

Punch, or the London Charivari, Vol. 156, April 23, 1919

Various

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, by Various, Edited by Owen Seamen

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PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI

VOL. 156

APRIL 23, 1919

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CHARIVARIA.

"Hull electors," declared a Radical contemporary, "have dealt the Coalition a stinging rebuke." But not, as others claim, the _coupon de grace_.

A propos, a Woking butcher was fined last week for being thirty-two thousand coupons short. The report that he has since received a letter of condolence from Mr. LLOYD GEORGE is not confirmed.

A correspondent who has a latchkey would like to hear from a gentleman who could fit a house to it.

A food inspector at Chatham admitted that he could not tell the difference between No. 1 grade tinned beef and No. 2 grade. The old plan of calling one grade Rover and the other Fido seems to have been abolished since the War.

The EX-CROWN PRINCE, in a recent interview with a Danish newspaper man, called LUDENDORFF a liar. LUDENDORFF is believed to be preparing a crushing rejoinder, in which he calls the EX-CROWN PRINCE a Hohenzollern.

"The new Bolsheviks," says _The Philatelist_, "are fetching eight shillings a pair." It doesn't say where they are fetching it from, but it is clear that the loot business has declined since the days of the old Bolsheviks.

The United States Government has purchased four million pounds of frozen chickens for the American army. They are to be tested by inspectors before shipment to determine whether they are edible. What is known in scientific circles as the Soho standard of resilience will probably be applied.

Burglars have broken into an East End moneylender's office. It is not known definitely how much they lost.

The five hundred pounds in notes recently lost by a London hotel guest have now been recovered. It appears that a waiter had mistaken them for a gratuity.

The Metropolitan police are trying to establish the identity of a man who can give no account of himself and who knows nothing about the War. The fact that he was not wearing red tabs only adds to the mystery.

"Some men dance the Jazz dance," says a contemporary, "because it is stimulating." It is not known why the others do it.

A squirrel having been stolen from the Zoo, it is said that the authorities are taking no further risks, and that in future all lions and tigers will be securely chained to their cages.

It is reported that a much-advertised motor-car, after having its engine removed, ran for seven miles on its reputation alone.

With reference to the report that a service man had received a letter from the Intelligence Department admitting that a certain mistake was due to a clerical error, it is now reported that this admission was due to another oversight.

A terrible tragedy was only just averted last week, when a husband, who had travelled from the City by tube, and his wife, who had been to the Spring bargain sales, failed to recognise each other on their return home.

The War Office, the Board of Trade and the Zoo have formed a Triple Alliance for a campaign against rats. As a result of this it is said that quite a number of the more timid rodents are afraid to go out alone after dark.

The Society of Public Analysts has been asked by the Food Ministry to define a sausage. A number of pedigree sausages are to be submitted for classification.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs in the late Bavarian Soviet Government has been placed in a lunatic asylum. The reason for this invidious distinction is not assigned.

* * * * *

MR. CHURCHILL ON THE HULL ELECTION:

"Nothing in these reactions should be taken by the Government as in any way deflecting them from their clear and definite course of reviving the posterity of this country."--_Daily Telegraph_.

All very well, but they must get it born first.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Old-fashioned humorous Cow_ (_suddenly_). "Moo!"

Lady (_who all last year was a land-worker_). "Pooh!"]

* * * * *

"MUTABILE SEMPER."

To such as have a humorous bent
Pleasant indeed it was to cull
From rival organs what was meant
By the enlightened vote of Hull;
What process of the mind (if any) drove her
To execute that ludicrous turn-over.

Some held the Peace was too severe,
And others not severe enough;
The latter cried, "The cause is clear--
LLOYD GEORGE is made of flabby stuff;"
The former took the line that he had blundered
In letting Fritz (their friend) be grossly "plundered."

Then came a still small voice which said,
"The thing that sent the coupon West
Was Woman; something in her head
Told her that second thoughts were best;
To Party laws she hasn't learnt to knuckle
(This was the view advanced by Mr. BUCKLE).

"Men know a 'pledge's' worth by now;
They take it with a touch of salt;
To Woman 'tis a sacred vow,
And for the least alleged default
She gives her Chosen One no minute's grace,
But treats it like a breach-of-promise case."

O "Ministering Angels," ye
Who yet are mobile as the breeze,
Have you alone the right to be
"Uncertain, coy and hard to please?"
Our Ministerial Angels (GEORGE and kind)--
Aren't they allowed, poor males, to change their mind?

O.S.

* * * * *

THE SPOIL-SPORT.

Mr. Phillybag was demobilised. The Day had come. For months he had dreamed of the possibility--had imagined the joy and alacrity with which he would doff his cap, tunic and trousers, service dress, one each, and resume the decent broadcloth of a successful City solicitor. Strangely enough, however, once he was actually demobilised he found himself in no hurry to lose the garb which showed that he, Mr. Phillybag, had helped, you know, to put the kybosh on the KAISER. He was proud too of the corporal's stripes which he had gained in a very short Army career.

That explains why he was in uniform this morning in his office, when he opened a letter from Ernest Williams, his former junior clerk. He remembered Williams well--how in the early days of the War that youth had seen Lord KITCHENER point his finger from the hoardings at him, and there and then, discovering that the Ordnance Department possessed a cap, size 6-7/8, which fitted him, had followed instructions and immediately commenced to wear it. Now he had written to Mr. Phillybag to inform him that, as he expected to be demobilised shortly, he was

calling at eleven o'clock to discuss the question of re-entering his employ.

Mr. Phillybag rubbed his hands together in satisfaction. He was looking forward to the interview. Since Armistice Day he had read every article he could find written on the subject of demobilisation and its humours; consequently he knew exactly what he was expected to do. When Williams entered, in all the glory of a Captain's stars, perhaps even a Major's crown, the ribbon of the D.S.O. or the M.C., or both, on his breast, he, Corporal Phillybag, would spring smartly to attention, salute and address his junior clerk as "Sir."

He chuckled with delight as he visualised the piquant scene. Reseating himself, he would briskly resume his interrupted work for a moment while he kept his superior officer waiting. Then--

"Mr. Williams to see you, Sir," said one of his clerks.

"Show him in at once."

On his appearance Mr. Phillybag suffered a slight recoil, but recovered himself quickly and exchanged embarrassed greetings. An awkward pause followed. At length Mr. Phillybag broke it.

"Williams," he said severely, "I'm surprised at you. Who ever heard of an employee returning to civil life from the Army with a lower rank than the one his employer holds? Four years in khaki and only a lance-corporal! You've spoiled my whole morning. It's men with careers like yours who make the profession of humorous journalism so precarious."

* * * * *

A SOUVENIR OF COLOGNE.

"Am I really awake, or is it all a beautiful dream?" I said, pinching myself to make sure.

At the other end of the room an unmistakably German band was playing "Roses of Picardy," while all around me German waiters were running about deferentially, with trays in their hands. Even as I wondered one of them approached and laid the bill on my table with a friendly smile and "Tree mark, bleesir."

Then I remembered that I was at the British Officers' Club in Cologne.

"How interested they will be at home," I thought, "when they know where I am. And of course I must send them souvenirs of my Watch on the Rhine;" and thoughtfully I produced from my pocket some local tram-tickets, kept for the younger members of the family, and patted a box of two-penny cigars encouragingly. These I was going to send to my brother.

Then I rose and, paying the bill, went out to purchase a suitable memento for a younger sister. Slowly I wandered along the crowded Hohestrasse in the direction of the Opera House, peering into the shop-windows for something redolent of the land I was in. Presently a bright-looking sweetshop attracted me. The window contained a beautiful selection of chocolate-boxes, with pictures of the Cathedral or the Rhine Maidens on the lids. In I went and selected a handsome sample, bound with red plush and bordered with sea-shells. But it was empty. "Nix sweets," said the girl behind the counter, and offered me the alternative of a bun. Nothing doing, and I passed on.

Further along the street I stopped before a chemist's shop to regard

a huge pyramid of bottles of eau-de-Cologne displayed in the window.

"The very thing," I said to myself. "What more appropriate souvenir than a bottle of the local produce?"

That was ten days ago, and this morning I received the following letter:--.

"Thank you so much for the scent; it was sweet of you, and arrived safely, only I don't think it quite so nice as the real eau-de-Cologne which I buy at Brown's shop [Brown is the village grocer] for three-and-nine a bottle. And he says they must have taken you in properly with a German imitation called eau-de-Koeln, and expects you had to pay a pretty penny for it, though I hope you didn't, poor boy."

Reader, I ask you.

* * * * *

"INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC--PUBLIC MEETING.

"In order to comply with the regulations of the Board of Health, each person attending the meeting must occupy 25 sq. feet space."--Australian Paper.

"Let me have men about me that are fat."--Julius Caesar.

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[Illustration: THE CHEERFUL PACHYDERM.

ELEPHANT (faintly intrigued). "WHO'S THAT TICKLING ME?"]

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[Illustration: PEACE PREPARATIONS.

Music-hall Artist (to partner). "I RECKON WE OUGHT TO INTRODUCE SOME NEW FEATURE INTO THE TURN, WITH PEACE COMIN'."

Partner. "AH, I'VE BEEN THINKING OF IT TOO. WHAT ABAHT PINK FACINGS FOR OUR EVENING DRESS?"]

* * * * *

THE BLUE HAT.

Nancy came softly into my study and stood at the side of the desk, where I was busy with some work on account of which I had stayed away from the office that morning.

"Do you like it?" she said.

I felt a momentary anxiety as I looked up. I had made a bad mistake only a little time before, having waxed enthusiastic over what I took to be a new blouse when it was a question of hair-dressing, the blouse having been worn by my wife, so she solemnly averred, "every evening for the last two months."

But this time no mistake was possible. You don't go about the house at eleven o'clock on a cold Spring morning fancifully arrayed in a pale blue hat with white feathery things sticking out all round it, unless there is a particular reason for so doing.

"I think it's a delightful hat," I said, "and suits you splendidly. But I thought you never wore blue?"

"I don't," said Nancy; "that's what makes me rather doubtful. I didn't really mean to buy it at all. I went in to Marguerite's--you know, that heavenly shop at the corner of the square"--I nodded; of course I knew Marguerite's--"to ask the price of a jade-green jumper they had in the window--oh, my dear, a perfect angel of a jumper!--and they showed me this. That red-haired assistant almost made me buy it; said she had never seen me in a hat that suited me so well; and really it wasn't so very dear. But I was a little doubtful. However--"

"She was quite right," I said very decidedly. "Did you get the what-you-may-call-it--the other thing?"

Nancy's face expressed poignant anguish.

"Twelve guineas," she said. "I simply couldn't run to it. Of course I was heart-broken. Still, it wasn't as if I really needed anything just now. It would have been ridiculous extravagance. But it really was an angel."

She turned to go, stopping a moment on the way out to have another look at herself in the little round mirror over the mantel-piece.

"I'm not quite happy about it," I heard her murmur as she went out.

The next morning I found a letter waiting for me at the office which brought me news of a totally unexpected windfall of some fifty odd pounds. It was a sunny morning, too, with a distinct feeling of Spring in the air.

I felt like being extravagant, and my mind flew at once to Nancy and her jade-green--what was the name of the thing?--that she had wanted so badly.

I left the office early, and on my way home managed to summon up sufficient courage to carry me through the discreetly curtained doors of Madame Marguerite's recherche establishment, devoutly hoping that the nervous sinking which I felt about my heart was not reflected in my outer demeanour.

The red-haired girl, in spite of a curiously detached and supercilious air, as who should say, "Take it or leave it; it concerns me not in the least," which at first rather alarmed me, was really quite kind and helpful.

"Something in jade-green that Moddom admired? A hat perhaps?"

No, I knew it was not a hat. I murmured something about twelve guineas. This seemed to be enlightening.

Ah, yes, a jumper probably. They had had a jade-green jumper at that price, she believed. If I would sit down for a moment she would send someone to see if it were still unsold.

I felt very anxious while I waited, but the emissary presently returned with the garment over her arm.

Yes, that was undoubtedly the one. She remembered how much Moddom had admired it. It had suited Moddom so well too.

While it was being packed up, for I decided to take it with me, a small boy arrived with several hat-boxes, which he put down on the floor.

Red-hair proceeded to unpack them, carefully, almost reverently, extracting the hats from the folds of surrounding tissue-paper and placing them one by one in various cupboards and drawers. Presently she drew forth from one of the boxes—I felt sure I was not mistaken—that very blue hat which I had admired only the day before upon the head of my wife.

I gave an involuntary exclamation. Red-hair looked at me.

"Surely," I said, feeling inwardly rather proud at recognising it again—"surely that hat is exactly like one that my wife bought yesterday."

Red-hair was hurt. "It is the same hat," she said coldly. "We never make two models alike."

I tried to mollify her. "I can't understand her sending it back," I said. "I think it's an extremely pretty hat, and it suits her so well. But perhaps there was some alteration necessary. It may not have quite fitted or something?"

Red-head dived gracefully into the box and drew forth a note from the tissue-paper billows.

A faint flicker expressive of I knew not what hidden emotion seemed to pass for one moment over her aristocratic features as she read it. But it vanished instantaneously, and she turned to me with her previous air of haughty and imperturbable aloofness.

"Moddom is not keeping the hat," she said.

I felt somehow a little snubbed, and said no more, and, my parcel appearing at this moment, I paid and departed.

Nancy's joy over the jumper more than came up to my expectations. When she had calmed down a little I bethought myself of the matter of the hat.

"Oh, yes," said Nancy in reply to my question, "I sent it back after all. It won't matter in the least now that you have bought this."

"But why didn't you keep it?" I said.

"Well, I really felt I didn't like it so very much," said Nancy, "and, as you didn't seem quite to like it either--"

"My dear girl," I protested, "I told you I thought it was charming."

"Well, anyway you said that blue didn't suit me," persisted my wife. "You _did_, George."

There was a moment's pause. It was no use saying anything. Suddenly Nancy jumped up and clutched me by the arm.

"George," she said anxiously, "you didn't, you didn't say anything about that hat to the girl in the shop, did you?"

"I believe I mentioned that I thought it was extremely pretty, and that I was sorry you weren't keeping it," I replied airily. "But why?" For my wife's face had suddenly assumed an expression of horrified dismay.

"I shall never be able to go into that shop again," she wailed, "never. I wrote them a note saying that I was not keeping the hat

because _my husband very much disliked it_, and that I didn't care ever to wear anything of which he didn't approve."

What is really very unfair about the whole thing is that I know that Nancy thinks me entirely to blame. Indeed she told me so. When I ventured to point out that she had not been quite truthful in the matter she was at first genuinely and honestly amazed, and subsequently so indignant that I was fain ultimately to apologise.

In looking back upon the episode I am filled with admiration for the red-haired girl. I consider that she showed extraordinary self-restraint in what must have been a peculiarly tempting situation.

R.F.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Raw Hand_ (_at sea for first time and observing steamer's red and green lights_). "ERE'S SOME LIGHTS ON THE STARBOARD SIDE, SIR."

Officer. "WELL, WHAT IS IT?"

R.H. "LOOKS TO ME LIKE A CHEMIST'S SHOP, SIR.]"

* * * * *

SMALL-TALK.

"Of course you must come," said Mary; "it's nonsense to say you can't dance."

Mary is married to my first cousin, Thomas. I looked at Thomas, but saw no hope of support. Thomas labours under the delusion that he can jazz.

"It isn't only the dancing," I protested; "it's the conversational strain. Besides, as one of the original founders of the League to Minimise Gossip amongst General Staff Officers--"

"Rot!" said Thomas; "you simply let your partners do the talking. You needn't even listen. Just say 'Quite' in your most official tone whenever you hear them saying nothing."

Thomas, although my first cousin, is not bright; but I had to go.

For the first few dances I escaped; the crowd round the door was so dense that I saw at once that I should be trampled to death if I attempted to enter. Then I was caught by Mary and introduced to a total stranger.

I suppose there are people who do not mind kicking a total stranger round the room to the strain of cymbals, a motor siren and a frying-pan. I fancy the lady expressed a desire to stop, but as her words were lost in the orchestral pandemonium I realised that as long as the dulcet chords continued conversation was impossible; so we danced on.

Fortunately too, when the interval came, she was full of small-talk.

"Isn't the floor good? And I always like this band."

"Quite," said I.

"Rather sporting of the Smythe-Joneses to give a dance."

"Quite," said I.

"Especially when their eldest boy, the one, you know, who was so frightfully good at golf or something, has just got into a mess with--"

"Quite," said I, while she plunged into a flood of reminiscences. She did not ask whether I could jazz, mainly, I think, because I had already danced with her. I concentrated my thoughts on the best means of avoiding Mary when the music began again, and just threw in an occasional "Quite" to keep the lady in a good temper.

But there was no escaping Mary.

"You must go and dance with Miss Carter," she told me, adducing incontrovertible arguments. I am terrified of Miss Carter, who can only be described as "statuesque" and always does the right thing (which makes her crushing to the verge of discourtesy). I am always being asked if I know whether she is "only twenty-two." It was not without satisfaction that I initiated her into my style of dancing.

To my horror, when we stopped she sat in silence, regarding me with an air of expectant boredom. I racked my brains.

"Good floor, isn't it?" said I.

"Quite," said Miss Carter.

"Jolly good band too."

"Quite," said Miss Carter.

"And rather sporting of the Smythe-Joneses, don't you think?"

She said it again. By this time I felt convinced that all the other couples within hearing were listening to us. Miss Carter is that sort of person.

"Of course," I said with a nervous laugh, "it's rather absurd for me to say anything about it, because, you know, dancing isn't much in my line."

"Quite," said Miss Carter.

That settled it; I felt I must stop her at all costs. I cleared my throat and spoke as distinctly as I could.

"I'm always being asked a conundrum, Miss Carter, and you're the one person who can tell me the true answer. Am I permitted to ask it?"

"Quite," said Miss Carter, for the first time almost smiling. I plucked up courage.

"It's this: how old are you?"

She stopped herself just in time. Her answer was given in a tone which expressed at the same time her contempt for my breach of the conventions and the fact that she was too indifferent to think me worth snubbing.

"Twenty-two," said she.

"Quite," said I.

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[Illustration: "HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR HAIR DONE, MADAM?"

"WELL, I WANT TO GET IT DEBOBBED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE."]

* * * * *

THE CAREER (POSTPONED).

MY DEAR JAMES,--A few weeks ago I wrote to tell you that ere long the military machine would be able to spare one of its cogs--myself. I discussed possible careers in civil life, and since then I had almost decided on "filbert-grower." Had things gone well, by the beginning of June you should have received a first instalment of forced filberts.

Now this cannot be. The cog is shown to be indispensable. I must remain a soldier.

Why do they want me, James? I am nothing like a soldier. I cannot click my heels as other men do. I try, Heaven knows how I try, but all the C.O. hears is a sound as of two cabbages being slapped together. And my word of command! The critics say it is like a cry for help in a London fog.

My haversack contains no trace of any Field-Marshal's baton. You are aware that every private soldier's haversack is issued complete with "Batons, one, Field-Marshal (potential), for the use of." But there is no authority for such an issue for commissioned ranks.

Is it because of my manner with men and my powers as a disciplinarian? I fear not. If a man is brought before me for summary jurisdiction a lump rises in my throat and I want to cry. I am always sure he didn't mean to do it. As for military law, I am shaky on the fines for drunkenness, and I don't feel at all sure whether death at dawn or two extra fatigues is the maximum punishment for having one string of the hold-all longer than the other when on active service.

When I kicked the bell-push towards the end of last guest-night the Adjutant said he should mark me down for the job of Physical Training Officer; but I hope he was only joking. I am not built for the work. My frame is puny and my countenance irresolute. I hate bending and stretching my arms; they creak and frighten me. I never could squat on my heels like a thingummy.

I might, if allowed, make a hit as Messing Officer. With the aid of my Cookery Course notes I can differentiate between no fewer than thirty-four different types of rissole. Unfortunately we already have a Messing Officer of deadly efficiency. He can classify dripping by instinct. He can memorise at sight all the revolting contents of a swill-tub. My rissole lore is a poor asset in comparison.

No, James, I think I have it. One day you will read that our Armies of Occupation consist of so many hundred thousands of all ranks, including, perhaps, 35,001 officers. That is why they retain me. I shall be the "1" at the end of the thousands. It is your humble servant's function to keep the Armies of Occupation up to strength.

Are we to be robbed of the fruits of victory? The reply is in the negative. Therefore, when next June comes along and you yearn for the early filberts, do not be fretty. Remember that I am gathering in fruits of another and a nobler kind. Yours ever,

WILLIAM.

* * * * *

[Illustration: "SORRY, MUM, BUT I'M AFRAID YOU'LL 'AVE TER STAY UPSTAIRS 'COS THE AFFILIATED SOCIETY OF PIANNER-SHIFTERS 'AS CALLED A GENERAL STRIKE THIS MINNIT."]

* * * * *

NEW BREAD FOR OLD.

["New Bread Again"--"Loaves of Any Shape."--_Headlines from a Daily Paper_.]

As I walked forth in Baker Street
As sober as a Quaker,
Whom did I have the luck to meet?
I met a jolly Baker.
His voice was gay, his eye was bright,
His step was light and airy,
His face and arms were powdered white--
I think he was a fairy;
He danced beneath the April moon,
And as he danced he trolled
Wild snatches of an ancient rune,
Yet all the burden of his tune
Was "New--Bread--for Old!"

Quoth I: "Whence got you, lad, a heart
So glad that you must show it?"
Quoth he: "The Baker hath his art
No less, Sir, than the Poet;
I tell ye, I'm so blithe to-night
I'd paint the old Moon's orb red!
Oh, think ye that I took delight
For years in baking war-bread?
One shape, one colour and one size,
By Government controlled?
But now all this to limbo flies;
What wonder that to-night I cries
'New--Bread--for Old?'

"Good Sir, the Baker hath a soul
And loves to make bread pleasant--
The Twist, the long Vienna Roll,
The Horseshoe and the Crescent,
The Milk, the Tin, the lovely loaf
Where currants one discovers,
The Wholemeal for the country oaf,
The Knot for all true lovers.
So, till upon the glowing East
The sun in red and gold
Comes forth to bake the daily feast,
I'll cry with heart as light as yeast,
'New--Bread--for Old!'"

* * * * *

THE MODERN ICARUS.

"After an hour's flight over the frozen Conception Bay and the town of St. John's, Mr. Hawker made a perfect landing. He appeared more than over confident of success."--_Daily Paper_.

"General admiration and sympathy is extended to Mr. Tawker due to his frankness regarding his progress towards making

the trans-ocean flight."--_Sunday Paper_.

We trust our contemporaries are not in a conspiracy to represent the gallant aviator as a hot-air man.

* * * * *

"Presently, when aviation becomes a commonplace, the fares will come down."--_Daily Dispatch_.

That's just what makes us so nervous.

* * * * *

PEACE TERMS.

BEING SOME LETTERS OF MRS. PARTINGTON TO HER SISTER.

[Conferences between mistresses and servants are being held in various parts of the country to discuss terms of peace in the domestic world.]

Puddleford.

DEAR MOIRA,--We haven't got a servant yet, but we are clutching at a new hope. There is to be a conference here between mistresses and maids, to discuss and readjust the servants' rights and the mistresses' wrongs--or is it the other way about? Anyhow, I shall attend that conference. I shall bribe, plead, consent to any arrangement if I can but net a cook-general. Ten months of doing my own washing-up has brought me to my knees, while Harry says the performance of menial duties has crushed his spirit.

Of course, Harry does make such a fuss of things. You might think, to hear him talk, that the getting up of coal, lighting fires, chopping wood and cleaning flues was the entire work of a household, instead of being mere incidents in the daily routine. If he had to tackle _my_ duties--but men never seem to understand how much there is to do in a house.

I will tell you about the conference when I write again.

Yours always, DODO.

Puddleford.

DEAR MOIRA,--The conference was a most interesting affair; the one going on in Paris could never be half so thrilling. There was a goodly attendance of servants, and they had their own spokeswoman. We spoke for ourselves--those of us who were not too dazed at the sight of so many "treasures" almost within our grasp.

What the servants wanted was not unreasonable. They chiefly demanded a certain time to themselves during the day, with fixed hours for meals, evening free, etc.

Then Mrs. Boydon-Spoute got up--you know how that woman loves to hear herself talk--and said that such demands were outrageous. (It's easy for her to raise objections. She has somehow paralysed her two servants into staying with her for over ten years.) She pointed out that under such conditions the servant would have more freedom than the mistress; and to allow the working classes to thus get the upper hand was nothing short of encouraging Bolshevism in the home. Dreadful thing to say, wasn't it?

The servants got rather restive at that. When I thought of the two days' washing-up waiting for me at home I retorted with spirit that servants had as much right to freedom as we, and it was our duty to guard their interests--and lots of inspired things like that, glaring at Mrs. Boydon-Spoute the while.

I spoke so well that a cook-general offered herself to me as soon as the conference was over. She comes in on Monday.

Yours in transports, DODO.

Puddleford.

DEAR MOIRA,--Emma, the new maid, has arrived. Harry is as relieved as I am and was quite cheerful while I was dressing the gash he had inflicted on his hand while chopping wood. Isn't it strange that men can never give the slightest assistance in the house without getting themselves hurt in some way?

Emma promises to be a treasure. If mistresses would only show a little humanity there never would be any servant trouble at all. It is people like Mrs. Boydon-Spoute who are responsible for it.

Yours, purring content, DODO.

Puddleford.

DEAR MOIRA,--I am sorry not to have written for such a long time. I have been so extremely busy.

You see, when Emma has had her two hours free daily, her hour-and-a-half off for dinner, with half-an-hour for other meals, every evening out as well as two afternoons a week, you would be surprised what little leisure is left to her for the housework.

She gets in what she can, of course, and I do the rest. Doing the rest, by the way, takes up a great deal of my time. But I generally have an hour free in the evenings.

Your brave DODO.

Puddleford.

DEAR MOIRA,--I am glad to say Emma has gone and I am putting my name down at a registry-office in the usual way. It's too much of a strain having "conference" girls in the home.

Who was it said that if we are to allow the working classes to get the upper hand it was nothing short of encouraging Bolshevism in the home? Anyhow, I think he--or perhaps it was she--must be right.

I must close rather hastily. I have just heard a terrific crash in the kitchen; I'm afraid Harry has dropped something on his foot _again_.

Your long-suffering DODO.

* * * * *

"Mr. ----, like a fatherly hen, hovered over all, satisfying himself that nothing had been omitted that could detract from their comfort."--_Egyptian Mail_.

We cannot imagine any hen, however unsexed, behaving like that.

* * * * *

RHYMES OF RANK.

Vice-Admirals command a base;
Their forms blend dignity with grace.
You never see the smallest trace
Of levity upon the face
Of one who wears a Vice's lace.
For Admirals to romp and race
Or frolic in a public place
Is held to be a great disgrace;
I do not think a single case
Of this has happened at our base.

The Commodore, the Commodore
Is very popular ashore;
He can relate an endless store
Of yarns which scarcely ever bore
Till they are told three times or more.
The ladies young and old adore
This man who bathed in Teuton gore
And practically won the War;
But once, a fact I much deplore,
A General was heard to snore
While seated near the Commodore.

The Captain dwells aloof, alone;
He has a cabin of his own;
And should the smallest nose be blown,
Though softly and with dulcet tone,
In earshot of this sacred zone
The very ship herself would groan.
Yes, Captains (though but flesh and bone
Like little snotties, be it known)
Are best severely left alone.

Commanders are a stern-eyed folk
Who may or may not take a joke;
It really isn't safe to poke
Light fun at any three-ringed bloke;
You may be sorry that you spoke.
Their ways are proud; they sport the oak;
They are not tame enough to stroke;
I greatly dread these grim-eyed folk.

Lieutenants of the R.N.V.
Were born and bred on land, not sea,
And ancient mariners like me
With sly grimace and winks of glee
Would watch them when the winds blew free,
Or send them down a cup of tea.
But soon their deeds became their plea
For standing with the Big Navee
In equal fame and dignity:
While even Subs. R.N. agree
They're better than they used to be,
These Looties of the R.N.V.

Sub-Loots are nothing if not sports;
The nicest girls in all the ports
Declare they are the best of sorts

And useful on the tennis-courts.
In gun-rooms, where their rank resorts,
They bandy quips and shrewd retorts,
And swig champagne, not pints but quarts.
I said at first that they were sports.

* * * * *

[Illustration: Headmaster (interviewing new boy). "AT WHAT SCHOOL WERE YOU LAST, MY BOY?"

New Boy. "P-P-PLEASE, SIR, AT A ST-T-T-TAMMERING T-TUTOR'S"; (feels he is not making the best of himself) "B-BUT THEY T-TAUGHT OTHER THINGS BESIDES ST-T-T-TAMMERING."]

* * * * *

WITH THE RED GUARDS.

A good deal of curiosity exists regarding the management of the Bolshevik army, in which it is stated that discipline does not exist. A copy of Battalion Orders may therefore be of interest:

BATTALION ORDERS

BY MAJOR TROTOFF

(COMMANDING THE 22ND BATTALION THE RED GUARDS).

(1) DETAIL.

Disorderly Officer--LOOT VODKAWITCH.

Next for duty (if so disposed): LOOT PUTAWAYSKY.

(2) PARADES.

The Battalion (or such of it as has no other engagement) will parade as strong as possible on the Peter-and-Paulsky Prospekt, at 10.30 A.M. for 9.30 A.M.

DRESS.

Barging order, with rifles, razors, knives, pokers and horsewhips.

The following scheme will be carried out:--

General Idea--A few families of the Bourgeois class have taken up a position in certain cellars in West End of City. Patrols report that they still possess a few valuables.

Special Idea--The O.C. invites the Battalion to occupy district and help itself.

(3) COMMAND.

The Second in Command of this unit regrets to announce that he found it necessary to sentence his Commanding Officer to forty-two days No. 1 F.P. for attempting to maintain discipline; the Second in Command therefore assumes command of this unit in the absence of the C.O. now serving sentence.

(4) COURSE.

Would a few officers mind being detailed for the hundred-and-twenty-first course in the use of Private House Grenades, 13th of this month?

(5) BOOTS, BOLSHEVISTS FOR THE USE OF, ISSUE OF.

The Quartermaster would be greatly obliged if private gentlemen of the Battalion requiring boots would favour him with a visit at any time during the day or night.

If not inconvenient to them it would be a kindness if they let him know what they take.

NOTICE.

The Officer at present in command of the Battalion has pleasure in announcing that the private residence of the Commanding Officer, which contains a large number of objects of great beauty and value, is through its owner's unavoidable absence at present unguarded.

In these circumstances the O.C. is pleased to grant an extension to all ranks until twelve midnight.

P. PIPSKY,

Captain and Agitant.

* * * * *

A SUPER-MORMON.

"A Nelson soldier in a letter states that General ---- informed his unit that he had 2,000 wives to ship out to New Zealand, and another 2,000 would be ready to leave England during the next few months."--_New Zealand Paper_.

* * * * *

There was an industrial freak,
As a labourer sadly to seek;
But he leapt into fame
By preferring a claim
For a general Ten-Minutes' Week.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Vicar_ (to parishioner who has violent quarrels with her neighbour_), "MRS. CRABBE SENT A MESSAGE THAT SHE HAS QUITE FORGIVEN YOU. WHAT MESSAGE CAN I TAKE TO HER?"

Parishioner. "YOU CAN SAY I 'OPE SHE'LL DIE 'APPY."]

* * * * *

FEARFUL ODDS.

There's no fear that strikes so dumb,
None so hard to overcome,
As the thought that there are two
Eyes that _may_ be watching you.
Here's a perfect illustration
Of that sickening sensation.

Young Lieutenant Jimmy Spry's
Power resided in his eyes;

He'd been able all his days
To revolve them different ways.
For example, let's suppose
That the right one watched his nose,
Then the left--you'll think it queer--
Turned towards his dexter ear.
But what really made him great
Was--he always _saw_ things straight.

Out in France, a year ago,
He was cornered by the foe;
Neither party had a gun,
But the odds were three to one
And the Huns were fit and strong;
One was lean and very long,
One was short and stout of calf,
While the third was half and half.

Jimmy, spoiling for a fight,
Fixed the short one with his right,
While his left with martial glare
Met the long 'un's startled stare;
But--I know it sounds absurd--
He was _looking_ at the third.

Jimmy was, I'd have you know,
Something of a boxing pro.,
So he knew the golden maxim:
"He who eyes his man best whacks him."
Shorty, when he saw the grim
Optic that was turned on him,
Thinking Jimmy's fist looked hard
Prudently remained on guard.
Canny Hun! And who can blame
Longshanks if he did the same?
But our hero, irritated,
Grassed the third man while they waited.

Filled with rage and anger, both
Rushed upon him with an oath,
Eager now to slit the gizzard
Of that astigmatic wizard,
Till they noticed with dismay
Both his eyes were far away!
(One eye sought the earth, while one
Seemed to contemplate the sun.)

Both stopped dead; the same cold thought
At their jangling heart-strings caught.
Longshanks, trembling at the knee,
Quavered, "Hans, he's watching _me_!"
Shorty whimpered, scared to fits,
"No, it's _me_ he's after, Fritz!"
Sick with fear, their souls revolted;
As one man they turned and bolted.

At them Spry in mild amaze
(Literally) bent his gaze,
Sighed, and then without a word
Wandered homeward with the third.

* * * * *

BAR BABIES.

[Lord Justice BANKS recently referred to the possible establishment of a Law Courts' _creche_, where the female barrister might leave her young while engaged in forensic duties.]

From "The Law Times" of 192--.

"A Violent altercation took place yesterday in the room allotted to infants of the Junior Bar (adjoining the Court of Pathetic Appeal) between his nurse and little Johnnie, the teething infant of Mrs. Flapperton, who, by the way, we noticed being measured only the other day for silk. The Court Husher having failed to produce silence, Mrs. Justice Spankhurst had to intervene, and only succeeded in restoring order by threatening to have the _creche_ cleared."

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE RECKONING.

PAN-GERMAN. "MONSTROUS, I CALL IT. WHY, IT'S FULLY A QUARTER OF WHAT _WE_ SHOULD HAVE MADE _THEM_ PAY, IF _WE_'D WON."]

* * * * *

ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

Monday, April 14th--The Criminal Injuries (Ireland) Bill furnished the LORD CHANCELLOR with the text for a rather gloomy sermon on the present state of the sister-country. The King's Writ still runs there, but in many counties is outstripped by the rival _fiat_ of Sinn Fein. A tribute to the impeccable behaviour of "law-abiding" Ulster appeared to stir in the breast of Lord CREWE memories of the pre-war prancings of a certain "Gallopier," for he remarked that the noble lord's information seemed to be "partial and recent."

Exception has recently been taken to the cab-shelter in Palace Yard, some Members objecting that its architectural design was out of harmony with that of the Houses of Parliament, and others complaining that its internal attractions were so great as to seduce the taxi-men from paying any attention to prospective fares. Sir ALFRED MOND, after long consideration, has decided to abolish the offending edifice and to give the drivers a shelter in the Vaults, where the police will discourage them from exceeding in the matter of "rest and refreshment."

Members were naturally eager to hear what Mr. BONAR LAW, freshly flown from Paris, had to tell them about the Peace Conference, the prospects of hanging the EX-KAISER, and so forth, but received little information, save that the Government shared the popular desire that no legal quibble should prevent the arch-criminal being brought to justice. Members were a little comforted, however, by the announcement that a Committee of the Cabinet is already considering the whole question of Peace-celebrations. While Mr. LLOYD GEORGE is engaged (if the image is permitted) in fighting beasts at Ephesus it is pleasant to think of his colleagues deciding upon the relative merits of crackers and Catherine-wheels, flares and bonfires, church-bells and steam-sirens, as means for the expression of the national joy.

[Illustration: SIR A. MOND AND AN EFFICIENT CAB SERVICE FOR MEMBERS.

At a blast on whistle the cab-drivers will down tea-cups, cake, kippers or what-not, and double smartly on to parade.]

After the loud orgy of headline which followed upon his remarkable

victory at Central Hull, Commander KENWORTHY might reasonably have expected that his entry into the House would have produced an uproarious scene of demonstration and counter-demonstration. But there was nothing of the kind. The jubilant "Wee Frees," of course, cheered as one man, but the volume of sound produced was not appreciably greater than if one man had cheered; and the crowded Coalitionists sat gloomily silent, though no doubt they thought a lot. The gallant Commander has already introduced one pleasing innovation into the procedure of the House, for, before signing the Roll, he nodded cheerfully to the ladies in the Gallery, as if to say, "But for you I shouldn't be here!"

Sir A. GRIFFITH-BOSCAWEN, who at Question-time had regretfully admitted that the Government were withdrawing soldiers from agriculture at a moment when they were particularly required, now moved the Second Reading of the Bill which is intended to give them the chance of going back to the land in perpetuity. In spite of his warning that the cost of the land to be acquired was a comparatively minor part of the expense, Members vied with one another in denouncing the iniquity of allowing the land-owner to get the present market-value of his property; and the landlords' representatives themselves hastened to declare that such a preposterous notion never entered their heads. The Bill was read a second time without a division. I don't suppose it will provide land for anything approaching the eight hundred thousand soldiers who are said to be pining for it; but it ought to satisfy the relatively small proportion who, after hearing about the trials and hardships of a small-holder--no forty-eight hours' week for him!--retain their agricultural aspirations.

Tuesday, April 15th--In a couple of hours the Lords disposed of several Bills, enjoyed a scientific debate on neurasthenia--described by a correspondent of Lord KNUTSFORD as "a gas escaping from people"--discussed the prices of milk and cheese, and still found time for the consideration of their own procedure. Lord CURZON said the suggestion that the House should sit on more days in the week had not been favourably received. Friday would not do, as their Lordships went out of town on that day, and Monday was equally inconvenient, as they could not contrive to get back by then. To earlier sittings the LORD CHANCELLOR objected on behalf of his legal colleagues. So it looks as if there would be no change, and since, _teste_ Lord SALISBURY, the House does its work admirably, why should there be?

Remembering a famous speech on the presumption of certain organs of the Press, the Commons were not surprised to learn from Mr. CHAMBERLAIN, _a propos_ of the beer-tax, that he is not responsible for what may appear in _The Times_.

There is still something of "the eternal boy" in Major WEDGWOOD BENN. It was with an air of "Now I've got him" that he propounded the question, "Is paper a raw material or a manufactured article?" But Mr. BRIDGEMAN can always solve these Cobdenite conundrums, and quietly replied, "Both." Whereupon Major BENN, with an engaging blush, retired from the fray.

In moving the second reading of the Aliens Restriction Bill the HOME SECRETARY said that, while national safety must be the first consideration, no unnecessary hardship should be inflicted on our foreign immigrants. But his proposal that the Government should rest contented with its present powers for another two years met with little favour from Members whose knowledge of history seems to date from 1914. In the opinion of Mr. BOTTOMLEY, who led the Opposition, every alien was _prima facie_ undesirable; Sir ERNEST WILD, from his experience in the criminal courts, took the same view, and patriotically demanded the exclusion from our shores of persons whose

principal occupation, we gathered, was to furnish him with briefs for the defence; and Mr. JOYNSON HICKS, Mr. BILLING and Sir R. COOPER urged that the SHORTT way with aliens should be made considerably shorter. Before this massed attack the HOME SECRETARY gave way and agreed to reduce the operation of the Bill to one year.

The temperature of the House rose so appreciably during the debate as to upset the nerves of some of the ladies in the Strangers' Gallery. At least that is the charitable explanation of the behaviour of Miss SYLVIA PANKHURST and her friends, who interrupted a discussion on soldiers' pensions by shouting out, "You are a gang of murderers!"

Wednesday, April 16th--A crowded House, the Peers' Gallery full to overflowing, the HEIR-APPARENT over the Clock, and the new Editor of _The Times_ among the representatives of the Press--the PRIME MINISTER could have desired no better setting for his speech upon the labours of the Peace Conference. His original intention was to hold his forces in reserve and invite his critics to "fire first," but, as none of these gentlemen seemed to be particularly anxious to go "over the top," Mr. LLOYD GEOEGE obligingly altered his battle-plan and himself delivered the opening fusillade.

That he was in no apologetic mood was shown in almost his first sentence. His declaration that indemnities were a difficult problem, "not to be settled by telegram," evoked resounding cheers. Thenceforward he held the sympathy of the House, whether he was describing the difficulties of the Peace Conference, or reconciling the apparent inconsistencies of its Russian policy, or inveighing against the attempts of certain newspapers to sow dissension among the Allies. "I would rather have a good Peace than a good Press" was one of his most telling phrases, and it was followed by a character-sketch of his principal newspaper-critic which in pungency left nothing to be desired. "What a journalist I could have made of him!" the recluse of Fontainebleau will doubtless remark when he reads the passage.

The PRIME MINISTER'S object, I imagine, was less to impart information than to create an atmosphere; and he was so far successful that the House showed little inclination to listen to other speakers. Nevertheless several of them devoted some hours to saying nothing in particular before the House mercifully adjourned for the Easter Recess.

* * * * *

"The Postmaster-General, in a written answer, states that arrangements are now in hand for the improvement, where circumstances permit, of postal services which have been curtailed as a result of war conditions."--_Scots Paper_.

As for the telephone service, we can well believe that he would prefer the veil to be kept over that.

* * * * *

A GERMLESS EDEN.

The antiseptic baby and the prophylactic pup
Were playing in the garden when the bunny gambolled up;
They looked upon the creature with a loathing undisguised,
For he wasn't disinfected and he wasn't sterilized.
They said he was a microbe and a hotbed of disease;
They steamed him in a vapour of a thousand odd degrees,
They froze him in a freezer that was cold as banished hope,
They washed him with permanganate and carbolated soap,

With sulphuretted hydrogen they bathed his wiggly ears;
They trimmed his frisky whiskers with a pair of hard-boiled shears;
Then they donned their rubber mittens and they took him by the hand
And elected him a member of the fumigated band.
Now there's not a micrococcus in the garden where they play
And they bathe in pure iodoform a dozen times a day,
Taking each his daily ration from a hygienic cup,
The baby and the bunny and the prophylactic pup.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE QUESTION OF PEACE CELEBRATIONS IS BEING CONSIDERED
BY A COMMITTEE OF THE CABINET.]

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RAPID PROMOTION.

"Cpl. A.A.C. Earl of Shaftesbury, K.P., K.C.V.O., relinquishes
his appt. (March 1), and is granted the hon. rank of
Brig.-Gen."--_Daily Paper_.

* * * * *

FROM THE STREET OF ADVENTURE.

Journalistic reconstructions and amalgamations have been proceeding
so rapidly and extensively of late that there seems no end to the
kaleidoscopic possibilities of the future.

Up to the present, however, no confirmation can be obtained of
the startling rumor that _The Spectator_ has been purchased by the
proprietors of _The Kennel Gazette_, and will henceforth be devoted
to the interests of our four-footed friends, the supplements being
restricted to purely feline amenities.

Another persistent rumour, which hitherto lacks the seal of official
corroboration, is to the effect that _The Guardian_ is to be given a
new range of activity as the organ of scientific spiritualism, under
the title of _The Guardian Angel_ and the joint editorship of Sir
Oliver Doyle and Sir Conan Lodge. The investigations into multiple
consciousness conducted by these two eminent _savants_ have proved
their mutual convertibility to such an extent that they have decided
upon this rearrangement of their names. If the scheme materialises
the stimulating collaboration of Mr. HAROLD BEGBIE is a foregone
conclusion, and there is even a possibility of contributions from
an August Exile somewhere in Holland.

A third report maintains with minute circumstantiality that the
proprietors of _The Economist_, having come to the conclusion that
this journal needs brightening, have decided to entrust the post of
principal leader-writer to "CALLISTHENES," and retain the services of
the authoress of _The Tunnel_ as financial _feuilleton_ writer. But
on enquiry at the London School of Economics we could not obtain any
definite information.

The rumours that _The Morning Post_ is about to be merged in _The
Winning Post_, and that Mr. MAXSE is starting an evening paper, to be
called _The Job and Caviller_, are extremely interesting, but need to
be received with a certain amount of caution.

* * * * *

"Two-seater Motor-car. 7-9 h.p., in perfect running order,
Bosch magneto, Michelin tyres, spare wheel and accessories,

Axminster and Brussels carpets, stair carpeting, lino., kitchen utensils, dinner service, copper chafing dish, pots, pans, lawn mower, deck chairs, &c., nearly new mangle, and numerous other effects."--_Local Paper_.

Just the car for the _White Knight_ when he takes to motoring.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Excited Officer_ (_in demobilisation special_). "I _KNEW_ THE COUNTRY WAS GRATEFUL! LOOK AT THAT OLD CHAP WAVING HIS HOE AT US!"]

* * * * *

BABLINGO.

It has been suggested to me that the time has come for a comprehensive investigation of the interesting language known as Bablingo. Materials for this are ready for use in every home that still possesses a nursery with an inmate not more than two years of age. I must premise that it is the inmate's mother and the inmate's nurse, not the actual inmate, who use the language. Some day, no doubt, there will arise an investigator who will reduce to order and catalogue the inchoate efforts of an infant to make itself understood by talking. These efforts are doubtless of high interest to the etymologist, but the difficulties of the task are at present too great, and in any case I am not the man to undertake it.

I shall content myself for the moment with setting an examination paper in Bablingo for the purpose of testing knowledge. It will differ from most other examinations in having a further object--namely to supply instruction and information to the examiner. Later on it may be possible to construct a grammar, and to append to this a few easy exercises. It must be remembered, however, that there are great difficulties to be overcome in such a task. Every home, for instance, has its own rules for pronunciation. Of these I do not for my immediate purpose propose to take cognisance.

Here, then, is a short Bablingo examination paper for the use of mothers and nurses. I do not at present see my way to including fathers.

(1) On what principles is the language which you use in your nursery formed? Did you (a) acquire it, or (b) find yourself unconsciously in possession of it?

(2) Give a list of the characteristic features which distinguish Bablingo from the dialects employed by Prehistoric Man.

(3) What justification can you allege for the conversion of the words _little thing_ into the words _ickle sing_? Are the spelling and pronunciation of these two words intended to be a concession to the feeble understanding of an infant?

(4) _Wasums and didums, then? Was it a ickle birdie, then?_ Expand the above into a four-line verse with rhymes, and explain why the language as spoken and written is nearly always in the past tense, and rarely in the present or future.

(5)(a) _Did he woz-a-woz, then; a Mum's own woz-man?_ (b) _'Oose queenie-mouse was 'oo?_ Write a short story on one of the above texts.

(6) _Did she try to hit her ickle bruzzer on his nosie-posie wiz a mug? She was a Tartar, and did she want to break him up into

bitsy-witsies?_ Construct a scene from a typical nursery drama on the above motive. What theories do you base on the extract with regard to the girl's temper and the boy's courage and endurance?

* * * * *

A REALLY CANDID CANDIDATE.

"TO THE ELECTORS OF ---- WARD.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,--I beg to thank you for returning me as your member at the Election on Monday last. Nothing shall be wanting on my part to betray the confidence thus reposed in me."--_Provincial Paper_.

* * * * *

A YEAR'S REPRISALS.

When I sent Aunt Emily--from whom I have expectations--a pincushion at Christmas and she retaliated with a pen-wiper on New Year's Day, I thought that was the end of it.

Not so.

Aunt Emily reopened hostilities on my birthday with a purple satin letter-case embroidered with a sprig of rosemary and the word "Remembrance." That fresh offensive occurred on January 27th, which, I repeat, is my birthday. Readers please note.

When was Aunt Emily's birthday? Frenzied search in antique birthday books revealed not the horrid secret. Probing my diary for other suitable anniversaries, I came to February 1st--"Partridge and Pheasant Shooting ends."

I passed this as being inappropriate, and then--the very thing--February 14th, St. Valentine's. Also Full Moon.

To arrive on that day, I despatched, carefully packed, the white marble clock from the spare-room. When well shaken it will tick for an hour. Aunt Emily had never seen it, I knew.

Then I sounded the All Clear.

But on Easter Eve a heavy packing-case was bumped onto my doorstep. From wrappings of sacking there emerged a large model of Eddystone lighthouse; a thermometer was embedded in its chest, minus the mercury, I noted. And Aunt Emily wished me as per enclosed card "A joyous Easter."

With groans and lamentations another anniversary must be found by me. Ah! Here we have it! KING GEORGE V. born June 3rd. On the dark roof of my spare-room wardrobe loomed an Indian vase--bright yellow with red blobs--very rare and very hideous, with a bulge in its middle. Obviously unique, because when the Indian made it his fellow-Indians slew him to prevent repetitions of the offence. I packed it in the middle of a crate and much straw, calculated to make an appalling mess when released.

To dear Aunt Emily it went, with love, and a few topical remarks about the Monarchy.

But Aunt Emily evidently had a diary too. On the 21st of October--anniversary of Trafalgar--my heart sank as the railway delivery van drew up at my door. The angry driver toiled into my

passage with a packing-case (bristling with splinters and nails). When it was open and the chisel broken I picked the splinters out of my fingers and contemplated the battered horn of a gramophone emerging from sawdust and shavings.

The mess created was indescribable when the horn was drawn forth. Shavings flew everywhere. The sawdust was like a butcher's shop. There were records too, some broken, all scratched. When set going it made a noise like a cockatoo with a cold. Decently covered with a cloth it was interned in the loft.

Next please. One more effort and I should be one up and Aunt Emily to play. And her turn would be Christmas. Once she sent me five pounds at Christmas.

The diary again. A poor hatch of anniversaries for November. A partial eclipse of the moon, partially visible at Greenwich, was down for the 22nd. But eclipses are too ominous.

I fell back on KING EDWARD VII., born November 9th, 1841. Twenty-three volumes of Goodworthy's History of England should commemorate this. There had once been twenty-four, but the puppy ate one.

Gratitude came by return of post, and I sat down in peace to await Christmas and a cheque.

But on December 19th came another dreadful and splintery packing-case. Desperately I gouged it open. Out of it, through a cloud of shavings, emerged my own loathsome yellow-and-red Indian vase! No word with it--not a word, not a note. Not a funeral note.

Rage overtook me. I disinterred Aunt Emily's own gramophone and records. I packed the horn anyhow. Such of the records as seemed difficult to get in I broke into small pieces and shoved in corners. I nailed the packing-case up with the same nails and addressed it in the boldest and fiercest of characters to Aunt Emily and caught the railway-van on the rebound. The deed was done.

I laughed "Ha, ha!" I laughed "Ho, ho!" I would teach Aunt Emily to return me my own vase.

Next morning came a letter. As I read it perspiration burst out on my forehead. Language the most awful burst from my lips.

And yet it was a simple letter--from my little cousin Dolly.

"DEAR BOB," it said,--"I sent you a yellow-and-red vase for Christmas. Your Aunt Emily gave it me as a wedding present. It is not my style and must be yours, because I have seen one like it in your house. Perhaps you collect them. Don't tell your Aunt, but I really couldn't bear it. I forgot to put any note in the box. Happy Christmas.

"Love, DOLLY."

And Aunt Emily would have opened my case by now.

On Christmas Day I received a letter from her which I opened with cold and clammy fingers.

She thanked me for sending back the gramophone. She was sorry I did not care for it. She was now sending it to a hospital for shell-shocked officers. And she wished me a Blithe Yuletide on a penny card. And she was very sincerely mine.

Anyone can have her for aught I care.

[Illustration: _Unsuccessful House-huntress_. "REALLY ONE SEES SO FEW OF THE SORT OF MEN WHO USED TO _BUILD_ HOUSES. WHY DOESN'T THE GOVERNMENT RELEASE MORE CORDUROY TROUSERS AND ENTICE THE LABOURERS BACK?"]

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE SUPER-HUMAN DOG.

WHEN YOU CAME HOME ON LEAVE YOUR DOG, UNLIKE SOME HUMANS, NEVER EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT SEEING YOU _STILL IN ENGLAND_.

NEVER INDULGED IN DEMOBILISATION TALK.

OR HANDED OUT "CHESTNUTS."

OR INTRODUCED YOU TO YOUR C.O. (ALSO ON PASS).

OR BORED YOU WITH HIS OWN DOMESTIC TROUBLES ("LEFT A BOOT-JACK IN MY DRINKING-TROUGH, SHE DID").

OR INTRUDED HIS PRESENCE AT INOPPORTUNE MOMENTS.

BUT SIMPLY WELCOMED YOU--

--IN HIS OWN--

--INIMITABLE MANNER.]

* * * * *

A SOUTH SEA BUBBLE.

"I want you," said my hostess, "to take in Mrs. Blank. She is charming. All through the War she has been with her husband in the South Seas. London is a new place to her."

Mrs. Blank did not look too promising. She was pretty in her way--"elegant" an American would have called her--but she lacked animation. However, the South Seas...! Anyone fresh from the Pacific must have enough to tell to see soup, fish and _entree_ safely through.

I began by remarking that she must find London a very complete change after the sun and placidity that she had come from.

"It's certainly noisier," she said; "but we had our share of rain."

"I thought it was always fine there," I remarked; but she laughed a denial and relapsed into silence.

She was one of those women who don't take soup, and this made the economy of her utterances the more unfair.

Racking my brain for a new start I fell back on those useful fellows, the authors. Presuming that anyone who had lived in that fascinating region--the promised land (if land is the word) of so many of us who are weary of English climatic treacheries--would be familiar with the literature of it. I went boldly to work.

"The first book about the South Seas that I ever read," I said, "was BALLANTYNE'S _Coral Island_."

"Indeed!" she replied.

I asked her if she too had not been brought up on BALLANTYNE, and she said no. She did not even know his name.

"He wrote for boys," I explained rather lamely.

"I read poetry chiefly as a girl," she said.

"But surely you know STEVENSON'S '_Island Nights' Entertainment_?" I said.

No, she did not. Was it nice?

"It's extraordinary," I said. "It gives you more of the atmosphere of the South Seas than any other work. And Louis BECKE--you must have read him?" I continued.

No, she had not. She read very little. The last book she had read was on spiritualism.

"Not even CONRAD?" I pursued. "No one has so described the calms and storms of the Pacific."

No, she remembered no story called _Conrad_.

I was about to explain that CONRAD was the writer, not the written; but it seemed a waste of words, and we fell into a stillness broken only by the sound of knife and fork.

"Hang it! you shall talk," I said to myself; and then aloud, "Tell me all about copra. I have longed to know what copra is; how it grows, what it looks like, what it is for."

"You have come to the wrong person," she replied, with wide eyes. "I never heard of it. Or did you say 'cobra'? Of course I know what a cobra is--it's a snake. I've seen them at the Zoo."

I put her right. "Copra, the stuff that the traders in the South Seas deal in."

"I never heard of it," she said. "But then why should I? I know nothing about the South Seas."

My stock fell thirty points and I crumbled bread nervously, hoping for something sensible to say; but at this moment "half-time" mercifully set in. My partner on the other side turned to me suavely and asked if I thought the verses in _Abraham Lincoln_ were a beauty or a blemish; and with the assistance of the London stage, the flight to America, Mrs. FULTON'S _Blight_, Mr. WALPOLE'S _Secret City_ and the prospects of the new Academy, I sailed serenely into port. She was as easy and agreeable a woman as that other was difficult, and before she left for the drawing-room she had invited me to lunch and I had accepted.

As I said Good-night to my hostess I asked why she had told me that my first partner had been in the South Seas. She said that she had said nothing of the sort; what she had said was that during the War she had been stationed with her husband, Colonel Blank, at Southsea.

* * * * *

THE MESSAGE OF HULL.

The Hull Election has been keenly discussed in various papers, but by none with more enthusiasm than _The Daily News_. In a special article from the luminous pen of "A.G.G.," in the issue of April 12th, the

true inwardness of the portent is thus revealed:--

"The message of Hull is a message for all the world. It is the announcement that this country, whatever its Government may do, will not have a French peace. It is a declaration to America that the English people are with her in her determination to have a League of Nations' settlement and no other. It is the repudiation of Conscription, of war on Russia, of the permanent military occupation of Germany, of imperialism and grab, of war policy in Ireland, of repression in Egypt, of the reckless profligacy and corruption that are plunging Europe into Bolshevism and hurrying this country to irretrievable ruin."

We confess that we are staggered by the moderation, not to say modesty, of "A.G.G." as an interpreter of the meaning of the Hull Election. He has omitted infinitely more than he has inscribed in his list.

The return of Commander KENWORTHY stands, of course, for all these things, but for many others of at least equal importance.

It means the disappearance of influenza, the ravages of which are clearly traceable to the political virus disseminated by the Coalition.

It means the rehabilitation of Mr. BIRRELL and his return to public life as English Ambassador to the Court of King Valeroso I.

It foreshadows the wholesale gratuitous distribution of cigarettes, marmalade and gramophones.

It means the prohibition of the use of the French horn in orchestras and all places where they play, the reinstatement of the German flute and the restoration of the German Fleet.

Lastly, it means the compulsory prohibition of all Greek except "Alpha of the Plough."

* * * * *

TO A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD

(_ WITH HIS FIRST CRICKET SET _).

Here's a gift to take and treasure,
England's gift as well as mine,
Symbol of her clean-spent leisure,
Of her youth and strength a sign;
Glams of sunlight on old meadows
O'er these varnished toys are cast,
And within that box's shadows
Stir the triumphs of the Past.

Still the ancient tale entrances,
Giving us in golden dower
ULYETT'S drives and IVO's glances,
JACKSON'S dash and THORNTON'S power;
Skill of LYTTTELTONS and LACEYS,
Grit of SHREWSBURYS and GUNNS;
Pride of STUDDS and STEELS and GRACES
Piling up their English runs.

Take these simple toys as token
Of the champions that have been,
Stalwart in defence unbroken,

Hefty hitters, hitting clean;
And, when capped in Life's eleven,
May you stand as firm as they;
May you, little son of seven,
Play the game the English way.

W.H.O.

* * * * *

"It seems to be a ruling passion amongst certain writers to portray anybody connected with commerce as being an ungrammatical ignoramus. Even Kipling panders to this notion in his conception of a drapery assistant in the person of 'Kipps.'"--_Draper's Organiser_.

But did not Mr. WELLS do something to redress the balance in _Kim_?

* * * * *

[Illustration: "WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO, NO. 4?"

"IT'S NO GOOD, INSTRUCTOR; I AIN'T GOT NO HEAD FOR HEIGHTS."]

* * * * *

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

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

The latest of the now so fashionable short-story volumes to come my way is one called _Our Casualty, Etc._ (SKEFFINGTON). Much virtue in that "_Etc._," which covers other fifteen little tales in the best, or nearly the best, "Birmingham" manner. I say "nearly," because for its happiest expression the art of "Mr. GEORGE BIRMINGHAM" demands space to tangle events into more complicated confusion than can be contrived in the dozen pages of these episodes. But within their limitations they are all excellent fun, partly concerned with the War (usually with an Irishman involved), partly recalled from the piping and whisky-drinking times of peace, at Inishmore and elsewhere. One can only treat them after the manner of the schoolboy who declined to distinguish between the Major and Minor Prophets. But I rather specially enjoyed the title-piece, which tells how the super-patriotism of an aged volunteer defeated the kindly plans of those who would have saved him fatigue by assigning to him the role of casualty in a trench-relief practice. Casualties also figure in "Getting Even," an improbable but highly entertaining fiction of the score practised by an ingenious Medical Officer (Irish, I need hardly say) upon an over-zealous C.O., who, to keep him busy during a field day, flooded his "clearing station" with all sorts of complicated imaginary cases, only to find the fictitious victims arranged comfortably in rows under the shade of the trees to await the Padre and a burying party, the M.O. reporting that they had all died before reaching him. It couldn't possibly happen as here told, but that matters little, since, so far as I am concerned, a "Birmingham" tale can always well afford to dispense with credibility.

* * * * *

I am distinctly grateful to ROSE MACAULAY for _What Not_ (CONSTABLE). It brought me the pleasantest end to anything but a perfect English Spring day. She has wit, not so common a gift that you can afford just to take it for granted; she knows when to stop, selecting not exhausting; and she makes her epigrams by the way, as it were, without exposing the process of manufacture. (Other epigrammatists

please copy.) Miss MACAULAY'S "prophetic comedy" is a joyous rag of Government office routine, flappery, Pelmania, Tribunals, State advertising, the Lower Journalism and "What Not." That audacious eugenicist, _Nicky Chester_, first Minister of Brains in the post-war period of official attempts to raise the nation from C3 to something nearer A1 on the intellectual plane, happens, because of his family history, to be uncertified for marriage. He also happens to fall very desperately in love with his secretary, _Kitty Grammont_, and the conflict between duty and desire becomes the theme--perhaps just a little too heavy--of an extravaganza that is happiest in its lighter and more irreverent moments. Which is to say that _What Not_ wanders out of the key. But what on earth does that matter if one is made to laugh quite often and to smile almost continuously at a very shrewd piece of observation, whimsicality and tempered malice? And you will like the serene _Pansy Ponsonby_ (out of "Hullo, Peace!"), who could scarcely be called _Kitty's_ "sister-in-law," but was of the most faithful. The odd thing is that under all her gibing the author seems to have a queer furtive admiration for her precious Ministry of Brains.

* * * * *

Among the many things I like in DORETHEA CONYERS' novels is the artistic subtlety, achieved by few of our other novelists, with which she manages to write them as it were in character. I am quite sure that if _Berenice Ermytrude Nicosia Nevin_, who is called by her initials on the cover and inside by what they spell, had tried to write a novel it would have been remarkably like _B.E.N._ (METHUEN). There would have been the same keen delight in horses, hunting and Irish scenery, and the same cheerful disregard for such trifles as spelling or such conventions as making quite sure that your reader knows which character is speaking at any given moment, and the same excellent humour, which, if it is at the expense of the Irish, is kindly enough for all that. It seems to me that in her new novel Mrs. CONYERS, wisely refusing to stray to that suburbia in which her gifts lack this charm, has recaptured much of the careless rapture of her earliest books; and very careless and very rapturous they were. But I am not quite sure that in real life even _Ben_, when as second whip to the East Cara hounds she lost her horse, would have found an aeroplane useful to catch up with. In case it should be objected that anything so funny as the tea at _Miss Talty's_ never could happen, even in the Caher Valley district, I want to put it on record here and now that it could and does.

* * * * *

The Mystery Keepers (LANE), by MARION FOX, reminds me of the old riddle, "What is it that has feathers and two legs, and barks like a dog?"--the answer being a stork. People who protest that a stork doesn't bark like a dog are told that that part is put in to make it harder. I find that the greater part of the mystery kept by _The Mystery Keepers_ is put in to make it harder. The Abbey at Clynch St. Mary has a "coise" put on it by the last Abbess, and every direct male heir expires punctually on his twenty-first birthday. The actual agency is a poisoned ring concealed in the frame of a portrait of the malevolent Abbess and is in the custody of the _Otway_ family, who enjoy a prescriptive if nebulous right to be stewards of the property. Just how or why the _Otways_--noble fellows, we are given to understand--carry out the deceased Abbess's nefarious wishes with such precision and despatch is not explained. Anyway the mother of the last victim, who has found out the secret, steals the ring, murders the _Otway_ of the period, and retires to a lunatic asylum after her son has himself stolen the ring from her workbox and poisoned himself into the next world. That finishes it. The ring retires to a museum and the proper people marry each other. It is a slender and quite impossible

story, but told in a clever way which goes far to redeem its lack of substance.

* * * * *

The Graftons (COLLINS) is a sequel to Mr. ARCHIBALD MARSHALL'S former chronicle of the same pleasant family. Herein you shall find them, pursuing the even tenor of their prosperous way, father, son and charming daughters, and arriving placidly at the point where, in the natural sequence of events, these daughters leave the paternal nest for others provided by eligible mates. Their courtships, and some mild uncertainty as to whether papa _Grafton_, well-preserved and wealthy widower, will or will not follow the example of his female offspring, provide the entire matter of the book. For the rest Mr. MARSHALL is content to mark time (and very pleasantly) with pictures of English country life at its most comfortable, and in particular with some comedy scenes, excellently done, turning upon the often delicate relationship of Hall and Parsonage. There are a couple of clerical portraits in the book that seem to me as lifelike as anything of the kind since _Barchester_. Apart from this the outstanding virtue of the _Graftons_ is the reality of their dialogue. Precisely thus do, or did, actual people speak in the quiet old times before the War; precisely thus also did nothing whatever of any consequence happen to the vast majority of them. Since, however, the truth and charm of the tale depend upon this absence of the sensational, I must the more regret that Messrs. COLLINS, who have printed it exquisitely, should have been betrayed into a coloured wrapper of almost grotesque ineptitude.

* * * * *

In _Graduation_ (CHATTO AND WINDUS) there is an essential femininity about Miss IRENE RUTHERFORD McLEOD'S style and general attitude that imposes limitations; it is a quality that shows itself not only in her plot, but in her characters, the three reputed males who figure therein being as fine examples of true womanliness as you need wish to meet. _Frieda_ was the heroine (a name somehow significant); and of the trouser-wearers, the first, _Geoffrey_, was a cat-like deceiver, who fascinated poor _Frieda_ for ends unspecified, pretended (the minx!) to be keen on the Suffrage movement, which he wasn't, and concealed a wife; the second was a Being too perfect to endure beyond Chapter 10, where he expires eloquently of heart-failure, leaving _Alan_, the third, to bear the white man's burden and clasp _Frieda_ to his maidenly heart. This sentimental progress is, I suppose, what is implied by the title and the symbolic staircase (if it _is_ a staircase?) on the wrapper. But my trouble was that I could never discern in the sweet girl-graduate any development of character from the pretentious futility of her earliest appearance. Perhaps I am prejudiced. Undeniably Miss McLEOD can draw a certain type of prig with a horrible facility. But the antiquated modernity of her scheme, flooded as it is with the New Dawn of, say, a decade ago, and its bland disregard of everything that has happened since, ended by violently irritating me. Others may have better luck.

* * * * *

Spring has been slow in coming, but I got something more than a whiff of actual summer when _Under Blue Skies_ (HUTCHINSON) came my way. Mr. DE VERD STACPOOLE is at the top of his form, and it is a real pleasure to recommend an author who brings to his tales of adventure so nice a sense of style and so keen a feeling for character. In "The Frigate Bird" the rapsallions who seize a schooner and, without any knowledge of navigation, sail the high seas, are full-blooded adventurers; but there is all the difference in the world between the character of the educated _Carlyon_ and that of the simple-minded and ignorant _Finn_.

This yarn occupies nearly half of the book, and the other stories should give food for thought to those who allege that no Englishman can write a short story. Apart from one charming little tale of a haunted French _chateau_ Mr. STACPOOLE allows us to bask here in the eternal summer of Pacific skies. I am very grateful for my sun-bath.

* * * * *

In _Poems of the Great War_, by Mrs. ROBERTSON-GLASGOW, readers of _Punch_ will recognise some of the best serious poems that have appeared in these pages of recent years. The little half-crown volume in which they reappear has been admirably printed at S. Aldhelm's Home for Boys, Frome, and may be bought at SMITH'S in Kensington High Street.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Voice of Tommy in audience_. "NAH THEN, MATE, WHY DON'T YER DIG YERSELF IN?"]

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