

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 156, June 11, 1919

Various

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PUNCH,

OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

VOL. 156.

June 11, 1919.

CHARIVARIA.

"Every British working man has as much right as any Member of Parliament to be paid L400 a year," states a well-known Labour paper. We have never questioned this for a moment.

"Women," says a technical journal, "are a source of grave danger to motorists in crowded city streets." It is feared in some quarters that they will have to be abolished.

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"Are you getting stout?" asks a Sunday contemporary. Only very occasionally, we regret to say.

The heat was so oppressive in London the other day that a taxi-driver at Euston Station was seen to go up to a pedestrian and ask him if he could do with a ride. He was eventually pinned down by some colleagues and handed over to the care of his relatives.

"I do not care a straw about Turkey," writes Mr. LOVAT Fraser in _The Daily Mail_. It is this dare-devil spirit which has made us the nation we are.

Superstition in regard to marriage is dying out, says a West End registrar. Nevertheless the superstition that a man who gets married between January 1st and December 31st is asking for trouble is still widely held.

Mr. VAN INGEN, a New York business man, has just started to cross the Atlantic for the one hundred and sixtieth time. It is not known whether the major ambition of his life is to leave New York or go back and have a last look at it.

"There is no likelihood," says the FOOD-CONTROLLER, "of cheese running out during the coming winter." A pan of drinking water left in the larder will always prevent its running out and biting someone during the dog-days.

Sympathetic readers will be glad to hear that the little sixpence which was found wandering in Piccadilly Circus has been given a good home by an Aberdeen gentleman.

Aeroplane passengers are advised by one enterprising weekly not to throw bottles out of the machine. This is certainly good advice. The bottles are so apt to get broken.

Germany, it is expected, will sign the Peace treaty this once, but points out that we must not allow it to happen again.

Of two burglars charged at Stratford one told the Bench that he intended to have nothing further to do with his colleague in future. It is said that he finds it impossible to work with him owing to his nasty grasping ways.

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Sixty-seven fewer babies were born in one Surrey village last year than in previous years. It would be interesting to have their names.

A grocer, according to a legal writer, is not compelled to take goods out of the window to oblige a customer. The suggestion that a grocer is expected to oblige anybody in any circumstances is certainly a novelty.

Uxbridge, says The Evening News, has no bandstand. Nor have we, but we make no fuss about it.

The Bolshevists in Russia, we are told, are busy sowing seeds of sedition. For some time it has been suspected that the Bolshevists were up to no good.

HERBERT WELSH, aged sixty-seven, has started to walk from New Jersey to New Hampshire, U.S.A., a distance of five hundred miles. In the absence of fuller details we assume that HERBERT must have lost his train.

"Postage stamps," says a weekly snippets paper, "can be obtained at all post-offices." This should prove a boon to those who have letters to write.

It is thought if a certain well-known judge does not soon ask, "What is whisky?" he will have to content himself with the past tense.

"What to do with a Wasp" is a headline in a contemporary. We have not read the article, but our own plan with wasps is to try to dodge them.

We hear that complications may arise from an unfortunate mistake made at a Jazz Competition held in London last week. It appears that the prize was awarded to a lady suffering from hysteria who was not competing.

A taxi-driver in a suburb of London was married last week to a local telephone operator. Speculation is now rife as to which will be the first to break down and say "Thank you."

The Press reports the case of a young lady who received slight injuries from a slab of ceiling which fell on her head whilst she was asleep in bed, but was saved from further damage by the thickness of her hair. This should act as a warning to those ladies who adopt the silly habit of removing their tresses on retiring for the night.

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[Illustration: Hospital Orderly (taking particulars of new patient_u).

"NAME, SIR?"

Patient. "SIR BRUCE BLAZEAWAY."

Hospital Orderly. "RANK?"

Patient. "LIEUTENANT-GENERAL."

Hospital Orderly. "BATTALION?"]

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TO SIGN OR NOT TO SIGN?

As Count BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU puts it, quoting from his German translation of _Hamlet_: "Sein oder nicht sein, dass ist hier die Frage_."

* * * * *

"The recommendations of the Jerram Committee came before a conference between a representative body of lower deck ratings and members of Parliament who sit for naval constituencies. The veterinary chief petty officer presided."--_Sunday Paper_.

The rank is new to us; but he must be just the man to look after the interests of our sea-dogs.

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From the "Transactions" of a photographic society:--

"Mr. ---- stated that as Architectural Photography covered a large and varied field he purposed to confine his remarks to the line of work most familiar to him, namely, The Interiors of some of the great English Ministers."

Now at last we shall know if the Government's heart is in the right place.

* * * * *

TO ROBERT OF THE FORCE.

Since first you loomed upon my infant ken
My firm belief has ever been, and still it is,
That you are fashioned not as other men
(Subject, at best, to mortal disabilities),
But come of more than human kin,
Immune, or practically so, from sin.

Godlike the poise that to your bearing lends
The aspect of a tower that never totters;
There's a divinity hath shaped your ends
(Rough-hewn, perhaps--especially your trotters);
Your ample chest, your generous girth
Have no precise similitude on earth.

I cannot picture you (though I have tried)
Wearing a bowler hat and tweed apparel,
Or craving sustenance for your inside
Drawn either from the oven or the barrel;
Scarcely you figure in my eye
As liable, in Nature's course, to die.

And it was you who almost fell from grace,

Striking, like Lucifer, against authority,
Leaving your Heaven for another place
Not mentioned by your ten-to-one majority,
And doomed, to your surprise and pain,
Never, like Lucifer, to rise again.

But you were wise, my Robert, wise in time;
And I, who set you far above humanity,
High-pedestalled upon my lofty rhyme,
Rejoice with you in your recovered sanity;
To me I feel it would have mattered
Enormously to see my idol shattered.

But 'ware the Bolsh, who fain would lure your feet
To conduct unbecoming in a copper;
Once you betrayed us, going off your beat,
And now you've nearly come another cropper;
If, tempted thrice, you break your trust,
You'll have no halo left to readjust.

O.S.

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EMBARRASSMENT AND THE LAWYER.

Watson is a young barrister who is feeling rather pleased with himself.
I confess that he has deserved it.

The situation was as follows. Before the War he had had no briefs, but had always had a conscience. A hopeless state of affairs. Then he went to the War and shed his conscience somewhere in the Balkans. So far so good. But, when he was demobilised and began to take stock of what had been happening at home in the meanwhile, he found to his horror that a conscience had again been thrust upon him by the General Council of the Bar.

Such was the situation he had to face, and he has won through.

How, you ask, did the G.C.B. play this trick on him? It happened in this way. Having nothing better to do during Watson's absence and at a critical moment of the War, these idle elderly well-fed lawyers solemnly deliberated upon the following fantastic problem:--

"What is the duty of counsel who is defending a prisoner on a plea of Not Guilty when the prisoner confesses to counsel that he did commit the offence charged?"

With a cynical disregard of their own past these sophists propounded the following answer:--

"If the confession has been made before the proceedings have been commenced it is most undesirable that an advocate to whom the confession has been made should undertake the defence, as he would most certainly be seriously embarrassed in the conduct of the case, and no harm can be done to the accused by requesting him to retain another advocate."

The new Watson was unable to agree with this doctrine, so far as it

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The legal conscience thus gratuitously thrust upon him was soon to undergo its first ordeal. An acquaintance of his, in a moment of absent-mindedness, murdered somebody, and asked Watson to persuade the inevitable jury that he hadn't. The said acquaintance explained to Watson that he simply did it when he wasn't thinking.

Watson was in a hole. Obviously this was a case to which the embarrassment prescribed by the General Council of the Bar was applicable. This legal embarrassment, which, strictly speaking, ought now to be his, would not, however, have worried him in the least had it not been for another consideration. Suppose, after Watson had triumphantly got his client acquitted, it got about that the "innocent" had confessed his crime to counsel beforehand? That would mean an end to Watson's professional career. One does not thus slight the edicts of the mighty with impunity.

Watson was too proud to ask his client to keep the deadly secret, or to apply the famous wriggle of Hippolytus: "My tongue hath sworn, but my heart remains unsworn."

Nevertheless Watson gave his mind to the problem. In the end he decided on the following line of defence: "Not Guilty," and in the alternative "Guilty under justifiable circumstances, without malice aforethought but with intent to benefit the person murdered."

Happily the General Council of the Bar has not yet assigned any moral embarrassment to a counsel who pleads "Not Guilty," and in the alternative, "Guilty." Watson therefore reasoned that if the jury returned a verdict of "Not Guilty," his client's alternative confession could be written off as an obvious mistake; on the other hand, if he were found "Guilty," the fact of confession would be an ethical asset towards securing for him a lenient view of the case.

As I said, Watson behaved well. He proved to his own and the jury's satisfaction (1) that his client did not commit the murder; (2) that alternatively he did commit the murder, but that he did so for the good of everybody concerned; and (3) that in either case he never meant to do it.

In the event the prisoner was acquitted without a stain upon his

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Watson is now well established as the last hope of abandoned causes. He is a specialist in defence, and criminals of every shade throng to him. When a new one swims into his ken Watson meets him on the threshold and says, "Don't speak a word. Read this;" and he puts into his hand a printed slip. The slip reads:--

" Conditions of Advocacy .

"(1) If you put your case into my hands it ceases at once and from that moment to be any concern of your own. You are not entitled, for instance, to express any opinion as to whether you committed the alleged crime or not. That is my affair exclusively.

"(2) If however there is anything which lies so heavily on your conscience that it must out sooner or later, let it be later. I am open to receive confessions at any time after proceedings have begun.

"If you accept these conditions, good; if not, go."

Watson says they always accept them, so he never worries about the General Council of the Bar.

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[Illustration: THE NEW ISSUE.

OIL GENIE (gushingly, to Coal-Owner and Mr. SMILLIE). "CAN I DO ANYTHING TO ALLAY THE TROUBLED WATERS?"

[The discovery of oil in Derbyshire, which threatens the supremacy of the mining industry, may affect the questions now in dispute before the Coal Commission.]

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[Illustration: _Harassed Mother (having distributed half of her offspring on laps of passengers)._ "COME ON, 'ENERY. SQUEEZE IN SOMEWHERE. 'TAIN'T EXAC'LY 'OW I LOIKES TO TRAVEL, BUT S'POSE WE'LL 'AVE TO PUT UP WITH IT."]

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AN ERROR IN TACTICS.

In the heart of the Foret de Roumare there is a spot called Rond du Chene a Leu, where eight paths meet. Why they choose to meet there, unless it is for company, one can't imagine. The fact that there is not an estaminet within five kilometres nullifies its value as a military objective. Therefore, having been decoyed thither by a plausible guide-book, it was with surprise that I beheld an ancient representative of the British Army smoking his pipe with the air of having been in possession for centuries.

"Bit lonely here," I said.

"Rumble's Moor on a wet Friday's busy to it," he said emphatically. "Is it reet the War's over?"

"Yes."

He puffed his pipe for a few minutes while the information soaked in.

"Who won?"

"The Peace Conference haven't decided yet."

Conversation languished until I remembered the guide-book.

"According to tradition," I said, "it was at this identical spot that ROLLO, first Duke of Normandy, hung his golden chain on a sign-post for a whole year without having it stolen."

"Tha-at ud be afore we brought our Chinese Labour gang felling timber," he said firmly; "I wudden give it five minutes now."

"I understand, too, that there is a historic ruin hereabouts."

"Theer was," he said; "but he's in hospital."

"What do you mean?"

"Ratty Beslow; my owd colleague an' sparring pardner. It's 'im you weer talking of, ain't it?"

"It wasn't; but I'm interested in him," I said, sitting down on a pile of logs. "How did he get to hospital?"

"Through a mistake in Nacheral 'Istory. You see, me an' Ratty had been in th' War a goodish time an' ha-ad lost our o-riginal ferociousness. So they put us to this Chink Labour gang for a rest-cure. Likewise Ratty 'ad got too fa-amous as a timber-scrounger oop th' line, and it was thought that if 'e was left in th' middle of a forest, wheer it didn't matter a dang if he scrounged wood fra' revally to tattoo, it might reform him. But it was deadly dull. We tried a sweepstake f'r th' one as

could recognise most Chinks at sight, and a raffle for who could guess how many trees in a circle; but there wasn't much spice in it. So at last Ratty suggested we should try a bit o' poaching.

"Ah doan't know th' first thing about it,' I says; 'Ah'm town bred. Nobbut Ah could knock a few rabbits over if Ah'd got a Lewis gun handy.'

"Rabbuts be danged!' says he; 'Ah've no use f'r such vermin. Theer's stags, so Ah've heerd tell, in this forest.'

"Ah wudden say no to a haunch o' venison,' I answered; 'but stags is artillery work.'

"They is not,' says Ratty. 'Nor yet rifles nor bombs.'

"Ah s'pose you stops theer holes an' puts in a ferret,' says I, sarcastic; 'or else traps 'em wi' cheese.'

"That's the only kind o' hunting you've bin used to,' replies Ratty. 'Stags is caught wi' tactics, a trip-wire an' a lasso.'

"Well, la-ad,' I says, 'you'd best do th' lassoing. I doan't know the habits o' stags.'

"Ratty scrounges a prime rope fra' somewheers, an' we creeps out after nightfall. It was a dree night, the owd bracken underfoot damp an' sodden, an' th' tall firs looking grim an' gho-ostly in th' gloom. Soon theer was a crackling o' twigs, like a tank scouting on tiptoe.

"Bosch patrol half-left!' whispers I.

"Stow it, you blighter,' says Ratty. 'This is serious. Can't you see th' stag?'

"I peeps round and, loomin' in the da-arkness, see th' hindquarters of a stag sticking out ayant a tree. It looked bigger 'n Ah 've seen 'em in pictures, but Ah 've noticed Fritzes look bigger in th' dark.

"Now's your chance, la-ad,' I whispers. 'Trip round an' slip th' noose over 'is horns.'

"Not me,' growls Batty. 'T'other end's safer.'

"He crawls up to it wi' th' rope all ready, but just as he was going to slip it over its leg it seemed to stand on its head, feint wi' its left an' get an upper-cut wi' its right under Ratty's chin. A shadow passed across th' fa-ace o' the moon, which I judged to be Ratty.

"Ratty's after altitude records,' says I to meself, 'an' there'll be th' ellanall of a row if that rope's lost.'

"However, in a few minutes he started to descend an' made a good landing in some soft bracken. By th' time I'd felt him all over, an' found 'e'd be fit to go to hospital in th' morning, th' stag had disappeared."

"I never heard of stags kicking like that before," I interrupted.

"Nor hadn't Ratty," said the ancient warrior. "Ah towd you he made a mistake in Nacheral 'Istory.

"The next night, feeling mighty lonely, Ah walked five kilometres to th' nearest estaminet, the 'Rondyvoo de Chasers,' an' looked upon the _vang_ while it was _rouge_. When I'd done lookin' and started home th' forest looked more gho-ost-like than ever wi' th' young firs bowing an' swaying, and drifts o' cloud peeping through the branches. All at once I

heard a crackling o' twigs like th' night afore, an' then someone stole
acrost th' road carrying a rope.

"Ah says to myself, 'It's one of th' Chinks poaching, an' it's 'evin
'elp 'im if 'e 's after what Ratty nearly caught last night!"

"Seemingly 'e was, for 'e follered th' noise, an' Ah follered 'im--at a
safe distance. Then, dimlike an' looming big, Ah saw th' stag, an' the
Chink stealing up behind it.

"'Tother end, you fool!" I whispered; an' he jumps round to its head,
slips th' noose round its neck an' leads if off as quiet as a lamb."

"You don't expect me to believe," I broke in indignantly, "that a stag
can be led like a poodle on a lead?"

"P'raps not stags," said the veteran, relighting his pipe. "That's weer
Ratty made the mistake that sent 'im to hospital. But you can do it now
and then with a transport mule what's broke away, and the Chink done
it."

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[Illustration: _Photographer (to Douglas Devereux, the world-famous
cinema-actor_). "TIKE YER PHOTO, SIR?"]

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COMMERCIAL CANDOUR.

"In reply to your letter to hand, we are very sorry for the delay in
sending the Jumper, but the tremendous demand for these has denuded
our stock. We are, however, expecting a further delay now in a day
or so.

Yours obediently,

BROTHERS, LTD."

* * * * *

"The spell of hot weather is causing large numbers of the public
to migrate to the Kent coast. Thanet, owing to greatly improved
travelling facilities, is being specially flavoured. The public well
know the magical properties of Thanet air."--_Evening Paper_.

Then why bother about flavouring it?

* * * * *

"The Food Controller announced that canned salmon is now free of
control, and that chocolates and other sweetmeats will be freed on
July 1.

He also intimates that canned salmon is now free of control,
and that chocolates and other sweetmeats will be freed on July
1."--_Daily Paper_.

We hope he will say it once more, on the Bellman's principle that "what
I tell you three times is true."

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[Illustration: _Chorus of children (to parent, late Lieut-Col. R.F.A.,
D.S.O., M.C. and Bar_). "DON'T BE FRIGHTENED, DADDY; SHE'LL ONLY PECK

YOUR LEGS."]

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HINTS ON SELECTING AN AEROPLANE.

As all the world will soon be in the air a few words of advice on choosing an aerial steed may be of assistance to intending fliers who have so far had no experience as owners of winged craft.

The first thing is to locate the whereabouts of the best park, for one speaks of a park of aeroplanes just as one speaks of a school of whales, a grove of wombats or a suite of leeches. Having arrived (wearing, if you are wise, a full-grown check cap, with the back to the front and the peak protecting the nape of the neck from the bites of savage vendors), take a deep breath and look round you knowingly.

By the way, what are you--peer, profiteer, or plain _pater-familias_ looking for a family air-bus? It is impossible to advise you how to select a plane without knowing whether you want one for long-distance journeys (with non-starting attachment), for stunting, or merely for gadding about and dropping in on your friends. There is a sad story afloat of a man who bought an air-bus the other day for world-touring and only discovered the insufficiency of cupboards and the want of a bathroom after starting on his maiden trip to Patagonia (where the nuts drop off).

Let us suppose that you are one of the majority of heavier-than-air persons who will shortly be wanting a good steady machine to rise to any ordinary occasion.

Well, then, look round you carefully. Observe the demeanour of the machines that are trotted out (if such a term may be used) for your inspection. The flick of a tail, the purr of an engine or the slope of a wing may give the observant a clue as to the disposition of an aerial Pegasus.

But however reassuring a preliminary canter may be (to borrow another horsey simile) insist on a thorough personal inspection of all parts of the machine. Test the musical capacity of the wire entanglement, screw and unscrew the turnbuckles till the seller cries for mercy, and run your hands well over the body (the aeroplane's, of course) to make quite sure that it will support the weight of yourself, of your family and of your parasites--remembering in this connection that Aunt Louisa kicks the beam at 15.7. Make sure also that the body will not part company with the rest of the box of tricks at one of those awkward corners in the sky. Also, if you have time, it might be well to glance at the engine, the petrol tank and the feed-pipe, as experts consider these of importance.

Having satisfied yourself that all these things are as they should be in the best of all possible aeroplanes, that the joy-stick works as smoothly as a beer-pull, and that the under-carriage has the necessary wheels, axles and other things that under-carriages are licensed to carry, little remains but to pay for the machine and make a nosedive for home.

A longer and more detailed article on "How to Choose a Stunter," by the Bishop of Solder and Man, with which is incorporated "A Few Hints on Banking for Beginners," by Sir JOHN BRADBURY, will appear in next week's issue.

[This is the first I have heard of it.--ED.]

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From a Menu:--

"Special this day: Boiled Rabbi and Pork."

A clear case of adding insult to injury.

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[Illustration: UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE DERBY.

Nurse. "PLEASE IS THIS THE WAY TO THE GRAND PARADE?"

Soured Spinster. "DON'T MENTION THE HORRID THING, YOUNG WOMAN, AND ME WITH HALF-A-MONTH'S PENSION ON THE PANTHER."]

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BALLADE OF APPROACHING BALDNESS.

I'm back in civil life, all brawn and chest,
Lungs made of leather, heart as right as rain;
I still could dine off bully-beef with zest;
I've never had a scratch or stitch or sprain;
Life seems to throb in every single vein.
Yet I'm a whited sepulchre, in brief;
I've one foot in the grave, I'm on the wane,
I'm heading for the sere and yellow leaf.

From Mons to Jericho I've borne my crest
And back from Jericho to Mons again;
I've sampled smells in Araby the Blest
Would burst a boiler or corrode a drain;
The Blankshires have a port that raises Cain--
I've messed with them and never come to grief;
And yet I'm dashing like a non-stop train
Full steam into the sere and yellow leaf.

It caught me hard this morning when I dressed
And read the mirror's verdict. Ah, the pain
Is gnawing like a canker at my breast,
Is beating like a hammer in my brain;
I must speak out or break beneath the strain.
I'm going bald on top. O cruel reef
Where youthful hopes lie wrecked! O dismal lane
Whose end is but the sere and yellow leaf!

ENVOI.

Prince (Mr. Punch)! on Armageddon's plain
My love-locks fell a prey to Time, the thief.
Regrets are useless, unguents are in vain;
Only remains the sere and yellow leaf.

* * * * *

THE COMMERCIAL TOUCH.

"Presiding at the concert given in connection with the ---- Art Club's annual exhibition of oil and water-colours, Mr. ---- congratulated the club on the quality of its paintings, which, he thought, were remarkably cheap when cognisance was taken of the present high prices of materials."--_Provincial Paper_.

This critic has, as the Art jargon puts it, "a nice feeling for values."

* * * * *

"HOW I DIFFER FROM MY MOTHER."

By A Modern Woman.

'_Women differ by the width of Heaven from what their mothers were_'--MR. JUSTICE DARLING.

"I do not smoke and I do not wear bare-back dresses, but I agree with Mr. Justice Darling--there is the width of Heaven between my mother and I."--_Evening News_.

Let's hope so, in the matter of grammar.

* * * * *

HUMOUR'S LABOUR LOST.

Lochtermachty, N.B. May 29th, 1919.

DEAR MR. PUNCH,--My father and I have fallen out over the question of your literary judgment and sense of humour. If I weren't a filial daughter I'd say that he's a ----; but I am, so I won't call him names.

The fact is that, before he became a professional Padre, he didn't know that such things as senses of humour existed. All that mattered in his life were Latin and Greek and Hebrew and the other pursuits of the classical scholar. However, during his wanderings with the Army he has somehow managed to acquire what he calls "an appreciation of the laughable." And that is the cause of our divided house.

This morning at breakfast, while he was reading out the account of the proceedings of the General Assemblies, he came upon the interesting statement--volunteered by an eminent Edinburgh divine--that all the ministers of the Kirk have lost a stone in weight during the War, and that this works out at a loss of five tons of ministerial flesh to the United Free Church of Scotland. Then, after he had tested the accuracy of the statistics, which he found quite incorrect, and I had meditated upon the bulk of matter encircled by the parental Sam Browne, we were both seized with an idea, and said "_Punch!_" at the same instant.

It took us some time to get rid of the accumulation of marmalade, margarine and bacon fat which we amassed in our attempts to link fingers across the table; but about 10.30 or so we got settled down to work on your behalf.

Until lunch-time we were fully occupied in giving each other ideas and then explaining why they wouldn't work. After lunch the Padre retired to his study to work out, he said, a satire--after ARISTOPHANES--which would afford him an opportunity of introducing the Archbishop of CANTERBURY'S speech, and making some whimsical allusions to the legend of the strayed lamb come back to tell his lean Scotch brethren of the green meadows and luscious feeding to be had across the Borders.

My own ambitions were slighter. I would do a conversation perhaps between the shades of JOHNSON and his BOZZY, or a Limerick, or even just an original witty remark, or, failing all of these, I would select an "apt quotation." About tea-time I retired to the garden with a notebook, a pencil and a book of quotations. By 6.30 I had a

list of one hundred and two, and was wavering over the final choice of a parody on "Some hae meat wha canna eat," and an adaptation of "Be soople, Davie, in things immaterial," when my parent came out to the lawn, flushed and excited, with his last three hairs triumphantly erect, and brandished a document in my face.

It was an ode, Mr. Punch--an ode five (foolscap) pages long, written in Greek!

I gave him best at once, and then very gently suggested that his composition might not in its present unmitigated form be quite suited to your tastes and requirements.

I shall spare you the details of the ensuing controversy, but I want you to know that I have spared you much else, and in so doing have forfeited not only my father's affection but a projected advance on my next quarter-but-three's dress allowance.

I hope you need no further proof of my devotion.

Yours, etc.,

A DAUGHTER OF THE MANSE.

P.S.--I was forgetting to say that you will find the bit about the ministers near the bottom of the third column of the tenth page of Thursday's Scotsman. Perhaps you can think of a funny treatment yourself.

* * * * *

SONGS OF SIMLA.

III.--THE FURRIER.

Akbar the furrier squats on the floor
Sucking an Eastern pipe,
Thumbing the lakhs that he's made of yore,
Lakhs which creep to the long-dreamed crore
In a ledger of Western type.

And all around him the wild beasts sway,
Cured of their mortal ills--
Flying squirrels from Sikkim way,
Silver foxes that used to play
Up on the Kashmir hills.

On the shelf of a cupboard a polecat lies
Laughing between his paws,
And there's more than a hint of amused surprise
In the gape of the lynx, in the marten's eyes,
In the poise of the grey wolf's claws.

And, should you enter old Akbar's lair
And hear what he wants for his skins,
You will know why the little red squirrels stare,
Why the Bengal tiger gasps for air
And the gaunt snow-leopard grins.

J.M.S.

* * * * *

The Telephone Girl's motto: Nulla linea sine die--"Number engaged; ring again and again, please."

* * * * *

ALAS! POOR PANTHER.

I went to the Derby fully intending to back the favourite--The Panther.

But the cross-currents immediately set in--as they always do.

I began by making the mistake of reading the forecasts of all the experts--the gallant Captains and Majors, the Men on the Course, the Men on the Heath, the Men on the Spot--all of whom, although they mostly favoured The Panther, had serious views as to dangerous rivals, supported by what looked like uncontroversial arguments.

I also had an early evening paper with a summary of forecasts, none of which (as it was to turn out) mentioned the winner at all.

I was even so foolish as to glance at some of the advertisements of the wizards who are so ready to put the benefit of their knowledge at the service of the public and make fortunes for others rather (apparently) than for themselves, all of whom hinted at some mysterious long-priced outsider whose miraculous qualities of speed were a secret. But of course I was too late to profit by these; they merely unsettled me.

Not content with this I was forced to overhear the conversation of others in our compartment, each of whom fancied a separate animal, arguing with reasons that could not be gainsaid.

In this way I learned that The Panther would win in a canter and would be badly beaten; that he was a stranger to the Epsom course; that he was ready for anything; that he liked soft going; that he was no good except when he could hear his hoofs rattle; that his jockey was not strong enough; that his jockey was ideal; that he was sounder than any horse had ever been, and that trouble was brewing.

All this naturally left me shaken as to my first decision. Was I wise, I asked myself, to trust all my eggs (forgive, Sir ALEC BLACK, the poorness of this metaphor) to one doubtful basket?

Having admitted an element of doubt I was the prey of every suspicion and began to consider the other candidates. All Alone headed the list. I liked the name, because it suggested the corollary: the rest nowhere. Also it belonged to a lady--to the only lady owner, in fact--and lady--owners were said (by a man with a red beard opposite me who smoked cigarettes so short that I was certain it was made of dyed asbestos) to be in luck this season. "Always follow the luck," he added. But then, on the other hand, what could be more lucky than Colonel BUCHAN, author of Mr. Standfast and an excellent History of the War, into whose lap so many good things fall? Why not back a horse named after him? Besides, was not Buchan third favourite?

I was making a note of Buchan's claims, when a man with a Thermos flask lashed to his side began to praise Dominion. Dominion, it seems, was third in the Two Thousand Guineas--only just behind Buchan, who was just behind The Panther. Many people thought The Panther unduly lucky that day. A very different course, too, at Newmarket from that at Epsom. Obviously Dominion must be remembered. Moreover he was being greatly fancied and some of the best judges looked to him to win the Blue Riband for Lord GLANELY. The fact that Lord GLANELY drew his own horse in the Baltic Sweep was not to be sneezed at either, said some one. That's an omen if there ever was one! And it knocked out Lord GLANELY'S other horse, Grand Parade.

"Well, here's a tip," cried a man with a frock-coat and a straw hat.

"Blest if I've got a single coin left--nothing but paper money. That's good enough for me. I shall back Paper Money."

The carriage agreed that that was his duty. "Of course you must," they said. "When everyone disagrees in the way that the experts do, you might as well take a tip like that as anything."

Paper Money had therefore to be added also to my list of possibles.

"Besides," said another man, "DONOGHUE rides him; our leading jockey, you know." I had forgotten to look at the jockeys' names. How absurd! Of course one must back DONOGHUE.

But just then, "Give me WHALLEY," said the man with the asbestos beard, and, as WHALLEY was riding Bay of Naples, I had to consider him too. Naples was a jolly place and I had had a lot of fun there. Hadn't I better make that my tip?

But, on the other hand, what about Tangiers? I had had fun there too, and more than one fellow-passenger had darkly hinted that this was a much better animal than public form proclaimed. Looking for particulars, I found that he once "ran Galloper Light to a head;" which had a promising sound. He was trained at Lambourne too, and I like Lambourne. There is a good inn there and it is a fine walk to White Horse Hill.

"Well," said another man, who had been borrowing matches from his neighbour ever since Victoria, "I always had a feeling for a Marcovil colt. Marcovil is a good sire. I've had some very special information about Milton, the Marcovil colt, to-day."

MILTON!--one of my favourite poets, and also one of Mr. ASQUITH'S, as he said in that lecture last week. Yes, but is Mr. ASQUITH exactly lucky just now? Perhaps not. And did not MILTON write *Paradise Lost*? True. But, on the other hand, he wrote *Paradise Regained*. You see how difficult tip-hunting can be!

And so it went on and I emerged from the Epsom Downs station in a maze of indecision, in which one fact and one only shone with crystal clearness, and that was that whatever won the race The Panther had no better chance, even though it had been made favourite, than any other.

"Besides," as one of the two men who sat on my knees had said, "What's a favourite anyway? Very often a horse is made a favourite by the bookies, in conjunction with the Press, just so as everyone will back it. No, no favourites for me. Give me a likely outsider at good odds. Look what you have to put on The Panther to win anything."

In the result I backed--well, I am not going to tell you; but they "also ran."

The moral of this story--if it has one--is either don't bet at all, or, if you do bet, draw the horse from a hat at random, and, having drawn it, stick to it. No one, as the failure of The Panther proves, can possibly *know* more than you.

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[Illustration: *Daphne*. "I MUSTN'T HAVE ANY CAKE TILL I DON'T ASK FOR IT, MUST I?"]

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[Illustration: *Wife*. "HOW ABOUT SEAHAVEN FOR THE HOLIDAYS? I HEAR IT'S VERY PICTURESQUE."]

Profiteer. "NOT OUR CLASS, MY DEAR. TOO QUIET--SORT O' PLACE THE
NOUVEAUX PAUVRES GO TO.]"

* * * * *

TECHNICAL TERMS.

When Ernest asked me to take a run in his car I took advantage of the invitation because there are times when I think that life is less joyful without a car and that one day I shall slip out and buy one. I should love to grip the wheel and sweep the countryside and listen to the soft purr of the engine. So we started sweeping the countryside, Ernest and I; but we had not swept very much of it before the soft purr developed a kind of cough and the car stopped.

Ernest coaxed and petted her. He tried kindness, while I helped him with sarcasm. He tried hauteur and then a little bad temper.

Eventually he decided to send for the local motor engineer, and it was when this gentleman arrived with his mate that I decided that motoring was not for me and that I should have to fall back on fretwork or tame mice for my recreation.

"Here, Bill," said Overalls-in-Chief, "just hold up the Ding-dong."

His mate did as instructed and up went the Ding-dong.

"Now hand me the Doo-dal," he went on; "and while I tune up the old Jig-jig you get the Pipety-pip and clean it out.

"Now get the Tick-tick and just give me a tap here with the Ooh-jah, while I give the Thing-a-me-tight a couple for his nob.

"See that?" he shouted at me. "Would you believe it? Easy as winking. See, it was like this. The What's-a-name here, as kept the Tiddle-um-tum in place, was sort of riding on the Squeak-box, so as the Tiddle-om-pom and the other Jigger sort of gave the half-seas-over to the Thing-a-me-bob and missed the Rum-ti-tum. Simple, ain't it, Guv'nor?"

"Yes," I answered, "quite simple."

But I have decided to give up all idea of buying a car. I should never learn the language.

* * * * *

LITTLE GREY WATER.

Little Grey Water, my heart is with you
In the loop of the hills where the lone heron feeds,
Where your cloak is a cloud with a lining of blue,
And your lover a wind riding over the reeds.

Little Grey Water, I know that you know
What the teal and the black duck are dreaming at noon,
And the way of the wistful wild geese as they go
Through the haze of the hills to keep tryst with the moon.

Little Grey Water, folk say and they say
That the homing hill-shepherd, benighted, has heard
A song in the reeds, 'twixt the dawn and the day,
That was never the song of a breeze or a bird.

But I know you so silent, so silent and still,

And so proud of your trust that you'll never betray
What the fairies that gather from Grundiston Hill
Tell the stars before morning to witch them away.

W.H.O.

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[Illustration: FAITH RESTORED.]

MR. PUNCH. "STANDS ROBERT WHERE HE DID? GOOD! I WAS AFRAID FOR A MOMENT THAT MY IDOL HAD FEET OF CLAY."]

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ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, June 2nd--The Lords seldom sit _die Lunae_, and were perhaps feeling what humbler folk call "rather Mondayish" at being summoned from their week-end pleasaunces to put the Local Government (Ireland) Bill through its final stages. Anyhow they developed some eleventh-hour criticisms. The sad case of the Belfast Water Commissioners attracted Lord STUART OF WORTLEY. There are fifteen of them--one each for the existing wards. But under the Bill Belfast is to be divided into ten wards; and fifteen into ten won't go, even in Ireland. Lord PEEL considered that while Lord STUART'S arithmetic was impeccable his fears were exaggerated. If Belfast drinks its whiskey neat it will not be for want of Water Commissioners.

In the Commons Members were disappointed to learn from Sir AUCKLAND GEDDES that he had no idea of the time when railway-fares would be reduced to the amount printed on the tickets. Nor were they much consoled by his promise to consider the suggestion that as the fare cannot be brought down to the ticket the ticket shall be brought up to the fare. We should not lightly part with our few reminders of the cheap dead days that are no more. In fact it would be a salutary thing if other tradesmen imitated the "commercial candour" of the railways and ticketed their goods with the pre-war value in addition to the present charge.

There is a juvenile impulsiveness about Sir HENRY CRAIK which reminds one of "the boy who wouldn't grow up," and may account for his keen interest in Kensington Gardens. Dissatisfied with an assurance of the FIRST COMMISSIONER OF WORKS that he was doing his best to get the War Office to clear away their hutments he burst out, "Could he not attempt to use some disciplinary action against the obstinacy, the stupidity, the slackness, the carelessness of those who are responsible?" Swept away by this spate of sibilants Sir ALFRED MOND essayed no further answer.

After less than an hour's debate the House gave the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER power to borrow a trifle of two hundred and fifty millions, to square this year's account, _plus_ an undefined sum to enable him to fund the floating debt, now amounting to close on two thousand millions. Even Sir FREDERICK BANBURY had no serious objection to raise, his chief anxiety being that everyone, and not merely the plutocratic holders of Treasury Bills, should be permitted to subscribe to the new loan. Mr. CHAMBERLAIN assured him that it was a case of "Let 'em all come."

[Illustration: ANOTHER VISIT--AND IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.]

MR. AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.]

[Illustration: THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS.]

"AM I REALLY SUFFERING FROM SENILE DECAY?"]

Tuesday, June 3rd--According to the view of Major WOOD and his friends the Mother of Parliaments is played out. The Grand Committees which were to have restored her vigour have left her more enfeebled than ever, and unless she devolves a large part of her duties upon subordinate assemblies her end is near. But I noticed that, although Ireland was expressly excepted from their resolution, most of them talked of little else, and I fancy that but for Dublin we should not have heard much of devolution.

As a statesman His Grace of CANTERBURY has hitherto enjoyed the reputation of being "safe" rather than dashing. But that is evidently a mistake, for in introducing the Bill which is to enable the Church to free itself from some of the trammels imposed upon it by the State he begged his hearers not to be afraid of "brave adventurous legislation." His appeal was quite lost upon Lord HALDANE, who was shocked by the terrible possibilities of the measure, and warned the PRIMATE that if the Bill became law he would have signed the death-warrant of the Establishment. Coming from a Presbyterian who helped to disestablish the Church in Wales, this showed the heights of altruism to which a real philosopher may rise.

Colonel WEDGWOOD was shocked to learn that in the occupied territories Germans had to take off their hats when addressing British officers. But it would be a mistake to assume that his concern was due to any tenderness for our foes. On the contrary, it was exhibited out of regard for the feelings of British officers. Mr. CHURCHILL regretted the inconvenience, but pointed out that it had always been the practice--even in Belgium--for an Army of Occupation to exact certain acts of respect from the inhabitants.

Mr. KELLAWAY, who announced last week with such pride that "the Government have struck oil," was now able to state that the oil had reached a height of 2,400 feet and was still rising steadily. There is some talk of inviting the successful engineers to put down bores at Westminster.

Wednesday, June 4th--Complaint was made recently that under the new Rules of Procedure Members were expected to be in three places at once. I fancy that a good many of them settled their difficulty to-day by betaking themselves to a fourth place, not in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster.

There was anything but a Grand Parade on the green benches, and the faithful few who were present put a good many questions "on behalf of my honourable friend." The Front Benches were well manned, however, and Mr. LONG had quite a busy time explaining to Commander BELLAIRS why the Admiralty thought it inadvisable at this date to hold courts-martial in regard to the Naval losses of 1914. The House was more interested to hear that the Peace celebrations will include a Naval procession through London, and that there will be a display in the Thames of war-ships of various classes, including, possibly, some of those captured from the enemy.

A feature of the afternoon was Mr. MACQUISTEN'S brief comments upon Ministerial replies. Divorced from their setting, such remarks as "Fish is very dear!" (_a propos_ of Admiralty parsimony in compensating the owners of drifters) or "By thought-reading?" (when the best method of ascertaining native opinion on the future of Rhodesia was in question), may not sound particularly funny, but, when delivered in a voice of peculiar penetration and "Scotchiness," at precisely the right moments, they were sufficient to convulse the Benches. Mr. MACQUISTEN must be careful or he will soon be a spoiled DARLING.

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[Illustration: _Waiter (at public dinner, to very hot and red-faced diner_). "I'M GOING NOW, SIR. ANYTHING MORE I CAN GET YOU? BRANDY OR PORT? NO, SIR? SHALL I GET YOU A COOL CHAIR, SIR?"]

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"Cigar smokers will be interested very much in the likelihood of that luxury being soon dearer than ever.... It will most likely develop into a habit of getting the very last whiff of every cigar."--_Provincial Paper_.

The printer would seem to be practising already.

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"HOW TO HEAR MUSIC."

(With humble acknowledgments to the critic of "The Times.")

We were grateful to Mlle. Snouck Hugronje for giving us an opportunity of hearing the Violin Concertos of Prenek Bib Doda in C sharp minor, and of Basil Tulkinghorn in the composite key of F.E. The latter work, we may explain, is dedicated to Lord BIRKENHEAD. Doda's work is so rarely played that Mr. ERNEST NEWMAN has wittily suggested that he ought to be renamed Dodo. But let that pass. Here he is abundantly like himself, rich in self-determining phrases which emerge from a Hinterland of wild surmise, and tower aloft in peaks of Himalayan majesty like Haramokh or Siniolchum ---- Mr. CANDLER must finish this sentence.

Tulkinghorn is also a master of transcendental effects, and as relentless in pushing home his points as Mr. SMILLIE when examining a duke before the Coal Commission. But he is not always to be trusted. He lacks the architectonic faculty. In between the clusters of clear-cut phrases there are too many nebulae of gaseous formation and spiral type, which deflect the orbital movement of his essentially electronic melody and impair its impact on the naked ear.

But when Mlle. Snouck Hugronje plays you forget all about self-determination, syndicalism, guild-control, proletariats, sunspots and even Mr. SMILLIE. If you are a poet, and we are all poets nowadays, you dream yourself into a punt on the Sonning backwater, wondering if the summer was ever so amazing before, nearly being shipwrecked on a sandy spit, starting moorfowl or it may be dabchicks, sending a _frisson_ into the fritillaries, losing and regaining your punt-pole, always believing that the next bend ---- Mr. FILSON YOUNG must really finish the sentence.

If you are a musician and an occultist you will, by due concentration of your pineal gland and pituitary body, rise with the rapidity of a HAWKER to astral altitudes immune from all mundane disquiet. You will notice ---- However, this is best, left to Mr. CYRIL SCOTT or Sir RABINDRANATH TAGORE or Sir OLIVER LODGE. But if you are a mere listener you will listen and be thankful. But if you never go to concerts you will still be able, by the aid of the New Criticism, to attain to an ecstasy of appreciation far greater than if you had relied on the crude medium of your senses.

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[Illustration: _Niece_. "BUT AREN'T YOU GOING TO GIVE THAT NICE PORTER A TIP, AUNTIE? HE'S AN OLD SOLDIER."]

'Aunt' '_EXACTLY_' MY DEAR. MUCH TOO POLITE TO BE UNPLEASANT TO ONE."]

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THE CONSCRIPTION OF BRAINS.

PROGRESS OF THE COMMISSION.

The Literary section of the Nationalisation Commission met last Friday. Before evidence was taken the Chairman, Mr. ROBERT WILLIAMS, said that as their Report must be delivered in less than a week the Commission had decided not to summon Lord MORLEY, Lord ROSEBERY or Mr. THOMAS HARDY, but hoped in the few days still available, to hear the evidence of Sir THOMAS HALL CAINE, Lady WARWICK, Mrs. BARCLAY, Mr. SPACKMAN and Mr. SMILLIE.

Mr. EDWARD MARSH read an interesting Report on the State Remuneration of Poets. He was of opinion that poets, if they could be shown to be of the authentic Georgian brand, ought to be secured a reasonable salary quite irrespective of the views which they expressed. They must never be expected to glorify or approve of the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, but should be perfectly free to criticise or attack him. No attempt should be made to impose any metrical constraint on their verse. But he thought it desirable that for the purpose of bringing them to the notice of the public a State chaperon should be appointed to provide suitable introductions and biographical details. He also advocated the multiplication of poetry tea-shops, where pure China tea and wholesome confectionery should be supplied gratis to all poets whose works had been favourably noticed in 'The Times Literary Supplement'.

The CHAIRMAN. What is your idea of the minimum wage for poets?--In view of the present purchasing power of the sovereign I should put it at eight hundred pounds a year. Modern poets require an extra amount of nourishment, owing to the nervous strain involved in production, and their requirements in the matter of dress are often difficult to satisfy. I understand that the price of sandals has gone up two hundred per cent.

Mr. CHARLES GARVICE, the next witness, stated that he did not think the literary quality of novels would be necessarily improved by nationalisation. Speaking for himself he did not think it would affect his output. But if the State took over this industry it should be liberal in affording novel-producers facilities for obtaining fresh material, local colour, etc. At all costs the output of salubrious and sedative fiction must be maintained if only as an antidote to the subversive and revolutionary literature now freely disseminated among the proletariat.

COLONEL WEDGWOOD. HOW do you expect a workman earning only three pounds a week to afford seven shillings for every novel that he buys?--Personally I should like to see the cost reduced, but I understand that if the price of novels were fixed at one shilling it would involve the State in an expenditure of ten million pounds annually, even with the present reduced output of novels, which has fallen during the War to little over twenty million tons.

Mr. HAROLD BEGBIE declared himself a whole-hearted supporter of nationalisation. There was something extraordinarily uplifting in the notion of consecrating one's talents to the State. Publishers were too often callous individualists. Here one would be working for humanity. If his interview with the KAISER had been issued under State sanction he believed that the Peace would have been signed months sooner.

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OFFICIAL CANDOUR.

"TELEGRAPHIC NOTICE.

Public is hereby informed that delays to and from offices in Punjab are normal."--_Indian Paper_.

Same here.

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OUR VETERANS.

"London Rifle Brigade, 40 strong, of the 1st Battalion, which went out in 1814, arrived in London from France at mid-day yesterday."--_Daily Paper_.

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A ROYAL INTERVIEW.

"Someone to see you, Miss."

Thus Mary at about nine o'clock on an April evening at the door of my tiny sitting-room.

There was a strange little quiver in her voice.

Mary is so extremely well trained, and so accustomed, moreover, to queer visitors at the flat, that I looked up in surprise.

"Yes?" I said. "Is it a lady?"

Mary did not reply immediately; she seemed half-dazed.

"Is it a lady?" I repeated a little sharply. My usually imperturbable parlourmaid appeared to have taken leave of her senses.

"She said she was a queen, Miss," she gasped.

At that moment the visitor, evidently grown tired of waiting, calmly floated in through the half-open door and settled down gracefully in the centre of a large gold cushion lying on the end of the Chesterfield.

Fortunately I grasped the situation at once.

"Thank you, Mary," I said, with what I now feel to have been most commendable coolness in the entirely unprecedented circumstances; "I will ring if I want tea later."

When the door had closed upon the still gasping Mary I turned apologetically to my visitor.

"I'm so sorry, your Majesty," I said. "You see, my maid was not unnaturally a little surprised--"

"It's quite all right," said the Fairy Queen graciously; "I thought you wouldn't mind my coming in."

"Of course not," I said; "I am only too delighted. Won't you come nearer the fire?"

She looked down at the cushion on which she was sitting, then she looked up at me and smiled.

"I don't like to leave it," she said; "it's so pretty." And she stroked the soft gold stuff with her tiny hand.

"Yes," I said; "and your lovely frock goes with it so beautifully. But how would this be?"

I stooped, gently lifted the cushion with its delicate burden and put it down on the floor in front of the fire. "There--how is that?"

"That's delightful," said the Fairy Queen. "I'm so glad you like my frock," she went on. "Paris, of course. That is to say, the idea came from there. My own people did the actual making. After all, no one can touch the French when it comes to real _chic_. Don't you think so?"

I acquiesced. Oh, yes, Paris was certainly the best.

"But I didn't come here to discuss clothes," said my visitor. She made a quick movement and leaned suddenly forward on the cushion, her delicate golden head supported on her slender hand. "Do you know the Editor of _Punch_?" she asked abruptly.

I hesitated. "I can't exactly say that I _know_ him," I said.

The Fairy Queen looked very disappointed.

"Oh, dear, then I'm afraid it's no good. I thought you'd be sure to know him."

"But although I don't know him personally I am in communication with him," I said. "Perhaps--"

She brightened up a little.

"I suppose you _could_ write," she said; "though of course it would be far better to see him."

"It's about that cover," she went on. I looked at her blankly.

"The cover of _Punch_, you know."

Vague pictures of Mr. Punch surrounded by little dancing figures, an easel, Toby, a lion--surely there was a lion somewhere--flitted across my mind. What on earth had the cover of _Punch_ got to do with the Fairy Queen?

I went over to the little table where lay the latest copy, and came back with it in my hand and knelt down on the floor near the cushion.

The Fairy Queen came close to me and peered over the edge of the paper.

"Look at the fairies," she said, pointing with a tiny indignant finger. "_Look_ at them. They're most dreadfully old-fashioned. Nobody in fairyland looks in the least like that now."

I looked. Certainly the little figures had rather an early-Victorian air about them.

"Of course we should never dream of being tremendously fashionable or anything of that kind. I would not for one moment think of allowing any of my court-ladies to cut their hair short, for instance, or to wear one of those foolish hobble skirts; but nobody, nobody could accuse us of being dowdy. Now tell me, have you ever seen one of us looking like that, or like that?"

"But are you quite sure," I said, not without hesitation, for she was by

way of being rather an autocratic and imperious little person and I was the least little bit afraid of her--"are you quite sure that they _are_ fairies?"

"Of course they are," she replied quickly. "What else could they be? Naturally Mr. Punch would have fairies all round him. He loves us. You have no idea how much we have in common."

I didn't reply at once. I was engaged in staring at the familiar design.

"They haven't any wings," I said, still rather doubtfully, "except this one at the bottom."

But the Fairy Queen was very decided indeed. "All fairies don't have wings," she said; "and with regard to that particular one at the bottom," she glanced a little superciliously at the buxom lady with the trumpet, "as a matter of fact, she isn't a fairy at all. I don't quite know what she is, an angel perhaps, but not a fairy, certainly not a fairy. But the others are, of course." She glanced at me a little defiantly with her bright eyes. "Surely, my dear, I ought to know a fairy when I see one. At the time when these were done they were perfectly all right; they only want bringing up to date, like the pictures inside, that's all. Now you will see whether you can do anything, won't you?"

It was difficult to refuse, but I didn't feel very hopeful.

"I'll try," I said. "I'll write to the Editor; but I'm afraid it's not very likely that he will do anything in the matter. You see the cover's been like that for years and years. Almost ever since _Punch_ began. It's--well, it's part of the _Punch_ tradition. We all love it. Nobody would like to see it altered; it wouldn't seem the same thing."

The Fairy Queen was busy with her cloak and didn't pay much attention to what I was saying,

"Won't you stay a little longer and have some tea or something?" I begged.

She shook her head.

"A chocolate?"

She smiled. "I can't resist a chocolate," she said. She took a very little one and nibbled at it daintily, flitting about the room meanwhile and chattering away in the friendliest fashion in her tiny high voice.

"I must go," she said at last. "I have enjoyed it so much. May I come again some day? I should love to come again."...

I went out with her into the little lobby and down the stairs, and stood at the hall door to watch her go.

"Now don't forget," were her last words as she floated out into the night. "Tell him, tell him exactly what we really look like."

"I can't," I called after her desperately; "I can't."

But she had already disappeared in the soft haze. I went slowly up the stairs and back to my quiet room and the dying fire.

"I can't," I said again. "I only wish I could."

R. F.

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"Bandsmen Wanted for Municipal Band. Solo Cornet and others. Work found for bricklayer, carpenter, painter and paperhanger."--_Daily Paper_.

With whose assistance we may expect some jazzling effects.

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[Illustration: LURE OF THE LAND.

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A MAN WHO BOUGHT A FARM--

--BECAUSE AN OPEN-AIR LIFE APPEALED TO HIM--

--AND BECAUSE IT MADE ONE ONE'S OWN MASTER--

--BECAUSE, MOREOVER, HE WAS FOND OF ANIMALS--

--AND ALSO BECAUSE ANY AMOUNT OF EXPERT OPINION WAS ALWAYS AVAILABLE IN CASES OF DOUBT--

--BECAUSE, AGAIN, THE ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY GAVE SUCH A CHARM TO IT--

--AND, FURTHER, BECAUSE CERTAIN SECTIONS WERE BOUND TO BE PROFITABLE--

--IN ADDITION BECAUSE UP-TO-DATE APPLIANCES MADE EVERYTHING SO EASY--

--BECAUSE, IN PARTICULAR, IT TOOK ONE BACK TO NATURE, AND HELPED ONE TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF NATURAL LAWS--

--AND, LASTLY, BECAUSE, AFTER ALL, ONE COULD ALWAYS GET RID OF THE BEASTLY THING.]

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[Illustration: _Author_. "YOU REMEMBER MY LAST BOOK?"

Artist. "THE ONE I ILLUSTRATED?"

Author. "YES. WELL, SIR BARNES STORMER WANTS ME TO DRAMATISE IT FOR HIS NEXT WEST-END PRODUCTION."

Artist. "I SAY! THAT'S SPLENDID. I MUST READ IT.]"

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THE MURMANSK MOSQUITO.

My particular interest having been aroused by descriptions recently published in the English Press of the Murmansk mosquito, I made a point, on my arrival in North Russia with the Relief Force, of collecting further data from officers whose experience entitles them to speak with authority upon the habits of the local fauna.

From them I have gathered some curious information which should interest even those whose enthusiasm for the phenomena of natural history is normally but languid, and cannot fail to intrigue not only the entomologist but also the big game hunter, who would find it well worth his while to observe and study the tactics of this sagacious and formidable insect.

Judging from the evidence at my command the true Murmansk mosquito is considerably larger and fiercer than the Archangel variety, owing no

doubt to the genial influence of the Gulf Stream. Both types are however sufficiently ferocious, and, save when rendered comatose by excess of nutrition, will attack human beings without provocation. The female of the species, if disturbed while accompanied by her young, will invariably charge with such fury that only by an exceptional combination of skill and courage can she be driven off. The shrill and vibrating cry of the Russian mosquito as it swoops to the attack is, I am assured, qualified to shake the fortitude of even experienced troops.

So surprising are some of the current stories of the size, strength and agility of these dreaded carnivora that one would suspect their veracity were they not vouched for by military and naval officers, and supported by such concrete evidence as that of the local architecture. The houses are almost universally constructed of substantial logs, undoubtedly for the reason that brickwork would be more easily displaced by the furious assault of the mosquito, which usually hunts in droves, packs or swarms, and has been known to surround and make concerted attacks, upon buildings occupied by particularly well-nourished personnel.

As evidence of the determination of their attacks, veterans of this front have pointed out to me, in the walls of local buildings, massive timbers which have been scarred and splintered by the teeth and claws of these monsters, emboldened by hunger and incensed by resistance.

The peculiar ferocity of the mosquito of these high latitudes is, of course, accounted for by the brevity of its actual life. Immured throughout the prolonged winter within its icy sarcophagus, it is not released before the middle of June, while the premature severity of August rapidly lowers its vitality. Such is its offensive spirit during the first relaxation of wintry rigour that it is dangerous in the extreme for anyone to walk about alone, for naturally the mosquito which the sunshine has just liberated, fasting and impatient, will make a determined effort to partake of the first likely repast which presents itself. Single newly-thawed specimens have been known to lie in ambush by frequented paths and fall upon lonely wayfarers with the desperate courage of starvation. I am credibly informed that, if duty necessitates an unescorted journey at this season, it is a wise precaution to provide oneself with several joints of reindeer flesh, which, in the event of attack by mosquitoes, may be thrown to them and so effect at least a temporary diversion.

The revolver is of little service against this formidable creature, owing to its cunning and the rapidity with which it manoeuvres, while its bristly hide is stout enough to defy the ordinary shotgun. It is proposed to detail certain anti-aircraft batteries to deal with high-flying swarms, while a young friend of my own, who was with a special company of the R.E. in France, is prepared to design a haversack projector for issue to all ranks. But against this it is urged by those familiar with North Russian towns in summer that nothing of such a nature can materially damage the _moral_ of the local mosquito.

Thrilling stories are told of escapes from these dangerous brutes. A senior officer of notoriously full habit of body, having attracted the attention of several immense specimens, was by them surrounded in his office, and rescued only just in time by the gallant efforts of an allied fatigue party which the besieged officer had the presence of mind to detail over the telephone. While awaiting (or pending) their arrival he passed through a period of mental agony (which has left unmistakable marks upon him) as he listened to the roar of their wings and the crunching of their fangs upon the outer timbers, or fixed his fascinated gaze upon the sweep, of their antennae under the front door, where they were trying for a purchase in order to force an entry.

On another occasion a patrol which was attacked by a large swarm was only saved by the _savoir faire_ of its commander, who ordered his men

each to ward off the rush of the hungry insects with a ration biscuit held out to them at arm's length. In their impetuous ferocity the creatures blindly snapped at the biscuits, with the result foreseen by the experienced leader; the swarm, with every appearance of complete demoralisation, broke and fled, several being weakened by the fracture of their mandibles and falling an easy prey to the bayonets of the exultant patrol.

With its naturally ardent temperament irritated by months of bitter cold, its constitutional hunger aggravated by a prolonged fast, its appetite tempted by a novel diet in the form of British soldiery well-washed and firm-fleshed after years of Army rations, the North Russian mosquito is likely, in the opinion of experts, to take a high place among the more deadly horrors of war.

* * * * *

[Illustration: Sergeant. "NOW THEN, ARE YOU THE FOUR MEN WITH A KNOWLEDGE OF MUSIC I WAS ASKING FOR?"

Chorus. "YES, SERGEANT."

Sergeant. "RIGHT. PARADE OFFICERS' MESS 11.30 TO MOVE GRAND PIANO TO MARQUEE--DISTANCE 500 YARDS--FOR CONCERT THIS EVENING."]

* * * * *

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

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

That audacious paraphrase of the Book of Job, The Undying Fire (CASSELL), seems to me to be marred by a fundamentally false note. I am sure that Mr. WELLS is as serious about his new God in the Heart of Man as he was about the Invisible King--I've no sort of intention of sneering--but I cannot credit him with belief in the Adversary, who by arrangement with the Almighty (as set forth in a discreetly flippant prologue with something of the flavour of those irreverent yarns invented and retailed by Italian ecclesiastics about Dominiddio) visits Job Huss, the headmaster of Woldingstanton, with the plagues of his desperate trial. However I take it that the author was anxious that his parody should be as complete in form as possible, and, being rather impressed by the insouciance, not to say insolence, of the Satan of the original, seized his chance of bizarre characterisation and "celestial badinage" and let consistency go hang for the time. Certainly the theological disquisitions of Mr. WELLS are remarkable not for their formal logic, but for their provocative quality and the very real eloquence of detached passages of the rambling argument. In particular, taking up again the thread of Joan and Peter, he gives such a survey of the scope and glories of a new education that is to salve the world's wounds as would move the heart of a jelly-fish. Mr. WELLS has his own methods of justifying the ways of God to man. He may be discursive, impatient, rash, perhaps a little shallow; but he has an undying fire of his own. He is certainly not dull. And therefore orthodox divines and pedagogues may perhaps have a real grievance against him. But I can't imagine any serious-minded man in a serious time reading this book and not getting hope and courage from it.

* * * * *

Victory Over Blindness (HODDER AND STOUGHTON) is a book whose title gives you at once the key to its contents and to the spirit that animates them. It is the record by Sir ARTHUR PEARSON of one of the most finely successful enterprises that the War has called forth. Everyone to-day has at least a vague idea of the work carried on at St.

Dunstan's, "the biggest individual business," Sir ARTHUR terms it, "that I have ever conducted." A study of these pages will transform that vague idea into wonder and admiration. Big the business might well be called, since it is nothing less than the bringing back, almost to normal life, of men apparently condemned to an existence of helpless inactivity and dependence. Few things will strike you more forcibly in this book than its practical common sense. That and an unsentimental optimism seem to be the dominant notes of all Sir ARTHUR'S effort. Without doubt the success of this has been beyond measure helped by the fact that the originator was himself a sharer in the adversity that it was designed to lessen. Two chapters especially in the book, called "Learning to be Blind," a brief manual of practical suggestions by one whom experience has rendered expert, supply a clue to the difference between the work at St. Dunstan's and the best-intentioned efforts of outside sympathy, Victory Over Blindness is a proud and rewarding motto; this little volume will show how thoroughly it has been earned.

* * * * *

I fancy that Miss JOAN THOMPSON had some design of symbolism in the choice of a name for her heroine, Mary England (METHUEN). The publishers indeed consider that she might be called "Every Woman," so typical is she of her sex, and "so like to the emotional careers of so many English girls is her own." Perhaps, on the other hand (without disparagement to the skill of Miss THOMPSON'S portraiture), I should have expected the typical maiden of Mary's class to show greater initiative. Many things nearly happened to Mary; practically nothing in her life was fashioned by her own intent. Of the two men who might have made her happy, one didn't propose at all, and one did it in the wrong fashion. Other two, who seemed possibly menacing, both drifted away with their evil purpose (if any) unfulfilled. I am wrong, though, in recalling Mary as invariably passive. She was once roused to the action of destroying the manuscript of a novel, in which the writer, the man who didn't propose, had too faithfully revealed his perception of herself. But though, as a reviewer, I may applaud this achievement on general grounds, it provided no kind of solution for the problem of her existence. This was left to be settled, very much offhand, by a detached iceberg, which sank the ship in which Mary was emigrating. I thought that iceberg rather an evasion on the part of Miss THOMPSON. Perhaps however all this effect of drift is part of a subtle intention. I can certainly call the book admirably written, with restraint and an emotional sympathy that impressed me as the outcome probably of an intimate knowledge of the scenes and persons described. Whether her lethargy is "typical" or not, as a study Mary England will hold you at least sufficiently curious to deplore its arbitrary end.

* * * * *

Sir HARRY JOHNSTON has written a book which I find it difficult to define. His publishers and Mr. H.G. WELLS call it a novel, but bits of a biography and an autobiography and an African explorer's account of his travels have all somehow squeezed themselves into it, and for readers whose birthdays began before the last quarter of the nineteenth century The Gay-Dombeys (CHATTO AND WINDUS) will best justify itself as a chronique scandaleuse. To penetrate the thin disguises in which the author has dressed his notabilities and to sort the composite or hybrid personalities into their component parts should provide the initiated with congenial if not very edifying occupation. The reader who is also a DICKENS enthusiast will be, according to temperament, delighted or outraged to find that Sir HARRY JOHNSTON has made his book as it were a continuation of Dombey and Son. Many of his characters are either the creations of Boz or their children and he contrives to carry on the interweaving of their lives to an unbelievable extent—even when the fullest allowance has been made for the smallness of the world. Florence Dombey and Walter Gay, as Mr. and Mrs. Gay-Dombey,

actually survive well into the present book, while Sir HARRY JOHNSTON'S _Eustace Morven_, who tells us that he has reverted to the ancient spelling of his name, is the son of _Harriet Carker_ and that hazel-eyed bachelor, _Mr. Morfin_, who lived and loved in _Dombey and Son_. But save in the chapter describing _Eustace Morven's_ appearance at the annual dinner-party given by _Florence_ and _Walter_ to celebrate the re-establishment of the firm, Sir HARRY JOHNSTON'S work has not a very pronounced flavour of DICKENS. It is to be hoped that this method of writing novels will not become popular. A series of sequels to everybody by somebody else opens up an intimidating prospect, at least for the reviewer.

* * * * *

Mr. PHILIP GIBBS has gathered together, under the title. _Open Warfare, the Way to Victory_ (HEINEMANN), his despatches written from the Western front during the last year of the War. What strikes one most on seeing them again in book form is the obscurity in which they veil the events they record. They so shine, as it were, with a luminous mist that they seem to reveal everything, yet in sober truth very often it is only in the light of later knowledge that they reveal anything at all. Congratulations, therefore, to Mr. GIBBS, the perfect war correspondent! I defy anyone from these papers alone (apart from the plentiful and excellent maps) to form anything like an adequate conception of the disaster that swept down upon the British Armies in the Spring of 1918. And yet in a sense it is all there, gorgeously camouflaged under the control--I daresay the wise and necessary control--of the censorship. The author, watching the very moulding of history with every advantage of proximity, has written down, if not much bare statement, yet an amazing sequence of heroic detail, associated with such stirring names as Arras or Givenchy or Cambrai. Curiously enough, though each chapter is intensely vivid, they become, through much instancing of the same unconquerable spirit, something monotonous, though never wearisome, in bulk. One trusts that a future generation will realise that the value of a book of this order consists in its first-hand record of such incidents of valour; it would be pitiful to have it hastily assumed, because so much is slurred or omitted to deceive the enemy, that England was so feeble-hearted as to require her evil news predigested before consumption in this manner. It should be added that the writer gives us a good sound introduction that goes a long way to fill the yawning gaps.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Gatekeeper (at castle of unpopular baron--to new grocer's boy)._"YOU SILLY IDIOT! WHY DON'T YOU GO ROUND TO THE TRADESMEN'S GATE? GOOD THING YOU DIDN'T PULL THE BELL, OR YOU'D 'AVE GOT A 'ALF TON OF BOILING LEAD ON TOP OF YOU. THIS IS THE _VISITORS_' DOOR!"]

* * * * *

"GIRL WANTED.--A reliable girl for the summer months to go across the Arm."--_Halifax Evening Mail_.

To prevent misapprehension we ought to say that the western part of the bay at Halifax, Nova Scotia, is locally known as the "Arm."

* * * * *

END.

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