Punch, or the London Charivari, Volume 156, February 12, 1919 eBook

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Page 1

CHARIVARIA.

"Officers," says a recent A.C.I., "may use their public chargers for general purposes." Army circles regard this as a body blow at the taxi-sharks.

***

"I had a thrill the other night," writes a correspondent of *The Daily Mail.* "I encountered a badger on Hampstead Heath." We hesitate to think what he would have encountered if he had had two or three thrills.

***

The United States Immigration Bill now before Congress provides that "an alien resident may be joined by his grandfather if over fifty-five years of age." A proposal to extend the privilege to great-grandfathers who have turned their sixtieth year appears to have met with no success.

***

"It is highly probable," says the chief medical officer of the Local Government Board, "that masks and goggles will be necessary to ensure freedom from infection from influenza." People who refuse to adopt this simple preventative should be compelled by law to breathe exclusively through their ears.

***

The sensational report that the new Director-General of Housing has already found a house turns out to be unfounded. It is no secret, however, that the Department is on the track of several.

***

"There is a Members' cloak-room," says a contemporary in "Hints to M.P.'s," "where an attendant will take your coat and hat." So different from those other political clubs where another member usually takes them.

***

SHAKSPEARE on Glasgow: "For this relief much tanks.".

***

The salute, says a correspondent, is being reintroduced into the German Army. Kicking an officer on the parade-ground for other than political reasons is also forbidden.

***

The Consumers' Council urge, *inter alia,* "that the Food Ministry ought to be retained so long as there is any need of food control." This view is regarded as entirely too narrow by officials of the Ministry, who feel that the public is just beginning to love them for themselves alone.

***

A sale of ninety specially-selected mules is announced to take place at Tattersall's to-morrow. In the technical language of the live-stock trade a "specially-selected" mule is one which has a clear reach of six feet at either end.

***

"The Government must say what it will do," states *The Daily Mail*. Waiting for *The Daily Mail* to say it first must not be allowed to degenerate into a mere mechanical habit.

***

For impersonating a voter a carpenter of Gloucester has just been sentenced to a month's imprisonment. Where he succeeded in obtaining the disguise from is not known.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *When taking* A *new house always employ* A *professional draught detector*.]

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* * * * *

A *love tragedy*.

He was a smart new clinical thermometer. She was a pretty nurse in an influenza ward. His figurings were clear and his quicksilver glittered. Her eyes were blue and a little curl peeped from under her cap. He fell madly in love with her; and when her dainty fingers toyed with him his little heart swelled to bursting and he registered all he could.

So when she took her morning temperatures her patients were desperately high, and when the other nurse took them in the evening they were three degrees lower; and the doctors were much perplexed.

They put the love-struck thermometer in a tumbler of warm water with two others to test him; and, freed from her influence, he recorded correctly. Learned authorities on medical research meditated pamphlets, on the new variation of the universal plague.

Then came a morning when the pretty nurse, after too many cigarettes the night before, took her own temperature. For the adoring thermometer the supreme moment had arrived. In rapturous ecstasy at the touch of her dear lips he rose to heights of exaltation that left his other efforts far behind. "Drat the thing," exclaimed the pretty nurse, putting him down nastily, "I've got it myself now," and went off to bed. He, broken-hearted, rolled off the table and died.

* * * * *

Long memories.

"I remember," said a veteran of nineteen, "when there was a hansom at the stand at the corner."

"Oh, that's nothing," said a venerable spinster of twenty-one. "I've been, to dances with a female chaperon where there was no smoking on the stairs, and some people danced a thing they called a 'tango.'"

"When I was working on the land," resumed the first speaker, "I had a day off and went to lunch with people close by. The man who sat next me was a judge and asked me what an 'old bean' meant."

"Oh, cut it out!" interposed an aged matron who had not hitherto taken any part in the conversation. "When I was born there was no *Daily Mail,* when I went to school I was taught to play the piano with my fingers, and when I married people hadn't begun to 'jazz.'"

* * * * *

A *new game of bawl*.

> “An open howling handicap will be held at Talleres, F.C.S., next Sunday.”
>
> *Standard (Buenos Ayres)*.

* * * * *

“At a meeting of the newly-formed British and Allied Waiters’, Chefs’ and Employees’ Union the president said that one of their main objects was to stop enemy aliens from spoiling their business. They must do this themselves.”—*Daily Paper*.

And some of them, it must be admitted, have been making considerable efforts in this direction.

* * * * *

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Edentulous persons.

It happened a long time ago. Higgins, Mackenzie and I, three irresponsible subalterns, had been lent to the Government of India for famine relief work. One Sunday we foregathered in the cool of the evening at a dak bungalow, near the point where our three districts met, to compare notes and to swap lies.

“How are you getting on?” I asked Higgins.

“I’m not getting on at all. I’m just stagnating. I do all my work and draw my pay, and there’s the end of it. I’m sure the regiment has forgotten all about me, and in fact no one seems to be aware of my existence.”

“Why not write to the Government of India about it?” remarked Mackenzie.

“Yes, I’m sure that’s the best thing to do,” I agreed. “The Collector in my district is always writing to the Government of India, and the Government prints all he writes and sends it round with remarks and decisions. He will get all sorts of honours and rewards out of this famine.”

“Yes. But what shall I write?” asked Higgins. “If I simply say there is a chap called Higgins who is terribly bored and wants some notice taken of him, they won’t print that sort of tosh.”

“Not that particular kind of tosh, perhaps,” agreed Mackenzie. “You’ve got to write about your work and ask for a decision on some point or other. Then they’ll remember your existence; and if you write often enough you will gradually crawl out of obscurity into the limelight. Almost anything will do to start with.”

“Well, I found an old woman to-day in one of my camps who could not eat her ration, because she had no teeth. Can you make anything out of that?” asked Higgins.

“We’ll have a shot at it anyway,” replied Mackenzie. He pulled a sheet of note-paper and a pencil out of his pocket and wrote the following draft:—“There are in the famine camps in my area some toothless old people who cannot eat the ordinary ration. What shall I do about it?”

“The gist of the letter is all right,” I said, “but the style wants polishing. Higgins’s education will be gauged by our style. Cross out ‘some toothless old people’ and write ‘certain edentulous persons.’ Put ‘masticate’ instead of ‘eat.’ Then you must not say, ’What shall I do about it?’ That sounds too helpless. You, or rather Higgins, must appear as a man of unbounded initiative and resource. You must write, ’I suggest that a special ration of soft food be issued to such persons.’ That will help the Government of India to solve a very difficult problem, and Higgins will earn its eternal gratitude.”

The amendments were passed unanimously. Higgins copied out the letter in his best handwriting and sent it off through the long and winding channels by which subalterns on famine duty communicate with the heaven-born ones who sit on the far-off hills.

We separated next day, and I forgot all about the matter until three weeks later, when, going through my official mail, the name Patrick Aloysius Higgins caught my eye. There was our letter printed in full, and below it was the epoch-making decision of the Government: “A special ration of soft food may be issued to edentulous persons in famine camps.”

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Higgins's success evidently provoked Mackenzie to emulate it. Some time later I received another printed document. After the usual official opening, with its reference numbers, *etc*., it ran as follows: "There are in the famine camps in this area certain persons who, though not edentulous, are yet unable to masticate the ordinary ration. Though they have some teeth, the teeth are all in one jaw. May such persons be considered as edentulous for the purposes of the decision referred to above? Signed, *James Douglas Mackenzie*." The Government was again pleased to record its approval.

The letter roused my jealousy. Higgins and Mackenzie, by the use of my distinguished literary style, had both got well along the road to fame, whilst I was still languishing in obscurity. Something must be done about it. I took a pen and wrote: "There are in the famine camps in this area certain persons who, though they are not edentulous and though they have some teeth in both jaws, are yet unable to masticate the ordinary ration because the teeth in the upper jaw correspond with the gaps in the lower, and *vice versa*. May such persons be considered as edentulous for the purposes of the two previous decisions?"

I sent the letter off to the Government of India. The reply came by return of post:—

"The Government of India, in response to representations, has authorised the issue of a special ration of soft food to edentulous persons in famine camps. In the interpretation of the term 'edentulous' considerable latitude may be permitted, and is indeed desirable, so that it may in practice be applied to many individuals who, according to meticulous physiological standards, should not be so classified. The determining factor in the application of the term should be the inability of the individual concerned to extract sufficient nutriment from the normal ration, owing to imperfect mastication. Such persons will invariably exhibit symptoms of mal-nutrition or cacotrophy.

"The Government is confident that the foregoing general ruling will enable junior and inexperienced officers, temporarily employed on famine duty, to classify appropriately and with facility as denticulate or edentulous all individuals afflicted with dental hiatus, mal-conformation and labefaction, without further reference to higher authority."

As I read the letter with the help of a dictionary, it dawned upon me that the Government of India had won the game beyond all doubt and peradventure.

* * * * *

To Saint Valentine.

Patron of hearts and darts and smarts
(Which, I suspect, you stole
From Cupid, when the Pagan arts—

Which only edified in parts—
  Took on an aureole),

And patron of the robins, who
  Select your day to mate
(An act, from any point of view,
Considering what March can do,
  Rash and precipitate),

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We seek no boon for any friend
(Or lover, if you like);
We only ask that you will send,
If saintly powers so far extend,
On day without its strike.

* * * * *

The drug habit—alarming development.

"The old-fashioned doctor is scandalised at the trade union movement in the profession. In extreme cases he is said to be taking his own medicines."—*Provincial Paper*.

* * * * *

Extract from *The London Customs Bill of Entry*, January 25th:—

"Import, s. @ Rotterdam, of Holland, 175 bdls baskets containing 700 strikes."

We always suspected they were of foreign origin; and here we have "manifest" proof.

* * * * *

From a report of Col. F.B. MILDMAY'S speech:—

"Just as an accomplished horseman exercised ideal control over the strongest horse with the lightest hand, so Mr. Lowther had shown such tactful skill in handling them that those who had sat under him had bus-consciously been disposed to accept his guidance."

Provincial Paper.

A praiseworthy effort of the printer to keep up the metaphor.

* * * * * [Illustration: THE VICTIM.]

* * * * *

THE PATRIOT PIG.

Last Spring I was discussing food with our local doctor. Last Spring it was quite a favourite topic.

"Now," I said, "we can manage to scratch along somehow. But next year..."

The Doctor, a hearty man, gave me a smashing blow on the shoulder. "I have it!" he trumpeted. "We'll start a Patriot Pig Club."

Before he left I found myself an important pillar of the scheme. Pillars, you know, are the parts of an edifice that bear the weight. Their function is to be sat upon by the arches. In this case the arches were Jones the doctor and Perkins the butcher.

The Committee began sitting. I put five pounds into the preliminary pool and promised them all my pig-swill. I know I did, because the Doctor came straight from the meeting to my house to tell me I had, and to collect the cheque.

The pigs arrived. I myself and a number of other enthusiasts turned out to welcome them. The Doctor, I remember, made a happy little speech, and we all laughed a lot. The Committee were very pleased with themselves. They *were* dear little chaps—the pigs, I mean—very small, of course, but that gave me the opening for what was undoubtedly the most successful sally of the afternoon. Someone said they weighed five pounds apiece. "One pound per pound," I remarked.

A week later the Doctor called for my second instalment. "Pig going strong," he chattered gaily while I wrote out the cheque; "best of a good litter—bust its pink ribbon yesterday; twice the weight it was when it came."

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It was on the tip of my tongue to repeat my witticism, which was still true, but I refrained.

I paid the first dozen five-pound instalments without comment. Up till then I had been fully occupied in studying how FOCH was getting on with the other sort of pig over there. But now I began to think.

I was thinking heavily when I put on my hat, but when I reached the premises of the Patriot Pigs I was thinking things that I prefer not to talk about. To begin with, they were housing the poor little beasts in a place you wouldn't dream of inflicting on the poorest labourer. And the overcrowding! And the dirt! And the pigs themselves! They were positively uncanny. There was something almost human about them. They were all heads and no bodies. It was just as though the other half of the wits of the half-witted boy who looked after them had distributed itself among the whole herd. I could have wept when I thought how my purse and my swill-tub had been emptied to keep such puny monstrosities in the land of the living.

I had my pig taken out and weighed. He turned the scale at forty-eight pounds.

A week later I went and weighed him again; he had shrunk to forty.

I am a man of action. In a flash my mind was made up. I put him on a string and led him home.

My wife seemed rather surprised when we entered the drawing-room, but I hastened to explain.

"I paid five pounds," I said, "for a five-pound pig. Since then I 've paid fifty-five pounds more, and I have been led to expect, that at the very least the pig was keeping pace. But it isn't. The sterling is increasing by leaps and bounds; the avoirdupois is not even stationary. That's not counting several tons of swill that ought to be inside him but aren't. It can't go on." I paused and added darkly, "That pig shall not return."

"But surely you're not going to have him live with *us*, Henry?"

I controlled myself.

"No, Maria," I said, "I am not. At a late hour to-night we will take him out into the country and lose him."

"Oh, Henry," she began, "supposing—"

I interrupted gently but firmly.

"My mind," said I, "like BERT COOTE'S, is made up. He is my pig and I may do what I like with him. There is no law against one losing one's pig. Besides, he is ruining me."

At 10 P.M. we set out *en famille*. It was July. I remember the date rather particularly because it was just then that they ceased to ration bacon altogether. At 10.30 the pig was safely lost. At 11 the front-door closed upon us. At 11.1 little Willy Perkins, the butcher's son, arrived with the pig and claimed something for restoring lost property.

A man with a position to keep up simply can't afford to be caught in the act of feloniously making away with pigs in war-time; besides DORA was still alive and she might have something to say; so I had to pretend how pleased I was, and I gave the scamp half-a-crown.

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Now I know Perkins and Son well enough to realise that if the animal had been worth more than half-a-crown they would have allowed me to lose my pig free of charge. So I made another resolution. It was pretty drastic, but in a crisis like this severe measures are often the best. In short, it was murder I contemplated—nothing less.

I went to work carefully. I let four months slip by to allay any possible suspicion. I paid my weekly cheque without being asked; without a murmur I parted daily with my swill; in fact I comported myself as though the unholy plot maturing in my breast was nonexistent.

At length the night arrived. I took down my long magazine Lee Enfield and my cartridge (I am not a Volunteer for nothing) and crept to the Patriot Pig H.Q.

The once-crowded sty lay dark and still. I entered and switched on my torch: it shone on the loathsome features that I knew so well. He was all alone, so there could be no mistake. His head was as large as ever, but his body seemed scarcely visible. I weighed him; he registered fourteen pounds.:

I will not harrow you, my reader, with details. Suffice it to say my nerve was sure, my eye true and my hand steady. I killed that pig with a single shot and went home to bed.

The Doctor arrived next morning while I was shaving. He was white with rage. He said:

“What the deuce do you mean by killing my pig?”

“*Your* pig ?” I smiled. “No, *my* Pig!”

“Stuff and nonsense!” he spluttered. “*Your* pig died four months ago—caught cold last July through being out so late at night and died next day.”

That roused me. “Do you mean to tell me,” I asked coldly, “that I’ve been paying five pounds a week for the last four months for a dead pig?”

“Very kind of you, I’m sure,” replied the Doctor, “but no one asked you to, you know.”

Adding together all my expenses—the weekly subscription for my pig; a similar sum paid to the Doctor for his; the value of my swill; the fine imposed (by DORA) for improper use of firearms; ditto (by the Magistrate) for shooting game without a licence; alleged damage to the P.P. premises and the remaining wits of their custodian; and finally, the bill from Mr. Perkins for a pound of pork purchased in July, and the account from Dr. Jones for professional attendance subsequent to consumption of same—-adding all these together I find that from first to last I disbursed L385 5s. 5-1/2d. on the patriot.

With pork at two shillings a pound my outlay should have produced a pig that weighed 1 ton 14-1/2 cwt. Truly that would have been a very Hindenburg of a pig. It was almost worth trying.

* * * * *

OUR EUPHEMISTS.

> “General Servant wanted, by middle of February; no small family."_—Oxford Times_.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Proprietor (to assistant recently released from the Army).* “WHY, WHATEVER MADE YOU OFFER TO SEND THE GOODS HOME FOR HER? ANY FOOL COULD TELL YOU’VE BEEN OUT OF CIVILISATION DURING THE WAR.”]

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* * * * *

TO THE SPEAKER ON HIS RE-ELECTION.

Good Mr. SPEAKER, in this troublous time,
When it is hard to string a cheerful rhyme,
Your genial influence unshaken bides
Amid the flux of shifting sands and tides;
And, re-electing you by acclamation,
The Parliament has acted for the nation,
Which, while acknowledging the Members' *nous*,
Congratulates not you, Sir, but the House.

'Tis fourteen years since you were called to bear
The heavy burdens of your "perilous Chair"—
What years, what burdens! Yet your steadfast mien
Has never failed to dominate the scene.
Others have found the post a giant's robe
Or lacked the needful patience of a Job;
But you, by dint of fearless common sense,
Have won and held all Parties' confidence;
Firm as the rock and as the crystal clear,
When need arises righteously austere,
Ready, not eager, your advice to lend,
And not afraid in season to unbend.

Thus, tested by a strain that very few,
If any, of your predecessors knew,
You come at last, among the lesser fry,
To loom so largely in the public eye,
That, we regard you, greatest of your clan,
More as an institution than a man.

* * * * *

THE REST-CURE.

"Will young officer requiring rest help farmer catch rabbits for a month?"—*Church Family Newspaper*.

THE RETURN.

It was at tea last Sunday that we met for the first time for three-and-a-half years. He was sadly altered. To the casual observer he may still appear his own attractive self; the change in him is deeper.

He isn't what he was, but none the less it is wonderfully delightful to have him among us again. A girl at the next table noticed him and spoke smilingly to her companion. But I —I sat and looked at him and never said a word.

Before the War I was fond of him, but I doubt if I could ever have realised how much I should miss him; and nothing has brought home to me so surely the astounding fact that at last it is over as his return.

Sitting opposite to him here brought back the jolly memories of other teas in that distant pre-war life of ours—memories of bright faces, gentle clatter of cups, charm of soft clothes, strange forgotten sense of comforts, and one particular smile; and, throwing off from me the gathering gloom of the war-weary, I dug my fork joyously into his brown bosom and raised the chocolate *eclair* to my lips.

* * * * *

> "By placing a lemon in the oven for a few minutes nearly the entire pulp turns to juice. When next you want orange-juice try this."—*Glasgow Citizen*.

But why not use an orange?

* * * * *

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“As a woman married to an Army officer for nineteen years I do not consider that I could possibly, on less than our present income, provide my children and husband with the necessary education and comfort.”—*Letter in Daily Paper*.

Some husbands take a lot of educating.

* * * * *

[Illustration: *Assistant Paymaster*, “HOW LONG WERE YOU IN YOUR LAST JOB?” *"Hostilities Only" Man*. “THREE MONTHS, SIR.” *A.P.* “WHAT WERE YOU DOING?” *H.O.M.* “THREE MONTHS.”]

* * * * *

THE MAN WHO STAYED AT HOME

(A SOLILOQUY AFTER A DAY’S WORK AT THE MINISTRY OF FOOD).

[Sir JOHN FIELD BEALE, formerly First Secretary of the Ministry of Food, has been in consultation with the Supreme Council for Supply and Relief in Paris. Sir WILLIAM BEVERIDGE has just returned from a mission of inquiry into the food situation in Austria.]

Let others speed to far Sequanian shores
To end the War that was to end all wars,
Where peace-pursuing Discord loud debates
And all hotels are packed with Delegates;
Where pundits in the Parliament of Man
Discuss or Georgian or Wilsonian Plan;
Where fickle Fate dispenses weal or woe
Respectively assigned to friend and foe;
Where Cornucopia meekly comes to heel
Under instructions from Sir JOHN FIELD BEALE.

Let others in Icarian feats engage
With the ingenious aid of HANDLEY PAGE;
Haste to discover all that may be known
About the situation in Cologne;
Or, like Sir WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, to appease
The clamourings of esurient Viennese—
In none of these things Fortune waits for me,
Nor Knighthood cheap, nor unctuous O.B.E.
Ah, not for me to note with facile pen
Successive stages of the L. of N.

With calorimetric and statistic arts
Administer the prog of Foreign Parts,
Or, eager not to do the thing by halves,
To reconcile the Czechs and Jugo-Slavs—
I will, resigning honours, kudos, pelf,
Administer hot cocoa to myself;
Then to repose; for it is truly said
The best location of mankind is BED.

* * * * *

EMANCIPATION.

"Wanted by respectable woman, a couple of Gentleman's Trousers (left off)."—*Irish Paper*.

* * * * *

"A Caproni machine flew a distance of 325 miles in four fours."—*Scottish Paper.*

A correspondent writes to ask if this is double the time usually described as "two two's."

* * * * *

"At 11 o'clock the muster roll at many shops and offices was still incomplete. Indeed assistants were reported 'missing' at many establishments an hour later. There were girls—Government and others—who stayed at home."—*Evening Paper*.

Little pigs who wouldn't go to market.

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* * * * *

“At Bolton on Saturday the United Textile Factory Workers’ Association decided to put forward a demand for a 4-hours week, with the same rate of pay as for 55-1/2 hours.”—-*Provincial Paper*.

We trust this is a misprint and not an “intelligent anticipation” of what we are coming to.

* * * * *

“The teachers of —— are not satisfied with the scale of salary fixed by the Education Committee, and yesterday morning a deputation waited upon the Special Salaries Committee to state their case. The Education Committee decided to increase the salary of the borough Director of Education from L450 to L500.”

Provincial Paper.

And if that don’t satisfy ’em—Bolshevism, my dear Sir, Bolshevism!

* * * * *

[Illustration: *The General (showing his nieces round Club*). “THERE’S BEEN A LOT OF ARM-CHAIR FIGHTING DONE IN THIS ROOM.” *School-Girl.* “HOW TOPPING! THAT BEATS PILLOW-FIGHTING. BUT ISN’T IT RATHER DANGEROUS?”]

* * * * *

OLD HEN-PECK.

Captain Edwin Peck, E.N.,
Had the habits of a hen.
Edwin’s nose was like a bone,
And his teeth were not his own;
Neither, I regret to tell,
Did they fit him very well.
It was not his fault, no doubt,
That they tried to tumble out,
And in fact he seldom dropped them,
For he almost always copped them
Just as they became unstuck
By ejaculating, “Cluck.”

Yoked to this elusive plate,
Did our Edwin curse his fate?
No, he was content to live,
For he was inquisitive.

If he saw a speck of grit
He must needs examine it,
Not as any other might,
Standing at his proper height,
But with body slightly slanted
And his head obliquely canted,
While with small unblinking eye
He surveyed it wickedly.

One fine Sunday Captain Peek
Stalked along the lower deck,
Pausing now and then to stare,
Poking here and scratching there,

Like a pullet in her prime
Clucking softly all the time.
Presently the Captain spied
One small scuttle open wide.
“Cluck!” he said, and likewise. “Tut!

“Every scuttle should be shut;”
And with a malignant snort
Poked his head out through the port.

That was easy, but, alack!
When he tried to get it back
There was heard an angry cluck—
Captain Edwin Peck was stuck!

Strange at first as it appears,
He had overlooked his ears;
But it’s not so queer, perhaps,
When you ask, “Have hens got flaps?”

Silence! You’d have heard a pin
Fall upon the deck within,
Till the Bloke was heard to shout,
“Stick it, Sir! We’ll get you out!”

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Everybody had a go—
Chief, Commander, P.M.O.,
Padre, Carpenter and Stoker,
Using engine-grease and poker,
Hawser, marlin-spike and soap,
Till at length they gave up hope,
For, in spite of all they did,
Edwin fitted like a lid.

Suddenly upon the scene
Came a German submarine.
Then a flash, a roar, a groan;
“We are sinking like a stone!”
Cried the Bloke with angry frown;
“Can we leave poor Peck to drown?
Really, this is *too* absurd;”
Then a miracle occurred.

As the cold green waters roll
Round poor Edwin in his hole,
Are the watchers wrong in thinking
That the Captain’s neck is shrinking?
As she took her final list on,
Sighing, “uedor men aeriston!”
Long-enduring Captain Peck
Gracefully withdrew his neck,
Poked it out again and spoke
To the sorrow-stricken Bloke:
“Nothing more that we can do?
No? Then sound the ‘Sove kee poo!’”

Need I tell how Captain Peck
Was the last to leave the wreck,
How the good ship perished, or
How he brought them safe to shore,
Landing, after all his men,
Clucking softly like a hen?

* * * * *

Up-to date quotation for foot-sore Londoners: “Et Tube, brute!”

* * * * *

THE MUD LARKS.

One reads a lot nowadays about the “slavery” of various habits (drug, drink, bigamy, *etc*.) and loud is the outcry. But there is yet another bondage, just as binding and far more widespread, which nobody ever seems to mention, namely, the drill habit. Drill the young soldier up in the way he should go and for ever after his body will spring to the word of command, whether his soul approves or no.

Once upon a time two men turned up in a railway construction camp deep in the Rhodesian bush. They were a silent, furtive, friendless pair, dwelling apart, and nobody could discover whence they came, whither they were bound, or, in fact, anything about them. It was generally conceded that they had some horrid secret to bury (camp optimists voted for “murder”) and left it at that. Time went by and so did the rail-head, leaving the two mysteries behind as permanent-way gangers. Solitude seemed to suit them. Years passed along and still the two remained in that abomination of desolation guarding their stretch of track and their horrid secret. Then one day ROBERTS rolled by on his way to Victoria Falls, and, his train halting to tank-up, the old Field-Marshal stepped ashore and called to the two gangers, who happened to be close at hand tinkering at their trolley. The guard, who was taking a bottle of Bass with the steward on the platform of the diner, suddenly jabbed his friend in the brisket.

“Look, for the love of Mike!” he giggled.

The two gangers were standing talking to “BOBS,” shoulder to shoulder, heels together, feet spread at an angle of forty-five degrees, knees braced, thumbs behind the seams of their trousers, backs hollowed, heads erect—in short in the correct position of attention as decreed in the Book of Infantry Training. The old man finished speaking and the two saluted smartly and broke away. The steward looked at his friend and nodded, “Old soldiers.”

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“Old deserters, you mean,” retorted the guard. “*Now* we know.”

The drill habit had been too strong for those two fugitives even after ten years.

The other night our Babe, as Orderly Officer, sat up alone in the Mess, consuming other people’s cigarettes and whisky until midnight, then, being knocked up by the Orderly Sergeant, gave the worthy fellow a tot to restore circulation, pulled on his gum-boots and sallied forth on the rounds. By 12.45 he had assured himself that the line guards were functioning in the prescribed “brisk and soldierly manner,” and that the horses were all properly tucked up in bed, and so turned for home.

He paused at the cross-roads to hear the end of the Sergeant’s reminiscences of happy days when he, the Sergeant, (then full-private, full in more senses than one) had held the responsible position of beer-taster to a regiment at Jaipurbad ("an ideal drinkin’ climate, Sir"), then, dismissing the old connoisseur, continued on his way bedward.

It must have been one o’clock by then, a black wind-noisy night. As the Babe turned into the home straight, he saw a light flash for an instant in a big cart-shed opposite the Mess—just a flicker as of a match scratched and instantly extinguished.

This struck him as curious; it was no weather or hour for decent folk to be abroad. The Babe then remembered that the mess-cart was in the shed, and it occurred to him that somebody might be monkeying with the harness. He thereupon marched straight for the shed (treading quite noiselessly in his gum-boots) and, pulling out his electric torch, flashed it, not on some cringing Picard peasant, as he had expected, but on three unshorn, unwashed, villainous, whopping big Bosch infantrymen! It would be difficult to say who was the most staggered for the moment, the Huns blinking in the sudden glare of the torch or the Babe well aware that he was up against a trio of escaped and probably quite desperate prisoners of war. “Victory,” says M. HILAIRE BELLOC (or was it NAPOLEON? I am always getting them mixed) “is to him who can bring the greatest force to bear on a given position.” That is as may be, but, after personal participation in one or two of the major disputes in the late lamented war, I put it this way. Two opposing factions bump, utter chaos reigns supreme and the side which recovers first wins. In this case the Babe was the first to recover. A year before the War he found himself in a seminary in the suburbs of Berlin, learning to cough his vowels, roll his r’s and utter German phonetically. Potsdam was near at hand, and many a pleasant hour did the Babe spend on a bench outside the old Stadt Palast, watching young recruits of the Prussian Guard having their souls painfully extracted from them by *Feldwebels* of great muzzle velocity and booting force. The sight of those three Hun uniforms standing before him must have pricked a memory, which in turn set some sub-conscious

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mechanism to work, for suddenly the Babe heard a voice bawling orders in German. It was fully five seconds, he swears, before he recognised it as his own. "Attention!" snarled the voice in proper Potsdammer style. "Quick march! Right wheel!" The three great hooligans trembled all over, clicked their heels and stepped off the mark as punctiliously as though on the Tempelhofer Feld at the Spring Parade.

In two minutes the Babe, snarling like a Zoo tiger at dinner-time, had manoeuvred them across a hundred yards of bog and filed them, goose-stepping, into a Nissen Hut full of sleeping Atkinses. The Atkinses rolled, gaping, off their beds at the Babe's first shout, and the game was up.

Ten minutes later the Bosch gentlemen were *en route* for the main guard under strong, if *deshabille*, escort.

It turned out that one of them spoke English quite badly and on reaching the Guard Room he opened out.

They had escaped from a prison camp at Abbeville, he said, and were heading for Holland, travelling by night.

Passing the farm at about midnight they espied our hooded mess-cart and, feeling tired and footsore, had conceived the bright idea of stealing a horse to fit the cart and driving to Holland in style and comfort. Just as they were getting things shipshape along came the Babe and clapped the lid on—"*verfluchte kleine Teufel*!"

When the Main Guard lads inquired how it was that after all their trouble they had allowed one lone unarmed infant to corral the three of them, instead of quietly biffing him on the head, as they quite easily might have done, the Huns were very confused. At one moment they were in the shed, they said, fascinated like moths in the glare of the torch, and the next thing they knew they were in the midst of a horde of underclothed Tommies—trapped. As to what had happened in the interval, or how they had been spirited from one place to the other, they were not in the least clear—couldn't explain it at all.

The Drill Habit again.

PATLANDER.

* * * * *

ARMISTICE-TIME ECONOMY.

“The Consecrating Officers were elected Honorary Members of the Lodge and were presented with a souvenir in the form of a solid silver cigar ash-tray, made from the lead used in the production of shrapnel bullets.”

Freemason’s Chronicle.

* * * * *

“Several persons dropped to the pavement, several dripping with blood. One man had his head partially opened, and he lay writing on the ground.”—*Provincial Paper*.

If the poor fellow was, as we presume, a reporter, we cannot too much applaud his devotion to duty.

* * * * *

[Illustration: NEWS FROM THE SHIRES.

Customer. “WELL, JARVIS, WHAT’S THE LATEST?”

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Farrier. “I HEAR AS HOW THAT ADMIRAL BEATTY IS LIKELY TO BECOME A PUBLIC MAN.”

Customer. “HOW DO YOU MEAN?”

Farrier. “WHY, I HEAR SOME TALK OF HIM BEING MASTER OF THE QUORN.”]

* * * * *

THE BET.

The Colonel was, as usual, laying down the law.

“Economy!” he said with a snort; “economy’s dead. No one cares about saving money any more. No one cares about the value of money. We are asked excessive prices and we pay them. We eat, drink and are merry—or approximately so—and be hanged to you! With the exception of the halfpenny stamp we put on circulars I can think of nothing that has not gone up or, in other words, lost buying power. I defy anyone to name a thing that hasn’t.”

He glowered fiercely and challengingly around.

“I repeat,” he said, “that the purchasing power of money is not what it was in any respect. The other day, for instance, I bought a new hat. I used to pay a guinea; it is now thirty-two and six. And a worse hat probably. What do you think I was charged for soling and heeling shoes? One pound ten! And worse leather. That’s partly what I mean by the loss of purchasing power; where the price may in some extraordinary way remain the same, the quality of the article paid for is inferior. There’s a steady deterioration. Can anyone name a case where I am wrong?”

His red eyes again defied us.

“Yes, I can,” said a meek voice.

The Colonel subjected the speaker to a long and ferocious scrutiny.

“You can’?” he said at last.

“Yes,” replied the meek voice. “Will you bet on it?”

“Bet on it? Most certainly I will,” said the Colonel, who has done fairly well in wagers in his time. “How much?”

“What you like,” replied the meek voice.

“Very well,” said the Colonel, “make it a tenner.”

“With pleasure,” was the rejoinder. “The bet is that I can’t name a single thing which has not either increased in price or decreased in quality since the War?”

“Yes,” said the Colonel.

We all sat up and waited, as though for the maroons in the old, old days.

“Well,” said the meek voice, “the cost of pulling a communication cord is I still five pounds, and you can have just as good a pull as ever.”

* * * * *

ON THE SAFE SIDE.

“Why, what’s this, Ben, they’re telling me?—
Eighty and going to get a wife!
Gaffer, I thought you’d surely be
A snug old bachelor for life.”

“Well, Sur, ye see I allus meant
To take ole Martha some fine day;
But ‘wed in haste and then repent’
I heer’d as many folks did say.

“But now, thinks I, there’s sure no fear
Through too much haste o’ goin’ wrong;

“An’, anyways, at eighty year
I can’t repent fur wery long.”

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THE GREATEST PATRIOT OF ALL: A public servant who did not strike during the War —Big Ben.

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[Illustration: EFFECT ON BALLROOM IF, OWING TO THE STRIKE MANIA, THE MUSICIANS WERE SUDDENLY TO “DOWN INSTRUMENTS.”]

* * * * *

THE APPOINTMENT.

They tell me there is work for most,
    However tired they be,
That there are Offices engrossed
In finding me a well-paid post
    Of suitable degree;
That there are businesses that itch
To make the young lieutenant rich,
Yet I have not discovered which
    Is itching after me.

And this is strange; for I could shine
    In any place you please,
Although, if there is any line
Which is most obviously mine,
    It is the man of ease—
The man whose intellect is such
He never has to labour much,
But does the literary touch
    In comfort at “The Leas.”

Or I could be a splendid Squire
    And watch the harvest grow,
Could urge the reaper to perspire
And put the cattle in the byre
    (If that is where they go),
And every morning do the rounds
Of my immense ancestral grounds
With six or seven faithful hounds,
    And say, “It looks like snow.”

And there are moments when I feel
    The diplomatic call;
No trickery would long conceal
The state of things at Bubazeel
    When I was at the Ball,
To spy across the “brilliant floors”
On daughters of Ambassadors,
And “obviate” impending wars
    By dancing with them all.

A bishopric I can’t afford,
    Though I could give it tone,
And often when the people snored
I’ve felt they would not be so bored
    By sermons of my own;
But if the Secretaries cry
For secretaries—here am I;
Or nobly would I occupy
    The taxi-driver’s throne.

For I should beam across the street
    When people waved at me,
And say, “My petrol’s incomplete,
I haven’t had my bit of meat
    Nor yet my bit of tea,
But just because I like your face
I’ll take you out to any place
However distant from my base—
    And ask no extra fee.”

And yet I doubt could England bear
    To see my rest destroyed?
A soul so delicate and fair
Should simply saunter through the air
    And cultivate the void;
One would not readily degrade
One’s loveliness in *any* trade,
Only, of course, one must be paid
    For being unemployed.

A. P. H.

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SMITH MINOR PROFFERS A REQUEST.

(An authentic document.)

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Will you please send me a fountain pen because nearly every boy but me has a fountain pen and I should so like to have one because I often want to write something outside and I carn't and then when I come in I don't no what it is and I miss something out of my letter then when I have writen my letter I remember what it was and genulry I remember it in lesons and when I begin to write my next letter I have for goten it and it goes on like that till at last I remember it and then some times I don't rember it all and that is why I want a fontin pen.

* * * * *

[Illustration: "DRY" HUMOUR.

PRESIDENT WILSON. "OUR FUTURE LIES UPON THE WATER!"

BRITANNIA. "ALLUDING, I PRESUME, TO YOUR PROHIBITION MOVEMENT?"]

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[Illustration: ESSENCE OF PARLIAMENT.

MR. LOWTHER TAKES THE CHAIR FOR "POSITIVELY THE LAST TIME." HIS ENTHUSIASTIC PROPOSER AND SECONDER (COLONEL MILDMAY AND SIR HENRY
DALZIEL), BITTEN BY THE POPULAR CRAZE, PUT A BIT OF "JAZZ" INTO THE PROCEEDINGS.]

Tuesday, February 4th.—There is much virtue in horsehair. Few who attended the informal opening of the Third Parliament of KING GEORGE THE FIFTH would have guessed that under the full-bottomed wig and gorgeous black-and-gold robes of the dignified figure on the Woolsack lay the volatile personality of "F. E." He played his new part nobly. A trifling error in the setting of his three-cornered hat, whose rakish cock was for the moment reminiscent of the "Galloper," was quickly corrected on the advice of one of the Lords Commissioners at his side; and by the time the faithful Commons were admitted to hear the Commission read there was nothing to differentiate Lord BIRKENHEAD (as he had now become) from any previous occupant of his exalted position. Nor was there any lack of dignity in his delivery of the instructions to the Commons to "proceed to the choice of some proper person to be your Speaker"—-though I fancy that when he bade them "repair to the place where you are to sit" he must have been tempted to add the words, "provided that you can find room there."

For the Lower House, when we returned there, was a seething mass of humanity. How many of the 707 duly elected Members were present I know not; but there were enough to swamp the floor and surge over into the Galleries. Seeing that the "Tubes" were closed and taxis few and far between, some of them were obliged to resort to unusual

methods of locomotion. Sir HENRY NORMAN surprised the police in Palace Yard by arriving on a motor-scooter, and there is an unconfirmed rumour that the Editor of *John Bull* made his *rentree* to the House in a flying-boat drawn by four *canards sauvages.* Anyhow, there they were, so thick and slab that Mr. DE VALERA, who was reported to have escaped from durance vile with the intention of presenting himself at the House and creating a disturbance, would have found it impossible to gain entry unless preceded by a charge of gelignite. As it was, none of the Sinn Feiners was present, nor indeed any representative of Irish Nationalism at all, and the proceedings were as orderly as a Quaker funeral.

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Not that they were by any means dull. For both Colonel MILDMAY, who proposed, and Sir HENRY DALZIEL, who seconded, the re-election of Mr. LOWTHER as Speaker, spiced their compliments with humour. The former was confident that even if Woman appeared on the floor of the House the SPEAKER-ELECT'S "consummate tact" would be equal to coping with her artfullest endeavours to get round the rules of procedure; while the latter attributed his priceless gift of humour to "Scottish ancestry on the mother's side."

Horsehair again! I hardly recognised in the quietly-dressed Member who rose from the Bench behind Ministers to acknowledge these encomiums the man whose awe-inspiring appearance (when clothed in wig and gown) has quelled so many storms in the last four Parliaments. Let us hope that the fifth, of which, being the outcome of his famous Conference, he may in a sense be described as the "onlie begetter," will not disgrace its parentage.

Already there are elements of difficulty. Through the non-return of Mr. ASQUITH the Opposition has lost its head literally and is in some danger of losing it figuratively, for the remnant of the un-"couponed" Liberals and the Labour Party are at present acutely divided on the question upon whom the lost Leader's mantle should fall. Today Sir DONALD MACLEAN, as senior Privy Councillor, took the *pas* and was able from personal experience to give his conception of the ideal Speaker, who "must not only have good vision but be sometimes quite blind; not only have acute hearing but occasionally be almost stone-deaf." Fortunately the SPEAKER-ELECT can assume these physical defects at will; for, despite its quiet opening, I doubt if the new Parliament when it gets to work will prove precisely a Lowther Arcadia.

Wednesday, February 5th.—To the Lords again, where the SPEAKER-ELECT, attired in Court dress and accompanied by the SERGEANT-AT-ARMS dandling the Mace as if it ware a refractory infant, presented himself at the Bar to hear from the LORD CHANCELLOR the pleasing intelligence that HIS MAJESTY was convinced of his "ample sufficiency" to execute his arduous duties, and readily approved his election. Thereupon Sir COLIN KEPPEL swung the Mace on to his shoulder and escorted the SPEAKER, now confirmed in his rank, back to the Commons.

There was an unusual rush of Members to take the oath. This was not entirely due to the new Members, naturally desirous of completing their initiatory rites, but was shared by many of the older hands, for the good and sufficient reason that, until a Member is certified as having been duly sworn, he cannot recover his one hundred and fifty pounds deposit from the Returning Officer. In their zeal to be in a position to reimburse themselves Members crowded in such numbers to the tables that there was some danger that they would be overturned. As one of our Latinists remarked, "It looks as if we should have *novae res* outside and *novae tabulae* inside."

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Thursday, February 6th.—The process, once immortalized by a Lords' reporter in the sentence, "A few Bishops looked in, swore, and went away again," went on in both Houses; but in the Commons in a more orderly fashion than yesterday. For the SPEAKER, ever ready, as he said on his election, "to carry out the old rules in a modern spirit," directed the waiting Members to form up in line. One of the Coalitionists evinced a little surprise. He had always understood that when coupons were issued queues were superfluous.

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[Illustration: *Donald (who a short time before had put the bottle in the cupboard "for another day" breaking long silence).* "SAXPENCE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS, SANDY."

Sandy. "WEEL, I'M THENKIN' IT'S JEST TWA MEENITS SEN THE CLOCK STRUCK TWELVE—AN' IT'LL BE ANITHER DAY."

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"Wanted a Certificated (Resilient) Lady Teacher for Std. V."—*Times of India*.

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TENDENCIES

(*Being some extracts from the daily Press of, say, 1925).*

.... The bi-monthly strike of Clyde workers took place yesterday. The proceedings were quite orderly. The matter in dispute this time is a very simple affair. The men, who are now working on a full half-hour a week basis at one hundred and sixty-eight hours' pay, with three snap meal-times of ten minutes each per day, are not pressing for any alteration in pay or hours, but demand the dismissal of Mr. John Smith, the managing director of one of the large shipbuilding yards, who rudely refused to fetch a pint of beer for one of the rivetters. The Government department dealing with strike questions is full up for three months yet, but hopes are entertained that, unless a critical by-election should intervene, it will be possible to deal with the matter at the expiration of that period.

.... Much interest was aroused last evening by the production of a new musical show, both the book and music of which have been written by natives of this country. A strong protest has been lodged by the United States Embassy.

.... A passenger on one of the Tube railways alleges that he entered a train at Oxford Circus Station last evening. No confirmation is as yet forthcoming, and the rumour must be treated with reserve.

.... The Peace Conference held a sitting yesterday and definitely decided that the ex-Kaiser should be tried one of these days. It is confidently stated in the inner circles of Paris that peace will inevitably be concluded within the next ten or twelve years.

.... Dancing still holds its own as the principal amusement of the bulk of the population. The latest dance, the Guzz-Jinx, which is danced on the hands with the right foot placed in the mouth of one's partner, is stated to be very graceful indeed. The correct music is provided by a band performing entirely on hair-combs and tea-trays.

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.... A reduction is promised in the price of tobacco shortly. An ounce recently changed hands at a well-known Piccadilly shop at two hundred and seven pounds, but the new season's prices are not expected to be much above one hundred and fifty pounds.

A man was charged at Bow Street yesterday with endeavouring to ride in a motor-bus on Tuesday, the 12th of the month, when his permit was only for Thursday, the 15th of each month. He was severely cautioned and ordered to get a new calendar.

* * * * *

[Illustration: BEFORE THE COMBAT.

Excited Duellist. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING?"

Nervous Opponent. "I'M PUTTING MAGIC DROPS ON MY SWORD, WHICH WILL MAKE IT IRRESISTIBLE."

Excited Duellist. "BUT THAT'S NOT FAIR TO ME."

Nervous Opponent (relieved). "ALL RIGHT, YOU CAN HAVE SOME AND WE'LL CALL IT A DRAW."]

* * * * *

A VALENTINE.

Dear Lydia, long before your time,
When I was half the 'teen you own to,
Don Valentine was in his prime,
The world not yet the thing it's grown to.
The postman then with double knocks
This morning many a heart was thrilling,
And brought a shining cardboard box
With round red hearts in paper frilling.

A simpler world, and well content
With what seems small by modern measure;
And winters came and roses went,
Yet Time dulls pain as well as pleasure.
Though, with this fashion out of date,
His hand to-day weighs almost lightly
If this my war-time chocolate
Makes two dark eyes to shine more brightly.

* * * * *

HINTS FOR THE GARDEN.

To those who are about to re-establish their herbaceous borders it will come as a welcome surprise that restrictions as to the sale of the following foodstuffs by nurserymen have now been withdrawn:—

Stucky's *Germania* (Lamb's Ear).

Scolopendrium (Hart's Tongue).

No coupons will be required for these in future.

Fatsia Horrida.—This is no longer grown by nurserymen, but can be obtained at any butcher's, large quantities having recently arrived from Greece. Smith minor, possibly a prejudiced witness, says he gets it at school; that it is beastly and only another name for Cod Liver Oil.

Sambucus (the Elder).—A correspondent inquires if anything is known of the younger branch of this family. On being appealed to the Secretary of the Linnaean Society sent the following somewhat enigmatic telegram: "Recommend CLEMENCEAU non-Papa, who may know something of Uncle Sam."

Hydrangea.—This hardy shrub is so called as it was originally raised by the Ranger of Hyde Park. The American variety "radiata" succeeds well indoors if grown on hot-water pipes.

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Pirus.—There are several varieties of this species. The best known, however, comes from Cornwall and was raised by the late Sir W.S. GILBERT, who introduced the Savoy cabbage. It is called the *Pirus of Penzance*.

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DANCING DEMOBILISED.

[It is said that demobilised officers, anxious to dance, are finding it almost impossible to buy dress-shirts and evening pumps.]

Now that I've been demobilised
I'm going again to dances—
I do not care with whom or where,
I'm taking any chances.
And evening dress, I've been advised,
Will never become transitional;
Yet once or twice I've been surprised
To find my khaki pals disguised
In new dress suits and old trench boots,
Which scarcely seems traditional.

I met my Colonel at a hop
Jazzing in his goloshes,
With a dress-tie pert on a cricket-shirt
That had shrunk in various washes;
And my Major was doing the Donkey-Drop
Between a couple of rippers—
Yet his pink-and-white pyjama-top
If anything seemed a shade *de trop*,
And his faultless coat hardly echoed the note
Of his worsted bedroom slippers.

But the world long since went off its chump,
And the cry of the man from France is,
"I simply refuse to let shirts and shoes
Prevent me from going to dances.
I'll take the shine out of collar and pump,
And their wearers *will* look silly
When I once begin the Giraffe-Galump,
The Chicken-Run and the Jaguar-Jump,
The Wombat-Walk and the Buffalo-Bump,
With a chamois vest on my manly chest,

And football-boots and the smartest of suits
They can cut in Piccadilly."

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THE GRAND TRUNK LINE.

"The following are some alternative routes which could be used by people going home this evening from the City or West End:—

"Clapham Common.—By Elephant, trams and 'buses."—*Evening News*.

LOCAL COLOUR.

I ran upstairs after lunch to-day to see old Harris. He has the flat over mine, you know. In addition to this Harris is an author. Sometimes he even gets money for it.

"Doin' a bit of work to-day, Harris?" I remarked casually.

"I'm doing a little flying story," he informed me with dignity.

"Oh, yes," I agreed carelessly, then woke up and stared hard.

"Flying?" I repeated. "But what the—I mean, what do you know about flying, anyway?"

Brutality is the only thing with Harris. He was very hurt. He gasped and glared at me in a most annoyed manner.

"I know a pretty good lot," he announced with some asperity. "I've talked to dozens of pilots about it and I've read books on flying—and the newspapers—"

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“And don’t forget you once passed Hendon in the train too, old son,” I soothed him. “I’d no idea you were so well up in it. Sorry I spoke. Let’s see it; may I?”

Harris picked up a couple of sheets of paper from the desk and, coughing imposingly, proceeded to read out his masterpiece:—

“Lionel Marchant came slowly out of the hangar, drawing on his long fur gloves and studying his maps with an intent and keen face.

“His machine, a single-seater scout of the latest type, was just being wheeled out and now stood glistening in the bright autumn sunshine, which danced on the shining brasswork and threw deep shadows on the grass beneath.

“The airman swung lightly into his seat; a final word or two with his commanding officer and he flung over the levers and gave a sharp turn to the starting handle.

“The powerful engine in front of him woke into life deafeningly and, waving away the mechanics holding the wings, he pressed the clutch pedal and moved slowly forward.

“His face is very grim and determined—he throws across another lever and the low hum of the motor changes into a deep-throated roar. Gathering speed, he goes faster and faster—now he is in the air—now a little speck in the sky, heading for the enemy’s lines —”

“Oh, no, please,” I broke in feebly. “I can’t stand any more just now. You’re not seriously thinking of having this published, are you?”

As in a dream I took the manuscript from his fingers and gazed blankly at it whilst his indignant flow of speech passed harmlessly over my head.

“But, Harris,” I said at length, with infinite compassion in my voice, “Harris, I love you as a brother, but this really is awful—why—well, listen here”—

“’As the second German machine came down on them in a steep dive Lionel gave a hasty glance behind him, where the huge engine raced madly, and shouted excitedly to his observer.

“’The latter, swinging the machine gun round sharply, took rapid aim and pressed the trigger—’”

I stopped.

“Well?” demanded the author icily.

“No, it’s too frightful,” I bleated. “Harris, this *might* conceivably be read by a real pilot. Heaven forbid, of course! And he’d simply hate this scout ’bus with the engine ahead to change into a ‘pusher’ two-seater in six paragraphs.”

Harris was routed, absolutely demoralised. “They told me to put in lots of flying talk,” he murmured abjectly, “and tons of local colour to make it lifelike.”

“Yes,” I said grimly, “but this colour’s too local for words.”

“Of course, if you think you could do it better yourself,” Harris observed with heavy sarcasm, “well, then—”

“Certainly,” I agreed heartily. “I don’t mind showing *you*, Harris, seeing you’re a pal of mine. Just pass the ink and let your uncle get to work.”

Behold my effort!—

“‘Orderly, what about tea?’

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“‘Very nearly ready, Sir.’

“‘Right. Then I think a small piece of toast is indicated;’ and he proceeded to hack the loaf to pieces with great vigour.

“‘Hun over somewhere, sounds like,’ said a sleepy voice as the throb of an engine was heard overhead.

“‘Oh, I can’t help his troubles,’ observed the toast-maker airily. ’He’s got no right to come at tea-time. In about half-an-hour or so I might think about—’

“Here the telephone bell rang.

“‘Now that’s a splendid joke,’ said his unfeeling friend as he laid down the receiver. ’You’ve got to go up after that chap. They’re getting your ‘bus out now, so—’

“‘What!’ came in disgusted tones from the fireside. ’Don’t be so dam funny. What do you mean?’

“’Not ragging, really, Bill. The C.O. said he wanted you to have a shot at that fellow. Run like a hare. You may catch him up over Berlin somewhere. I’ll eat your toast for you.’

“‘Oh, will you?’ grunted the other. ’What awful rot it is! Oh, the devil—where’s my hat?’ and out he plunged.

“Two minutes later he was struggling into a heavy leather coat and, feeling thoroughly ill-used, climbed into his machine.

“The propeller was swung, emitting one hollow cough.

“‘Switch off. All right, contact.’

“At the third attempt the engine remembered its manners and started up with a jerk. A few moments to get her running smoothly, a rapid test to see that she was ‘giving her revs.’ and the chocks, were waved away from the wheels.

“Within twenty yards he was off the ground and, throttle wide open, climbing towards the little white dot thousands of feet above.

“And all the time he was grumbling.

“’What awful rot it is! I’ve about as much chance of reaching the blighter as ... Running my engine to bits as it is ... May be able to cut him off when he’s dropped his eggs.’

“Which is precisely what happened. The last gift had been thankfully received in a ploughed field beneath and the Hun was turning for home when the scout struggled to his level.

“The watchers on the ground saw the small machine press determinedly towards the bigger and a faint crackle of gun-fire broke out.

“It was answered by all the guns on board the enemy craft and the single-seater wavered undecidedly.

“Then he got his adversary fairly in his ring sight again and’ risking everything, fired burst after burst.

“All at once the big machine heeled over and dived—a flash and a sudden sheet of flame from the engine and down dropped the raider, to dash to pieces in the French fields three miles below.

“Ten minutes later the British machine slithered on to the ground and switched off in front of the sheds.

“‘By Jove, Bill,’ said his friend, rushing up excitedly, ’that was the best show—’

“‘Not so much of it,’ interposed the ‘hero,’ scrambling out of his seat. ’What about my tea? Did you look after my toast for me? No, might have known you wouldn’t.’”

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WHAT OUR POETS HAVE TO PUT UP WITH.

> “They who faced the terrors of the deep, Who guarded our snores-while we were asleep.”
>
> *Scottish Paper*.

* * * * *

> “Though his career was entirely that of a public servant, he had personality and that self-evident efficiency which mark a man out for promotion.”—*Times*.

That “though” is rather cynical.

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[Illustration: “I SAY, TAXI, I’VE ONLY GOT ENOUGH CHANGE TO PAY THE EXACT FARE. D’YOU MIND TAKING A CHEQUE FOR THE TIP?”]

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RECIPROCITY.

> [Discussing the unruliness of modern children, a correspondent in the Press suggests that parents might exchange offspring for educational purposes.]

Hector, one thought alone forbade
  Your stout progenitor to squirm
Through all the months the Huns essayed
  To pink his epiderm—
The thought that you, through what he’d done,
Might find a better world, my son.

Now must you do your bit for me,
  For, guided by the sage’s lore,
I mean to barter progeny
  With Brown, the man next door,
And educate in place of you
Bertram, his brazen-lunged Yahoo.

Too long, too long have I been banned
From giving what he's been denied,
The checkings of a chiding hand,
Impartially applied,
But now he's going to get it, Hec
(Though not exactly in the neck).

Exile from your ancestral hut
At first may fill your soul with pain;
If so, this filial thought should cut
Your tears off at the main:
The hours he spends across my knee
Will mean a better world for me.

* * * * *

IT HAPPENED IN IRELAND.

"Mr. —— held that purchased meat would be better than that supplied by contractors, who were not saints. He knew of one case where cattle were actually killed after they died."—*Irish Times*.

"The following has been issued by the Sinn Fein Executive:—

> "At the weekly meeting of the Executive it was unanimously decided to appeal to the subscribers to the Mansion House Anti-Subscription Fund."—*Irish Times*.

* * * * *

> "This enabled him [Mr. Bottomley] to provide a sum sufficient to yap the other shareholders 12. in the pound."—*Evening Paper*.

We always thought him a bit of a dog.

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THE BLANKET ASTRAY.

Now that most of us are on the point of escaping into civil life, the relentless department to whom the W.O. entrusted the stewardship of Army blankets is calling us to strict account as to our dealings with these articles.

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Between us and freedom rise the accusing phantoms of blankets we signed for and failed to return, blankets we misused as carpets, curtains and table-cloths. The bright dawn of the new era is overcast by their threatening shadow.

The A.A.L.R.B.G.S.—Acting-Assistant Local Recorder of Blankets General Service, a very important Hat indeed—some time last winter paid us a visit and went away without complaint. We had specialised in cherishing Blankets G.S. For fear of loss or damage none had been issued for use, and the enthusiasm of all ranks was so warm that the men were glad to sleep without them, if only they might go and see for themselves the full tally of blankets folded correctly to a hair's-breadth and piled irreproachably and unapproachably in the stores.

Then, three days ago, arrived a chit asking us to explain a curt quotation from the report of the A.A.L.R.B.G.S., to the effect that

"*There was a blanket on the table in the store*."

By a civilian this might be interpreted as a word of praise for our care of the table or for the comfortable *tout ensemble* of the Quartermaster-Sergeant's treasure-house; but we know better. We read it with the sensations of a householder who, after the call of a Scotland Yard official, should be invited to explain, in an otherwise satisfactory account of his visit, the sentence—

"*There was a corpse in the boot cupboard*."

It suggested criticism, suspicion, disapproval. In his dilemma the O.C. replied as follows:—

"Owing to the fact that, in view of the paper scarcity, the keeping of Individual History Sheets for the Blankets under my command was discontinued early in the War, I have found it difficult to collect evidence. I beg, however, to submit the likeliest explanations that offer.

"(1) Possibly the blanket was placed on the table, folded and compressed beneath the weight of the various utensils, literature and stationery necessary to the functioning of a B.Q.M.S., in order that the correct regimental wrinkles, as laid down in the various handbooks, might be made and maintained; the blanket to be used as a model at lectures to young soldiers on the care of equipment.

"(2) The distance between the Main Blanket Dump and the table under suspicion is only four feet. It is in the experience of all familiar with conditions in the Field that blankets with long service frequently develop extreme activity. I beg to suggest that the blanket

in question may have absented itself without leave from the main dump and proceeded as far as the table by its own locomotive power.

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“(3) About the date of the inspection the name of an N.C.O. was submitted with a recommendation for the O.B.E., but was withdrawn on compassionate grounds. I cannot trust my memory, but possibly the justification of this recommendation was the N.C.O.’s zealous care of the property of H.M. THE KING, in that he sacrificed his own blanket for the welfare of the table.” (On paper, of course, our blankets are issued in the normal way.) “The weather at the time was inclement, either (*a*) wet and dirty or (*b*) extremely cold. The N.C.O. was determined that this table should be protected from the deleterious effects of (*a*) moisture likely to result from the vicinity of the Q.M.S., damp from out-door duties or (*b*) very low temperature, which is known to injure such articles of furniture.

“(4) The blanket may have been known to be likely to try to escape from custody, and have been placed conspicuously on the table so as to be directly under the observation of the Q.M.S.

“(5) The table may have intended illegally to absent itself without leave, and have concealed itself beneath the accused blanket in the hope of eluding the vigilance of the sentries, disguised as a civilian table, *i.e*. covered with a table-cloth. This theory is unlikely, the table bearing an excellent character and never having been known to attempt desertion or be in any way guilty of conduct contrary to good order and military discipline.

“(6) The Storeman—now demobilised and dispersed—may have committed the irregularity suggested, with the idea of increasing the amenity of the stores during the inspection, as a humble compliment to the A.A.L.R.B.G.S.

“(7) No. 55,442, Procter, Mary, a member of the Q.M.A.A.C., may be correct in her statement that the article described as a ‘blanket’ was not a blanket, but a rug, travelling. She says she is ’in a position to know this,’ as the article is her own property, and supports the claim by demonstrating the presence of her initials embroidered across one corner.

“I await your reply.” And so we all do.

* * * * *

VICTRIX.

Here’s a lady come to town
  Puts us all to shame;
Walking in with noiseless feet,
Very light and very fleet,
  Over-night she came.
Not a beauty in the land,

Though she knew no peer
Both for comeliness and grace,
But must take a second place—
The snow is here.

Never monarch wore, I swear,
Such a radiant dress;
All the whitenesses we prize
Suddenly before our eyes
Turn to dinginess.
Gone are all the shining joys
That we held so dear;
Linens, marbles, gleaming plumes
We must hide in shadowed glooms—
The snow is here.

Veil your brows, you pretty maids,
With your falling curls;
Should you venture forth to-day
Tuck your milky throats away,
Cover up your pearls.
Naught shall match your loveliness
Later in the year
(Who so foolish as to dare
Say the lily is more fair?)
But—the snow is here.

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R. F.

* * * * *

A MASTER OF GROTESQUE.

The Leicester Galleries for laughter just now! For the walls of the inner room are hung with drawings by Mr. H.M. BATEMAN, not a few of which—such as “The Leave Wangler,” and “The Man who Clung to the Railings,” and “The Infectious Hornpipe”—have already rejoiced the readers of *Punch*.

Mr. BATEMAN’S appeal is double, for, having enjoyed his broad or subtle farce and his keen satirical observations, one may turn to the admiration of his technique, or *vice versa**. He did not invent the idea of the humorous sequence—the accumulative pictorial comedy; CARAN D’ACHE had come before, and before CARAN D’ACHE was WILHELM BUSCH, the German; but he has made it his own to-day. Some of his series are irresistible. As a delineator of types, accurate beneath the caricature, he is deadly; particularly, perhaps, when he turns his attention to the Senior Service. But his Brigadiers and his Clubmen are also always within an ace of being identifiable.

For anyone in the dumps Mr. Punch prescribes a speedy visit to the Leicester Galleries.

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OUR PLUTOCRATIC CLERGY.

“Curate wanted. L22. 2 churches. E.P.”

Church Times.

[Illustration: *Mabel (to newly-married sister).* “YOU DON’T MIND ME STILL CALLING YOU ‘SYBIL,’ DO YOU?”]

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OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

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

MR. JOHN GALSWORTHY is a most deceptive writer. He lures a reader on by a display of gentleness and smoothness and moderation, and then turns on him and makes it plain that he is really a most provocative fellow and is engaged in matching his mind against yours. He tries to commit you to some such statement as this: “The allegiance of the workman in time of peace is not rendered to the State, but to himself and his own class.” Or this: “I think editors, journalists, old gentlemen and women will

be brutalised [by the War] in larger numbers than our soldiers." Or this: "This is at once a spiritual link with America and yet one of the great barriers to friendship between the two peoples. We are not sure whether we are better men than Americans." Or this: "My mind is open, and when one says that, one generally means that it is shut." Disconcerting, very, and all to be found in *Another Sheaf* (HEINEMANN). Mr. GALSWORTHY'S chief object in his little book is to arouse us to the disgrace and destruction of our State and race if we continue to allow ourselves to be fed, not by our own resources, but by alien corn and meat, which may so easily become hostile corn and meat. Incidentally Mr. GALSWORTHY finds that we are in the mass far too ugly. For instance, how few of us have chiselled nostrils! We ought not to eat so much pure white flour.

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On the second page of *The Secret City* (MACMILLAN) Mr. HUGH WALPOLE (or, to be meticulously correct, *Durward*, into whose mouth the story is put) says that “there is no Russian alive for whom this book can have any kind of value except as a happy example of the mistakes that the Englishman can make about the Russian.” Well, after finishing the book, which is in some ways a sequel to *The Dark Forest*, I felt so very disinclined to believe this statement that I consulted a Russian, who is very much alive, and received the opinion that, if Mr. WALPOLE has not succeeded in drawing the real average Russian, he has given us a type whose faults and virtues sound the keynote of the situation as it is to-day. Such an opinion is worth a thousand times more than any judgment of mine, and I am glad of the opportunity to record it. From a literary point of view it seems to me that Mr. WALPOLE, in allowing *Durward* to tell the tale, has created innumerable difficulties for himself—difficulties which to a great extent have been cleverly overcome, but which nevertheless make the story wobble dangerously and once or twice threaten it with devastation. To me, however, the interest never really flagged, for granted that one has a sympathy with Russia one feels acutely what Mr. WALPOLE is aiming at and how wonderfully he succeeds. It is not difficult to find faults: to complain, for instance, that a strong man like *Semyonov* would not have taken such elaborate measures to get himself killed; but these points are trivial in a book which is not to be read so much for its story as for its idea. And the idea is great.

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Rollo Johnson was incautious enough to be born the natural son of a peer. This fact caused just sufficient complications to keep MARY L. PENDERED’S latest story, *The Silent Battlefield* (CHAPMAN AND HALL), from any threat of stagnation while she was developing the theme that really intrigued her. This was the struggle between increasing wealth and early-acquired Socialism as it arose in the mind of a hero working his way up from poverty to millionairedom, a seat in the House and the opportunity of hobnobbing with lords, suffragettes and other notables. When I say that the two sides of the Socialist case are presented with rather uncommon fairness you may think that is only because my own particular creed is upheld; but really and truly I was frowning quite as much as purring while the silent battle proceeded, and the end is neutral enough to bring despair to all true believers. Lest you should suppose the book all made up of election addresses I hasten to add that, in the quiet and thoughtful way one expects of the author, the story is a good one, the pictures of a small country town are true to life, and the characters without exception real creatures of flesh and blood. Remembering the puppets that so often have been made to represent their country in a political novel, this is saying more than a little, and if it is true that, among the ladies of the cast, one still finds those the most attractive who have no pronounced opinions to speak or vote about, no doubt this is just old prejudice, and, anyway, the book is one that can be heartily commended.

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The scene of *In Happy Valley* (HODDER AND STOUGHTON) is laid spiritually, if not strictly geographically, in that part of the continent of America which everybody who has gone to a cinema, hoping against hope, knows so well. I mean the country where people have “shooting irons” and use them on the slightest provocation to insist that other people shall carry their hands at an absurd and wearisome elevation, and all the men wear fringy trousers, and all the women shawls, save the heroine, who has to be suitably arrayed for the performance of athletic feats. I admit that I didn’t feel quite at home *In Happy Valley*, because I missed the sheriff and his posse, and nobody held up the stage-coach; still the young doctor and the school teacher and the ladies at the mission did their best for me, and I found it a great help to know the language, an attainment of which I am justifiably a little vain, for not everyone could translate at sight to “thud” the road or “shoot up” a Christmas party. Mr. JOHN FOX, Junr., has not placed his largest strawberries—and some of them are quite nice ones—at the top of the basket. His first story did not attract me as much as others further on, such as, for instance, that excellently humorous one, “The Angel from Viper,” though here and in other places a lady called *St. Hilda*, obviously not she of Whitby, confused me a little. I fancy that we were supposed to have made her acquaintance in some previous book. But my real quarrel with Mr. Fox is that he has only given walking-on parts to the actors who do best when such tales are told upon the screen—I mean the horses.

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When it is granted that books on flying by fliers have at present a peculiar fascination, the fact still remains that what I will call The Library of Aviation has usually been remarkably fortunate in its contributors. *Cavalry of the Air* (SIMPKIN, MARSHALL) is the last flying work which it has been my good fortune to read, and the only conceivable reason for finding fault with it is that “FLIGHT COMMANDER” occasionally becomes a little facetious. But when that small complaint is made I have nothing left except praise. The author was first of all an Observer—or, as he calls it, a “Shock Absorber”—in France, and he describes his life so that we groundlings may understand and sympathise with every phase of it. Especially I like the way in which he pays tribute to the infantry. In the second part of his book he tells us of his training as a pilot; and here he gives information which deserves to be most thoroughly studied. The illustrations by Mr. GEOFFREY WATSON add to the charm of this attractive volume. Of another contribution to the literature of the air which lies before me I cannot speak so well. Lieut.-Colonel CURTIES has an inventive mind, and in *Blake of the R.F.C.* (SKEFFINGTON) he uses it unsparingly.

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But although I am ready to believe almost anything in a book of this kind, I am bound to confess that I found myself bewildered by this breathless romance. Indeed the pace is so hot at the outset that even the author seems to have lost control of it. If, however, you are craving for excitement you will find it here. The scene is laid in Cairo, and we all know that funny things happen in that city. Not the least funny thing that happened to the characters in this story was the careless ease with which they drank whisky-and-soda. But this—let me warn you—happened nearly two years ago.

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UNIQUE EXPLOIT OF A LADY-VOTER.

> "I felt a very proud woman when I walked into the ballot-box, for the first time, and cast my vote. And it took me 4-1/2 hours to get there and back."—*Local Paper*.

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[Illustration: TRUE POLITENESS. WARMING THE HAND BEFORE GREETING———A POOR RELATION ON A COLD DAY.]