married to Godfrey. Godfrey, for his part, loved Katty Winslow, a young widow, who flirted equally with him, with Oliver, and with Laura's undesirable brother, Gilbert. So much for the tender passion. As for the other emotion, Oliver naturally hated Godfrey; so did Gilbert. Laura also came to share their sentiment. By the time things had reached this climax the moment was obviously ripe for the disappearance of the much detested one, in order that the rest of the tale might keep you guessing which of the three had (so to speak) belled the cat. Followers of Mrs. LOWNDES will indeed have been anticipating poor Godfrey's demise for some time, and may perhaps think that she takes a trifle too long over her arrangements for the event. They will almost certainly share my view that the explanation of the mystery is far too involved and unintelligible. I shall, of course, not anticipate this for you.

It has been said that the works of HOMER were not written by HOMER himself, but by another man of the same name. This may, or may not, give you a clue to the murder of Godfrey Pavely. I wish the crime were more worthy of such an artist in creeps as Mrs. LOWNDES has proved herself to be.

* * * * *

The test of the second water, as sellers of tea assure us, provides proof of a quality for which one must go to the right market. BARONESS ORCZY has not feared to put her most famous product, The Scarlet Pimpernel, to a similar trial. Whether the result of this renewed dilution is entirely satisfactory I leave you to judge, but certainly at least something of the well-known and popular aroma of romantic artificiality clings about the pages of her latest story, Lord Tony's Wife (HODDER AND STOUGHTON), while at the bottom of the cup there is not a little dash of the old strong flavour. On the other hand, though it may be that one's appetite grows less lusty, it does seem that in all the earlier chapters there is some undue proportion of thin and rather tepid preparation for episodes quite clearly on the way, so that in the end even the masterly vigour of the much advertised Pimpernel, in full panoply of inane laughter and unguessed disguise, failed to astound and stagger me as much as I could have wished. Lord Tony was a healthy young Englishman with no particular qualities calling for comment, and his wife an equally charming young French heroine. After having escaped to England from the writer's beloved Reign of Terror, the lady and her aristo father were comfortably decoyed back to France by a son of the people whose qualifications for the post of villain were none too convincing, and there all manner of unpleasant things were by way of happening to them, when enter the despairing husband with the dashing scarlet one at his side-- et voila tout. The last few chapters come nearly or even quite up to the mark, but as for most of the rest, I advise you to take them as read.

* * * * *

In A Certain Star (HODDER AND STOUGHTON) Miss PHYLLIS BOTTOME achieves the difficult feat of treating a love conceived in a romantic vein without declining upon sentimentality, and seasons her descriptions, which are shrewdly, sometimes delicately, observed, with quite a pretty wit. I commend it as a sound, unpretentious, honestly-written book. Sir Julian Verny, a baronet with brains and a very difficult temper, falls a captive to Marian's proud and compelling beauty. Then, just before the War flames up, secret service claims him, and he returns from a dangerous mission irretrievably crippled. Marian fails him. True, she disdains to be released, but out of pride not out of love. It is little grey suppressed Stella (her light has been hidden under the dull bushel of a Town Clerk's

office) who comes into her kingdom and wins back an ultra-sensitive despairing man to the joy of living and working and the fine humility of being dependent instead of masterful. There are so many Julians and there's need of so many Stellas these sad days that it is well to have such wholesome doctrine stated with so courageous an optimism.

* * * * *

There is a sentence on page 149 of A Castle to Let (CASSELL) which, though not for its style, I feel constrained to quote: "It was a glorious day, the sunshine poured through the green boughs, and the moss made cradles in which most people went to sleep with their novels." Well, given a warm day and a comfortable resting-place, this book by Mrs. BAILLIE REYNOLDS would do excellently well either to sleep or keep awake with, according to your mood. The scene of it is laid in Transylvania, where a rich young Englishwoman took an old castle for the summer. Incidentally I have learned something about the inhabitants of Transylvania, but apart from that I know now exactly what a novel for the holidays should contain. Its ingredients are many and rather wonderful, but Mrs. REYNOLDS is a deft mixer, and her skill in managing no fewer than three love affairs without getting them and you into a tangle is little short of miraculous. Then we are given plenty of legends, mysteries and dreams, just intriguing enough to produce an eerie atmosphere, but not sufficiently exciting to cause palpitations of the heart. Need I add that the tenant of the castle married the owner of it? As she was both human and sporting, it worries me to think that she may now be interned.

* * * * *

[Illustration: Patriot Golfer (seeing British aeroplane and not wanting to take any risks). "FORE!"]

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