

Punch, Or The London Charivari, Vol. 146., January 21, 1914

Various

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January 21, 1914, by Various

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PUNCH,

OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

VOL. 146.

January 21, 1914.

[Illustration: "NOT VERY SPORTING LINKS, ARE THEY?"

EVEN EARTHQUAKES HAVE THEIR USE.

"AH, THAT'LL MAKE BETTER GOLF."]

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CHARIVARIA.

MAJOR-GENERAL LEONARD WOOD, chief of the U.S.A. General Staff, has reported that the American Army is, practically speaking, unarmed, and advises the immediate expenditure of L1,200,000 for artillery and ammunition. We fancy, however, that the present state of affairs is the result of a compromise with the American Peace party, who will not object to their country having an army so long as it is unarmed.

"VICTORY FOR THE ORANGE WOMEN.

DRURY LANE INSTITUTION TO CONTINUE."

This should put heart into the Orange Men of Ulster.

We hear that, to celebrate the recent glorious victory in Alsace, the little town of Zabern is to be re-named Saebeln.

The Rev. N. FITZPATRICK, describing a visit to the Balkan States in a lecture at the Camera Club, spoke of the difficulties he had with his laundry. The same bundle of clothes was soaked in Roumania, rough-dried in Bulgaria, and ironed in Servia. We are astonished that the lecturer should have made no mention of mangling, which we understand is done well in the Balkan States.

The KAISER, we are told, has given instructions that his menus are in future to be written in German. What, by the way, is the French for Sauerkraut?

Mr. ARCHIBALD, a member of the Australian House of Representatives, has calculated that the value of the property of the five million inhabitants of the Commonwealth is L780,000,000. We cannot but think it is a mistake to divulge the fact with so many dishonest people about.

I do like your eyes is the latest bright thought for a Revue title. To be followed, no doubt, by Her nose isn't bad, is it? and What's wrong with her toes?

"FRENCH BATTLESHIP DROPPED."

Pall Mall Gazette.

Very careless of someone.

Reading that one of the features of the new British battleship class will be less draught, Aunt Caroline remarked that she was glad to hear this: she had always understood that during even half a gale it was very easy to catch cold at sea.

Sir RUFUS ISAACS has decided to take the title of Lord READING. This still leaves it open to a distinguished literary man, should he be made a peer, to become Lord Writing.

The age of pleasure! Where will it stop? Extract from _The Witney Gazette_:-"On Monday evening a very successful dance was given in the Corn Exchange ... The company numbered over one hundred, and dancing to the strains of Taylor's Oxford Scarlet Band was enjoyed till the early hours of Wednesday morning."

While Police Constable JAKEMAN was in Eldon Road, Reading, last week, a cat suddenly pounced on him and bit him. We have not yet received a full account of the incident, but apparently the constable was on detective duty and cleverly disguised as a mouse.

One of the cats shown at the Grand Championship Cat Show had her fur cut and trimmed like a poodle's. The matter has been much discussed in canine circles, and we understand that there may be trouble.

An express train travelling from Nice to Macon was, last week, beaten by an eagle, which raced it over a distance of eighteen miles. Birds are evidently being put upon their mettle by the aeroplanes.

Alleged notice outside Drury Lane:--

SLEEPING BEAUTY.

N.B.--CHAUFFEURS ARE KINDLY
REQUESTED NOT TO HOOT
WHEN PASSING.

From Paris comes the news that a successor to the Tango has been found in the form of a Chinese dance known as the Tatao. The name, presumably, is a contraction of the words "Ta-ta, Tango."

A new character named "It" appears in the revival of _The Darling of the Gods_. We presume it is The Limit.

The manager of the Little Theatre is making arrangements for shilling seats for the first time in the history of the house. How is it going to be done? By _Magic_, of course.

"The Shepherdess without a Heart" continues to make good progress, and the medical profession is much interested.

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A FAREWELL TOUR.

This is positively Chum's last appearance in print--for his own sake no less than for yours. He is conceited enough as it is, but if once he got to know that people are always writing about him in the papers his swagger would be unbearable. However, I have said good-bye to him now; I have no longer any rights in him. Yesterday I saw him off to his new home, and when we meet again it will be on a different footing. "Is that your dog?" I shall say to his master. "What is he? A Cocker? Jolly little fellows, aren't they? I had one myself once."

As Chum refused to do the journey across London by himself, I met him at Liverpool Street. He came up in a crate; the world must have seemed very small to him on the way. "Hallo, old ass," I said to him through the bars, and in the little space they gave him he wriggled his body with delight. "Thank Heaven there's _one_ of 'em alive," he said.

"I think this is my dog," I said to the guard, and I told him my name.

He asked for my card.

"I'm afraid I haven't one with me," I explained. When policemen touch me on the shoulder and ask me to go quietly; when I drag old gentlemen from underneath motor-'buses, and they decide to adopt me on the spot; on all the important occasions when one really wants a card, I never have one with me.

"Can't give him up without proof of identity," said the guard, and Chum grinned at the idea of being thought so valuable.

I felt in my pockets for letters. There was only one, but it offered to lend me L10,000 on my note of hand alone. It was addressed to "Dear Sir," and though I pointed out to the guard that I was the "Sir," he still kept tight hold of Chum. Strange that one man should be prepared to trust me with L10,000, and another should be so chary of confiding to me a small black spaniel.

"Tell the gentleman who I am," I said imploringly through the bars. "Show him you know me."

"He's _really_ all right," said Chum, looking at the guard with his great honest brown eyes. "He's been with us for years."

And then I had an inspiration. I turned down the inside pocket of my coat; and there, stitched into it, was the label of my tailor's with my name written on it. I had often wondered why tailors did this; obviously they know how stupid guards can be.

"I suppose that's all right," said the guard reluctantly. Of course I might have stolen the coat. I see his point.

"You--you wouldn't like a nice packing case for yourself?" I said timidly. "You see, I thought I'd put Chum on the lead. I've got to take him to Paddington, and he must be tired of his shell by now. It isn't as if he were really an armadillo."

The guard thought he would like a shilling and a nice packing case. Wood, he agreed, was always wood, particularly in winter, but there were times when you were not ready for it.

"How are you taking him?" he asked, getting to work with a chisel. "Underground?"

"Underground?" I cried in horror. "Take Chum on the Underground? Take--Have you ever taken a large live conger-eel on the end of a string into a crowded carriage?"

The guard never had.

"Well, don't. Take him in a taxi instead. Don't waste him on other people."

The crate yawned slowly, and Chum emerged all over straw. We had an anxious moment, but the two of us got him down and put the lead on him. Then Chum and I went off for a taxi.

"Hooray," said Chum, wriggling all over, "isn't this splendid? I say, which way are you going? I'm going this way?... No, I mean the other way."

Somebody had left some of his milk-cans on the platform. Three times we went round one in opposite directions and unwound ourselves the wrong way. Then I hauled him in, took him struggling in my arms and got into a cab.

The journey to Paddington was full of interest. For a whole minute Chum stood quietly on the seat, rested his fore-paws on the open window and drank in London. Then he jumped down and went mad. He tried to hang me with the lead, and then in remorse tried to hang himself. He made a dash for the little window at the back; missed it and dived out of the window at the side; was hauled back and kissed me ecstatically, in the eye with his sharpest tooth ... "And I thought the world was at an end," he said, "and there were no more people. Oh, I am an ass. I say, did you notice I'd had my hair cut? How do you like my new trousers? I must show you them." He jumped on to my lap. "No, I think you'll see them better on the ground," he said, and jumped down again. "Or no, perhaps you would get a better view if--" he jumped up hastily, "and yet I don't know--" he dived down, "though of course, if you--Oh lor! this is a day," and he put both paws lovingly on my collar.

Suddenly he was quiet again. The stillness, the absence of storm in the taxi was so unnatural that I began to miss it. "Buck up, old fool," I said, but he sat motionless by my side, plunged in thought. I tried to cheer him up. I pointed out King's Cross to him; he wouldn't even bark at it. I called his attention to the poster outside the Euston Theatre of The Two Biffs; for all the regard he showed he might never even have heard of them. The monumental masonry by Portland Road failed to uplift him.

At Baker Street he woke up and grinned cheerily. "It's all right," he said, "I was trying to remember what happened to me this morning--something rather-miserable, I thought, but I can't get hold of it. However it's all right now. How are you?" And he went mad again.

At Paddington I bought a label at the bookstall and wrote it for him. He went round and round my leg looking for me. "Funny thing," he said as he began to unwind, "he was here a moment ago. I'll just go round once more. I rather think ... Ow! Oh, there you are!" I stepped off him, unravelled the lead and dragged him to the Parcels Office.

"I want to send this by the two o'clock train," I said to the man the other side of the counter.

"Send what?" he said.

I looked down. Chum was making himself very small and black in the shadow of the counter. He was completely hidden from the sight of anybody the other side of it.

"Come out," I said, "and show yourself."

"Not much," he said. "A parcel! I'm not going to be a jolly old parcel for anybody."

"It's only a way of speaking," I pleaded. "Actually you are travelling as a small black gentleman. You will go with the guard--a delightful man."

Chum came out reluctantly. The clerk leant over the counter and managed to see him.

"According to our regulations," he said, and I always dislike people who begin like that, "he has to be on a chain. A leather lead won't do."

Chum smiled all over himself. I don't know which pleased him more--the suggestion that he was a very large and fierce dog, or the impossibility now of his travelling with the guard, delightful man though he might be. He gave himself a shake and started for the door.

"Tut, tut, it's a great disappointment to me," he said, trying to look disappointed, but his back would wriggle. "This chain business--silly of us not

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[Illustration: THE BLACK MAN'S BURDEN.

REFRAIN BY NATIVES OF SOUTH AFRICA AND KIKUYU.]

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[Illustration: Kindly Hostess (to nervous reciter who has broken down in "The Charge of the Light Brigade"). "NEVER MIND MR. TOMPKINS, JUST TELL US IT IN YOUR OWN WORDS."]

* * * * *

to have known--well, well, we shall be wiser another time. Now let's go home."

Poor old Chum; I had known. From a large coat pocket I produced a chain.

"Dash it," said Chum, looking up at me pathetically, "you might almost want to get rid of me."

He was chained, and the label tied on to him. Forgive me that label, Chum; I think that was the worst offence of all. And why should I label one who was speaking so eloquently for himself; who said from the tip of his little black nose to the end of his stumpy black tail, "I'm a silly old ass, but there's nothing wrong in me, and they're sending me away!" But according to the regulations--one must obey the regulations, Chum.

I gave him to the guard--a delightful man. The guard and I chained him to a brake or something. Then the guard went away, and Chum and I had a little talk ...

After that the train went off.

Good-bye, little dog. A.A.M.

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"Lady Strachie wishes to thoroughly recommend her permanent Caretaker and Husband."--Advt. in "Morning Post."

Lord STRACHIE should be a proud man to-day.

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HOW GREAT MEN SHOW EMOTION.

[Mr. HANDEL BOOTH, speaking in Hyde Park recently, declared that, when he informed Lord ABERDEEN of the conduct of the police during the Dublin riots, the Lord Lieutenant "buried his head in his hands."]

Mr. Leo Maxixe, writing in The Irrational Review, states that he has it on the best authority that when the GERMAN EMPEROR read the Criccieth New Year's interview with Mr. LLOYD GEORGE he exclaimed, "This beats the Tango," and fell heavily on the hearthrug.

Mr. James Larvin, addressing a meeting of the Confederates at the Saveloy Hotel, informed his hearers that when Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL read the article in The Daily Mail on his future he stood on his

head in the corner for three minutes, to the great embarrassment of Sir FRANCIS HOPWOOD, who was present.

Sir WILLIAM ROBERTSON NICOLL, writing in The British Weekly, asserts that when Mr. MASSINGHAM read "C.K.S.'s" recent reference to The Nation in The Sphere he kicked the waste-paper basket round the room and tore the hair out of his head in handfuls.

Mr. CECIL CHESTERTON, addressing a meeting of non-party fishmongers at Billingsgate last week, stated that he had heard that when Mr. GODFREY ISAACS informed the LORD CHIEF JUSTICE that Mr. HANDEL BOOTH had retired from the Dublin Police Inquiry Lord READING OF EARLEY burst into tears and hid his face in his wig.

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WHY MR. CHESTERTON SHUNS THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

Extract from local time-table:--

"10.45 a.m. Motor Service between Freshwater and Newport for light passengers only."

* * * * *

"Referring to the plea of Dr. Budge, the poet laureate, for purer English, a writer in the 'Daily Chronicle' says...."--Glasgow Evening Citizen.

Purer spelling of names is what the POET LAUREATE would really like to see.

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It was very touching of The Evening News to give so much space to the distressing story of the real Duchess who could not get a seat at Olympia--(surely they might have thrown out a common person to make room for her?)--but it was tactless to go on:

"'If you will bring me a couple of chairs,' said the duchess, 'I will sit down in the gangway with the greatest pleasure.'"

It makes one wonder which of our larger duchesses it was.

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THE HOUSE OF PUNCH.

[He "married a princess of the House of Punch."--Excerpt front an account of the life of a former King of Kashmir.]

Hail, Master, and accept the news I bring,
I come to make a solemn mystery clear,
One that affects you deeply; for I sing
Of a most ancient king
Nine hundred years ago in fair Kashmir,
Who yearned towards a bride, and--hear, oh hear,
Lord of the reboant nose and classic hunch--
"Married a princess of the House of Punch."

Yes, you are royal, as one might have seen.
The loftiness of your despotic sway,
Your strange aloofness and unearthly mien
 (Yet regal) might have been
A full assurance of monarchic clay.
Had but the fates run kindly, at this day
Yourself should be a king of orient fame,
Chief of the princely house that bears your name.

Methinks I see you at it. I can see
 A shamiana[1] loftily upreared
Beneath a banyan (or banana) tree,
 Whichever it may be,
Where, with bright turban and vermilion beard
 (A not unfrequent sight, and very weird),
You sit at peace; a small boy, doubly bowed,
Acts as your footstool and, though stiff, is proud.

Fragrant with Champak scents the warm wind sighs
 Heavily, faintly, languorously fanned
By drowsy peacock-plumes--to keep the flies
 From your full nose and eyes--
Waved from behind you, where on either hand
 Two silent slaves of Nubian polish stand,
Whose patent-leather visages reflect
The convex day, with mirror-like effect.

Robed in a garment of the choicest spoil
 Of Persian looms, you sit apart to deal
Grace to the suppliant and reward for toil,
 T'abase the proud, and boil
The malefactor, till upon you steal
 Mild qualms suggestive of the mid-day meal;
And, then, what plump, what luscious fruits are those?
What goblets of what vintage? Goodness knows.

Gladly would I pursue this glowing dream,
 To sing of deeds of chivalry and sport,
Of cushioned dalliance in the soft hareem
 (A really splendid theme),
The pundits and tame poets at your court,
And all such pride, but I must keep it short.
Once let me off upon a thing so bright,
And I should hardly stop without a fight.

But now you stand plain Mister; and, no doubt,
 Would have for choice this visioned pomp untold.
Yet, Sire, I beg you, cast such musings out;
 Put not yourself about
For a vain dream. If I may make so bold,
Your present lot should keep you well consoled.
You still are great, and have, when all is done,
A fine old Eastern smack, majestic One.

The vassals of your fathers were but few
 Compared with yours, who move the whole world wide;
You still can splash an oriental hue,
 Red, yellow, green or blue,

Upon a fresh and various outside;
While you support--perhaps your greatest pride
High pundits for your intellectual feast,
And some tame bards, of whom I am the least.

DUM-DUM.

[Footnote 1: Tent]

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GIVEN AWAY.

A correspondent of The Times writes:--"The Niva, the Russian Family Herald, promises to annual subscribers, in addition to a copy of the paper every week--

The complete works of Korolenko in twenty-five volumes.
The complete works of Edmond Rostand.
The complete works of Maikof.
A literary supplement every month.
A fashion book.
A book of patterns of fancy-work designs.
A tear-off calendar for 1914,"

and adds, "Where does English or American journalistic enterprise stand beside this?"

We understand that our more enterprising contemporaries have no intention of allowing this question to remain unanswered, and the wildest rumours are afloat as to the nature of the gifts which will be offered next year to annual subscribers by various British journals.

With a view to test the accuracy of these rumours our Special Representative called yesterday upon the Editors of several leading publications, and, although much secrecy is still maintained, he has succeeded in collecting some valuable information. For instance, the report that The Nineteenth Century and After would include among its gifts the dramatic works of the MELVILLE BROS., HOW to Dance the Tango, and Sweeter than Honey, a novel with a strong love interest, lacks confirmation; nor are we in a position to assert definitely that The Spectator will present a beautiful coloured supplement, entitled "Susie's Pet Pup," and a handsome mug bearing the inscription: "A Present from Loo," though we believe that such may be the case.

On the other hand, The Times' reply to an inquiry as to whether they would present to each reader half a ton of supplements was that they had done so for some years past; and The Daily Mirror did not deny that they were considering the proposal to present a framed copy of the portrait of John Tiffin which appeared in their issue of February 29, 1913. (Tiffin, our readers will remember, was brother-in-law to the man who discovered the great emerald robbery.)

The British Medical Journal's list will include the works of GEORGE BERNARD SHAW and the Life of Mrs. EDDY; but the report that The Tailor and Cutter would present Wild Tribes of Central Africa is emphatically denied.

Finally, The Boxing World had not thought of offering any

free-gifts, but on learning that BOSWELL had written a Life of JOHNSON seemed inclined to reconsider their decision.

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"In order to counteract a tendency to stoutness which ex-President Taft is now overcoming, the Kaiser has lately undergone a systematic course of outdoor 'training.'"--_Daily Mail_.

This is very friendly of the KAISER, but Mr. TAFT will probably do it better by himself.

Says an Edinburgh tram-car advertisement:--

THE SCOTTISH ORCHESTRA.
Conductor.....E. Mlynarski.
Solo Violinist.....Duci Kerekjarto."

You should see these natives when they get among the haggis. Hoots!

* * * * *

THE KAKEKIKOKUANS;

OR, THE HEATHEN IN HIS BLINDNESS.

THE country of Kakekikoku, as its name suggests, lies in the vicinity of Timbuctoo, the well-known African resort; and at the present time, when so much interest is centred upon that little-known land, it may be profitable to our readers, as well as to the writer, to give some information about it.

A famous Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, who has travelled widely, not only in this country but in Belgium and the Channel Islands, has stated that Kakekikoku is richly endowed with the bewilderments, perils and mysteries of primitive and unexplored African territory. A warlike and exclusive folk, the Kakekikokuans extend a red-hot welcome to the foreigner who ventures within their borders. They are possessed of a fine physique and an intelligence of a subtler kind than many savage races can pretend to; yet while having all the qualities that should go to the building up of a strong nation, certain conditions of their life bar the way to such an achievement. In a word, the Kakekikokuans are in the clutches of the medicine-man. Each of these despots has his own little following, and wields a distinctive influence, it being a point of honour with him that his teaching should differ in some way (usually in but a trivial detail) from the teaching of any other of his kind. The solemnity of their discussions and the heat of their dissensions about the minutiae of their creeds would be laughable were it not so pathetic..

And not only do the medicine-men dispute among themselves, but their followers engage even more vehemently in bitter strife. For instance, there is a national belief that the juby-juby nut, which grows in the forests in profusion, possesses some supernatural virtue that will make a man who chews it impervious to the weapons of his enemies. That this virtue exists is generally accepted; but when it comes to a discussion of how, when and where to chew the nut, much wrangling goes on; and such men as survive in battle claim that their particular

method is proved to be the correct one, while such as succumb are cited in proof of the error of their process of absorbing the juices of the juby-juby nut. The survivors include, of course, representatives of various schools of thought, and a battle against a common enemy rarely goes by without being immediately followed by a conflict among the surviving Kakekikokuans in order to put to final proof their respective theories about their remarkable fruit. Thus a promising people is committing race-suicide; for this sort of thing goes on not only in connection with this particular problem, but over such questions as the number of beads to wear round one's neck when visiting the medicine-man, whether the national custom of saluting the rising sun need be observed on cloudy mornings, and whether the medicine-man is entitled to the pick of the yams on any day but Sunday. People of different opinions on these points decline to eat together or to enter into social intercourse with one another; and their children are forbidden to mingle in play.

The good news has just come to hand, however, that a band of Church of England missionaries, despatched by the Bishop of ZANZIBAR, has now entered the country; and it is delightful to contemplate the beneficent result that may be expected from their broadminded attitude and their sane teaching on the subject of the brotherhood of man.

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[Illustration: _Observant Lady_ (_to gentleman alighting from 'bus_).
"_I_ THINK YOU'VE DROPPED A PENNY!"]

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"The Berlin critics have been accusing Mr. Bernard Shaw of having committed in his 'Pygmalion,' produced in Germany the other day, a plagiarism from Smollett's novel, 'Peregrine Pickle.' Mr. Shaw denies that he has ever read the novel in question, and, in an interview in the London 'Observer,' remarks: 'The suggestion of the German papers that I had Pygmalion produced in Germany lest I should be detected in my own country of plagiarism, shows an amusing ignorance of English culture.'"--_Yorkshire Evening Post_.

It does. Why even our most cultured countryman, Mr. BERNARD SHAW, has never read _Peregrine Pickle_.

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"Mr. Spademan, of Woodnewton, Northants, placed a dozen eggs under a hen some time ago, and there were hatched out thirteen chickens, one of the eggs being double-yolked. All the young birds are doing well.

Burroughes and Watts' billiard tables for accuracy."--_Birmingham Daily Mail_.

They are, in fact, a lesson to Mr. STADEMAN's hens.

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LACONICS.

"As a matter of fact," said the doctor, "you ought not to speak at all. But that's asking too much. So let it go at this--not a word more than is necessary. Good-bye.",

He left the room and I lay back pondering on his instructions. How many words were really necessary?

The nurse soon after entered.

"So the doctor's gone," she said.

Obviously it wasn't necessary to say Yes, since the room was empty save for me and her; so I made no reply.

She went to the window and looked out. The sky was blue and the sunshine was brilliant.

"It's a fine day," she said.

No, I thought, you don't catch me there; and said nothing. But I reflected that yesterday I might myself have made the same inane remark as she.

"Would you like the paper?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, and then almost regretted it, for having waited nearly fifty years for yesterday's news surely I could wait longer. Still, the paper would help to pass the time.

While she was fetching it I remembered a dream of last night which I had intended to tell her this morning.

But why do so? A dream is of no account even to the dreamer. Still, the recital might have made her laugh. But why should laughter be bothered about?

The nurse brought the paper and I signified Thank you.

"I'll leave you for a while now," she said; "The fire's all right. Your drink's by the bed. You'll ring if you want anything."

All these things I knew. My drink is always beside the bed; the bell is the natural communication between me and the house. What a foolish chatterbox the woman was! I nodded and she went out.

On her return an hour or so later she asked, "Is there anything in the paper?"

Before answering I examined this question. What did it mean? It did not mean, Are the pages this morning absolutely blank, for a change? It meant, Is there a good murder? Is any very important person dead? In reply I handed the paper to her.

Instead of reading it she began a long account of her morning's walk. She told me where she had been; whom she had seen; whom she had thought she had seen and then found that it was some one else; what somebody had said. Not a syllable mattered, I now realised; but yesterday I should have joined in the talk, asked questions, encouraged her in her foolishness.

Just before lunch my brother and a guest came into the room and began to talk about golf. My brother said that he had been round in 98. This was his best since September, when he went round in 97. He described his difficulties at the tenth hole.

It all seemed very idiotic to me, for the game was over and done with. Why rake it up?

The guest said that he had lost two balls, one of which was expensive. His driving had been good, but in the short game he had been weak. He could never quite make up his mind whether he putted best with a gun-metal putter or a wooden one.

My brother asked me if I remembered that long drive of his two years ago?

I nodded.

The nurse came in and told them to go. She then asked me if I was hungry.

"Very," I said.

She brought me some beef-tea and calf's-foot-jelly, remarking that they were easily taken and "would not hurt my throat."

That was why they were chosen, of course.

In the afternoon I had a visit from my Aunt Lavinia, who sat down with the remark that she would tell me all the news.

"You remember Esther?" she began.

Esther is my cousin and we were brought up together. How could I have forgotten her?

What she told me about Esther was of no consequence. Then she told me how she had nearly lost her luggage at Brighton--she quite thought she had lost it, in fact--but, as it happened, it turned up. "And if I had lost it," she said, "it would have been dreadful, for I had a number of dear Stella's beautiful sketches in one of my trunks. Quite irreplaceable. However, it is all right."

Then why tell me?

And so she rattled on.

"You don't say anything," she said at last.

It was true. I had said nothing. I told her what the doctor instructed.

"Quite right," she remarked. "I wish other people even in good health could have the same prescription."

Just before dinner my brother came in again. "You've had Aunt Lavinia here," he said.

I had.

"Getting quite grey, I thought," he said.

I had noticed it too.

He was smoking, and while he was with me he emptied his pipe and filled it again. He thought he had knocked the burning ash in the grate, but it had fallen in the turn-up of his right trouser-leg.

Should I tell him? I wondered. He would, of course, find it out from the smell, but meanwhile the cloth would be burned through.

"Your trouser's burning," I said.

That was the only remark I volunteered all that day; and really, except now and then on business, I don't see why one should ever talk more.

* * * * *

CURLING.

(_THE GAME AND HOW TO PLAY IT, BY A WINTER SPORT._)

Take a piece of ice (you'll want Switzerland for this). Draw two circles, one at each end. Draw a line a short distance from each circle. The drawing can be done with a pin, pocket-knife, diamond, axe, friend's razor or other edged or pointed instrument. I give no dimensions because they are dull things and I hate guessing. Talk of the circles at each end as "houses" and the lines as "hogs," and you are well on the road to become a curler.

Take two narrow pieces of tin with prickly eruptions on one side. Place one each end of the ice-patch, prickly side down, and stamp on the smooth side. Why these pieces of tin are called "crampits" I can't tell you, unless it's just part of the fun.

You now have a prepared patch that can be used for hop-scotch, shove-halfpenny, Rugby football or curling. If you have named the things as directed you really ought to use it for curling.

We now come to the question of players. This is one of the most important parts of the game. Four a side is the almost ideal number, but a few more or less do not make any very great difference. But be sure to get some Scotchmen. They take the game seriously and do much to make the whole affair bright and mirthful. A slight sprinkling of Irishmen often serves to bring out more prominently the flavour of the Scottish humour.

Don't play for money unless you have the majority of Scotchmen on your side.

The game is played with "stones," or, to use their Scotch pseudonym, "stanes." To every man two stanes. You can either get your "stanes" in England and travel out with them, or hire them in the locality. They make the most pleasant travelling companions and at times are the cause of many amusing incidents which beguile the tedium of the journey. Also they often lead to your picking up chance acquaintances.

I have known one stone placed in a dimly lighted corridor of a train productive of much merriment and harmless banter. Being of considerable weight they do not readily respond to a playful kick, but having no sharp corners they are seldom responsible for serious injury to the kicker.

Every stone, when new, has a handle. Be careful to preserve the handle intact on the upper part of the stone. If this adjunct be lost or mislaid the stone is less amenable to transit and almost useless for its original purpose.

You will also require a long-handled carpet-broom, which you will on arrival re-name a "cow." Most dressing-bags constructed for foreign travel are now fitted with these useful and picturesque articles. The "cow" is used for two purposes. If you are lucky enough to be appointed scorer for your side you mark the score on the handle in such a way as to be indecipherable by everyone but yourself. This prevents disputes with regard to the accuracy of your arithmetic. You also use it to sweep the ice in front of a friendly stone which appears likely to give up prematurely from exhaustion. Sweeping is carried out under the direction of your captain, and the process is known in the vernacular as "sooping 'er oop." You are not allowed to retard the progress of a stone, friendly or otherwise, by intentionally sweeping obstructions into its path. To discard a portion of your "cow" in front of a rapidly advancing stone is actionable.

Over-enthusiasm in "sooping 'er 'oop" should be avoided. Ice is proverbially slippery, and if you fall on to a friendly stone from excess of energy or from debility, your side is "huffed" that stone. This is a serious matter, and even if you are able to continue the game you are looked on with disfavour by your friends.

The object of the game is to get your stone as near as possible to the centre of the circle at the other end of the rink. With this object you stand on the piece of tin or "crampit" before referred to, grasp the stone firmly by the handle and hurl it along the ice. It is almost essential to let go the stone at the right moment, otherwise it will hurl you. The game is almost identical with the commoner game of "bowls," except for the language, which is worse. The term "wood" is inappropriate and must be avoided, as the use of it may lay you under a charge of ignorance or flippancy, which you will find almost impossible to live down.

I will conclude with a few hints to novices. Preserve a cool head and steady eye. Whilst you are playing your shot your captain will be dancing about in the circle at the other end of the ice. You will find it best to disregard his maniacal shoutings and gesticulations. You will probably not understand half of them and will not agree with the other half. If he should break a blood-vessel do not take any notice unless some part of his fallen body is likely to obstruct your stone. In this case you are entitled to have him moved.

If, after you have played, cries of "hog" or "wobbler" arise, remember that you are engaged in a sport and not in politics and that there is nothing really offensive in the terms. Finally, never scoff at the language used, and above all remember that what is one man's game may be another's religion.

* * * * *

[Illustration: LIFE'S LITTLE TRAGEDIES.

SHY AND NERVOUS HUSBAND, ABANDONED IN COSTUME DEPARTMENT BY HIS WIFE WHO HAS GONE TO THE FITTING-ROOM TO HAVE HER DRESS FITTED, AND SURROUNDED BY TALL AND BEAUTEOUS YOUNG LADIES WHOSE ONLY BUSINESS SEEMS TO BE TO MAKE HIM FEEL LIKE A WORM.]

* * * * *

[Illustration: "EH, BUT I HAD A RARE TIME LAST YEAR-R. A WAS AT MA COUSIN MACWHUSKIE'S A WHOLE FORTNIGHT, AN' A DIDNA ONCE KEN A WAS THEER!"]

* * * * *

REVENGE.

(_OR, A HINT TO A HOUSE-AGENT AFTER COMING AWAY FROM HIS OFFICE._)

Your voice was pleasing and your face was fat;
With soap _ad libitum_ you sought to dabble us;
But when I told you we must leave the flat
Did I not notice; underneath the spat,
The bifurcated boot that marks _Diabolus_?

I know that in a brief while you'll have found
The house I wanted (_sic_), superbly roomy,
With a fine view and every comfort crowned,
A short three minutes from the Underground;
Also I know that you are safe to "do" me.

There will be something wrong; but you shall fill
My ears with praises specious and irrelevant
Of this and that; and you shall have your will,
And heave a deep sigh when I've paid my bill,
Having got off at last some rare white elephant.

And when things happen to "The Yews" or "Planes"
Left by the Joneses like a haunt of lazars;
When the roof falls, or in the winter rains
The dining-room breaks out in sudden blains,
And every feast we have recalls BELSHAZZAR's;

You shall be smiling. But you have not guessed
One thing, for all your wisdom, child of Lucifer:
You did not know I was a bard, whose breast
Could boil with bitter language when oppressed
Like a bargee's; if anything, abusiver.

This is the high reward of sacred song;
The minstrels' voices are like falling honey
When the gods please them, but when things go wrong
They speak their mind out straight, and speak it strong,
Especially on points concerned with money.

So, if you "do me down," I have my lyre,
And I shall trumpet (at the normal Press wage)

Such things about that house, and with such fire,
That all men ever after shall conspire
To shun the said demesne and curse that message.

And spiders on the broken panes shall sit,
And the grey rats shall scuttle in the basement,
Until the Borough Council purchase it
And cleanse and decorate, and lastly fit
A fair blue _plaque_ above the study casement,

Saying, "Here lived a while and wove his spell,
Eusebius Binks the bard, the unforgotten;
The house is mentioned in his 'Lines to Hell,'
Also the agents, Messrs. Azazel,
And the then drains which, so he sang, were rotten."

EVOE.

* * * * *

The Daily Telegraph says of the Portsmouth Corporation telephone system:--

"At present there are 1,899 subscribers and 2,528 distinct telephones."

Why doesn't the Post Office experiment with this new sort of telephone.

* * * * *

"Yet it is necessary to state emphatically, although no representative of a daily newspaper seems to have been under this impression, that not for twenty years have I been so bored."

C.K.S. in "The Sphere," on the 'Edwin Drood' trial.

But how are the poor reporters to know so much about C.K.S. as that?

* * * * *

[Illustration: COULEUR D'ORANGE.

MR. ASQUITH (_on the Riviera_). "LUCKY FOR ME THERE AREN'T ANY 'CONVERSATIONS' HERE--I MIGHT AGREE TO ALMOST ANYTHING."]

* * * * *

THE POST OFFICE AGAIN.

DEAR UNCLE,--Its your birthday to-day. I sent you some nice pairs of hankerchifs because its your birthday. They for your nose. Its funny our birthdays being so close. And now no more from your loving neice

NANCY.

MY DEAR NANCY,--Thank you very much indeed for the nice pocket-handkerchiefs. I am very pleased with them. Nobody has ever troubled to give me handkerchiefs before with pretty flowers worked in

the corners. I have been wearing them to-day, or rather one of them. They are so nice that I really meant to have kept them specially for parties and things like that, but, as I was obliged to leave home in a great hurry this morning, and someone had hidden my everyday handkerchiefs, I took one of yours.

Such a funny thing has happened. I sent you for your birthday a pretty card with birds on it, and somehow or other it got taken in quite a different direction, and was returned to me this morning by--whom do you think? Auntie Maud, all the way away in Ireland. But we mustn't blame the Postmaster-General without being absolutely sure of ourselves. It is very difficult in mysterious cases like this to be absolutely sure. Didn't you get my parcel? I sent it off at the same time as I sent the card, and I haven't had the parcel back. I wonder where it is. It looks as though things were going on that you and I know nothing about. I shall be very angry with him if he has forgotten to give you your parcel.

Hoping you are quite well, thank you, Your loving

UNCLE HENRY.

DEAR UNCLE,--Thank you for your pretty card for my birthday. I didn't get your parcel. Its very naughty of him when its my birthday. I hop youll be very very angry with him because its my birthday and I didnt get your parcel. And now no more from your loving neice

NANCY.

The Postmaster-General.

SIR,--On Tuesday last I despatched by book-post a parcel from the South-Western District Office. It is now Friday, and the parcel has not been delivered. I should esteem it a favour if you would kindly give the Official Handicapper for the District in question instructions to allow my parcel to start forthwith. Yours faithfully,

HY. FRESHFIELD.

The Postmaster-General.

SIR,--In reply to your enquiry as to the nature of the parcel, I beg to inform you that it was oblong in shape and done up in brown paper and tied securely with string. To assist you still further in the task of identification, I may mention that it is addressed to Miss Nancy Freshfield, c/o F.E.L. Freshfield, Esq., 47, Ottalie Gardens, Westminster, S.W.

Trusting that nothing serious has occurred to disqualify my parcel, Yours faithfully, HY. FRESHFIELD.

DEAR UNCLE,--I thought it was such a long time my parsel didnt come I would write to you dear Uncle. I hop you were very angry with him. And now no more

from your loving neice NANCY.

DEAR SIR,--I am directed by the Postmaster-General to inform you that your parcel has now been traced.

The name of the addressee was correctly stated by you, but you omitted to append such further instructions for the guidance of the Post Office as to indicate the destination to which you desired it to go. I have the pleasure to add that the fuller information has been copied in from your letter, and the parcel despatched....

DEAR NANCY,--By the same post that brought me your letter I heard from our absent-minded friend, the Postmaster-General. You will be pained to learn that he is even more absent-minded than we thought he was. Although, when I handed him your parcel, I distinctly told him it was going to Westminster, the moment my back is turned he must needs forget all about it.

I feel really rather sorry for him, and I don't think we ought to be angry any more. He can't possibly forget now, because I have written the address down for him. Your loving

UNCLE HENRY.

* * * * *

[Illustration: WHAT TO DO WITH OUR FAT MEN; OR, EVERY LITTLE HELPS.]

* * * * *

A CABINET CRISIS.

It had to be faced at last. There is a demand for them occasionally, and people won't put up with that excellent one taken under the crab-apple tree any longer.

I was caught just right there. The sun was in an indulgent mood and winked at the signs of advancing age. The bald patch was out of sight, and the smile would have softened the heart of an income-tax assessor. I acquired the negative from the amateur performer, and had it vignetted, which made it better still, as there was a space between the cashmere sock and the spring trousering in the original that I did not want attention drawn to. I had a large number of prints made, and dealt them out to anybody who asked for a photograph of me. At first they aroused considerable enthusiasm, but after five or six years a look of doubt began to appear on the faces of the recipients. Hadn't I got a later one? This was very nice, but--I pointed out that I hadn't changed at all, or only a very little. At my best I was still like that; and didn't they want me at my best?

At last a person described by himself as plain-spoken, and by other people as offensively rude, said that I had never really been as good-looking as that, with all possible allowances made, and any way he wanted a photograph and not a memorial card. I took a firm stand, and said that if he wasn't satisfied with that one he could go without altogether, and he said in the most insulting way that he supposed he should be himself again in time if he took a tonic.

A few more episodes of that sort eventually drove me to it. I passed my viva-voce examination at the hands of the young lady at the desk, paid my fees, got my testamur, and was shown into the torture-chamber, where the head executioner was busy adjusting his racks and screws.

I was rather taken with the rustic seat that was standing on a white fur mat in front of a scene representing the Jungfrau, but he headed me off it. If I liked the Jungfrau as a background I could have it, but not with the seat; that was for engaged couples only. He recommended a pair of skis, or a bobsleigh; he could put a fine fall of snow into the negative. But as I had arrayed myself in a black coat, with one of those white waistcoat slips, and a flowing tie with a pearl pin, I refused this offer, and we decided we wouldn't have a background at all.

As the man who administered the laughing gas was out at lunch, I prepared to go through with it in cold blood, and seated myself in the operating chair in the most natural attitude I could assume--something like the one I had taken under the crab-tree. I thought I would show them that there wasn't so much difference after all. But it did not suit the head mechanic at all. He looked at me with his head on one side, and then took hold of mine by the chin and the hair and gave it a twist. I had never worn it at that angle in my life, and I knew it would put my collar all wrong; but I had to do what he told me. He arranged my coat so that it should look as if it had been made to fit somebody else, and disposed my arms in such a way as to give the sleeves the appearance of trouser legs with rucks in them. I felt almost more sorry for my tailor than for myself, but I shall send him one of the prints when I get them; it will be good for him.

We were now ready to tackle the expression. I had chosen one that would have been suitable for a man with a fair No Trump hand, but with one suit not fully guarded, as I didn't want to overdo it; but, judging from the inquisitor's remarks about the graveside, I am quite ready to admit that it might not have come out like that. I hastily dealt myself a hundred aces and a long suit of clubs, and he said that that was better, but I must put off the idea of the funeral altogether. It was not until I had assumed the appearance of a reach-me-down Nut with a dislocated neck, being made love to by six chorus-girls at once, that he condescended to take a look at me through the peephole. Then he ran up to me, gave my chin another hitch, pulled my neck another foot or two out of my collar, added a ruck or two to my sleeves, and said he liked the other side of my face better, after all.

So we went through it all again, and I worked at it with a will, for I wanted to see him get under his black cloth and finish the business.

It wasn't as bad as I had thought, but he was not done by any means when he had fired his first shot. He rammed more cartridges into the breach, and twisted me into three fresh contortions. He said he was sure that some of the efforts would turn out magnificently.

I don't feel quite the same confidence myself. I am anxiously awaiting the result, and trying to get rid of the crick in my neck and to unbuckle the smile in the meantime. If it doesn't turn out satisfactorily, I shall get a few lines--not too deep--put into the negative of the one taken under the crab-tree, and a little hair painted out--but not too much.

* * * * *

[Illustration: "WORK! I'M NOT AFRAID O' WORK, BUT I CAN'T GET ANY IN MY LINE."]

"WHAT IS YOUR LINE?"

"I USED TO BE A STOCKBROKER, LIDY.]"

* * * * *

"Lemnos and Samothrace are to pass to Greece, and Chios and
Wtlylene are to be neutralised."--_Daily Citizen_.

We shall remain anxious until the last-named is sterilized.

* * * * *

THE TRAGEDY OF MIDDLE AGE.

When I was a mid-Victorian nut
With a delicate taste in ties,
A highly elegant figure I cut,
At least in my own fond eyes,
And used to regard unwaxed moustaches
As one of the worst of social laches.

But now I find in my youngest son
The sternest of autocrats.
He tells me the things that must be done
And orders my collars and spats;
Prescribes mild exercise on the links
And advises me on the choice of drinks.

I've faithfully striven to imitate
My Mentor in dress and diction,
And loyally laboured to cultivate
A taste for the latest fiction;
Though I still read DICKENS upon the sly,
And even SCOTT, when nobody's by.

It's true I've managed to draw the line
At going to tango teas,
For, after all, I am fifty-nine
And a trifle stiff in the knees;
But I've had to give up billiards for "slosh,"
And pay laborious homage to "squash."

Long since my whiskers I had to shave
To please this young barbarian,
But still for a while I stealthily clave
To the use of Pommade Hungarian;
But now my tyrant has made me snip
The glory and pride of my upper lip.

"My dear old man," he recently said,
"If you go on waxing the ends,
You're bound to be cut, direct and dead,
By all of my nuttiest friends.
For it's only done, so _The Mail_ discovers,
By Labour leaders and taxi-shovers."

So the deed was done, but whenever I gaze

On my face in the glass I moan
As I think of the mid-Victorian days
When my upper lip was my own.
For now, of length and of breadth bereft,
The ghost of a tooth-brush is all that's left.

* * * * *

"MISSING NAVY PAYMASTER ARRESTED."

"Evening Standard" Poster.

So that's where it was all the time!

* * * * *

"The Under-sheriff said ... rumours against a man's
character were like a rolling stone, gathering moss as it
went."--_Western Mail_.

"As fond of the fire as a burnt child," is another of the Under
Sheriff's favourite sayings.

* * * * *

[Illustration: _Indulgent Householder_. "WHY ARE YOU SINGING CAROLS,
MY LITTLE MAN? DON'T YOU KNOW CHRISTMAS IS OVER?"

Youthful Caroller. "YES, SIR; BUT I 'AD MEASLES ALL FROO
CHRISTMAS."]

* * * * *

ONCE UPON A TIME.

GLAMOUR.

Once upon a time there was a peer who knew the frailty of unennobled
man.

Having occasion to entertain at dinner a number of useful fellows, he
instructed his butler to transfer the labels from a number of empty
bottles of champagne to an equal number of magnums of dry ginger-ale,
at ten shillings the dozen, and these were placed on the table.

At the beginning of the repast his lordship casually drew attention
to the wine which he was giving his guests, and asked for their candid
opinion of it, as he was aware that they were all good judges, who
knew a good thing when they saw it, and he would value their opinion.

And they one and all said it was an excellent champagne, and two or
three made a note of it in their pocket-books. And such was their
loyal enthusiasm that the banquet ended in a fine glow of something
exactly like hilarity.

* * * * *

AT THE PLAY.

"MARY-GIRL."

"I'm not going to give up my daily bath!" In these pregnant and moving words rang the *_cri de coeur_* which was to precipitate the tragedy of *_Mary Sheppard_*. To you the attitude of mind which provoked this cry may seem as natural as it was sanitary. But you must understand that it ran directly counter to *_Ezra Sheppard's_* ideal of the simple God-fearing life. Godliness with him came first, and cleanliness followed where it could. In his view a tub once a week was all that any sane person should need. Apart from this hebdomadal use its proper function was to hold dirty dishes and soiled clothes for the washing. And indeed this had at one time been *_Mary's_* own view (though tempered by vague aspirations towards a softer existence, as we might have guessed from the elegance of her brown shoes) before a year of the higher life had shaken her content. Let us go back.

[Illustration: Mr. MCKINNEL (*_Ezra Sheppard_*) to Miss MAY BLAYNEY (*_Mary Sheppard_*). "You've been lying again! You know how I hate it--I told you so in this very theatre when we were playing in *_Between Sunset and Dawn_*."]

Ezra Sheppard was by profession a market-gardener, and his favourite recreation was preaching in a barn. We have the picture of a frugal but happy interior, with a new-born infant (*_off_*). The trouble began with an offer made to his wife of a situation as foster-mother to the baby (also *_off_*) of a neighbouring Countess. The wages were to be high and she was to be delicately entreated; but there were hard conditions. She was not to hold communication with her husband or

child for twelve months. I am sorry to say that *_Mary_* did not flinch from these conditions quite so much as I could have hoped. *_Ezra_*, however, rejected them for her with manly scorn, until he was reminded that the high wages would speed the end of his own ambitions--namely, to replace his barn with a conventicle of brick. So he let his wife loose into Eden with the Serpent.

And now we see *_Mary_* seated in the lap of luxury, with soft gowns to wear, and peaches to eat and instant slaves at her beck. You will, of course, expect her virtue to fall an easy prey; but you will be wrong. The Earl's attitude is pleasantly parental, and the attentions of the Countess's cavalier--an author--are confined to the extraction of copy. And anyhow *_Mary's_* instincts are sound. Now and again she remembers to pity the loneliness of her husband, whose cottage light she can see from the window of her bower; and once, by a ruse, she gets him to break the conditions and visit her; but when he learns that the invitation came from her, and not, as alleged, from the Countess, his conscience will not permit him to take advantage of his chance. So you have the unusual spectacle of a true and loving wife pleading in vain for the embraces of her true and loving husband.

But if her virtue, in the technical sense, remained intact, the Serpent had overfed her with *_pommés de luxe_*. On her return home--where the restoration of her child might have helped matters, but it doesn't know who she is and refuses to part from its foster-mother--we find her lethargic, off her feed, indifferent to the claims of menial toil, and clamorous (as I have shown) for her rights of the daily bath.

In the first joy of conjugal reunion *_Ezra_* consents to tolerate the

discomfort of this change, but in the end he loses patience and hits her. She leaves for London the same afternoon.

Six black months pass over the husband's bowed head, and then, on a very windy night (the wind was well done), she makes a re-entry, and confesses that, under stress of need, she has lapsed from virtue. This is bad news for Ezra, but he is prepared to forgive a fault in which he himself has had a fair share. Only there must be a sacrifice of something, if moral justice is to be appeased. So he chooses between his wife and his chapel and does execution on the latter. He goes out into the storm and sets the thing alight. His conscience is thus purified by fire, the gale being favourable to arson.

It is a pity that so excellent an object as a brick chapel should be the evil genius of the play. Yet so it is. Built of the materials of Scandinavian drama, it is always just round the corner, heavy with doom. We never see it, but we hear more than enough about it, and in the end it becomes a bore which we are well rid of.

The theme of the perils of foster-motherhood is not new, but Mrs. MERRICK has treated it freshly and with a very decent avoidance of its strictly sexual aspects. But her methods are too sedentary. She kept on with her atmosphere long after we knew the details of the cottage interior by heart; while a whole volume of active tragedy-- Mary's six months in London--was left to our fevered imagination. And the sense of reality which she was at such pains to create was spoiled by dialogue freely carried on in the immediate vicinity of persons who were not supposed to overhear it.

The chief attraction of Mary-Girl (a silly title) was the engaging personality of Miss MAY BLAYNEY. Always a fascinating figure to watch, she showed an extraordinary sensitiveness of voice and expression. As for that honest and admirable actor, Mr. MCKINNEL, who made the perfect foil to her charms that every good husband should wish to be, he seems never to tire of playing these stern, dour, semi-brutal parts. That more genial characters are open to him his success in Great Catherine showed. Miss MARY BROUGH, as a charwoman, supplied a rare need with her richly-flavoured humour and its clipped sentences. All the rest did themselves justice. Miss HELEN FERRERS was a shade more aristocratic than the aristocrat of stage tradition; and it was not the fault of Miss DOROTHY FANE (as her daughter, Lady Folkington) that she was required to behave incredibly in the presence of her inferiors. I have not much to say for the manners of Society in its own circles; but it is probably at its best in its intercourse with humbler neighbours. Mrs. MERRICK's picture of the Countess on a visit to the Sheppards' cottage might have been designed for a poster of the Land Campaign.

There was no dissenting note, I am glad to say, in the reception of Mrs. MERRICK's charming self when she appeared after the fall of the curtain.

"A pretty authoress!" said an actress in the stalls.

"Is that your comment on the play?" I asked.

"Yes!" she said.

O.S.

* * * * *

"Her Majesty was accompanied by Princess Henry and John."--_Liverpool Echo_.

Where was Lord SAYE AND SELE?

* * * * *

[Illustration: "COME, COME, SIR! THAT'S THE HORSE WE KEEP FOR QUITE YOUNG CHILDREN! HE WANTS TO _PLAY_ WITH YOU, SIR!"]

* * * * *

THE LAST STRAW.

I sing the sofa! It had stood for years,
An invitation to benign repose,
A foe to all the fretful brood of fears,
Bidding the weary eye-lid sink and close.
Massive and deep and broad it was and bland--
In short the noblest sofa in the land.

You, too, my friend, my solid friend, I sing,
Whom on an afternoon I did behold
Eying--'twas after lunch--the cushioned thing,
And murmuring gently, "Here are realms of gold,
And I shall visit them," you said, "and be
The sofa's burden till it's time for tea."

"Let those who will go forth," you said, "and dare,
Beyond the cluster of the little shops,
To strain their limbs and take the eager air,
Seeking the heights of Hedsor and its copse.
I shall abide and watch the far-off gleams
Of fairy beacons from the world of dreams."

Then forth we fared, and you, no doubt, lay down,
An easy victim to the sofa's charms,
Forgetting hopes of fame and past renown,
Lapped in those padded and alluring arms.
"How well," you said, and veiled your heavy eyes,
"It slopes to suit me! This is Paradise."

So we adventured to the topmost hill,
And, when the sunset shot the sky with red,
Homeward returned and found you taking still
Deep draughts of peace with pillows 'neath your head.
"His sleep," said one, "has been unduly long."
Another said, "Let's bring and beat the gong."

"Gongs," said a third and gazed with looks intent
At the full sofa, "are not adequate.
There fits some dread, some heavy, punishment
For one who sleeps with such a dreadful weight.
Behold with me," he moaned, "a scene accurst.
The springs are broken and the sofa's burst!"

Too true! Too true! Beneath you on the floor
Lay blent in ruin all the obscure things
That were the sofa's strength, a scattered store
Of tacks and battens and protruded springs.
Through the rent ticking they had all been spilt,
Mute proofs and mournful of your weight and guilt.

And you? You slept as sweetly as a child,
And when you woke you recked not of your shame,
But babbled greetings, stretched yourself and smiled
From that eviscerated sofa's frame,
Which, flawless erst, was now one mighty flaw
Through the addition of yourself as straw.

R.C.L.

* * * * *

"A really acceptable present for a lady is a nice piece
of artificial hair, as, when not absolutely necessary, it
is always useful and ornamental."--_Advt. in "Aberdeen
Free Press."_

Still, it might be misunderstood.

* * * * *

"Theologians and mystics might say, 'Is that not mere
anthropomorphism?'"--_Mr. BALFOUR according to "The Daily
Mail."_

But a Welshman would say it best.

* * * * *

"An aggressive minority succeeded in showing that the
Little Navy-ites do not represent the bulk of public
opinion."--_Daily Express_.

It is, of course, always the aggressive minority which really
represents the bulk of public opinion.

* * * * *

A BYGONE.

When I see the white-haired and venerable Thompson standing behind my
equally white-haired but much less venerable father at dinner, exuding
an atmosphere of worth and uprightness and checking by his mere silent
presence the more flippant tendencies of our conversation; when I hear
him whisper into my youthful son's ear, "Sherry, Sir?" in the voice of
a tolerant teetotaler who would not force his principles upon any man
but hopes sincerely that this one will say No; and when I am informed
that he promised our bootboy a rapid and inevitable descent to a state
of infamy and destitution upon discovering no more than the fag end of
a cigarette behind his ear, then I am tempted to recall an incident of
fifteen years back, lest it be forgotten that Thompson is a man like
ourselves who has known, and even owned, a human weakness.

Dinner had begun on that eventful evening at 7.30 P.M., and it was drawing within sight of a conclusion, that is, the sweet had been eaten and the savoury was overdue, at 9.45 P.M. Four of us had trailed thus far through this critical meal: my father, a usually patient widower who was becoming more than restless; the Robinsons, never a jocund brace of guests, who were by now positively sullen, and myself who, being but a boy--of twenty odd years and having little enough to say to a woman of fifty-five and her still more antique husband, had long ago settled down to a determined silence. Meanwhile Thompson, then in his first year of service with us, tarried mysteriously heaven knows where.

The intervals of preparation before each course had been growing longer and longer and the pause before the savoury threatened to be infinite. My father commanded me to ring the bell severely. Longing to escape from the table I did so with emphasis, and my ring summoned (to our surprise, for we were not aware of her existence in the house) a slightly soiled kitchen-maid.

"Where is Thompson?" asked my father sternly.

"At the telephone, Sir," stammered the maid.

"The telephone!" cried my father. "Whatever is the matter?"

The maid started to mumble an explanation, burst into tears and fled in alarm, never again to emerge from the back regions. My father commanded me to the bell again, but as I rose Thompson entered. He was even then a stately and dignified person, and it was with a measured tread and slow that he advanced upon my father.

"Will you please serve the savoury at once?" said my father.

"I am afraid it cannot be done, Sir," said Thompson. "May I explain, Sir?"

"What is the meaning of this?" asked my father, fearing some terrible disaster below stairs, and sacrificing politeness to his guests with the hope of saving lives in the kitchen.

Thompson cleared his throat.--"For some weeks, Sir," he said, "I have been much worried with financial affairs. Like a fool I have invested all my savings in speculative shares, and the variations of the market have unduly depressed me. When I am depressed I take no food, and that depresses me even more."

You will be as surprised as we were that this was allowed to continue, but when a man of so few words as Thompson chooses to come out of his shell he is always master of the situation. "And so, Sir," he continued, "I have taken the liberty of telephoning to the mews for a cab."

He paused and bowed, as if this made it all clear, and was about to withdraw. "Kindly finish serving dinner at once, and don't be impudent," my father got out at last.

Thompson sighed. "It is absolutely out of the question, Sir," said he. "Quite, quite impossible."

"Why on earth?" cried my father.

Thompson became, if possible, more solemn and deliberate than before. "I am drunk, Sir," said he.

At this point Mrs. Robinson, whose indignation had slowly been swelling within her, rose and left the room. Robinson, as in duty bound, followed. Neither of them, to my infinite joy, has ever returned...

"Depressed by want of food, Sir," continued Thompson, by sheer duress preventing my father from following his guests and attempting to pacify them, "I have taken to spirits. I do not like the taste of spirits and they go at once to my head. They depress me further, Sir, but they intoxicate me. Yes, I am undoubtedly tipsy."

My father seized the opportunity of his pause for reflection to order him to leave the room and present himself in the morning when he was sober.

"You dismiss us without notice, Sir," he stated, referring to himself and his wife in the kitchen. "First thing in the morning we go. And so I have ordered the cab to take us."

This was a very proper fate for Thompson but came a little hard on my father. "But what am I to do?" asked he.

Thompson regarded him with a desultory smile. "The Mews desires to know, Sir," said he, "who will pay for the cab?"

I ought to be able to state that there followed with the cold light of day an apology, with passionate tears and remorse, from Thompson, or at least a severe reprimand from my father before he consented to keep him on. I regret to say that my father, next morning, postponed the interview till the evening, and from the evening till the next morning, and--that interview is still pending. If this seems weak, you have only to see Thompson to realize that no man with any sense of the incongruous could even mention the word "Drink" in his presence.

As for the cab which Thompson had ordered, though we never saw it we later heard all about it. It went to the wrong house because, as the proprietor of the mews informed us with shame and regret, the driver entrusted with the order had been very much under the influence of alcohol. Altogether it is a sordid tale, made no better by the fact that the house which the drunken driver chose to go to and insult was the Robinsons'...

* * * * *

LOVE AT THE CINEMA.

Inert I watched the Hero sacked
For lapses clearly not his own;
The midnight murder on the cliff,
The wonted ante-nuptial tiff,
The orange-blossoms, bored me stiff.
The picture-hall was simply packed,
But I was all alone.

Alone! Two little hours could span
The gloom that bound me stark and grim
(No melancholy pierced me through
Before the 7.32
Had ravished Barbara from view),
And yet I brooked it like a man
Until I noticed HIM.

He sat extravagantly near
His Heart's Delight. To my distress,
When temporary twilight fell,
He squeezed her hand (and squeezed it well!),
Possessed her waist, and in that shell,
That damask shell she calls an ear,
Breathed words of tenderness.

The blood ran riot to my head
And still I held my madness thrall,
My lips repressed the frenzied shriek,
My straining heart was stout as teak;
But, when he kissed her mantling cheek,
I broke--and two attendants led
Me wailing from the hall.

* * * * *

[Illustration: THE LOST CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

Maid (_to postman delivering long-delayed parcel_). "WHAT IS IT?"

Postman. "LABEL SAYS, 'WILD DUCKS,' BUT THEY'RE 'UMMING-BIRDS NOW'.]"

* * * * *

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

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

There is at least one thing that will surprise you about It Happened in Egypt (METHUEN), and that is that, although C.N. and A.M. WILLIAMSON are the writers, motor-cars are hardly so much as mentioned throughout. It is a tale of the Nile and the Desert, of camels and caravans, told with a quite extraordinary power of making you feel that you have visited the scenes described. But this, of course, if you have any previous experience of the WILLIAMSON method, will not surprise you at all. As for the story that strings the scenes together, though it promised well, with almost every possible element of fictional excitement--buried treasure, and spies, and abductions, and secrets--somehow the result was not wholly up to the expectation thus created. To borrow an appropriate simile, the great thrill remained something of a mirage, always in sight and never actually reached. Also I wish to record my passionate protest against stories of treasure-trove in which the treasure is not taken away in sacks and used to enrich the hunters; I am all against leaving it underground, for whatever charming and romantic reasons. No, it is not so much as a novel of adventure that might have happened pretty well anywhere that I advise you to read this book, but as a super-guide to scenes and sensations that happen in Egypt and nowhere else. From the moment when, as one of the WILLIAMSON party, you sit down to breakfast on the

terrace of Shepherd's, till you take leave of your fellow-travellers in the mountain-tomb of QUEEN CANDACE, you will enjoy the nearest possible approach to a luxurious Egyptian tour, under delightful guidance, and at an inclusive fare of six shillings.

* * * * *

Mr. SETON GORDON is a bold man. It is one thing to call a book The Charm of the Hills (CASSELL) and quite another to succeed in conveying that charm through the medium of the printed word. Perhaps, however, he was encouraged by the success that has already attended these pen-pictures of Highland scenes in serial form; certainly he knew also that he had another source of strength in a collection of the most fascinating photographs of mountain scenery and wild life, nearly a hundred of which are reproduced in the present volume. So that what Mr. GORDON the writer fails to convey about his favourite haunts (which is not much) Mr. GORDON the photographer is ready to supply. The papers, which range in subject from ptarmigan to cairngorms, are written with an engaging simplicity and directness, and show a sympathetic knowledge of wild nature such as is the reward only of long familiarity. The glorious mountain wind blows through them all, so that as you read you feel the heather brushing your knees, and see the clouds massing on the peaks of Ben-something-or-other. Perhaps Mr. GORDON is at his most interesting on the subject of the Golden Eagle. There are many striking snapshots of the king of birds in his royal home; and some stories of court life in an eyrie that are fresh and enthralling. One thing that I was specially glad to learn on so good authority is that the Golden Eagle, so far from being threatened with extinction, is actually increasing in the deer forests of the North. This is intelligence as welcome as it is nowadays unusual. The book, which is published at 10s. 6d. net, is dedicated "to one who loves the glens and corries of the hills"; and all who answer to this description should be grateful to the writer for his delightful record.

* * * * *

Goodness knows that of all London's teeming millions I am the possessor of the most easily curdled blood, but my flesh declined to creep an inch from the first page to the last of Animal Ghosts (RIDER). I think it was Mr. ELLIOTT O'DONNELL's way of telling his stories that was responsible for my indifference. He is so incorrigibly reticent. His idea of a well-told ghost story runs on these lines:--"In the year 189--, in the picturesque village of C----, hard by the manufacturing town of L----, there lived a wealthy gentleman named T---- with his cousin F---- and two friends M---- and R----." I simply refuse to take any interest in the spectres of initials, still less in the spectres of the domestic pets of initials. I am no bigot; by all means deny your ghost his prerogative of clanking chains and rattling bones; but there are certain points on which I do take a firm stand, and this matter of initials is one of them. Not one of these stories is convincing. Mr. O'DONNELL taps you on the chest and whispers hoarsely, "As I stood there my blood congealed, I could scarcely breathe. My scalp bristled;" and you, if you are like me, hide a yawn and say, "No, really?" There is a breezy carelessness, too, about his methods which kills a story. He distinctly states, for instance, that the story of the "Headless Cat of No. ----, Lower Seedley Street, Manchester," was told to him by a Mr. ROBERT DANE. In the first half of the narrative this gentleman's

brother-in-law addresses him as _Jack_, and later on his wife says to him, "Oh, _Edward_." What a man whose own Christian name is so much a matter of opinion has to say about seeing headless cats does not seem to me to be evidence.

* * * * *

There seems to be an increasing public for the volume of reflections. At all events Mr. REGINALD LUCAS, who has already two or three successes in this kind to his credit, has been encouraged to produce another, to which he has given the pleasant title of _The Measure of our Thoughts_ (HUMPHREYS). It is, of course, difficult to be critical with a book like this; either it pleases the reader or it doesn't, and that is about all that can be said. One reason for my belief that Mr. LUCAS's _Thoughts_ will please is that he has put them into the brain of a definitely conceived and very well drawn character. They are told in the form of letters by this character to his old tutor. The writer is supposed to be the rather unattractive and self-conscious eldest son of a noble house, who suffers from the presence of a father and sister who think him a fool, and a brother whose charm is a continual and painful contrast to his own lack of it. The special skill of the letters is their self-revelation, which brings out the pathos of the writer's position, while at the same time showing quite clearly the defects that explained it. Mr. LUCAS, in short, does not commit the error of making his hero merely a mute, misunderstood paragon, whom anyone with common penetration must have recognised as such. On the contrary, we sympathise with him, especially in the big tragedy of his life, while quite admitting that to any casual acquaintance he must have appeared only a dull and uninteresting egoist. This I call clever, because it shows that Mr. LUCAS has created a real thinker, rather than striven to give him any unusual profundity of thought. An agreeable book.

* * * * *

In the sixteenth chapter of the First Part of _The Rocks of Valpre_ (FISHER UNWIN) _Trevor Mordaunt_ married _Christine Wyndham_, and on the last page (which is the 511th) of the book, "she opened to him the doors of her soul, and drew him within...." Granted that _Mordaunt_, with the eyes of steel, was not exactly an oncoming man and that when he married _Christine_ he received, as wedding presents, two or three brothers-in-law who sponged hopelessly upon him, I still think that Miss ETHEL DELL has given us too detailed an account of the domestic differences between _Mordaunt_ and his wife. For my own part I became frankly tired of the pecuniary crises of the _Wyndhams_ and of their incurable inability to tell the truth. Had _Mordaunt_ got up and given these feckless brethren a sound hiding I should have been relieved, but he preferred to make them squirm by using his steely eyes. In the future I suggest to Miss DELL that she should leave these strong silent men alone. They have had their day and gone out of vogue. The best part of this book, and indeed the best work Miss DELL has yet done, is her treatment of the romantic friendship between _Christine_ and _Bertrand de Montville_. It is handled so touchingly and so surely that I resent with all the more peevishness the banality of the steel-eyed one.

* * * * *

[Illustration: ONE OF THE FEW HISTORIC MANSIONS OF ENGLAND WHERE QUEEN

ELIZABETH DID _NOT_ SLEEP.]

* * * * *

"His lordship dismissed the application, with costs, and the jury found in his favour, assessing the damages at L1,000."

We should like to be a Judge. It seems to be easy and well-paid work.

* * * * *

From the synopsis of a Singapore play--just the last scene or two:--

"Samion, after going through Nyai Dasima's fortune, maltreated her, and told her to leave his protection. He also commissioned a wicked man called Puasa to murder Nyai Dasima. Puasa murdered Dasima, and throw her body into a river. The corpse of Dasima floated and entangled in the bathing-place of William. William, seeing this, at once reported to the Police of Dasima's death. Puasa and others were arrested and imprisoned. The Judge investigated the case, and Puasa was sentenced to be hanged. Samion got mad and died. Mah Buyong also got mad."

And so home to bed.

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