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THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'



—Brockbank

THE
PICK OF 'PUNCH'

An Annual Selection



1953

Chatto and Windus

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY
Chatto and Windus

LONDON

*

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TORONTO

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No Record for Baxter

"TIMEKEEPING is not as easy as it looks," said Baxter as we went out on to the field. "But you will soon get used to it."

"Until you spoke those words of encouragement," said Cox, "I was as nervous as a wee birdie who thinks he will never learn to fly."

"I'm not trying to be superior," said Baxter. "I've been timekeeping for over ten years, and I'm quite sure I'm a better timekeeper now than I was in the beginning."

"I suppose," said Cox, "that in the beginning you used to gaze at the hand on the watch going round and round instead of looking at the runners."

"It's quite a thrill," said Baxter, "when you clock a record. I can remember breaking the 440, the mile, the 120-yards hurdles, and the half-mile relay. I shouldn't wonder if we didn't break the mile again to-day."

"I don't think we are experienced enough to break records," said Cox.

The first race was the 100 yards. Baxter returned 10.4 seconds. Cox and I returned 10.3 seconds.

Baxter shook his head.

"Well, we shall have to take your time," he said, "as there's two of you in agreement, but you both seem to be making the same mistake. You probably got a faster time because you started your watches too late. Remember now—go by the flash of the pistol and not by the report. Light travels faster than sound."

"I suppose," said Cox, "that's why we know what you are going to say before you say it."

In the next race Baxter returned 23.1 seconds. Cox and I returned 22.9 seconds.

Baxter shook his head again.

"You see," he said, "you're both too fast again."

"Isn't it just possible," said Cox, "that you are too slow?"

Baxter smiled indulgently.

"Everybody makes mistakes," he said, "but I doubt whether I could have made the same mistake twice. As a matter of fact I was listening for your clicks at the beginning of the race, and for a moment I thought your watches were never going to start. Try holding your mouth open—that minimizes the shock to the nervous system caused by the loud report and enables you to get off the mark more quickly."

"I must admit," said Cox, "that it would be difficult for the starter to catch you with your mouth shut."

The next race, the 440, revealed a complete reversal of form. I had 50.1 seconds, Cox had 50 seconds, and Baxter 49.9 seconds.

Baxter scrutinized the watches carefully. He was obviously playing for time.

"Your mouth," said Cox—"it wasn't open wide enough. Try to let your lower jaw rest on your chest next time. With a bit of luck you may dislocate it."

"H'm," said Baxter. "Of course, errors can creep in at the finish as well as the start. Beginners often become over-excited and press the button just before the runner reaches the tape."

"If we had done that," said Cox, "our times would have been faster than yours, not slower."

"Eh?" said Baxter. "Oh yes. No, I meant that one can get so interested in the finish of a race that one presses the button after the tape has been broken."

"The weakness of most of the great philosophers," said Cox, "is that they have a preconceived idea of where they are going even before they know how they are going to get there."

"Well," said Baxter, "I hope we agree better in the mile. Spadlow has a great chance of breaking the record."

"Personally, I would put Baxter's chances much higher," said Cox.

The mile was run at a tremendous pace. Spadlow won by about fifteen yards.

"4 minutes 25.6 seconds," I said.

"4 minutes 25.7 seconds," said Cox. "That's about 2 seconds inside the record."

Baxter was gazing at his watch with his mouth open, but he said nothing.

"Just heaven," said Cox, "he's dislocated his jaw, after all."



"You chaps must be mad," said Baxter at last. "He broke the record easily—4 minutes 8·1 seconds. Why, it's in world class!"

Cox took the watch from Baxter's hand. He pressed the button twice.

"It's stopped," he said. "You forgot to wind it up."

F. MAYNE

Wonderful Time

IT was late when I got home after the party. On the kitchen table, next to a glass of milk, was a note from my mother saying: "Here is a glass of milk. If you would rather not have it cold, have it hot. Heat it in a saucepan. Don't drink it if you don't want it. Have you had a good time? I won't wake you in the morning. Night, night. xxx."

Next day my mother said, "Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Yes," I said.

"Did they like your dress?"

"Yes, I think so," I said.

"Didn't they *say* so? What did they say?"

"They didn't say anything."

"Oh," my mother said.

"Who was there?" she asked.

"I don't think there was anyone you know," I said.

"Well, who were they, then?" my mother asked.

"Bob," I said, "and Joyce, and Betty, and Frank, and Mr. and Mrs. Green, and——"

"Who's Bob?" my mother asked.

"He works at the Bank," I said.

"Yes, but who is he?"

"What do you mean?" I asked. "He's just somebody."

"Well, then," my mother said, "what is his surname?"

"I don't know," I said.

"*You don't know?* What do you mean, you don't know?"

"Well, I just don't know."

"Wasn't he introduced to you?"

"Well," I said, "sort of."

"Sort of?"

"Yes," I said.

My mother was silent for a moment, then she said, "Who is Joyce?"

"I don't know what she does," I said.

"I don't want to know what she does," my mother said. "I would just like to know who she is."

"But she isn't anybody," I said.

My mother was silent again for a while.

"What about Betty?" she asked.

"What about her?" I asked.

"Well," my mother said, "where does she live?"

"I don't know," I said.

"What is her surname?"

"I don't know," I said.

"What about her father?"

"What about him?" I asked.

"Well," my mother said, "who is he?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Who is Frank?" my mother asked.

"I don't know anything about him," I said.

"Who are Mr. and Mrs. Green?" my mother asked.

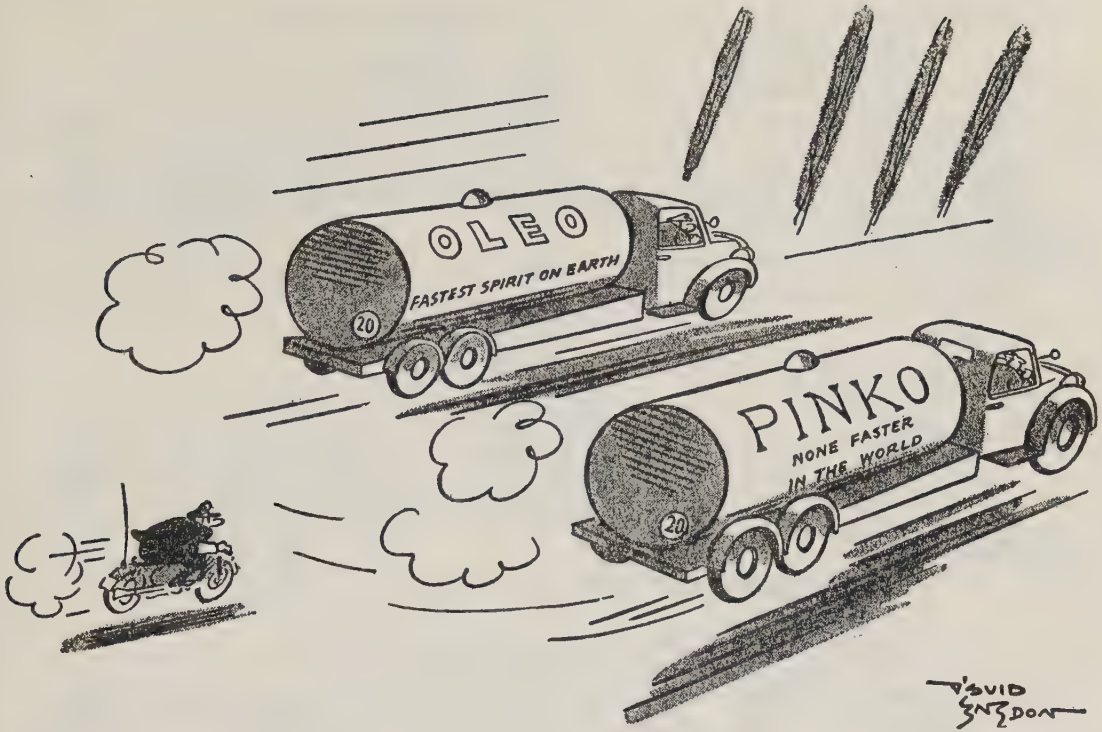
"I don't know," I said.

"Oh well," my mother said. Then: "You had a good time, did you?"

"Oh yes," I said. "Wonderful."

MARJORIE RIDDELL





From a Cricket Writer's Notebook

MAKE this season memorable for prose-beauty. Encourage musical analogies ("At the Oval a concert, a symphony, a percussion solo . . . Brahms? Tchaikovsky? Shostakovich? . . ."). Cultivate antitheses. Quote Virginia Woolf. Avoid statistics.

Humour, humanity essential. (*Mem.* Rhodes joke—"Get 'em in singles"—once *only* this season. Also ball in beard.)

Themes for season: decline and fall; no fast bowler since Kortright; Ranji; Trumper; Pooley (E.). Reserve phrase *laudator temporis acti* for mid-July at earliest.

Use colons sparingly for increased effect. No footnotes this year. Italics at sub-editor's discretion.

Now in order to call Charles Fry a sage.

* * * * *

Useful phrases:

"It was dark, satanic batsmanship/bowling/fielding/wicket-keeping/captaincy."

(*Mem.* Best used with a Mills. Is there one playing now?)

"He poured forth from the cornucopia of his glorious art."

". . . like the bat in the adage." (*Mem.* No need to quote adage.)

"Those who go down to the knee in slips."

"A bowling analysis should not, *per se*, be subjected to the counter-analysis of the psychologist."

"The sheer hulk of Tom Bowling." (*Mem.* Goddard only playing occasionally. Dollery?)

"He drove more furiously than any Jehu."

"My summer's babble of green fields is ended." (*Mem.* Not until after Scarborough.)

* * * * *

Remember to report play.

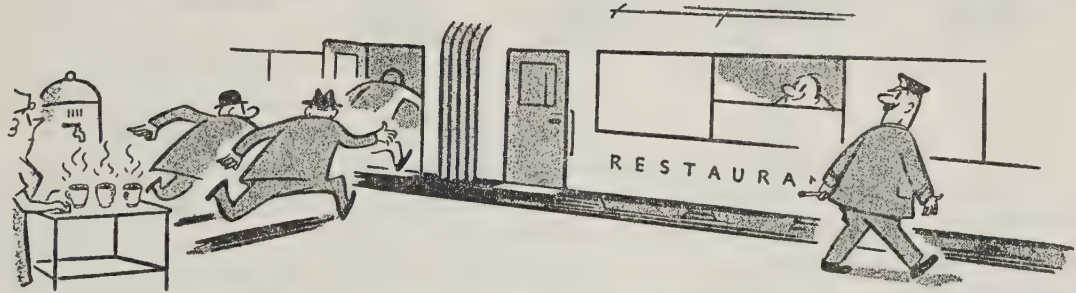
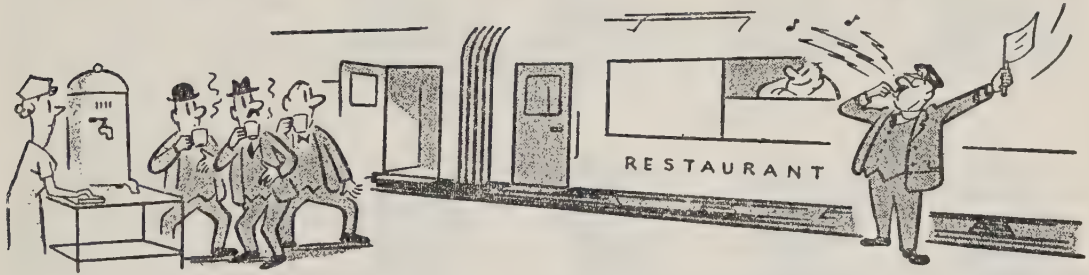
ERIC WALMSLEY

Bradshaw and that Other

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TIME-TABLES,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO FOOTNOTES

HOW does it come about that the authors of Bradshaw, at once the most dignified and the most poetic work in the whole Arabic notation, should be equally concerned with an International Air Guide, a precocious, transient book, flighty in every sense of the word? How can "Abbot's Langley, see King's Langley" be reconciled with "Turku, see Abo," or "Trichinopoly, see Tiruchirappalli"? Bradshaw, for all its scholarship (and it might well claim precedence over the *Authors' and Printers' Dictionary* as the leading authority on footnotes) has always been reluctant to make too much of ¶ and has never used it except for a simple and straightforward purpose. How, then, can the compiler who has been trained to write "¶ via Thirsk" and "¶ by motor" lend himself, at his time of life, to the overwritten "¶ No local traffic. Passengers booked to or from a place in Brazil may not stopover (*sic*) at any other Brazilian airport. Passengers booked to a destination beyond Brazil may stopover only once in Brazil"? What does it all mean? Admittedly the form is Bradshavian, but the content is almost science fiction.

The answer is that the journalist must write for his market. Nothing is beneath his dignity; he cannot afford shame. It would be technically possible for *The Times* to publish a Sunday paper full of Daring Memoirs or for the *London Gazette* to cover a big fight. Similarly Bradshaw, whose typical subscriber is the rural dean proceeding by halt and single track to take counsel with the Church in Wales, tries to cater also for the top executive who must fly at five minutes' notice



to Rio to talk it over man to man. (And caters very well, of course, but that is not our point.)

So we shall not expect to find the Other Bradshaw prying into academic detail, as Bradshaw does in Book III, Chapter 113, "Chester to Birkenhead," where it uses a rare || to mean "1 minute later on Saturdays." The top executive is a busy man and, although nobody enjoys a joke more than he does, he has no time to waste on frivolity. "Em-plane Idlewild twenty-three hundred hours after baggage clearance": that is the language he talks, and the sort the Other Bradshaw must talk too.

Perhaps the Other Bradshaw, who is only eighteen and a naturally rumbustious fellow, will mellow with age. After all, Bradshaw's footnotes, however integral a part of English letters they may seem, have not always been there. In 1852 you



"RIGHT—"



"TURN!"

travelled from Manchester to Norman-
ton, nine times a day,
without benefit of a
single footnote. To-
day the journey takes
exactly fifty foot-
notes, including a
rather choice "*" meaning "144½ miles via Holbeck." I say choice, because the compiler has already invoked "q," that is to say "via Holbeck," and Bradshaw does not normally have second thoughts.

The criticism is often levelled against Bradshaw that it is uniform to the point of monotony. Sherlock Holmes is quoted as saying, in *The Valley of Fear*, that "The vocabulary of Bradshaw is nervous and tense, but limited." Even these columns were opened, many years ago, to a contributor who wrote: "With most books it is possible to point to one chapter that is better than another, or one that is worse . . . But Bradshaw is above fluctuation, and he rides high, like the stars."

This may be flattering, but it is also arrant distortion. Bradshaw's compilers are men of many moods, taking full advantage of the limited means at their disposal for giving their moods expression. We find them wistful, as in Book I, Chapter 64, "Didcot to Southampton," where there is an "Aa" unparalleled elsewhere in the guide, which allows evening trains to call by request at Churn during the hours of daylight only. This is a survival from Great Western days: the other regions have

nothing to compare. Or we find them officious, as in Book VI, Chapter 286, "Glasgow to Oban," where they categorically refuse to handle luggage or bicycles when the train stops by request at Kingshouse. Or they can adopt a haughty attitude to the lower classes, as when, in Book III, Chapter 50, "London to Scotland," they call at Nuneaton "Zz . . . when required to set down Sleeping Car passengers only."

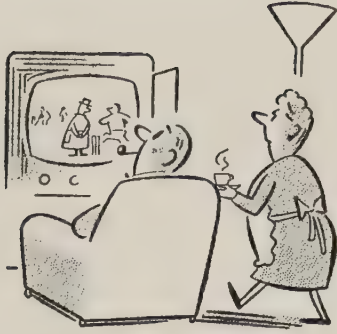
The man who watches over East Anglia (a canto of some length in Book IV) is a very changeable chap. He can be most helpful or totally indifferent, according to environment. Thus, between St. Ives and Huntingdon (Book IV, Chapter 46) he brings in § to announce that "Huntingdon (East) and (North) Stations are connected by means of an open pathway, 100 yards in length." But between Peterborough (North) and Yarmouth (Beach) (Book IV, Chapter 60) he couldn't care less: "∫ On Saturdays passengers change at Peterborough and find their own way between North and East Stations at own expense."

Finally we find them in times of deep sorrow. It has been the lifework of someone at Bradshaw's to chronicle a century's comings and goings at Bardon Hill (Book III, Chapter 226, "Leicester to Burton-on-Trent"). Gay trains, solemn trains, stopping trains, the odd express; at one time and another he has dealt with them all, allowing himself eleven modest footnotes. Imagine, if you can, his feelings as he wrote Bardon Hill's last cross-reference, rushed into print in the form of a supplement to the May edition: "Bardon Hill Station is closed and all trains cease to call there." What more can a man say?

But we are out of our province in discussing things of the spirit. We must return to facts. One finds throughout the guide little instances of the individual preferences of authors for a certain type of footnote. The author of Book IV, Chapter 58, "Yarmouth (Vauxhall) to Norwich (Thorpe)," has a strong feeling for bold capitals and uses nothing else. The author of the fifty footnotes mentioned above, on the other hand, uses every type face he can lay his hands on. A fascinating study.

When a new man starts at Bradshaw's he must find himself, as any amateur would, tempted to draw on his personal knowledge and slip in a surreptitious "f" meaning "Guard quite an interesting character, except Weds. and Sats." Or he may have a misguided sense of humour and put a "P" in the train columns referring below to "ghost train." Bradshaw's older compilers have a remedy for this. All the evidence suggests that a new man is given Ludgershall to Tidworth (Book I, Chapter 115a) (not even, you will notice, a chapter to himself). The three trains a day, and none on Sundays, between these two stations 2½ miles apart will soon break him in. How the Other Bradshaw works I cannot say: I imagine they put him straight on to London-Santiago and give him a free rein.

G. D. TAYLOR

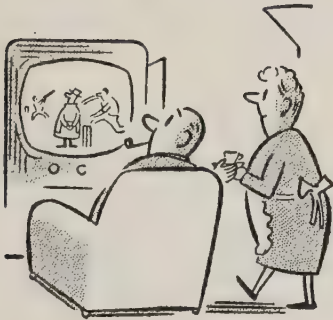


LES REVENANTS

On either side of *Mon Repos*
 Are haunted gardens, ghostly glades,
 Where phantom figures come and go
 At dusk amid the shades.

And ever and anon they stop
 Their fretful pacing to and fro,
 And having paused awhile to mop
 Proceed again to mow.

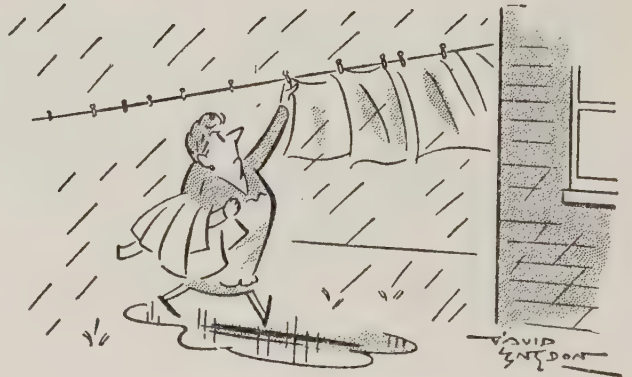
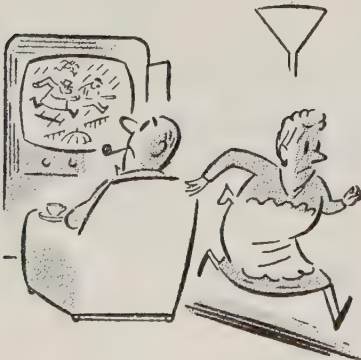
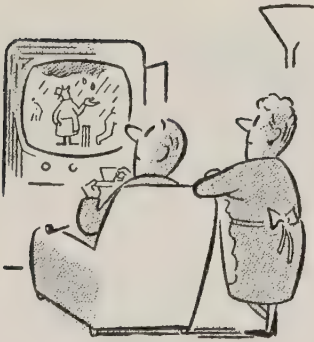
E. V. MILNER



THE POACHER

I saw him sadly
 Quit the tide—
 His net was long
 Its mesh was wide.
 "You should have seen,"
 I heard him say,
 "The little ones
 That got away."

MARK BEVAN

DAVID
LINTON

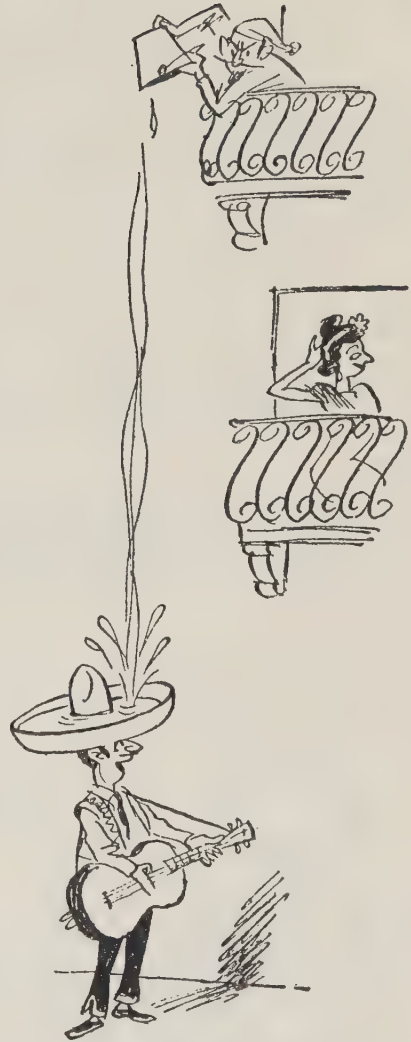
TELEVISION CRICKET

My love a cricket fan is he,
 He wouldn't miss a game;
 Old Trafford, Lord's or Headingley,
 He'll watch it just the same,
 And from the same position, which
 Is right up in the air,
 Moving at ease around the pitch
 Within the best armchair.

In shades of grey to suit his choice
 His little kingdom glows;
 Booms loud or soft that kindly voice
 To tell him what he knows;
 For him the scoreboard's fleeting view,
 The ash-tray on the floor,
 The coffee brought by people who
 Creep out, and shut the door.

And there through all the summer's day,
 A soul apart, he sits;
 Now pushing back his chair, that they
 May carpet-sweep the bits,
 Now answering the telephone,
 Now taking in the bread,
 Now, till four-thirty, getting shown
 A cowboy film instead.

And now upon the quiet screen
 The shadows melt and fade;
 My love is happy; he has been
 Where cricket's being played,
 And in him is the deep content
 All homebound crowds can share
 Who ever turned a knob and went
 Back to the best armchair.



The Lowing Herd

THE compartment throbbled with the sound of men sleeping. In the corner facing me Colonel Rackstraw snored in short bursts, raising his right hand to the salute at the end of each salvo and then letting it drop on to his evening paper with a crack like a whip-lash. From Marriott seated next to him there issued a series of high-pitched warbling notes which, with a little careful editing from Mr. Ludwig Koch, could have gone straight into the Home Programme as Bird-song of the Month. In the far corner our vicar was droning away at an organ voluntary, interspersed with some half-remembered banns of marriage from the previous Sunday.

In desperation I opened the fashion magazine I was taking home for my wife and sought refuge in the world of *haute couture*. Almost immediately a sentence sprang at me from the printed page. "*Boleros,*" it said, "*are running like wildfire through the Paris collections.*"

I looked at the colonel. Would he ever forgive me, I asked myself, for allowing him to sleep on in ignorance of such things? It was not a risk I was prepared to take.

I leaned over and shook him by the arm. He trumpeted loudly, saluted twice in quick succession and opened his eyes.

"What's up, Hopcroft?" he muttered thickly.



"The news looks pretty bad, sir," I said. "It says here that boleros are running like wildfire through the Paris collections."

"Boleros, eh?" The colonel made a gallant attempt to bring me into focus. "Thin end of the wedge when those fellows start running amok. First-class fighters, mind you, but a packet of trouble as soon as they're out of the line . . ." His voice tailed off and he began to nod.

"Don't you think Marriott should know about this?" I said loudly.

The colonel opened his eyes and stared vaguely at Marriott. Marriott chose that moment to start on a *reprise* of the seagull noises which had practically emptied the compartment at Clapham Junction.

"Yes," said the colonel, "I think he should." He nudged Marriott in the ribs. The bird-song stopped and Marriott woke up.

"Anything wrong?" he mumbled.

"Quite a lot," said the colonel tartly. "Hopcroft here tells me that boleros are running like wildfire through the Paris collections."

"Are they, by Jove!" Marriott blinked at us. "We had a plague of 'em once under our floorboards. Little beggars had eaten clean through a couple of joists and were starting on the third. Boleros, eh?" He undid another button of his waistcoat and closed his eyes.

The colonel nudged him again. "Better tell the padre," he shouted.

Marriott opened one eye and peered at the vicar, who had just embarked on a tremulous *vox humana* passage. "I quite agree, sir," he said. He shook the vicar by the knee and woke him.

"We thought you ought to know, padre," said Marriott, "that boleros are running like wildfire through the Paris collections."

The vicar yawned. "I can well believe it," he said sleepily. "We find an alarming number of foreign coins in our own offertories."

He settled back in his corner and closed his eyes. In a few moments the compartment throbbed with the sound of men sleeping.

RODNEY HOBSON

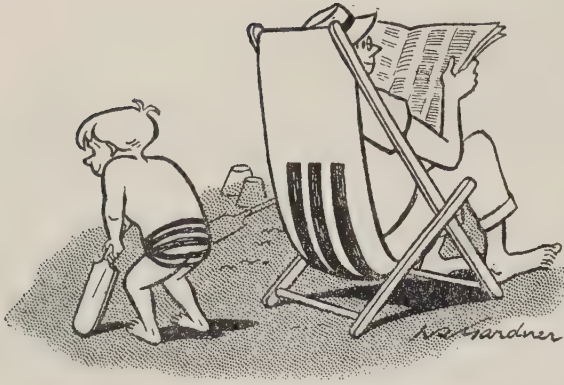
"A Diary found in His Possession . . ."

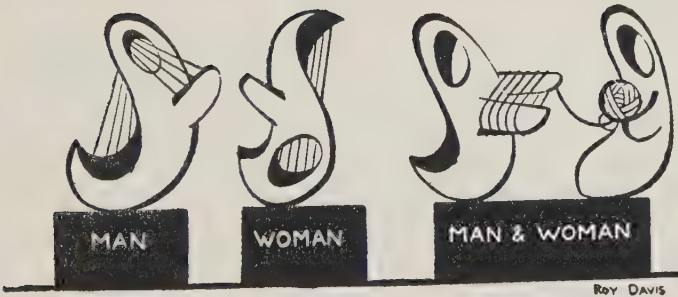
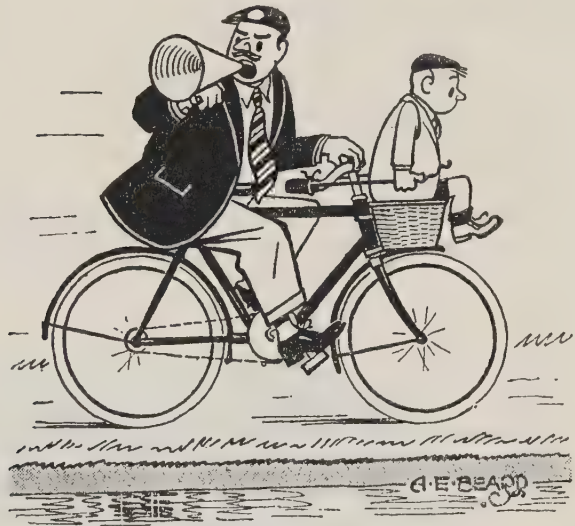
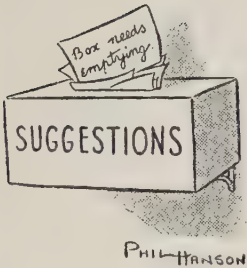
A FOOTNOTE TO RECENT ESPIONAGE REVELATIONS

TUES. Jun. 9. Still no reply my protest about H.Q.'s complex rendezvous arrangements, so proceeded as laid down, per H.Q.I./9x/Plaice/19G, hoping this time for successful receipt microfilm "Twostroke."

Set out in good time to meet "Charlie" (new contact man since arrest of "Archibald") outside National Gallery, to-day's check-point and a poor choice in my view.

THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'

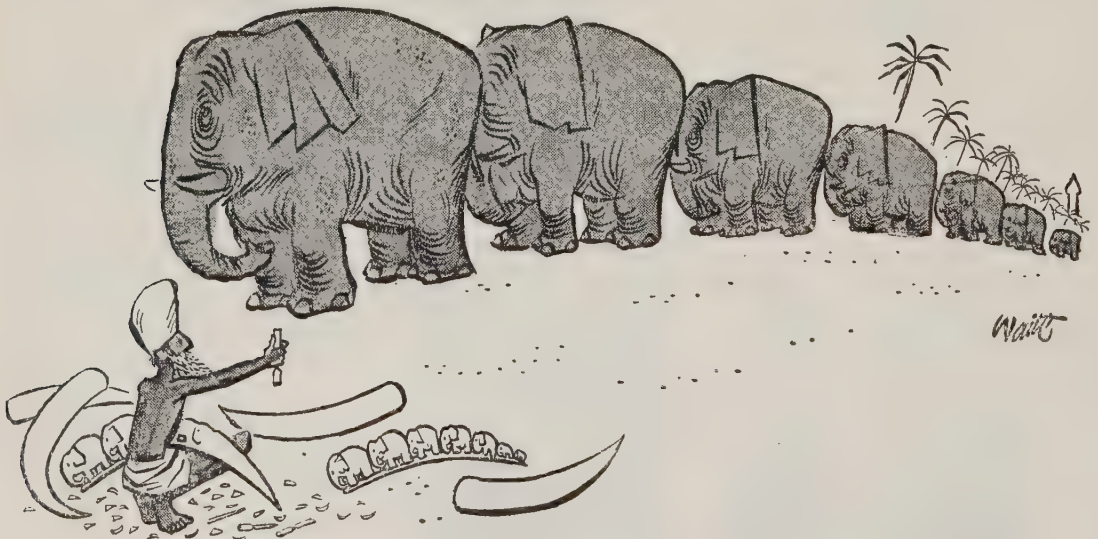




Arrived 1930 hrs. punc. and kept sharp lookout among crowds for man carrying cricket bat and humming Eton Boating S. Eye soon caught by man, red beard, crossing Trafalgar Square with bat (small, as child's toy). Displayed my identifications prominently, viz. copy *What Katy Did at School*, with lady's elbow-length white evening glove as place-marker (N.B.—As usual, these identifications troublesome locate and acquire).

After waiting gap in traffic ten mins. man crossed, twirling bat ostentatiously but humming "Donkey Serenade." But as he took position beside me and looked pointedly at glove and book I gave password for the day, "Fine night for Ivy's party. Mother's got hay fever." Response should have been "Give her my best regards," but man said "She's welcome," and jumped on bus just drawing away from lights. Impossible follow, and in any case I suspected man not "Charlie" and bat coincidence. Continued wait. At 2200 hrs. decided "Charlie" prevented keeping appointment or gone Nat. Portrait Gallery round corner in error; such a slip easy, owing bad H.Q. planning, but too late go and look now. Any case, thought man passing and re-passing me with pair dumb-bells possible M.I.5. Home and bed 2330 hrs. V. tired. Could not get on with *What Katy Did at School*.

Thurs., Jun. 11. All yesterday locating and acquiring this evening's identifications as per H.Q.I./18b/Halibut/4F, viz. Civil Service brief-case with royal cipher, 2 hard-boiled eggs inside (one spare). Made way in good time bandstand Hyde Park, taking seat back row 2000 hrs. punc., placing brief-case seat on my left. Awaited "Charlie"—identifications, striped trousers, carrying noise-maker (I supposed carnival novelty, but H.Q.I. again ambig.)—through *Caliph of Bagdad* overture, selec-



tion *Merrie England*, selection Luigini's *Ballet Russe*. At interval, still no inquiry as expected, "Is this anybody's seat?", but when band filed from stand to chat friends, relations in audience, man carrying trombone handed me brief-case from next seat with remark "Nobody sitting here, was there?" and entered conversation young blonde woman rocking pram. Owing slight inaccuracy password I delayed reply, but noting gold stripe trousers and interpreting tromb. as noise-maker I later spoke as laid down, viz. "That last piece was too loud," and commenced peeling h-b. egg. Instead of responding correctly "It is the drummer that bangs too hard," man said "Hear that, Edie, of all the blasted sauce," and continued to speak violently against

Brit. Civ. Service, waving brief-case. Blonde woman threatened strike with hand-bag, but other bandsmen approached and escorted me another part of park. Roughly handled, esp. by two young cornet-players; spare egg ruined. Man wearing baseball cap and carrying football attempted trip me as I ran; think possibly M.I.5. Home 2200 hrs., another wasted day.

Later. Have coded sharp protest H.Q., reference rendezvous arrangements. Busy day to-morrow assembling Saturday's identifications, pair dumb-bells, watering-can, copy *Rabbit Fancier's Year Book*. Depressed, feel H.Q. making unnecessary diffi-

culties, cannot see why not possible utilize old identifications afresh: have already in my lodgings stuffed squirrel, ebony-handled swordstick, emery-board, gas cape, beach umbrella, stage turkey, box Christmas tree ornaments, roll wallpaper, lady's girdle (not used, day "Archibald" taken), set sweep's brushes, pair castanets, "Return from Inkerman" framed gilt, white bucket, plaster carp in case, Arsenal shirt and two sections 3' 6" wattle fencing.

Sat. Jun. 13. Must record dissatisfaction at last-minute revision identifications to-day's meeting "Charlie" (1500 hrs., Fishmongers' Hall, City). Dumb-bells, *Rabbit Fancier's Y-B.*, etc., now cancelled, substituting coil of hosepipe tied with



twine. What is H.Q. up to? Have instructions for "Charlie" also been changed? No mention of this in amendment to H.Q.I./4k/Turbot/21P. (Was to wear plimsolls, carry Pekinese.) Feel uneasy whole situation.

Later. Cell, Bishopsgate P/Station. Hope possible smuggle diary out, so note for H.Q. here. Mission not accomplished. Arrived Fish. H. 1500 punc. with hosepipe as laid down (coiled up). At 1515 hrs. approached by big man in running shorts carrying spiked shoes, javelin. As no one else in sight, and in view altered arrangements identification, surmised v. likely "Charlie" and addressed accordingly: "My auntie is upset this afternoon," to which he should have responded, "Give her my best regards," but instead remarked, "Why, has she missed her hosepipe?" Suspected arrangements miscarried and endeavoured move away, but man brought me here, being a police sergeant called in by landlady's neighbour to recover hosepipe, though en route for Police Sports at Beckenham. URGENT. Cannot over-emphasize importance clarity all future instructions. Meantime, hope still to conceal whole truth here, and if larceny charge only one preferred intend ask numerous other offences taken into consideration, viz. stuffed squirrel, ebony-handled swordstick, emery-board, gas-cape, beach umbrella, stage turkey, box Christmas tree ornaments, roll wallpaper, lady's girdle, set sweep's brushes, pair castanets, "Return from Inker——" . . .

J. B. BOOTHROYD

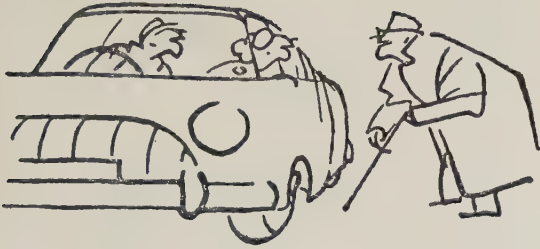
Situations Vacant

MR. STROMBOLI, our careers master, is a first-class man. He runs the Junior Training Corps, the Senior Choir, the Tuck Shop and the Leisure Hour Book-binding Society, all with exemplary efficiency. He has only just taken over Careers, and when the Head gave out in prayers that boys-who-had-not-quite-made-up-their-minds-what-they-were-going-to-do should see Mr. Stromboli in the air-raid shelter in the lunch hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays, considerable interest was aroused.

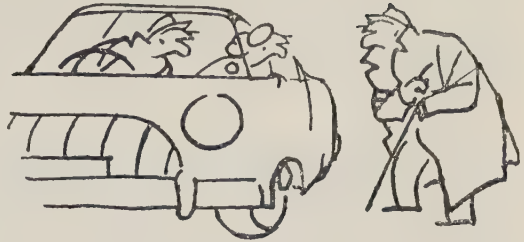
Stromboli set up a kind of office in the air-raid shelter, rather like a small Customs shed. There was a table where you went in, and a chair so that you could sit down and fill in forms; and there was an alley-way made of athletics hurdles to guide the less able boys down to another table, where Mr. Stromboli himself was sitting. When the boy got to the second table he was asked if he had anything to declare, such as General Certificate of Education, with Pass in Woodwork at Ordinary Level, or Special Interests: Shot-putting and Geography. Then he was asked some searchingly vague questions, and out he came by the door at the other end, with something like five or six hundred a year almost in his pocket.

As the term wore on Stromboli's fame increased and a lot of boys-who-had-

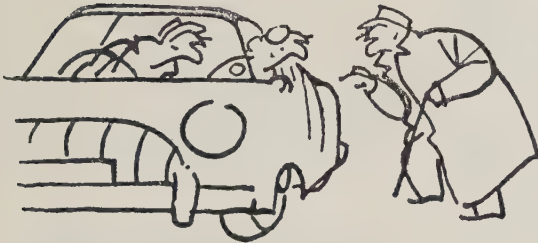
Fongosse



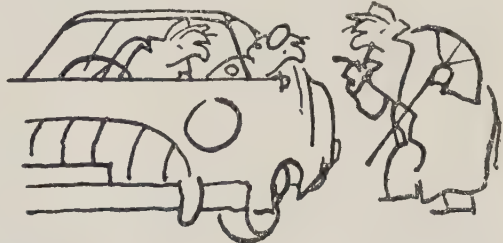
"HOW DO YOU GET TO WINBURY?—



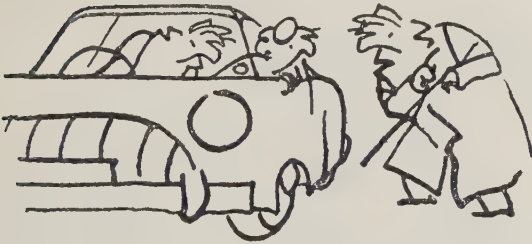
STRAIGHT ON TO THE CROSS-ROADS, AND THEN TURN LEFT." "TURN LEFT, YES"



"THEN UP THE HILL AND TURN RIGHT AT THE CHURCH." "RIGHT AT THE CHURCH, YES"



"THEN RIGHT AGAIN OPPOSITE THE WHEATSHEAF, WHICH TAKES YOU DOWN PAST A WHITE MILL." "A WHITE MILL"



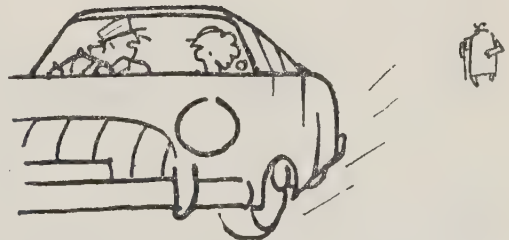
"TURN LEFT ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MILL, AND FOLLOW DOWN A NARROW LANE FOR ALMOST A MILE AND A HALF." "A MILE AND A HALF, YES, YES"



"AND THAT WILL BRING YOU RIGHT OUT ON TO THE MAIN WINBURY-MARLCHESTER ROAD, AND THERE YOU ARE"



"OH, THANK YOU SO MUCH, THANK YOU, THANK YOU . . .



. . . WHAT WAS IT HE SAID?"

"YOU CAN'T MISS IT"

already-made-up-their-minds-what-they-were-going-to-do decided to see Stromboli and find out whether there wasn't an easier way of doing it. Finally everyone was placed in something advantageous, even Hulk, J. G., of the Middle Fifth, for whom Stromboli had rediscovered a forgotten colony which was crying out for people like Hulk, J. G.

The stream entering the air-raid shelter on Tuesdays and Thursdays dwindled to a trickle, and at last dried up altogether; and it was one Friday evening, when I happened to be passing, that I saw Waddell, the chemistry master, coming out of the door at the far end, followed a few minutes later by Drogue, the senior classics man. I was busy that evening, and by the time next Friday came round and Stromboli fixed me up in an advertising agency, starting at £1,200, practically the whole staff had handed in their resignations. In fact I think I was the last, and I felt a little awkward about breaking the news to the Head.

Naturally enough he seemed rather preoccupied and looked as if he had aged somewhat in the last few days. He appeared scarcely to be listening as I stumbled through the piece I had rehearsed about the rising cost of living and always looking back on the old place, etc., etc.

"Hm? Hm?" he said. "Well, you'd better see Mr. Stromboli about it."

I had to tell him again that I was resigning. I said I was starting in an advertising agency at £1,200 a year, and this seemed to get home.

"£1,200?" he said. "That's very fair for a man of your experience, Bullett. The firm I'm joining have offered me £2,450, but of course it is a post of considerable responsibility. A quite exceptional post, Stromboli assures me . . ."

"Yes, sir, I see," I said. "So my resignation——"

"Should be handed in to Mr. Stromboli. He—ah—he's taking over from me."

I couldn't find Stromboli anywhere, so I thought I would go along to the air-raid shelter. There were several people standing about by the entrance door, including Mr. Farruish, the clerk to the Governors. I thought I would slip in the other way, but when I reached the door the chairman himself, Sir Arnold Potby, was just coming out. He was rubbing his podgy hands together and looking immensely pleased. "Splendid! Splendid!" he was saying to himself. "Just the job!"

WILLIAM THORNTON

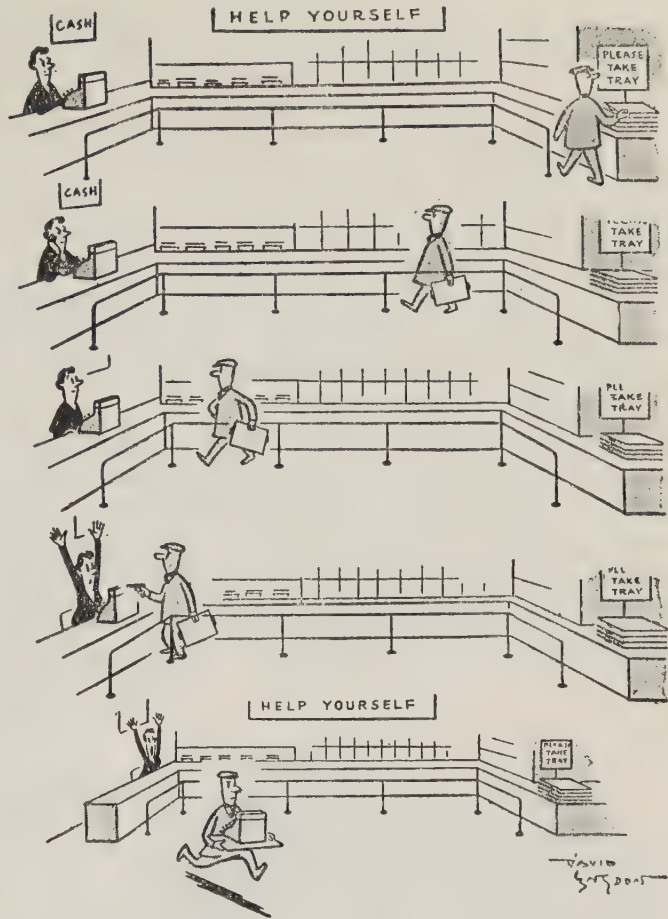
Sinister Affair at Euston

SOME people have travel sense and some haven't. I haven't. But at least I've realized it after all these years; the days are past when I would leave a bag in the luggage office at King's Cross and raise Cain half an hour later because they couldn't find it when I presented the ticket at St. Pancras. Nowadays I lay my travel

plans pretty carefully. That was why I found it so baffling at Euston last Tuesday, when my hat, coat, suitcase, portable typewriter and reserved seat disappeared; and with them, the small, dark Wing Commander and the two elderly ladies who had promised to watch the things while I went for a paper.

I had arrived early. It is part of my plan at these times. I like to be able to ask no fewer than four officials where to find my train; to walk its length once or twice to make sure that I shall know it again; and to go the round of the barriers, inquiry counters and information boards getting plenty of cross-checks on its departure time. Arriving early occasionally defeats its own object, as when, for example, I catch the train which leaves from the same platform as mine but forty minutes before; this has twice landed me unexpectedly at Snow Hill, Birmingham, but, on balance, there is much to be said for having a few minutes in hand. For one thing, it enables me to stake a claim to my reserved seat, put my possessions on the rack, and go for a paper, humming a carefree snatch, in the assurance that my immediate troubles are over.

Of course, there is the subject of landmarks. A reserved seat is no good unless you can find it again. Now, I admit readily that I have made bad mistakes over landmarks in the past, from the early days when I thought it enough to leave the compartment door open with the blind down—a state of affairs sadly subject to change—to comparatively recent times when I noted that the compartment was opposite a trolleyful of fish, a motor-cycle swathed in corrugated cardboard, or some other dangerously inconstant object. Nowadays, well into my enlightened period, I navigate by something as reliable as the mariner's night sky—namely, the advertisement posters along the platform walls. An infallible navigational fix can be gained



by standing with your back to the compartment door and simply memorizing the poster opposite. Though personally I am not content, even with that; I write it down.

So, before I left the two elderly ladies and the small, dark Wing Commander on this fateful Euston Tuesday, I noted down with care, on the back of an envelope: "My Corns Were Killing Me. Now I've killed them—with KILKORN!" It was exactly opposite the door. Nothing could have been more opposite. Humming a snatch, I went for my paper.

I was still humming it when I got back ten minutes later and dropped snugly into my corner. "Thank you very much indeed," I said expansively to the trio of watch-dogs, and opened my paper with a confident crackle.

"I beg your pardon?"

The speaker was a man of the income-tax inspector type, sitting facing another out of the same mould; the pair of them were occupying the seats of the two elderly ladies. Of the small, dark Wing Commander no trace remained but a cigarette-end and a slight dent in the upholstery. I looked at the rack above my head. It was empty.

My first impulse was to pull the communication-cord. Uncertain of the effect of this, however, in a stationary train, I hesitated. Then I saw that the possibility

of an error on my part must not be ruled out. "Excuse me," I said, and the men drew back their feet fastidiously as I passed between them to look out of the corridor window, one of them remarking loudly, "Naturally, in the circumstances it wasn't possible to sign a clean balance-sheet for either company." The other said "Oh, I entirely concur."

"My Corns Were Killing Me," I said. There was the poster, bang opposite, its message tallying precisely with my envelope.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Never mind," I said.

Where were the two elderly ladies, the small, dark Wing Commander, my hat and coat, suitcase and portable typewriter? The two Inland Revenue officials were eyeing me narrowly, and when I looked at



"IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THEIR READING SEASON HAS COME ROUND AGAIN"

their soft hands and hard collars a thought struck me. Could it be that, distrustful of these newcomers and vigilant in my interests, the three had moved farther up the train, taking my property with them?

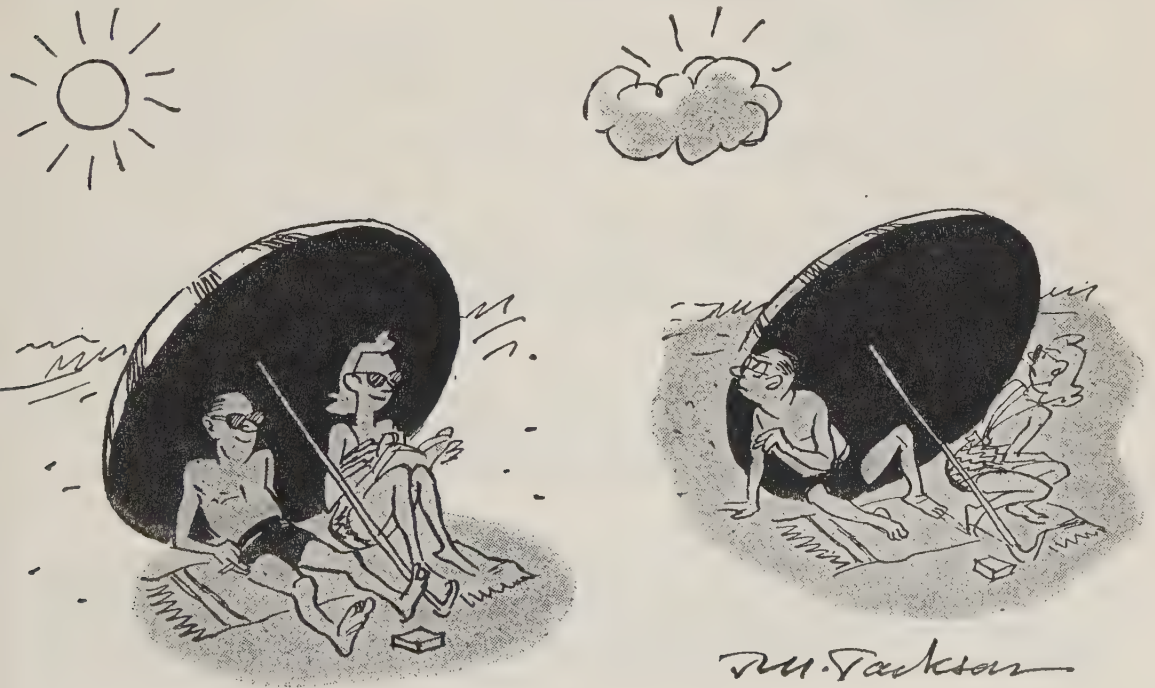
"Did they take them?" I demanded wildly. The train must by this time be on the point of departure.

"I beg your pardon?"

"My things . . ." I said. "Two ladies and an Air Force officer."

They exchanged glances, pursing their lips, then affected to interest themselves in the outdated views of Liverpool ornamenting the compartment at eye level. They said nothing, however, and in my mind a horrible black pit yawned suddenly. Was I——? No, no! Not that! A whistle blew. I threw another glance across the platform. "Now I've killed them," I muttered, and was about to leap out and go for the stationmaster when the door slammed in my face. At the same moment we began to move.

Then, and only then, the explanation flashed upon me. These two men, disguised as respectable Civil Servants, were in reality agents of a Foreign Power. The unfortunate Wing Commander, an Air Ministry courier with top secret documents in every pocket, had been brutally done away with; cut up, probably, and stuffed under the seat; the elderly ladies, chance witnesses of the atrocity, had been similarly dealt with. I don't know how much room there is under those seats. My hat, coat,



suitcase and portable typewriter had been hastily handed out to some confederate, clearing the way for the impending disposal of their owner on his return.

I stood in the corridor transfixed, the ghastly truth flickering through my brain in a twinkling. Gazing out of the window with, no doubt, a glassy stare, I was surprised to see that the train was still running between platforms. I was still more surprised to see, gliding into view with gathering speed, a poster saying "My Corns Were Killing Me" . . . then came six posters for something else, and "My Corns Were Killing Me" . . . then six more, and "My Corns Were Killing Me" . . .

I lurched blindly along the corridor, through a communicating door, along the next coach.

"We thought you'd had it," said the small, dark Wing Commander, and the elderly ladies both nodded.

"I thought *you* had," I said, "just for a minute."

J. B. BOOTHROYD

Honey Still for Tea

"RUPERT BROOKE?" he said, and he couldn't have pumped more incredulity into his voice if he'd heard that Monaco had acquired the atom bomb.

"That's right," I said, "the man himself."

"But you're joking!"

"It was in the *Radio Times*. Saw it myself. It said that according to a recent survey Brooke is now the second most popular poet among undergraduates at Oxford."

"But this is wonderful news," he said, "wonderful! It will make a world of difference to me."

"I'm glad you like Brooke's poetry," I said.

"It's not a question of *liking*," he said. "I know it—inside out. Brought up on it. Learned every sonnet. Grantchester all through, even the bits of Greek and German."

"Really?" I said.

"I shall be able to quote him again with an easy conscience—something I haven't done since 1934 when he was lying eighth just behind Robert Bridges and W. H. Davies in a poll run by the *Leeds Mercury and Star*. Since then he's never been in the first twenty."

"A 'mustn't.'"

"Exactly. Matter of fact I did try to slip 'the rough male kiss of blankets' into a piece I wrote for the house magazine of the International Wool Secretariat—in 1938, I think it was—but the editor whipped it out immediately. You're quite certain about this? He was placed second?"

"Certain."

"In a way I knew that something like this would happen. Through all these years, when it's been nothing but Eliot, Auden, and Edith Sitwell, I've kept my Rupert Brooke going, never let it get rusty. I just knew he'd come back some day. And every so often, in conversation, I've tried a quote: 'Here tulips bloom as they are told' or 'Stands the church clock at ten to three?' But the look on people's faces! It was almost as bad as admitting a passion for hall chimes. Now I'll show 'em, though! By the way, did the *Radio Times* mention James Elroy Flecker?"

"No, I don't think so."

"And Eliot still number one?"

"I suppose so."

"I could scream every time I hear 'Not with a bang but a whimper,' 'Talking of Michelangelo' or 'I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.' Scream! I've used them all so often since Brooke lost ground. Funny that I should know so little Eliot considering that's he a contemporary of Rupert's. But I suppose one's capacity for poetry is strictly limited, eh?"

"Mine is infinitesimal," I said.

"A pity—you should read Brooke. A tip-top poet, full of superb imagery. Which reminds me—d'you think there's any chance of plus-fours coming back?"

"Plus-fours?"

"Association of ideas, you know. I used to be crazy about Diabolo and Ketelby."

"'In a Monastery Garden'?"

"And other things. Not to mention Pearl White and the Savoy Orpheans. Ah, well, you've cheered me up no end."



"I suppose you're dashing off now to get your photograph taken in profile?"

"It's an idea," he said.

"Cheerio then."

"And is there honey still for tea?" he said.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

Friendly Native

I LIKE driving big American cars, and I jumped at the chance of taking Stolz's Cadibaker to the airport to meet him. But I should have stuck to the main roads. The lanes presented unforeseen difficulties. I tried to manoeuvre back, got into unknown country and was lost.

I saw the man at dusk, leaning on a gate in the middle of nowhere. It was a Sunday, and he was wearing a dark suit and tweed cap. I ran the window down a bit and said "Longheath?"

A change came over him as he moved away from the gate. His shoulders took on a marked curve, and his eyes went all shrewd and wrinkled up. He put his head close to the window. "Longheath, maister?" he said in a rich burr. "Do you follow lane over wold to Squire's hanger. Then down left into bottom and along bourn to bridge by Farmer Iles's ayot. Then up across lea to old grange, past holt, and out on to turnpike by little hurst near the lynch. Can't miss it."

He stood back and looked at me expectantly. I ran the window right down and put my head out. "Sorry," I said, "you'll have to say it again. I didn't quite follow."

He straightened up and looked at me with an odd mixture of reproach and embarrassment. "You English?" he said. "Sorry, chum. Straight on, first left, left again by the A.A. Box. Keep on till you come out on A 58 by the sewage farm. Then right. It's lousy with Yank cars. You can't miss it."

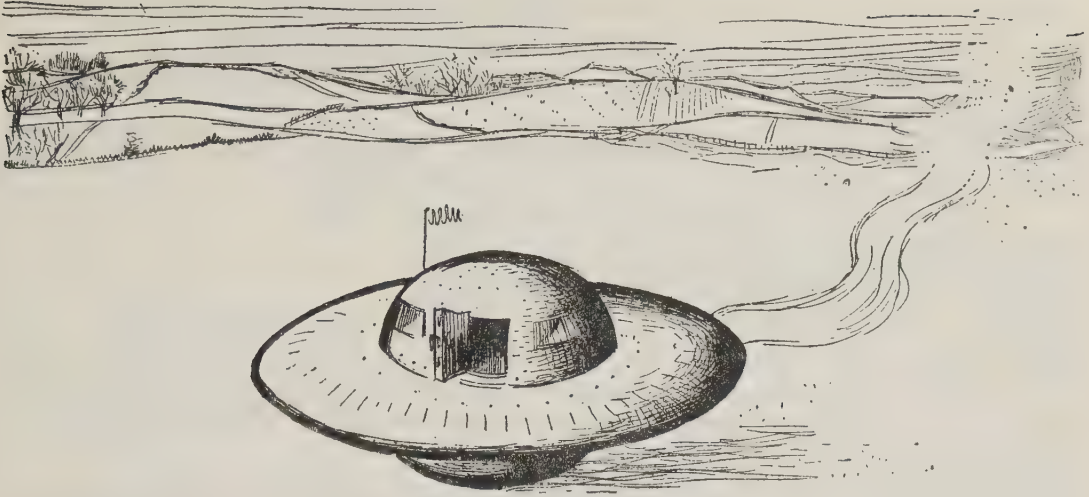
I said "Not now I can't," and drove on.

P. M. HUBBARD

No Deception

BEFORE leaving home I had undertaken not to let myself be imposed upon. Recollections of my last used-car bargain still rankled.

"I'm afraid I don't know the first thing about cars," said the man Rook, when I got there. Unprepared, it was just the sort of thing I should have said myself.



"LUNNON FOLK, I EXPECT"

Instead I walked round the car with a dealer's air, standing back occasionally as if to examine some detail which might have escaped the untrained eye.

"She looks very smart," I said. It was a lapse. She'd been smartened up for the occasion, obviously.

"She's been smartened up for the occasion," said Rook. "Matter of fact she shows the dirt rather badly. Care to look at the engine?"

He was trying to raise the bonnet, but it wouldn't raise.

"Sticking?" I said.

"Something broke inside, I shouldn't wonder."

"Oh, I shouldn't think so," I said. "They do stick a bit sometimes." I felt sorry for the chap. Up against me, and without an ounce of salesmanship in him.

We got the bonnet open between us. I couldn't see anything broken, but Rook caught hold of some kind of spring latch and waggled it. "Shouldn't be loose like that, should it?"

I said I didn't think it mattered, and added that the engine looked nice and clean. I've no idea whether this means anything in engines.

"Oil down there," Rook said, rubbing his finger on something and showing me a thin smear. "Leak of some sort, I expect. But of course she's not a new car, not by any means."

I quite understood that, I said. After all——

"Taken a beating, really, this last twelve years. Kept her going all through the war. Kids all grew up in her, you might say, jumping on the seat springs, picking at the upholstery and so on. Then my wife and eldest daughter learnt to drive in her. So, of course, she's a bit . . ." He trailed off, putting his hand on the edge of the roof and rocking the car vigorously.

I looked inside, opening and shutting the doors judicially. "Doesn't seem in bad condition," I said, "considering everything."

"She *looks* all right," said Rook, scraping a little rust off a headlamp with his fingernail. "But—well, I suppose you'd like a run round?"

"Thank you," I said firmly. I had been told particularly to be firm about this. "Have any starting trouble at all?" I said, as we climbed in.

"Sometimes have to use the handle," said Rook. "Nuisance, really."

"I see."

"Usually when it's frosty."

"Oh, well——"

"If she's been standing for a couple of weeks, you know."

That could happen with any car, I told him kindly. Why, with my old crate——

He sighed, and arranged the controls. "Sometimes doesn't start even when it's warm," he said. He pressed the starter button and the engine came smoothly to life.

"Seems all right now," I said, as we glided off.

"Some of the windows jam," said Rook.

I wound mine up and down with ease.

"The driver's window, chiefly," said Rook. He wound it up and down with ease.

"We were out on the main road now. The ride seemed well-sprung and rattle-free despite a decade of childish destruction. We ascended a slight gradient at fifty miles an hour. "Confounded choke," said Rook—"have to keep it out for ages." He pushed it in, and we gathered speed.

"Goes very well," I said after a minute or two.

"Noisy in second gear, didn't you notice?"

The man wanted saving from himself.

"It was three-fifty you wanted, wasn't it?" I said.

Rook went pink. "I must say, it sounds an awful lot. Or nearest offer, let's say. I mean, if you think . . . after all, a twelve-year-old car . . . I could hardly expect . . ."

"I like her," I said. "Three-fifty, then."

"Brakes want adjusting," he said. He stepped on the brakes by way of illustration and I was thrown with a moderate impact against the windscreen.

"What about the wipers?" I said.

He turned on the wipers. They worked splendidly.

"Stick sometimes," he said. He turned them off, then on again, trying to make them stick. They wouldn't. I felt sympathetic, and turned them off myself, and on again. There was nothing wrong with the wipers. Rook sighed again, as we swept into the drive and pulled up before his front door.

When he switched off I got my cheque-book out. Mrs. Rook arrived in some gardening gloves and said "So you're going to have her?"

"Please," I said.

"Sometimes," said Rook, "the engine fires back after you switch it off."



"DON'T WORRY—WE'RE NOT THE LAST"

"Three-fifty," I said, giving him the cheque.

"Well," he said, "if you——"

Mrs. Rook said "I hope Hugh told you the spare tyre's only a re-tread."

"That's fine, fine," I said, and moved over into the driver's seat.

It had begun to rain, and they cowered under the porch. "Good-bye, then," they said, waving. "Good luck."

The clutch was a bit fierce, and crossing the main road I managed to stall the engine. The starter whirred energetically for some time, but the red dash-light continued to glow warmly. When I got out with the starting-handle three excursion coaches were waiting to pass. I declined to be drawn into conversation with the drivers.

The windscreen was opaque with rain when I got back into the car. I turned on the wipers. They didn't turn on. A raindrop splashed on my hand from the join in the sunshine roof as I got off at last in second gear, with a slight screaming noise which drowned comment from the interested excursionists.

At any rate, I thought, trying in vain to wind up the driver's window which had unaccountably stuck, if they thought I'd been imposed upon when I got home, they could always ring up Rook.

J. B. BOOTHROYD



"LET'S HAVE A CRUSADE TO CYPRUS THIS YEAR. IT'S WITHIN THE STERLING AREA"

Endorsement

"AS a film-star, Miss la Fleur, to whom a perfect skin is *essential*, you are thrilled with our Yunganlully Crème, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"You are excited to find, *at last*, a cream that cleanses as it nourishes, nourishes as it cleanses, wouldn't you say?"

"Yes."

"After a hard day's work at the studio, under strong lights, you *know* your skin needs a beauty care that *really works*, don't you?"

"Yes."

"So you come home, ready for an early night, because you are unsophisticated and dislike night-clubs and believe in lots of sleep, isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"When you are ready to begin your beauty treatment, you first of all don a gay cap to keep your hair right away from your face, don't you?"

"Yes."

"While Poochie, your little dog, watches you with a cute look in his eyes, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"He's saying to himself: 'I wonder what my mistress is going to do now?' isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Then you generously apply Yunganlully, patting it in gently, *not* forgetting your neck, patting away, pat, pat, pat. You can *feel* it beginning to work, can't you?"

"Yes."

"Then you leave it for a few minutes to penetrate *right through* to the *lower skin* which Yunganlully manufacturers have discovered, is that right?"

"Yes."

"The Crème gets busy at once, *dissolving* dust and your old make-up, and then it is ready to be removed with cotton wool, isn't that right?"

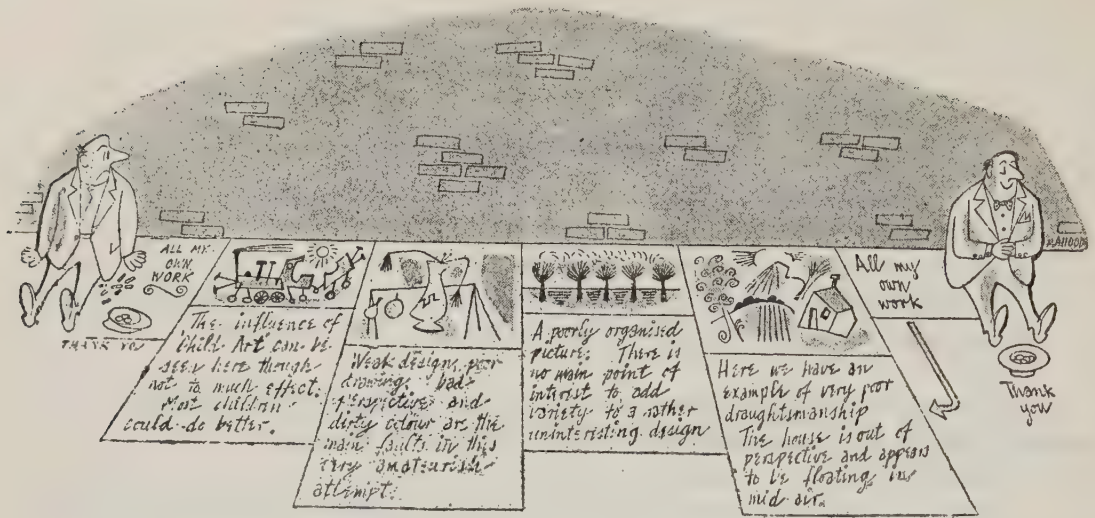
"Yes."

"And then—this is the secret—*then* you add a further application of Yunganlully, not patting this time, but *smoothing it right through* the *lower skin* to the *sub-skin*, another discovery of Yunganlully *world-famous* scientists, don't you?"

"Yes."

"You *urge* it in, ever so *gently*, with *slow* circular movements *anti-clockwise*, for about ten minutes, don't you?"

"Yes."



"And while you are asleep, YUNGANLUVLY CRÈME WORKS *FOR* you, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Good. It's very kind of you, Miss la Fleur. I think that gives me enough to work on. I'll send you a Presentation Jar of the Crème, of course."

"Thank you."

"See what you think of it."

"Yes."

MARJORIE RIDDELL

The English Conversationalist

"TELL you what, old boy, give me a ring some time."

"All right, then, I'll give you a ring . . . When shall we say?"

"Any time, really, so long as I'm there. Tuesday?"

"Tuesday? Yes, I can manage Tuesday."

"Fine! You'll be ringing me, then?"

"Yes, I'll give you a ring Tuesday. If by any chance I don't, I'll try to get it organized for Wednesday."

"Fair enough, old boy. You've got my number?"

"Don't think I have, not exactly."

"I'd better give it you, then."

"Yes, all right; you give me your number and I'll write it down."

"That'd be the best thing. Ready? Birkenwell 4832."

"Birkenwell? That's the Exchange, is it?"

"Yes, and 4832 is our number. When they answer, ask to speak to me."

"All right, then, old boy, that's settled. Tuesday. Failing that, Wednesday."

"O.K., then, you'll be calling me."

"Yeah, I'll be calling you. Think that's the best thing, don't you?"

"That seems the drill to me. Or tell you what, old boy. *I could call you . . .*"

COLIN HOWARD

TREE INTO POEM

I think that I shall never see

A poem lovely as a tree . . .

Yet, oddly, I have heard it hinted

That trees are pulped and poems printed.

E. V. MILNER

NEW LAMPS FOR OLD

You wondered, Omar, what the vintners bought

One half so precious as the things they sold.

Now I upon a kindred train of thought

Reflect, as seeks the sun his bed of gold.

Beside me, flickering on the fireside stool,

A flex-wreath'd flambeau from a bottle made—

Have I, I wonder, been an empty fool

To drink that sunshine to achieve this shade?

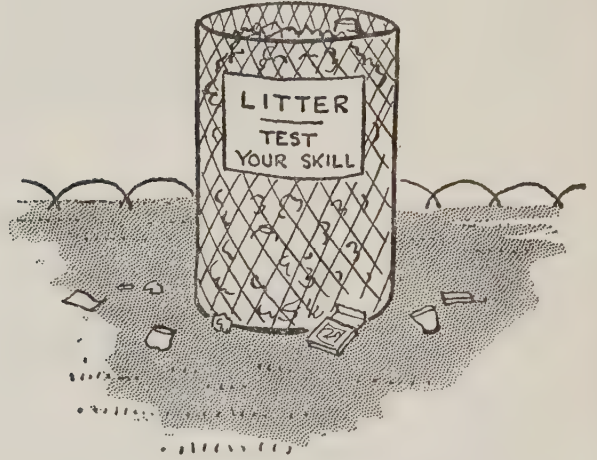
MARK BEVAN

First Time Up

THE glass screen over the door said NO SMOKING. FASTEN SEAT BELTS. It was getting dark outside, with a gusty drizzle. The tarmac looked sticky and the whole airport miserable. It was not at all what I had expected; more like a Green Line on a wet day. And there ought to have been an Air Hostess like Glynis Johns in the picture, not that man with the huge moustache and the diagonally striped ribbons.

The port engine started and worked itself up into a sort of controlled fury that set our forty rather dilated eyes vibrating in their sockets. I couldn't see why, with one engine going as hard as that, the plane didn't take off one-sided and spin round like a top; or alternatively why, if the engine at that speed couldn't move the plane

THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'





off blocked wheels, it was safe to trust ourselves to it at several thousand feet. Then it stopped as suddenly as it had started. I looked, glassy-eyed, at the man next to me and found him looking, glassy-eyed, at me. I reached hastily for my paper. Then the starboard engine blew up several times running, sending bursts of handsome orange flame past the forward windows. The thin-faced serious man just in front ducked so violently that he bumped heads with his companion on the gangway. He apologized uneasily, and the silence was filled with small deprecatory laughs and a whisper of rather breathless comment.

The steward hurried up the plane and disappeared through the door as though summoned to a technical conference. The starboard engine started the second time, but with much less assurance than its companion. It mounted, uncertainly, pausing occasionally to cough, like an asthmatic going upstairs. Then it stopped. My companion rustled his paper, and I looked stealthily at it. It said "—DISASTER, SEVEN FEARED LOST IN ALPS."

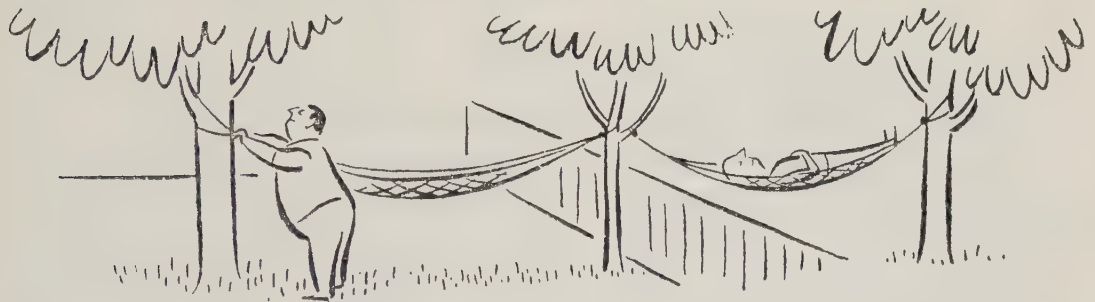
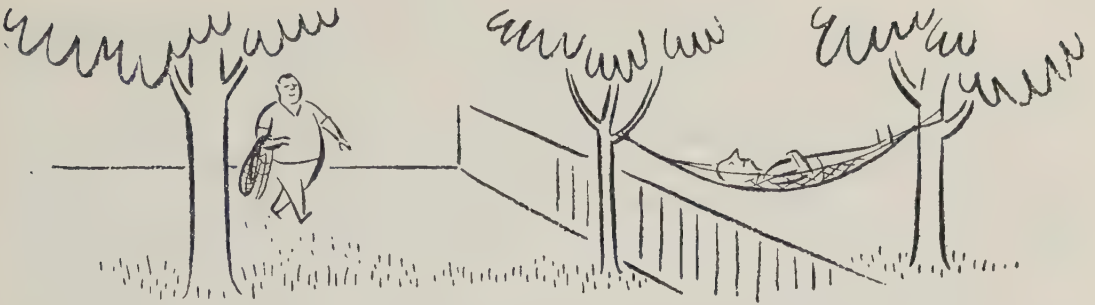
The engine started again, roared indignantly, tendered its resignation, withdrew it under protest and went sulkily on. It grated audibly. You could hear the loose parts dashing around inside and getting in the way of the others. The steward came out and went down to the tail. He had the confident, professional look of a surgeon hurrying out to his car for another bag of instruments. Presently he returned with something in a cup. The roar turned to a nasal whine. A paper bag, bowling over and over and spurting every time it got the wind inside it, crossed the tarmac and disappeared from view. It must be blowing pretty hard to make it go like that. The starboard engine was still half-heartedly at it.

Then the port engine joined in with the elaborately modest confidence of Cambridge joining Oxford on the Tideway, and the two ran together in breathless tumult for about a quarter of a minute. Wherever the contents of the cup had gone, it seemed to have done good. The loose parts, though still audible, had a smoother sound, like water-worn pebbles.

The port engine stopped. The other wobbled and coughed once or twice, like a man caught singing an extra verse to a hymn. Someone gave it a boost and it went on, though more unwillingly than ever. I swallowed thickly. The hyoscin in the pill was making my throat dry.

The port engine came in again. The two ran for the best part of a minute and stopped together. The steward came out empty-handed and hurried to the rear. A passenger hailed him and he stopped, leaning over the seat. He spoke with smiling inaudibility, looked at his wrist-watch with a keen gesture, spoke again, smiled and bustled on.

Then the engines started and worked up together. The plane stirred and shook itself, and we were off. It raced across the empty aerodrome with the surprising speed of a winged bird, but was obviously incapable of flight. The starboard engine was losing metal very fast now; the nacelle must be almost empty. It was quite dark.



The plane heaved itself limply over the boundary wall at the end of the runway and wobbled upwards. It felt as safe as a box-kite pulled into an erratic breeze by a small boy tiring quickly over uneven ground.

The words NO SMOKING disappeared from the screen, but I didn't want to smoke. My belt felt very tight under my midriff, but the FASTEN SEAT BELTS was still lit up. That couldn't be normal. The plane pitched and roared uneasily above the reeling lights. The steward said "Barley sugar?" I said "Could I have a brandy?" and the thin-faced man followed suit. There was a lot of barley sugar left, but the bar did well. The lights dropped away below. I found the prospect of falling five thousand feet instead of a few hundred immeasurably reassuring. Conversation became more general.

I half expected cheering crowds at Northolt, but no one seemed surprised at our arrival. It was as undemonstrative as Euston on a Sunday. The thin-faced man was met by an attentive little wife and two admiring children. "Yes," I heard him say, "very comfortable. Dull really." I wondered if they could smell the brandy. "Just like a Green Line really," he said.

P. M. HUBBARD

Surprise

THIS evening I bought my paper from a new firm, a sharp-faced man in a maroon velvet hat. The old firm, a hundred yards farther down the station approach, has been getting more and more insulting lately; only yesterday, just because I took a few moments making my selection, he reviled me loudly and directed me ironically to the nearest public reading-room. But that alone would not have lost him my custom; it was just that it tipped the scales in favour of the sharp-faced man, who had already attracted my favourable notice by his method of delivering his wares—folded over, with the front-page headlines intriguingly concealed.

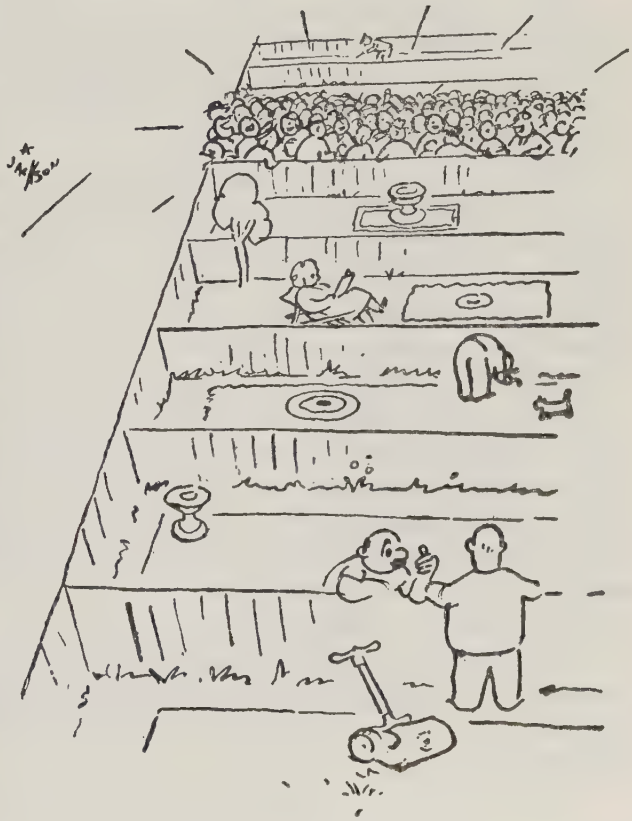
It may be a feeling for the dramatic in me, or a survival of childish delight in small, pleasurable surprises properly timed, but I prefer to choose my own moment for taking in world affairs at a glance. As the wheels of the home-bound train begin to turn I unfold my paper and take them in. That is the time for it. Not before.

I have lately become increasingly aware of a conspiracy to defraud me of this moment, and the old firm has become more and more a party to it. He has always tried to trap me by handing over my evening paper with its headlines uppermost, but I usually managed to look away just in time, even if it did mean missing his copper-blackened paw and dropping my three-halfpence in the gutter; *and* picking it up: the old firm never picks up a client's money, but clicks his tongue and exchanges resigned grimaces with the nearest barrow-boy, muttering irritably. Later he borrowed a sales trick from the movies: he didn't actually rasp out "Read all abah

it," a line known only to script-writers and studio sound-equipment, but he began to go in for such provocative innuendoes as "Cabinet bomb shell" and "Week-end meat crisis." These throaty announcements, noncommittal though they were, sufficed to rob my moment of its bloom. Sometimes they forced me to read at once, there in the middle of the pavement, if only to find out whether it was the Rations or the Russians who were in the news; but even if I resisted this the damage was done: I had approximate advance information of the day's place in history, and there could be no full-scale revelation.

Recently the old firm had gone further. Too far. When a man takes to hanging a copy of the paper round his neck on a piece of string and a paper-clip it is no longer possible to do business with him and preserve the desired ignorance of global developments. There was nothing for it but to end our long association.

In patronizing the sharp-faced man there is, I find, a second advantage. His pitch is nearer to the station, and therefore offers a much diminished risk, after thrusting the discreetly-folded paper into one's brief-case, of involuntarily reading the headline in someone else's copy. Most Londoners on the way to the station are members of the conspiracy against me. They dawdle aimlessly along in front of me, holding their front pages aloft, so that I can't help reading over their shoulders. (I've missed my train before now, trying not to catch up with a man whose headline, even at a distance, said "WORMS DROPPED ON HARRIMAN'S AIDE.") Or they emerge suddenly from a tobacconist's, with the back page to their noses and the front page pushed against mine. Or they alight backwards from a bus and stand so directly in my path that the item "TWINS BOUND IN GEM GRAB" penetrates my consciousness before I can sidestep into a flower-seller. Sometimes they cunningly let the paper slip from under their arms to lie outspread at my feet. Even through half-closed lashes—a defensive mechanism set up automatically



"GARDEN PARTY AT No. 197"

in such circumstances—I am obliged to read, as I step over it, “——IN NEW THREAT TO THE WEST,” or “MOSCOW WILL ATTACK IF——.” Why, I have even known them stop abruptly to pick some imaginary object from the forecourt cobbles, so that the paper jutting out of their side pocket is turned through ninety degrees into the inescapably legible horizontal, shouting at me: “——VAN IN COMMONS UPROAR.”

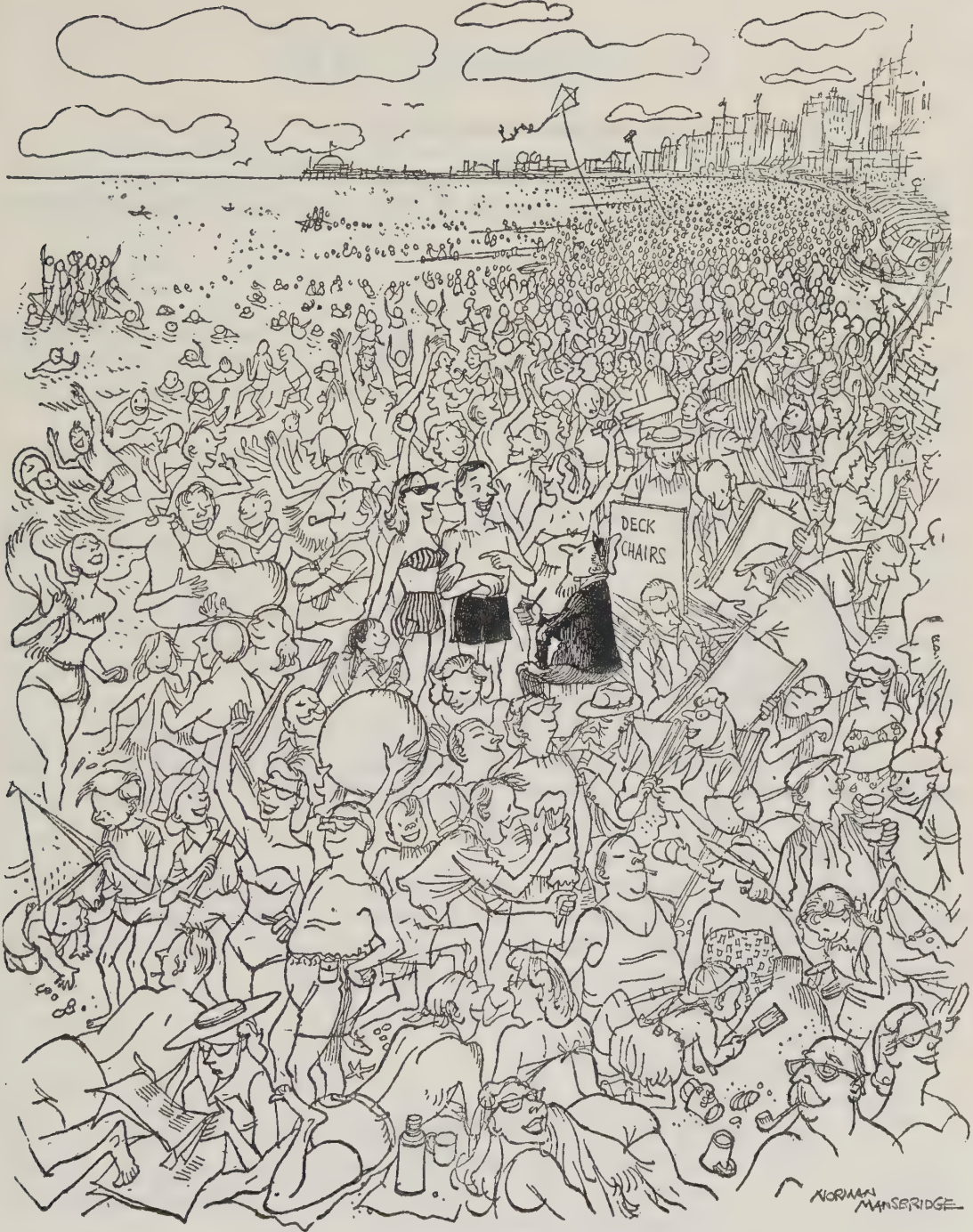
But the sharp-faced man, noble fellow, operates from under the fretwork canopy of the very station itself. I had no sooner tucked my paper away this afternoon than I was safely inside and going down the straight. The ticket-inspector on the barrier did his best to trap me, turning suddenly from what I had taken to be official business and cracking open a crisp new front page right under my nose, but I shied away adroitly and sustained nothing worse than a graze from a hair-tonic advertisement. My luck held all the way up the platform. It was a warm day, and that was in my favour. The pinkly scrubbed financiers in the first class coaches, who have in the past so often flattened their headlines against the window when they saw me coming, were already dozing over their tea and biscuits, unaware that opportunity was passing them by. Even that wily and stubborn conspirator, the man with the rimless pince-nez, who from his seat opposite mine in the first half of the second centre-aisle coach has tried to ensnare me with every trick that ingenuity could devise, even to the length of pushing the front page at me as I entered the compartment and crying “What about this, then, eh?”—even he was asleep, with his chin on his chest and his headlines on the rack.

I was more than usually eager, then, for the wheels to turn to-day. Not only had the moment of revelation been reached unscathed, but it seemed to me that, by dealing with the sharp-faced man, and keeping my wits no more than ordinarily about me for ambush and booby-trap, I might look forward to a new golden era of unimpaired headline-reading routine. I gazed ahead of me, at a faded view of Hastings promenade. On the platform were detachments of the enemy flaunting their papers enticingly as they waited for the next train. On my other flank, guerrillas moved stealthily along the corridor of the train on the adjoining track, ready to catch me yet, should I make the smallest slip.

As the whistle blew and the train jolted obediently I opened my paper with forced deliberation, and sighed happily. It was plain from a first flickered glance that the news was something big; it was acclaimed full page width, and in a double line: “RECORD CROWDS MAY SEE CRAZY DUKE BEAT SHY CHAMBERMAID AT SUNDOWN.”

Or rather, as I realized a moment later, “Sandown.” What it amounted to was that the sharp-faced man, for all his other virtues, had sold me a six-hours-old racing edition.

J. B. BOOTHROYD



"YOU REMEMBER US? WE WERE HERE LAST YEAR"

It's Slower by Lift

"MALLOW and Marsh?" echoed the hall-porter. "They're on the fourth floor. There's a self-operating lift opposite or you can walk. You'd do better to walk."

"Four floors!" I said.

"That lift's tricky," he replied.

"I'm used to lifts," I said, and prodded the calling-button. The lift appeared at once. I smiled at the hall-porter—not patronizingly, but as if to imply that in my opinion a child could operate so simple a mechanism. But when I turned to enter the lift I found it had already departed.

"It's gone," said the hall-porter. "You wasn't quick enough." This was hard to deny, so I said nothing and called the lift again.

The hall-porter sang among his letters. "Keep your finger on the button," he said gaily, "or you'll be here all day." I pushed my finger fiercely into the wall and held it there.

The lift arrived after some minutes, and this time I stepped inside without delay. I pressed the fourth-floor button. The lift shuddered uncertainly and then began a palsied descent to the basement. Through the ground-floor window I caught sight of the hall-porter slowly shaking his head.

We lurched to a standstill. Before I could reach the controls the doors opened and seven sturdy men and a wheelbarrow of cement entered with a rush. I was engulfed and pinned against a side wall. The man next to me put his lips to my ear and shouted "Where you going, guv?"

"He's going up," said a voice.

We stopped at the ground floor, and the man in charge of the wheelbarrow shouted "All out!" As the people behind me started to press forward I said "I don't want the ground floor." The next moment I was carried through the doors and into the hall. By the time I returned the lift had gone.

"I see you're back again," said the hall-porter.

"Yes," I said shortly.

"You're dead-set on riding up?"

"Dead-set," I answered.

"Well, I suppose I'd better help." His whole demeanour became brisk and masterful. "Listen!" he commanded, putting his ear to the door. "It's stopped at the third. Ah! Timms' voice. He's the upstairs messenger and he's taking the tea to the fourth." The ancient machinery rumbled.

"Caught him!" he said, and the lift stopped. "You see," he added in kindly

explanation, "you can break the circuit by pulling down the door handle. Now to bring him down." He pressed the calling-button.

"Bring him down?" I said. "Couldn't we wait until he has finished his journey?"

"It saves time this way," the hall-porter pointed out.

"But do you mean he can't do anything about it?" I asked.

"He's got his hands full. Tray. He can't do a thing."

I was impressed by the hall-porter's grasp of the situation, but I still felt uneasy.

"Do you think he'll mind?" I said.

"Mind!" he said. "He'll be fuming."

We heard Timms' voice long before the lift arrived. There was no doubt that the unexpected change in the direction of the lift had annoyed him.

The hall-porter opened the doors. "Going up?" he inquired. Timms rushed out.

"You just wait until I put this tray down," he shouted. We moved speedily into the lift.

"Very poor sort," observed the hall-porter. "He always carries on alarm-
ing when I do this to
him. Can't stand a joke."

At that moment the lift stopped with a jolt and started to move downwards.

"That's Timms," announced the hall-porter. "Watch the correct counter-move." He pressed the emergency stop, then the fourth-floor button. The lift ascended once again. The next ten minutes were devoted to move and counter-move, and the lift changed direction seventeen times. I was a little dazed, or I might have appreciated more fully the skill and cunning of both players. At the end of it Timms appeared to have tired. I was breathless. The hall-porter was triumphant.



"His tea's getting cold," he said. "I thought for a minute it was going to be stalemate."

"What next?" I asked.

"No need to worry now," said the hall-porter, "we're almost clear of the third already." Just then the lift stopped again. The hall-porter flew to the controls.

"We're stuck," he said at length. "It won't go." I decided to take the situation in hand myself, and rang the alarm bell.

"You've done it now," he said. "That'll bring the electrician up here and he'll create."

"Create what?" I asked coldly.

"Something awful," he replied.

The electrician was a man of slow reflexes, and half an hour passed before he sought the cause of the alarm. As he opened the door I bent down and put my face to the aperture between the bottom of the lift and the top of the doorway.

"We're stuck," I said.



"DID YOU NOTICE WHAT I DID WITH THE HARD-BOILED EGGS?"

"So that's it," he said. "I thought for a minute the cable had broke. You'd better squeeze through and climb down on my shoulders."

It was a difficult operation, but with the electrician dragging at my lapels and the hall-porter pushing mightily from the rear I emerged at last and tottered up the stairs. I knocked at the door of Mallow and Marsh. The secretary answered.

"I'm Clegg," I said. "I have an appointment——"

"I'm afraid the office is empty," she interrupted. "Both Mr. Mallow and Mr. Marsh left some time ago."

"I got stuck in the lift," I said.

"How odd," she remarked—and gave me a smile, as if to indicate that in her opinion a child could operate so simple a mechanism.

T. F. DAVENEY

ANNA

An analeptic puts you in good heart:
 An anagram makes rat-heel out of leather:
 An analytic takes a thing apart:
 An anaconda crushes it together.

An analect is part of a selection:
 An analogue's a thing you reason from:
 An anamnesis is a recollection:
 An anapæst's the one that goes tiddi-pom.

Anacolutha lack a proper link:
 The analgesics put you out of pain:
 The anabases climb out of the drink:
 The anabaptists pop you in again.

Anacreontics are a kind of song
 (Unlike *Anna's the name of names for me*):
 Anna Karenina is immensely long:
 And sixteen annas equal one rupee.

P. M. HUBBARD

THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'

MUST I GO DOWN TO THE SEA AGAIN?

In spite of what Mr. Masfield may say
I cannot display
The least enthusiasm for flung spray,

Nor, as the reader will readily assume,
For blown spume.

When the wind's like a whetted knife
I tend to lose interest in life.

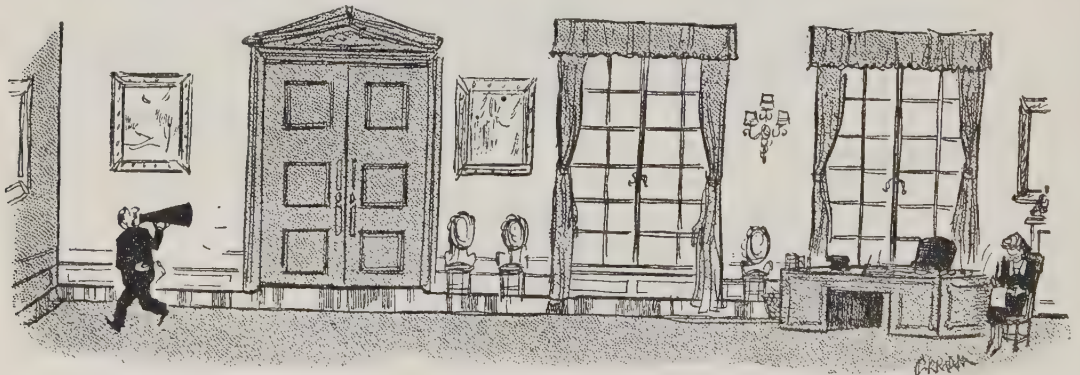
A grey mist on the sea's face
Seems to me conspicuously out of place.

As for a grey dawn breaking—
Anyone can have it for the taking.

Furthermore (with all due respects
To the B.B.C.'s effects)
I find the sea-gulls' crying
Trying,
Likewise the white clouds flying.

Altogether
In this sort of weather
What I deplore most about the seaside
Is its regrettable lack of a leaside.

E. V. MILNER



QUESTION AND ANSWER

Breathes there the Man with Soul so dead
 Who never to himself hath said
 "My Wife deserves a Day in Bed,
 Poor thing, she's quite worn out;
 The Household I will gladly run,
 Will for the nonce the Office shun,
 Forsake my Desk and morning Bun
 And set her Work about;



The Children's Playmate will I be,
 Will get the Breakfast, Luncheon, Tea
 And Supper for the Family,
 Will sweep and scour and stoke,
 Will wash of Dishes ninety-four,
 Of Laundry Items even more,
 And with each Caller at the Door
 Will crack a merry Joke;



Serene shall be my Day and bright
 From dewy Morn to dewy Night,
 A Cycle, yea, of calm Delight
 And ordered Happiness;
 While to my dormant wife accrues
 More Energy than she can use;
 I'll find her now and break the news"?



Well, very likely, Yes.

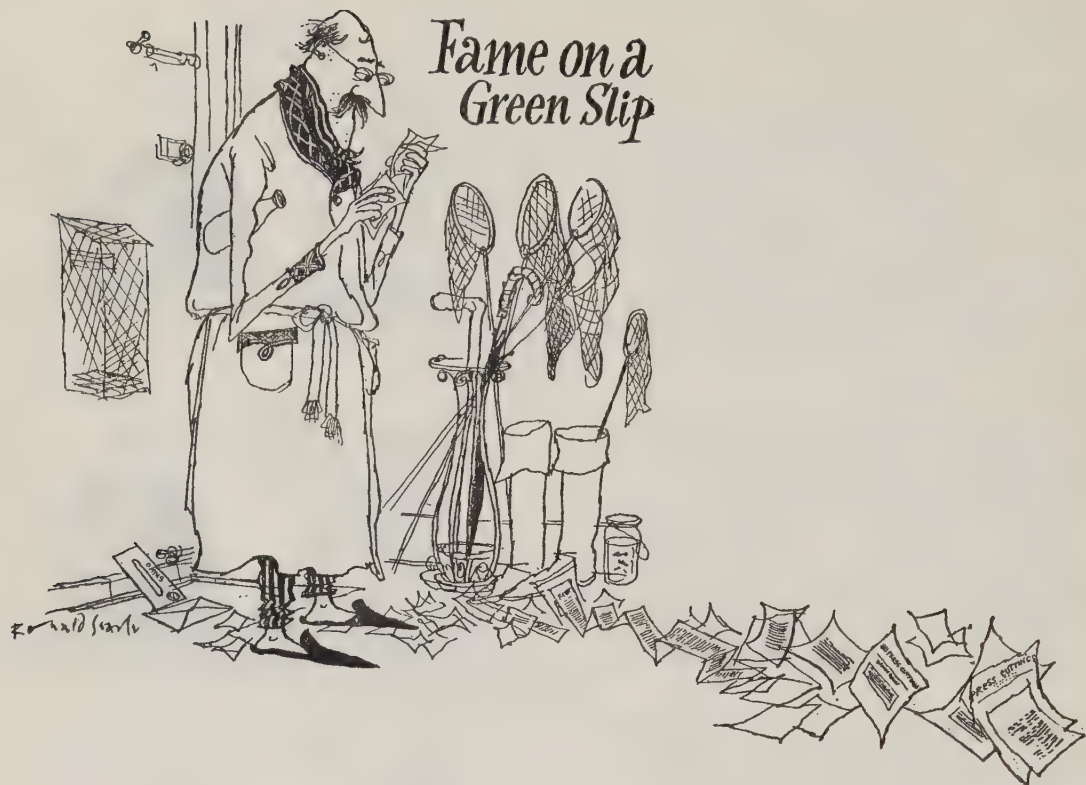
ANDE

GENIUS

A scientist living at Staines
 Is searching with infinite pains
 For a new type of sound
 Which he hopes, when it's found,
 Will travel much faster than planes.

R. J. P. HEWISON





A PRESS CUTTINGS AGENCY

I AM a mild man, and my name is Samuel Welkins. I have never married and there are often crumbs on my waistcoat. In the hall of my little flat there are no hockey-sticks or elephant-rifles, but only the best shrimping-nets that money can buy. The one I call Bessie has a telescopic shaft. During the week I am something very small in the City, I have never quite discovered what, but it keeps me in nets and jam-jars and on Friday night when I step into the bus in Leadenhall Street I am the happiest man in England.

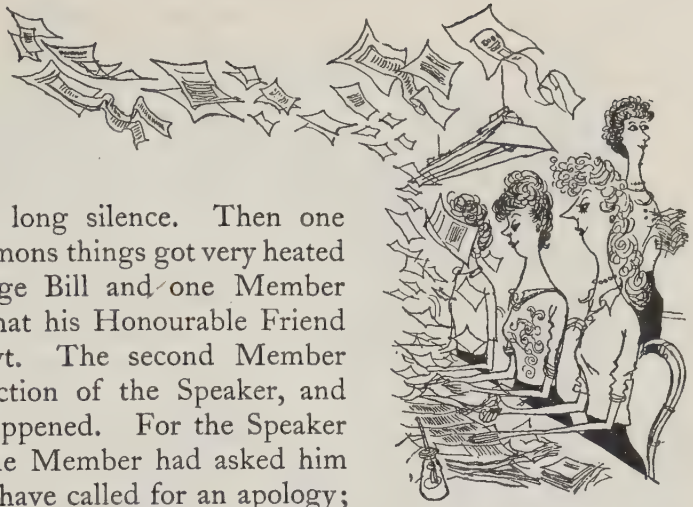
Of course you cannot go on spending all your week-ends with newts for nearly forty years without almost becoming one yourself. One unforgettable Sunday I was lying in a blizzard in some bulrushes near Chipping Sodbury when I made a discovery about the private life of the newt, perhaps a little complicated to go into here, but of the utmost importance, I felt, at a time when moral values were slipping downhill so fast. It took me five years to complete my *Preliminary Observations of a Newt-Watcher*, and then I went to see a publisher. Then I went to see other publishers, and in the end the book was published. A man on my bus who writes novels about vampires told me I ought to subscribe to a Press Cuttings agency, so

that I would know how rude reviewers had been. The most I hoped for was a few words in *The Aquarist and Pondkeeper*, but at last he persuaded me.

After that there was a long silence. Then one evening in the House of Commons things got very heated over the Sutton Hoo Sewage Bill and one Member shouted across the House that his Honourable Friend had the mentality of a newt. The second Member angrily demanded the protection of the Speaker, and then an astonishing thing happened. For the Speaker replied that if the Honourable Member had asked him yesterday he would certainly have called for an apology; but since then he had enjoyed the wonderful experience of sitting up all night over a book by a Mr. Samuel Welkins which shed such a remarkable light on the unsuspectedly beautiful character of the newt that now he could think of nothing more flattering than to be compared with one. Well, naturally all the reporters rushed to the telephone, and next morning—there was no big murder on, or anything—I had the headlines practically to myself. And for weeks my letter-box was so stuffed with Press cuttings that the postman had to leave little piles of them on the mat.

It didn't occur to me for some time to wonder—I do hope I am not being boring?—how the cuttings agency had tracked me down in so many papers from all over the British Isles, but when it did it began to prey on my mind. Was there a hulking electronic brain with a passion for names, or were there superhuman beings so utterly superhuman that even while reading *The Aberdeen Angus* they could remember that Samuel Welkins, who had written a book about newts, was one of the family? So one morning when things were even quieter than usual in the City I put on my goloshes and went to find out.

It wasn't a bit what I'd expected. First of all there was a friendly proprietor, who wasn't any more excited than if he'd been making margarine or pencils, and then there were several big rooms, which sounded like madly busy barbers' shops, for all the girls had scissors and were clicking them furiously. Each room had a lot of long tables, and at their head sat a kind of N.C.O. with a pencil, flicking through a paper faster than she could possibly read it and making little marks. Each table took on certain subjects, for instance Shipping and Finance, and when the N.C.O. was combing *The Financial Times* and came on an item headed "Tramlines Sag," she remembered there were nineteen subscribers anxious about tramlines and scribbled "Tramlines 19." The girls beside her then made nineteen cuttings, and the junior girls beside them, whose memories were still not quite up to containing five thousand

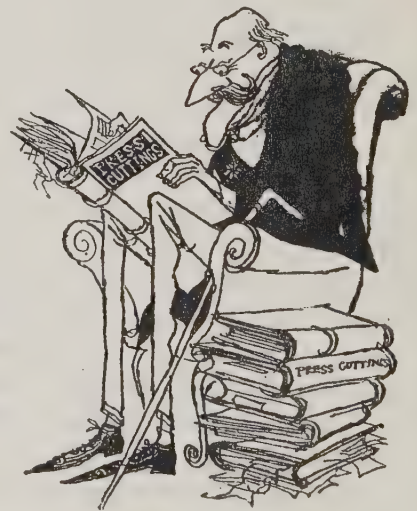


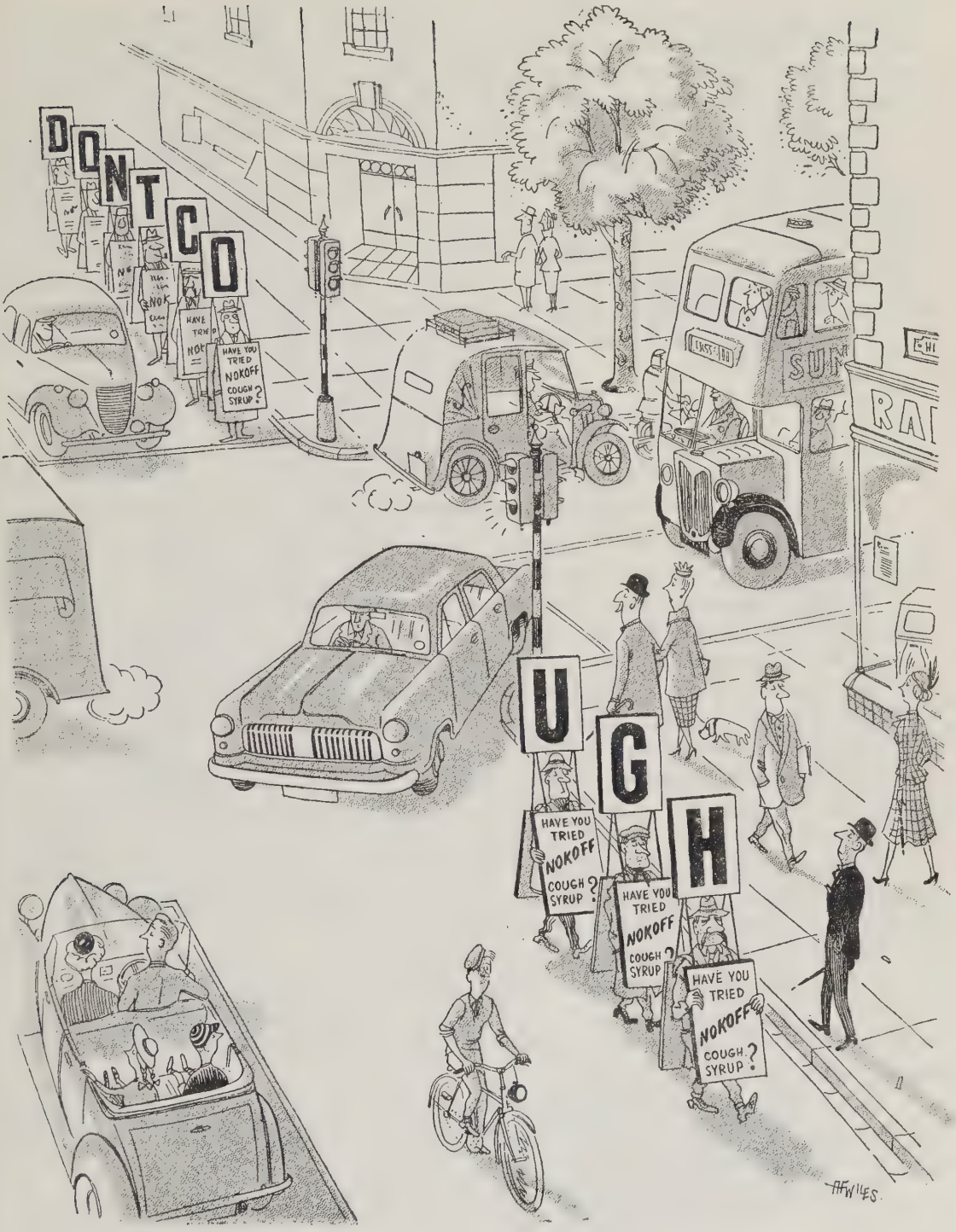


will be marked "H.C.," for Horseless Carriage. About one hundred and twenty dailies and five hundred weeklies are filleted in this way, apart from the magazines.

Everybody was very kind. I asked one of the senior girls to recite the lists. She said she couldn't, but that after three years' daily absorption it's all inside her head, and in case she has a bad day there's an inter-com for inquiries. Every morning at eight-thirty the proprietor comes on to a loud-hailer system and tells the girls that Mr. Samuel Welkins has been elected, Sir Reginald Quoit has passed beyond the reach of the Press, and Mrs. Peardrop no longer wants stuff on Anglo-Saxon pin-cushions and instead is bending her mind to soil erosion. And as if that isn't hard enough, many subscribers qualify their demands; an M.P. may ask for all references to him except in his constituency, where he already sees the papers.

The idea of a Press Cuttings agency is believed to have occurred first to a sharp youth in Paris, who noticed a paper-woman on the Left Bank charging unheard-of prices to an artist, and discovered she had collected all the editions in which the man was mentioned. To begin with, subscribers' interests were chiefly social: Mrs. Millamant wanted confirmation for her grandchildren that she really had dined with Mr. Gladstone. Now that all of us are much too busy wondering where the next lunch is coming from, that sort of thing is dying out, and most of the individual subscribers are professional people, who want to know either about public reaction to their work or about their pet subject. But far the greatest number of cuttings now goes to big business and the Ministries, and as it has become impossible to sell a mousetrap or reduce the bacon ration without the help of a public relations officer this is quite understandable. It took big business a long time to catch on, but even in the early days a steeplejack





AFWILES.

subscribed for information on church spires said to be dilapidated, and in one month twelve thousand births were reported to a manufacturer of prams. It's quite easy for girls to take newts in their stride if they are constantly being asked for all opinions on the Deluge and all theories as to the probable site of the Garden of Eden.

If you are the sort of person who gets himself in the papers the fees can mount up. Shaw and Barrie decided they were spending too much on cuttings, and devised a scheme to reduce their expenses. Barrie put Shaw into a forgotten piece called *Punch*, but all Shaw did was to write *Press Cuttings*, now almost equally forgotten. Bishop Hensley Henson (a subscriber) called this agency "a wonderful institution for harnessing human vanity to the advantage of human greed," and being only a simple newt-lover I cannot be expected to improve on that.

But I do hope I have made everything pond-clear.

ERIC KEOWN

Footwear

I HAD no intention, when I went up to London the other day, of buying a pair of shoes, but I met Sympson in Piccadilly Circus, gleamingly shod.

"I've just bought them," he said, looking down with pride at the shining toe-caps, "at a little shop round the corner. Export rejects at a bargain price."

Glancing down at my shoes I was grieved to see how senile they looked. It is with shoes as with men. They pass so imperceptibly from youth to age that those who live with them every day hardly notice what has happened.

"I was going to ask you to come with me to the cinema," said Sympson, "but the thought of walking through the vestibule with a man wearing shoes only fit for a jumble-sale appals me. Those things you've got on will fall apart at any moment, so why not replace them cheaply while you've got the chance?"

He took me to the little shop round the corner, and I sat down in a chair and a man pulled off my old shoes with an expression of ill-concealed disgust, and measured my foot and told me that I was nine-and-a-half.

"Nine," I said. "I've always been nine."

"Nine-and-a-half," he said brusquely. I did not like his tone.

"He's right," said Sympson. "I'm nine-and-a-half myself, and when we were together in the War I often borrowed your shoes, which I couldn't have done if you'd worn nines . . ."

I am a fairly good-tempered man as a rule, but I am not prepared to be dictated to about the size of my feet, and I left the shop five minutes later wearing a smart pair of black nines.

Sympson had free tickets for *Come Hither, Lucy* at the Rostoria. I have met quite a lot of people since who were pleased with the film, but I did not enjoy myself



"THE CORPORATION DECLINED TO ELABORATE YESTERDAY ON THE MEANS BY WHICH THE DESCRIPTION WOULD BE GIVEN, BUT SAID THEY WOULD 'NOT NECESSARILY' SEND THEIR OWN OBSERVERS."—Daily Telegraph

at all. We arrived in the middle, and I was still trying to sort out the characters when I became aware that both feet were becoming red-hot. The only hope of relieving my agony was to remove the shoes, but I had to do it without letting Sympson know what was going on, because I did not want to give him the chance of reviving his absurd theory that I was a nine-and-a-half.

I managed to unlace them by firmly gripping each knee in turn and raising it high enough to jerk the end of the lace with the other hand, but wriggling them off was a long job, and by the time I had got them both off the film had come to an end and another film, which Sympson said he did not think much of, had started.

"Let's give it a chance," I said, quietly wriggling one of my feet back into a shoe, "it may get more exciting in a minute."

It took me twenty-five minutes to get both shoes on again and laced up, and I was only just in time.

"I can't stand any more of this," said Sympson, rising to his feet. "And if we go now we can just catch the five-fifteen home."

As we walked out through the vestibule we had to pass a long queue of people waiting for the cheaper seats. People in queues usually look rather glum, but this lot seemed full of the joy of life, and laughed heartily as we stalked by.

"Rather rude," said Sympson as we hailed a taxi, "the way they stared at us."

We crossed our legs in the debonair manner one does cross one's legs in taxis, and noticed for the first time that while I wore a brown export reject on my right foot and a black export reject on my left foot, Sympson wore a brown export reject on his left foot and a black export reject on his right foot.

D. H. BARBER

End-of-Season Talk in the City

"THE late cut," said Mossbait, "properly executed, is movement given a lyrical form. You never saw Arthur Shrewsbury, did you?"

"Neither did you," I said, defiantly.

"Ah well," said Mossbait, sighing for both of us. "One never sees the late cut nowadays. There is the chop—a sort of I-did-it-with-my-little-hatchet stroke, and there is the snick, which is the product of a pitiable inability to recognize the one that is going away—but the veritable late cut, never."

He halted, and the passers-by eddied about him, for we were in Cheapside at high noon on a Monday.

"Like this," said Mossbait, performing a fanfaronade with his rolled umbrella, "the bat drawn back as if for a normal defensive shot——"

"Mind my eye!" said a passing citizen.

"—and poised above the right shoulder—I beg your pardon—until the ball is



"It's a dreadful party, George—I'm glad now we weren't invited."

clearly seen to be passing the off-stump, then—confound these people!—the weight transferred to the right leg, the right foot pointed towards third man, and then, flick! Sorry! Down on the ball like a whip—just enough to deflect it to the ground and to steer it between first and second——”

“Nay,” said a voice, “tha’s nivver sin oor Len, laad.”

The owner of the voice, in whom the loss of one eye had been compensated by a peculiarly penetrating quality in the glance of the survivor, shook his head sorrowfully.

“Caught, tha’d be,” he said, “catched in t’gully. Gimme yon,” he said, wresting the umbrella from its owner. “Nah,” he continued, “‘ere’s t’wicket, and yon’s ball, coomin’ fastish-like.”

Without moving feet or head he delivered his smashing blow like a man using a pole-axe.

A youth on a bicycle stopped to watch us.

“What’s that supposed to be?” he demanded in a combative tone.

“Laate coot o’ course,” said the executant.

“Get away,” said the cyclist, propping his mount against the kerb. “Look—I’ll show yer . . . Here’s the wicket,” he said, showing us a lamp-post, “and this line’s the crease, see?” He crouched in a simian manner, and the umbrella creaked ominously in his grip. “Ball comes up on the off—okey-doke?—and yer cut it—like this!”

The ribs of the umbrella sang tinnily against the iron post.

“Rot,” said Mossbait. “Straight into point’s hands.”

“Cor,” said the cyclist, “when did you last play cricket? No such thing as point nowadays.”

Mossbait elbowed aside the intervening spectators.

“I’ll *show* you,” he said, in the patient voice of a man arguing with an imbecile.

“The right leg across so——”

“But,” interposed an elderly clergyman, “if the ball should happen to come in from the off, you are plumb leg-before.”

“I should spot the off-break.”

“Ah,” said the cyclist, “wot about the chinaman?”

“Rhodes,” said the one-eyed man, “‘e wor the lad. Tha’d nivver spot *en*.”

“I’m not helpless,” cried Mossbait. “There’s no rule which says the batsman has to be bound hand and foot. If it comes in, all I do is to play down the line of the ball, and drop it in front of me.”

“Oh yes,” said a man in a cook’s hat and apron, “that’s all right with slow bowlers, but what about fast?”

“I move much quicker,” said Mossbait.

“Now Jack Hobbs,” said the cook, detaching a long, lean knife from his girdle, “Jack Hobbs—and, mindjew, I mean the Jack Hobbs of thirty-odd years ago—he done it like this.” He thrust out his hands, grasping the knife, and the now considerable crowd performed the vacillating manœuvres attributed to the army of Lars

Porsena. "None of this waving and whirling and slashing—just held it there, and give it a little tap as it went by. Good cricketer, Jack Hobbs," he added.

"You never seen Bobby Abel," said a little dirty man who was carrying a newspaper and an empty birdcage.

"Who hasn't?" inquired the cook.

"Well, 'ave you?"

"Course!"

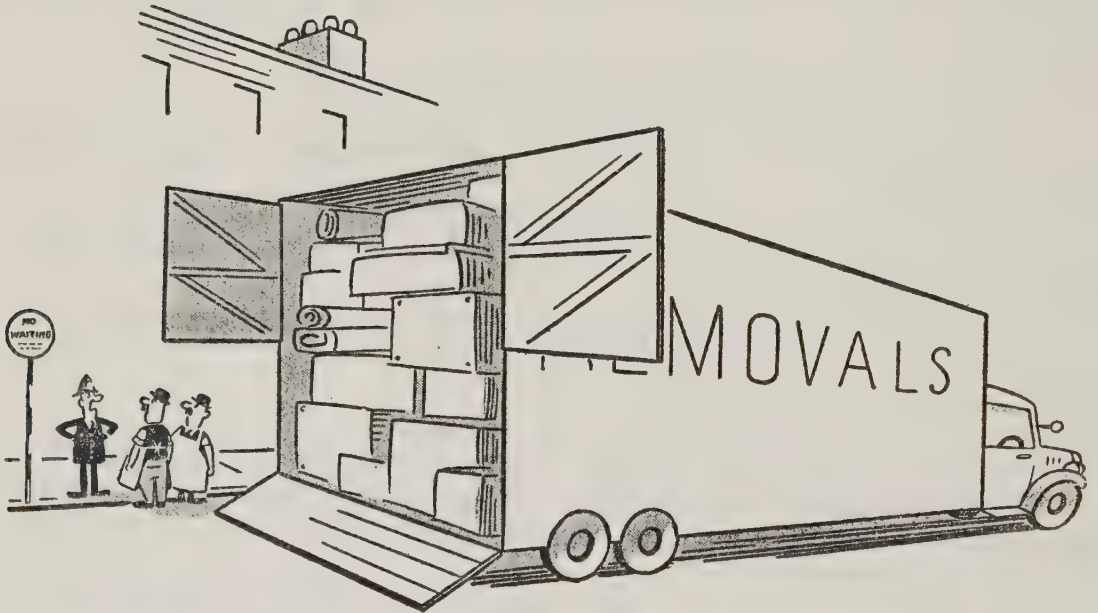
"Garn!"

"Now then," said the voice of authority, "what's all this?"

"It's all right, officer," said Mossbait, retrieving his umbrella. "I was just showing my friend a late cut."

"Late cut?" said the policeman, his eyes gleaming. "I've been watching you, sir. Was that what you were trying to do?" With a brisk movement he drew his truncheon.

"Here, I say," said Mossbait, wildly, "good heavens——"



"YOU COME UNDER LOADIN' AND UNLOADIN'! TWENTY MINUTES. LOOK SHARP"

"You got your feet all wrong," said the policeman kindly, "and you didn't bring your bat down sharp enough." He arranged his feet with care, cast a suspicious glance round at the field, and swung his truncheon slowly upwards as if for a normal defensive shot . . .

G. H. M. NICHOLS

Presentation

"I AM sure the Board will heartily endorse my expression of our deep respect and lasting affection for Mr. Goodsall, and join with me in wishing him a long, happy and fruitful retirement. This little token of our regard will do much, I think, to assure him of the esteem in which he is held."

"Hear, hear."

"Mr. Chairman, Members of the Board. In voicing my support of all that our President has said regarding the . . . ah . . . worth of our retiring Secretary, may I just add my small quota of appreciation. I have known Mr. Goodsall for a number of years, both professionally and in . . . ah . . . private life, and I may say that for kindness, patience, generosity, business astuteness and devotion to duty I have met very few to surpass him. In all business dealings he has shown himself to be honest, straightforward, forbearing, just, unselfish and . . . ah . . . effective. He has served the Board in its best interests for many years, and has not spared himself in the furtherance of its progress. He is more than worthy of those who preceded him, and a shining example to those who will succeed him."

"Hear, hear."

"Mr. Chairman, Members of the Board. Though a comparative newcomer to the Board—I was elected, Mr. Chairman, only five and a half years ago—I would consider it remiss of me if I did not add my humble share to the remarks of appreciation that have already been passed. During the short time I have worked with him I have been continually impressed by Mr. Goodsall's tirelessness in the execution of his work, his never-failing good temper, his tact and understanding, his sympathy towards the interests of those whom we endeavour to serve, and the business acumen which he has always displayed. May his retirement be a long and happy one, garnished with many tender memories of the years spent with the Board!"

"Hear, hear."

"Mr. Chairman, Members of the Board. I am the last to encourage repetition of any sort. But on this auspicious occasion I would feel it an opportunity missed if I failed to give voice to my personal regard for Mr. Goodsall's attributes. For courtesy, good intent, conscientiousness and—ahem—all-round ability it would be

well-nigh impossible to find his equal. I have known him since—ahem—far-off days, and my admiration for him has never flagged. Our affectionate memories of him will, I trust, be similarly long-lived.”

“Hear, hear.”

“Now, if Mr. Goodsall will step forward, I shall be pleased to present him with this handsome fishing rod and tackle, on behalf of the Board, as a testimony of our lasting gratitude and good wishes. Mr. Goodsall.”

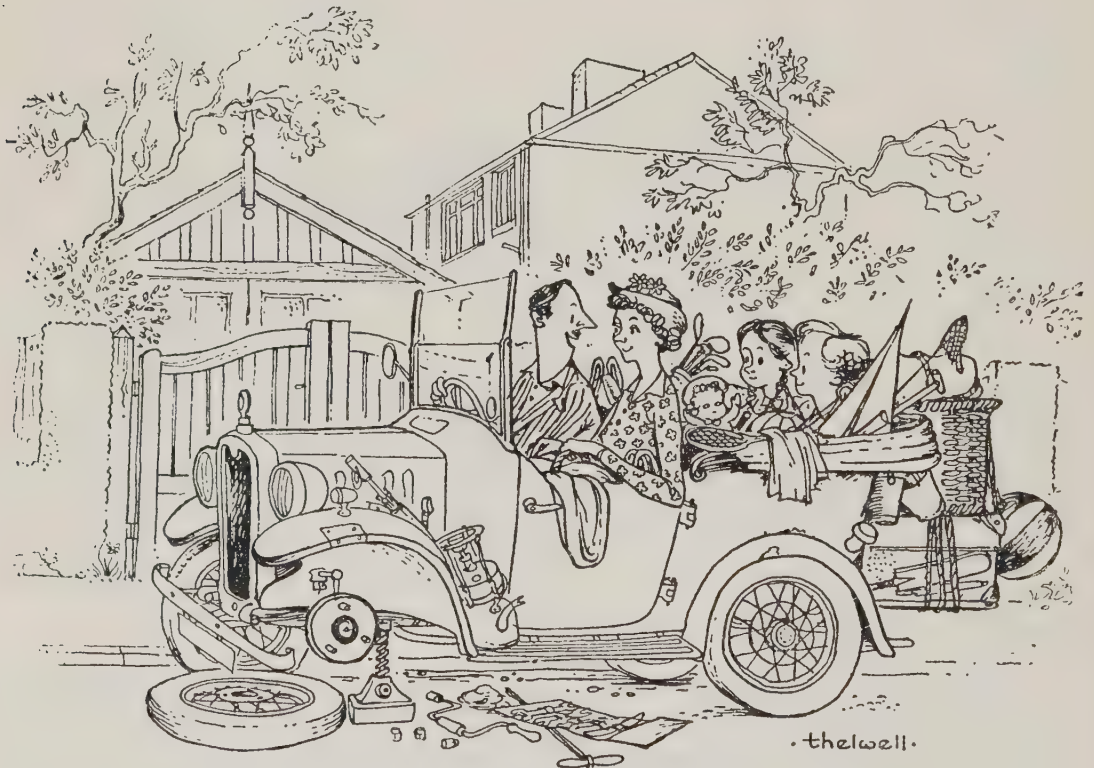
“MR. GOODSALL!”

“Osbert, where is Mr. Goodsall?”

“Mr. Goodsall was unable to attend the meeting, sir. He sent his apologies earlier this afternoon.”

“Confound it! If that isn't typical of the man.”

M. J. RUSSELL



“NOW, YOU'RE ALL SURE YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ANYTHING?”

First Night

"I'VE had to put you in Room Fifteen next door to Miss Brittain and her Music Appreciators," said the Principal. And as I tried to thank him it seemed that he looked at me with compassion. "But you'll be all right if no one is learning the trombone. They had one last year, and I had to move the whole class down to the basement next to Mr. Wheelwright and his Handicrafters. They tended to cancel each other out . . .

"You may find it advisable," the Principal went on, "not to attempt anything too ambitious on your first night. If I might make a suggestion . . ."

"By all means do," I broke in, untwisting my fingers.

" . . . get your class sorted out. You'll find that there are always some who want to sit next the window and others who are unable to settle down unless they are near the door. And to prevent distracting traffic back and forwards at intervals during the session, it's best to clear this up as soon as possible. A colleague once handed me his resignation because he allowed everyone in his class who said they felt a draught to move. Things got to the point where the entire class was huddled round the stove knitting and doing crossword puzzles with their backs towards the lecturer."

The Principal leant back in his chair and closed his eyes.

"Then you must try to *establish* yourself. Many an instructor can hold a class breathless simply by, for instance, the way he uses his chalk. Incidentally, remember that this is a day-school as well as an evening institute. I mean—if you have to use chalk, make sure it's wiped off the board at the end of the evening. We have regular complaints from infant teachers that rather peculiar notes and sometimes illustrations calculated to upset their pupils are still displayed in the morning for impressionable eyes to see."



Hollowood

"WHY NOT DECLARE AND PUT THEM IN BEFORE TEA?"

The Principal took the filling from a ball-pen and looked at it critically. "Have you noticed that these things don't write if they're cold? No matter. Ah, yes—establishing yourself. A well-timed joke can create the intimate atmosphere I should think is necessary for—what is your subject again?"

"Folklore and Witchcraft."

"Yes—and don't frighten them. If your people feel insecure you will never get the results which I've no doubt you deserve." The Principal's eyebrows met, and I relaxed under the momentary softening of the firm lines round his mouth.

"And try to keep the Sandals away from the Coloured Scarves, and Pipe-smokers from the Sandwich-eaters."

"Surely," I ventured, as I unwound my left leg from my right, "a class is—well, just a class. I mean . . ."

"My dear sir, the practised eye, running over a group of students, recognizes those sections which will be obstructionists, seekers-after-the-limelight, arguers and favour-carriers. Then there are the Lonely Hearts, as we call them, people who insist on bringing relatives with them—'just to look on'—so that, it is persuasively explained, they, the students, won't feel out of things. You are very apt in the hurly-burly of opening night to add the hangers-on to your register, thus making my secretary's work of trying to square your figures with the number of fees paid extremely difficult.

"But I mustn't keep you." He rose; I tried to shake hands, picked up my register, and left the room. A group of students came towards me, singing or arguing. I displayed the covers of my register casually so that they could see who I was. I walked on to Room 15. A clock struck seven somewhere. I cleared my throat loudly, opened the door and strode in—bustling, business-like, a personality with a let's-get-down-to-it-air. I said good evening briskly . . .

Perhaps somebody will turn up later in the week.

FERGUSSON MACLAY

THE SONG OF THE SOCK

Special Offer . . . Our "Grip-Top Sock"—Advt.

Give me the gift of a grip-top sock,
 a clip-drape, ship-shape, tip-top sock;
 not your spiv-slick, slap-stick, slipshod stock
 but a plastic, elastic grip-top sock.
 None of your fantastic, slack swap-slop
 from a slapdash, flash cash-haberdash shop;
 not a knick-knack, knit-lock
 knock-kneed knickerbocker sock

with a mock-shot, blot-mottled
 trick tick-tocker clock;
 not a rucked-up, puckered-up flop-top sock
 nor a super-sheer seersucker
 pukka sack-smock sock;
 not a spot-speckled, frog-freckled
 cheap sheikh's sock
 off a hotch-potch, moss-blotch
 botched Scotch block;
 nothing slip-slop, drip-drop,
 flip-flop or clip-clop:
 tip me to a tip-top
 grip-top sock.

ALUN LLEWELLYN

NO SMOKING
 DÉFENSE DE FUMER
 VIETATO FUMARE
 КУРИТЬ ВОСПРЕЩАЕТСЯ
 حنوع التدخين
 SIGARA İÇMEK YASAKTIR
 UNAKATAZWA KUVUTA TUMBAKO



R. Tackson



THE SWIMMING BATH

The bath has automatic gates
 To let you out and in,
 The dressing-rooms are built of brick
 With roofs of painted tin,
 The water can be very thick.
 The walls are very thin.

The water seeps into the bath
 Well laced with germicides;
 Shut in between its sterile shores,
 It has no waves or tides;
 It is as smooth and flat on top
 As on its other sides.

Its mass is rectilinear
 And very faintly green,
 It has a strange, unholy taste
 Like bromide or benzine,
 It froths about the edge, and is
 Aseptic but unclean.

It smells exactly like the stuff
 They use for dipping sheep,
 It makes the rash inhaler cough,
 The reckless diver weep;
 It's tepid in the shallow end
 And freezing in the deep.

The bath is cheerless when it's cold
 And crowded when it's hot;
 It is a noisy, comfortless,
 Unprepossessing spot.
 I buy my ticket by the month
 And go there quite a lot.

P. M. HUBBARD

Yooth Wanted

To Messrs. Plugg and Gaskett, Ltd., Motor Engineers

DEAR MR. PLUGG AND GASKETT,—I see by your advert that you require a junior Clerk that is quick at figures. You say you would prefer one just left School, well I have just left School so perhaps I would do? I was 3rd in my class for Maths and Top for Algebra, but perhaps you would not require any Algebra? I was fairly good at most subjects except English grammar and competition, so perhaps you will let me know? I am very interested in Motor Engineering and I am sure you would find me just right for the job.

Yours truly,
J. HOOP

To Mr. G. R. Hoop

DEAR UNCLE GOERGE,—I am writing to ask if you would do me a favour as Dad says you might. The thing is, I have been trying to get a job in a office now that I have left School and have answered twelve adverts in the paper but don't get any replies, and I think it is properly because I don't know how to write business letters. Dad says as you are a business man and better educated than the rest of the family perhaps you could help me, which I would be grateful if you would Uncle as I am at my wit's end and don't want to become a butchers boy or anything like that. I hope you are well.

Your affectionate nephew,
JAMES

To Messrs. S. Baggs and Son, Coal Merchants

SIRS,—With reference to your advertisement for a junior clerk in *The Evening Bray* of to-day's date, I beg to be considered for the post.

I am a youth of 15 years and, until recently, attended the Central Modern School, where I stood high in most subjects. I was particularly proficient in Arithmetic.

I may add that I am extremely interested in the coal distributive trade and am not without some association with it since my uncle, Mr. G. R. Hoop, is Transport Manager to Messrs. Waites and Scales, Ltd., of Shovelham.

I enclose a copy of my late headmaster's testimonial, which will, I think, give you confidence in my suitability for the post.

I am, Sirs,
Yours respectfully,
J. HOOP

To Mr. J. Hoop

DEAR MARSTER HOOP,—It seams by yore leter you are just the sort a chap wear looking for, tho I ort to exsplane that my litle biznes is not a big consern like the one yore Uncle works for. But now that wear doing a bit more trade we cood do with sumbody to look arfter the books proper. Most of all we needs sumbody as can write proper biznes letters, and by the looks of yore one to me you wood do fine. Drop round enny time.

Yores truely,

SAM BAGGS

C. E. DAVIS

Your Papers, Please!

"MAY I see your driving licence?" asked the policeman.
(Understand me: I am no felon. This was a routine check, at, oddly enough, a check-point.)

"I am sorry," I said, "but you can't. I haven't got it. And," I went on, to forestall him, "I cannot send it either. I have given it away."

"To whom?" asked the policeman, going straight to the point.

"That I am not at liberty to reveal," I said, "but I gave it willingly, partly in the defence of the democratic way of life, and partly to save a woman's name."

The policeman bent down to get a good look at me.

"And where," he demanded, "did all this take place?"

"On a train," I said. "The Green Train . . ."

* * * * *

The Green Train gave two hoots in a carefree manner and slid out of the station. I opened my copy of the Continental edition of the *Lower Tappington Advertiser* at the "fashionable intelligence" page. Suddenly someone kicked my shin. I looked down. Most people would have looked up, but I know where my shins are. Then I looked up.

The lady opposite me lifted her veil for an instant, and I gave a start of surprise. That sweeping red moustache, that monocle, that white scar along the resolute line of the adam's apple—these could belong to no one but "Poodle" St. Clair!

What was he doing there? Where had he got that hat, to say nothing of that feather boa? These and other questions jostled in my mind. Looking round, I perceived that we were alone.

"Poodle!" I cried.

"Hush!" he said, and then, leaning forward confidentially, "Old man, I need your help."

"And you shall have it," I said. "I have not forgotten that night in Keswick."

He gripped my hand. Under the lace glove I felt his iron fingers, tense and vibrant.

"What are you doing?" I asked. "Restoring the rightful heir to the throne of Sub-Carpatho-Ruthenia? Getting back the plans the First Lord left in a taxi? Thwarting a morganatic marriage? Do tell."

"The game isn't what it was," he said sadly. "The nearest thing to an heir to the throne in Mittel-Europa nowadays is a chap in a cloth cap and muffler. And plans—well! They used to draw plans. A whole new battleship on one bit of paper. Not nowadays. You need a wheelbarrow, and then it's all formulæ. No, I'm saving a woman's name."

"And," I said, "you can't tell me her name because it would shake the chancelleries of Europe to their foundations?"

"Absolutely, old man," he agreed. "Now look. I'm in the usual jam. No papers. It's dashed odd," he went on, with a trace of bitterness in his voice, "but





every peasant from Calais to Constantinople has a bundle of dog-eared papers to tell the world how tall he is, how many goats he owns, and the natal place of his wife's paternal grandfather, while we have nothing except a passport which is a dead give-away. In five minutes they'll be coming along here, and——"

"Stop," I said. "How long have you been out of England, Poodle?"

Even through the veil I could see a mist creep across his eyes.

"It must be fifteen years," he muttered.

"Things have changed," I told him. "Where papers are concerned the British can hold up their heads with any race under the sun. In personal documentation we are second to nobody. Here," I cried, diving into my pockets, "have some of these!"

I gave him my ration card (expired), my wireless licence, my driving licence, my dog licence, my dear old identity card, a sweet-coupon, a piece of paper which stated that I had the Commanding Officer's permission to keep a bicycle in the camp, the cover of a family allowance book, and a post-war credit voucher.

St. Clair was practically unmanned. "All these," he kept on saying, twisting the papers in his powerful hands to make them more dog's-eared—"all these. But," his tone changed, "you? What about you?"

"Don't worry," I said, "I still have my permit to erect a hen-house, an old petrol-coupon, and a questionnaire about my sugar-beet production for 1951. The latter," I explained, "came to me in error."

"By Jove!" said "Poodle" St. Clair, "things have changed! I'll never forget this, old man. You've not only saved a woman's name to-day, but you've struck a blow for freedom."

"Steady on," I said. "Not freedom, Poodle. The democratic way of life."

"Same thing," he said, and I realized how long he had been away.

In the next compartment a gruff voice was saying "Your papers, please!"

The Green Train roared on . . .

* * * * *



"I DO HOPE THOSE NEW PEOPLE AREN'T GOING TO BE NOISY"

"I think," said the policeman, "you'd better tell this to a magistrate." He obviously didn't believe me.

Neither did the magistrate.

G. H. M. NICHOLS

Are You Finglarious?

"COME here much?" asked Pillman, moving along the bench to make room for me. I was about to say no, that sitting in the park was a rarity with me, but at this time of the year I liked to snatch at the last fleeting remnants of summer—when he leant forward suddenly and said, with obscure satisfaction, "Scringoid!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Study people," he said, "that's what I come for." He wrote something in a small notebook. "That was a man with scringoid hair. Didn't you notice?"

Years ago, when the admission of ignorance was painful, I should have said "By Jove, yes, now you mention it." But I have outgrown that. Now, if anyone refers glibly to a quotation from *Contarini Fleming*, or says, whimsically, "You remember what happened to Thomas of Celano," I just say "What do you mean?"

"What do you mean?" I said.

Pillman gazed with narrowed eyes at the stream of passers-by. "Scringoid," he said. "You know—when the hair appears to have been cut out in one piece from a doormat and fitted to the head like a cap; it usually comes rather far down the nape, ending in a tadpole-shaped curl."

"Ah," I said. "So that's called——"

"Men with scringoid hair," said Pillman, preoccupied, "don't have to do anything to it when they get up in the morning; they just put their hats on and go out."

"I didn't know it was called that."

"I call it that," said Pillman, licking his pencil. "Look. A lollary."

"Lollary?"

"*Sh!*" He jabbed discreetly with his pencil in the direction of a big man in a floppy grey suit who had just passed. "Lollary hands," he said, writing in his book. "They hang with the palms facing backwards, and undergo a loose, involuntary half-gyration at each step."

I looked at the hands of the man in the floppy grey suit. They were doing it.

"Do you——?" I began.

"When you really study people," said Pillman, "you realize there isn't a single perfect specimen. Of course, it's better watching passengers leaving a crowded train. Catch them off guard more, when they're harassed about tickets and baggage. Characteristics much better emphasized." He sighed. "But you can't hang about too long at the barrier without attracting attention. Unless you're a ticket collector."

He sighed again, pondering on the opportunities afforded to ticket collectors. Then he brightened. "Still, it's not too bad here. There goes another scringoid and two second-degree brudgers." He scribbled briefly.

I watched the three American soldiers disappearing in the direction of Park Lane. One was undeniably scringoid, even with his cap on. The others seemed normal.

"Second-degree——?"

Pillman pursed his lips and said, judiciously, "I wouldn't put it any higher. In first-degree cases the hip pocket describes a very pronounced arc—down as the leg goes forward; up, as it comes back. That one is just a mild, crescent-shaped movement." He frowned. "All American soldiers brudge to a greater or lesser degree. It's occurred to me that it may just be the cut of the uniform. Would you say that?"

"I haven't really——"

"If so," said Pillman, "I might have to consider deleting 'staculant' as well. You've noticed staculancy, of course, among naval ratings? A rolling, held-in walk, the shoulder lifted with the leg, as if the trunk might otherwise be too near the ground to allow of the limb's clearance. They seem to lose it after commissioning."

He fell into an intense rumination, and was only brought out of it by the appearance of a family party. The parents were both lollaries, and one of the children, as Pillman pointed out, had advanced grool—a sheen about the face and forehead due to an abnormally tight-stretched skin. "Like a side-drum," he said. "Car salesmen are frequently grooloid—haven't been able to find out why." He made another note. "The mother," he said, without looking up, "is repigital."

"Er——" I said.

"You look."

She was, too.

The breeze was beginning to blow cool by now, and the specimens were thinning out. I got up. "It's been very interesting," I said.

"I'm coming too." He tapped the notebook and tucked it away in an inside pocket. "Quite a decent bag, really."

As we walked along, sunk in thought, I slowly became aware of something about Pillman that I'd never noticed before: he had a ludicrous trick of flinging his



"THAT'S THE WORST OF TWINS, THEY WILL DO EVERYTHING TOGETHER"

feet out sideways, with a slight waggle, as he walked. It was like a man trying to shake some unwanted object from the toe of his shoe. By the time we had reached the last of the trees I could no longer suppress a reference to it.

"Pillman," I said, "do you realize——?" But I broke off. He was staring with fatuous concentration at my right elbow, and I felt a sudden chill that was not of the evening breeze. "What's up?" I said.

"Nothing," said Pillman. He stopped walking and reached for his inside pocket. "You go on. I'll catch up in a minute."

J. B. BOOTHROYD

EPIGRIM

TAKE HEART, ILLITERATES

For years a secret shame destroyed my peace—

I'd not read Eliot, Auden or MacNeice.

But now I think a thought that brings me hope:

Neither had Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope.

JUSTIN RICHARDSON

The Way to the Station

MY week-end at Sturgess's newly-acquired cottage had been a pleasant one, and it was quite unnecessary to apologize, I assured him when I was leaving, for the long walk to the station.

"It'll do me good," I said. "Which is the best way?"

"The *best* way?" he said.

"Yes."

"I haven't really made up my mind," he said.

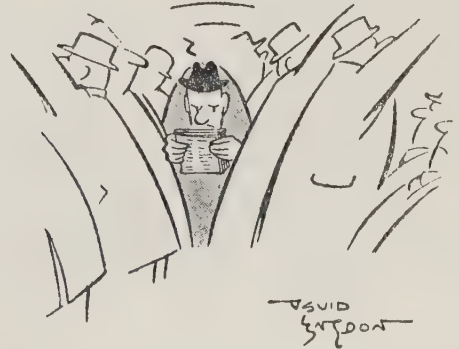
I paused, my hat half-way to my head.

"It depends what you mean," he explained. "There's the Nice Way, but I suppose that would be wasted on you on a Monday morning, and there's the Quick Way, or rather several Quick Ways, which may or may not be quicker than the Nice Way——"

I lowered my eyebrow. "Which way do you go in the mornings?" I asked patiently.

"Well, for the first few days after we moved in, of course, we all went the Nice Way," said Sturgess, "which was the way the agent brought us in his car originally and the only way we knew. Then we discovered the Quick Way——"

"Yes, yes, yes," I said. "I know. All houses have their Nice Ways and their Quick Ways, old man. There's no call to work up a dilemma on the strength of it."



NOBLE
DUNN

"I'm not," he said. "You won't let me finish. It's the Jones Way and the Steggles Way."

"The what?"

"And the Corkery Way and the Slatcher-Scrope Way."

"And the Appian Way and the Pilgrims' Way?"

"No," he said. "That's right, really."

"Well, tell me the Jones Way," I said encouragingly. "That sounds easy."

He looked at his watch. "All right. Out of here, turn left, bear right up the hill. About half-way up you'll hear Jones changing gear at the bottom. Very old two-seater. Gets to the bottom of the hill about a quarter past eight—if you don't hear him by the time you get to the top you've missed him. You could have had another cup of coffee."

"I could?"

"Steggles doesn't show up till twenty-five past. 1951 Garret sports saloon. Comes from East Dingwood and takes an entirely different route from Jones. You have to run back past the cottage."

"Is it really worth it?" I said. "How long does it actually take to get to the station, anyway?"

He sat down on a small stone gnome and stretched out his legs. "Depends which way you go," he said. "Of course, when we first moved in——"

"All right, all right, never mind," I said. "I'd better try for Jones. Which way did you say it was?"

He looked at his watch again. "I doubt if you'll make it now," he said. "It's nearly a quarter past. You'll have to fall back on Steggles."

"Oh," I said. "All right, which way's that?"

"It's no good starting now," said Sturgess. "If you get too far ahead of him you come to a T-road, and sometimes he turns one way and sometimes the other."

"Why on earth does he do that?" I said irritably.

"Well, one way's a Nice Way," said Sturgess, "and one's a Quick Way. I suppose it depends——"

"Never mind, never mind," I said. "Anyway, can't I just stand on the corner and wait for him?"

"Well, of course, if you think barefaced exploitation of my neighbours——"

"I do."

"Well, you can't. You'd spoil it for me. Some of them are beginning to make remarks now. Especially Corkery. Corkery hasn't even got a hood—it's always the way."

He began feeling in his pockets. "Corkery, let's see," he said. "I've got a time-table somewhere. I made out a time-table."

"Am I missing Steggles?" I said in alarm. "If you let me miss Steggles——"

"No, no, no," he said, "you're all right for Steggles. You've got plenty of time. I just wanted to show you, but it doesn't matter. As a matter of fact,

missing Corkery's the worst thing. If you miss Corkery you've only got Slatcher-Scrope."

"Is that bad?"

"Well, it can be. No such thing as the Slatcher-Scrope Way really: Slatcher-Scrope's not a mappable man. Drives a very old Rolls crammed with children and tins of paint and goes whichever way the fancy takes him. Normally he tries to avoid me—says he mistakes me for a screenwiper—but it's a very tall car——"

"With a slight stoop?"

"—and I can usually see it above the hedges and cut him off."

"Does he ever go past both ends of the road at once?"

"What?"

"Look," I said, "I'm walking. Never mind Steggles. I don't like the sound of any of them. It is possible to walk from here, I suppose?"

"Certainly. Would you like the Nice Way or one of the Quick Ways? The Nice Way sweeps in a gracious curve . . ."

In the end I 'phoned for a cab.

R. L. NICHOLSON

If None, Answer "None"

WHENEVER I have to apply for a new driving licence I find myself engaged in a struggle with conscience which the authorities, whipping through the neatly completed form D.L.1, can have no inkling of. Mostly it is the form itself. The blunt, staccato questions make me feel, from the first line, like a disingenuous witness in the hands of hectoring counsel or an eleven-plus trying to get into a grammar school. I am face to face with authority, and in a matter which I cannot, without inconvenience, avoid.

"What," says the grim, shadowy figure (always slightly above my head and half hidden behind some sort of desk or bar), "what is your surname? What are your full Christian names? Answer in BLOCK CAPITALS and insert Mr., Mrs., Miss *or as the case may be.*" It is the tone of the question that hurts. As it happens, my surname is a nursery by-word and my Christian names are standard jobs; but supposing I was a Pole, or christened Aloysius, or a baronet (*or as the case might be*)? It would be pretty terrible.

"What is your permanent address in Great Britain?" it goes on. "If none, answer NONE." As it happens, I have an address, but can I truthfully say it is permanent? Apart from anything else, I live in a New Town, where what the form calls track-laying vehicles are constantly pushing over people's permanent addresses. But supposing I had nothing even as approximately permanent as I have: supposing, like MERRILIES, MEG, Miss (age over 21), my bed it was the brown heath turf and

my house was out of doors—what should I feel like, having this sneering question shot at me and this blunt answer virtually put into my mouth? Certainly not like saying “NONE.” At the most I should say “None,” probably “None.” The printing of the form, in fact, is wrong here. It should read, “If NONE, answer ‘None.’”

The next question is subtler. “What,” says the voice of authority, “what kind of licence do you want?” “What do you want? What is it now?” says authority, lifting his faceless head from the dusty papers on his desk. “Why can’t you leave me in peace? Well, go on, make up your mind. What is it you *want*?”

I know what I want. I want ALL GROUPS, as I had last time. But who am I, faced with this querulous exasperated question, to ask permission to drive heavy

locomotives, light locomotives, motor tractors, heavy motor cars, motor cars and motor tricycles equipped with means for reversing, agricultural tractors, mowing machines or vehicles controlled by pedestrians, road rollers, track-laying vehicles steered by their tracks, motor bicycles (with or without sidecars) or tricycles not equipped with means for reversing, trolley vehicles, invalid carriages and vehicles exempted from duty under section 7 of the Act? Is it really necessary? Is it even honest or kind? I don’t really want to drive heavy locomotives or track-laying vehicles steered by their tracks, and it is, I know very well, only obstinacy that makes me say I do. As for those vehicles exempt under section 7, I cannot, in view of all that has gone before, even imagine what they might be.

Always, when it comes



to the point, I do in fact answer "ALL GROUPS." But from that moment my conscience is clouded and I am on the defensive. On the hard facts, of course, I am reasonably sound. I know, for instance, that my age is over twenty-one and that no one has ever certified my competence to drive. But when I get into the medical section my doubts crowd in upon me. "Do you suffer from epilepsy or from sudden attacks of disabling giddiness or fainting?" says authority; and just as I am about to repudiate the suggestion with a light laugh, he adds: "Read Note F and answer YES or NO."

"If you are in doubt as to your answer," says Note F suddenly in my ear, "you should get professional advice." "Well, really," I say, "I mean——" "Are you," authority cuts in in a louder voice, "without hand or foot"—(*Ha!*)—"or are you suffering from any defect in movement, control or muscular power of either arm or leg?" "If you are in doubt——" whispers Note F again—"No!" I say, "No! I mean, NO!" But by now I am sweating slightly. Have I not, in fact, been twitching a bit ever since I got the form from the post office this morning? But really—"Are you," says authority, playing his trump card, "are you suffering from any other disease, mental or physical, or disability which would be likely to cause the driving by you of a motor vehicle to be a source of danger to the public?"

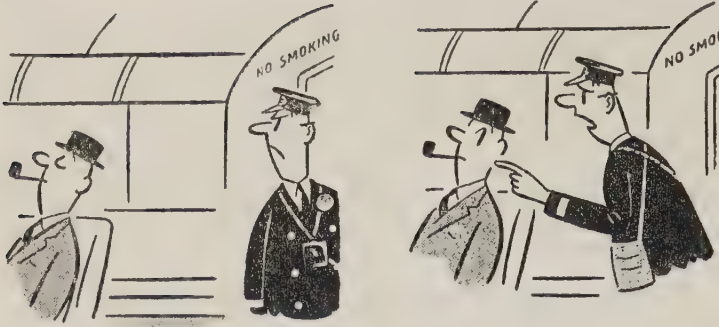
This is too much. What about my love of dogs or my fear of bats? What about the time, only last April (I have a wireless in the car), when I won by a canvas at sixty miles an hour through a built-up area after being a canvas down at Barnes Bridge, and collapsed, exhausted, over my steering wheel just outside the cinema? Ought I to tell the authorities about the time near St. Albans when I was Boadicea and got out by the haystack to sharpen the scythes on my hub-caps? It was all right, of course, but supposing any of the public in those parts had still been wearing togas?

As for the last two questions, I always answer "Yes" (though I know a man who, when asked if he has studied the Highway Code, regularly answers "No" but gets his licence just the same—I suppose they think he is joking). But I am helped by the relative space allowed in the form for these two answers. The complete thing looks something like this:

16. Have you studied the Highway Code?	YES
17. Do you understand that (subject to statutory exceptions) it is an offence to use a motor vehicle on a road unless covered by insurance against third party risks? Answer YES or NO	YES

That is, in fact, about the size of it.

P. M. HUBBARD



YORE

In days of yore,
When mud was mire,
And blood was gore,

And anger ire,
And food was fare,
And dreadful dire,

And cut was pare,
And friend was fere,
And worry care,

And lake was mere,
And knowledge lore,
And dry was sere,

And carried bore,
And spoils was mars:
In days of yore

They rolled their Rs
Like thunder or
Triumphal cars:

But we, being too refined to try
To roll them, let the old words die.

P. M. HUBBARD



MY MRS. EVANS

My Mrs. Evans is not the kind of a char
 Some are.
 She doesn't blow dust
 Off the bust
 Of one goddess
 On to another's bodice
 Or sink on to one's window seat
 And talk continuous feet,
 Or sing
 "Some Enchanted Evening"
 Without perceptible pause
 During her morning chores.
 She doesn't pounce on Celadon ware
 With the unpredictable air
 Of a home-made
 Hand-grenade,
 And none of her children have so far swallowed safety-pins on the day
 That some rather serious people are coming to stay.
 There are dailies who leave cold water bottles and the odd wheat flake
 At the feet of the beds they make,
 Who allow all the hard-won hot water to seep away
 And who butter the bottom of the breakfast tray;
 And many a help has eased her sweepings under the rug
 And apparently gnawed her way round the top of the water jug.
 But not my Mrs. Evans; my Mrs. Evans is
 Much too occupied over her elevenses.

DANIEL PETTIWARD

Tewt

"AND now Problem 4," said Colonel Eversharp. "As Commander 252 Infantry Brigade, how do you see your units laid out in defence of the Feather Wallop feature? Solutions after lunch. Back here at two o'clock—that is, fourteen hundred hours. Any questions? Oh yes; two pubs in Down Feather—the Brown Jug just at the bottom of the hill here and the Duke of Wellington's Arms a little further down in the village. Off you go. Time is now twelve-fifteen-and-a-half."

There was a general movement of regrouping and then a sudden rush of forces. The majority group, led by a heavily-moustached and kilted giant, began stumbling

down the grassy slopes of Feather Wallop towards the Brown Jug. The second group, composed mostly of peaked caps, moved with greater dignity and already deep in argument towards the inspiration of the Duke of Wellington's Arms. Colonel Eversharp and the other three members of the Directing Staff paused for a few minutes in tired silence and then made off for the quietness of Down Feather's best loved pub—the Tulip Tree . . .

"Twenty-four pints of beer—right," said the landlord of the Brown Jug.

"Six glasses of sherry," agreed the keeper of the Duke of Wellington's Arms.

"A cider, pink gin, glass of beer and a grape-fruit juice," smiled Mabel in the Tulip Tree.

"It don't seem a year ago," said the landlord of the Brown Jug, "as 'ow the last lot of gentlemen were 'ere with them there maps and things. Proper battle-ground this, y' know. Been coming 'ere since 'thirty-four, I think it were. I



"TALK ABOUT WOMEN'S HATS!"

s'pose you're doin' Problem 4, eh? Nasty problem to give you to 'ave your lunch with."

"I think," said the Heavy Highlander to his confrères, "two battalions up, one in reserve."

"Three up were the answer last year," said the landlord. "'Tis too wide a front or something, I did 'ear 'um say. Best of five miles from Carey's Farm across the Wallop to Up Feather."

"But no reserve," commented a red beret.

"Oh there were," said the landlord. "Some sort of reserve were in Hanky's Wood. We did tease young Reg over there; that's where 'e goes courtin' Meg Payne. We told 'im the woods were full of tanks so 'e'd better watch 'is step, eh Reg?"

"You 'ad me believe it for a while," said Reg, "till I understood 'ow these officers do prefer to 'ave no soldiers on trainin'. I weren't the only one 'ad, though. Old Peter Mayne thought 'e were goin' to 'ave all the artil'ry guns up be'ind Long Acre."

"Where's that on this map?" interrupted a gunner.

"And Mrs. Thorp up at Crossgates were so angry at it bein' the mobile bath unit," said the landlord.

"And Mrs. Livingstone still thinks as 'ow 'er 'ouse were selected as 'ead-quarters 'cos of the curtains," said Reg. "'Twere only what you calls Practical 'eadquarters. 'Tweren't the big one; that were back at Pudsey."

"Tactical headquarters, you mean," said a black beret. "Now where exactly is Mrs. Livingstone's house?"

"Vicar were angry at 'aving the minefield right across the cricket field and through the churchyard," said the landlord.

"I think we'll have time for a little more refreshment now," said the Heavy Highlander. "We seem to have covered 252 Brigade quite well."

"Now," said Colonel Eversharp, as the refreshed students collapsed on the grass nearby. "We'll hear what you've got to say, McBludgeon, about the solution to Problem 4."

"Perhaps," said the Heavy Highlander, "I can best explain it by showing you this marked map. Three up—wide front—armour in reserve—minefield—gun area—bath unit—cricket ground—Mrs. Livingstone's—er—I mean Tac H.Q. . . ."

"Am I looking at this the right way up?" said Eversharp. "Funny, I seem to be—Ah, now I see, yes! Now, Thwaites, you're in the rival syndicate. What has the Duke of Wellington to say to that solution?"

"Admirably conceived," said Thwaites. "Extraordinarily detailed—I mean the bath unit—I hardly think such precision was expected in the time available. They're right about the three up. But there is, of course, one major fault, I would say, that somewhat detracts from the effectiveness of the entire scheme."

THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'



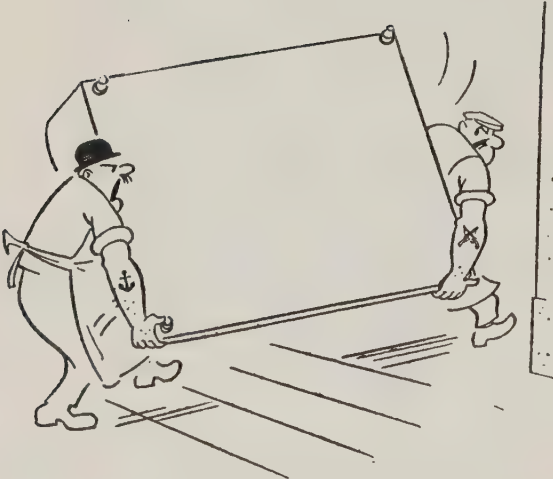
P. G. Wodehouse

"... SO I SAY TO MYSELF ..."



Brooks

"APOLOGIES TO MR. AND MRS. WELCH OF GREENLEAVES, LITTLE WISSINGTON, BUCKS, MISS B. CLARKE OF 15A UPSHOT MANSIONS, N.W.12, MR. AND MRS. PALMER, THE TWINS, UNCLE BOB, COUSIN EM AND ROVER OF 17 BUSHYTOP GARDENS ..."

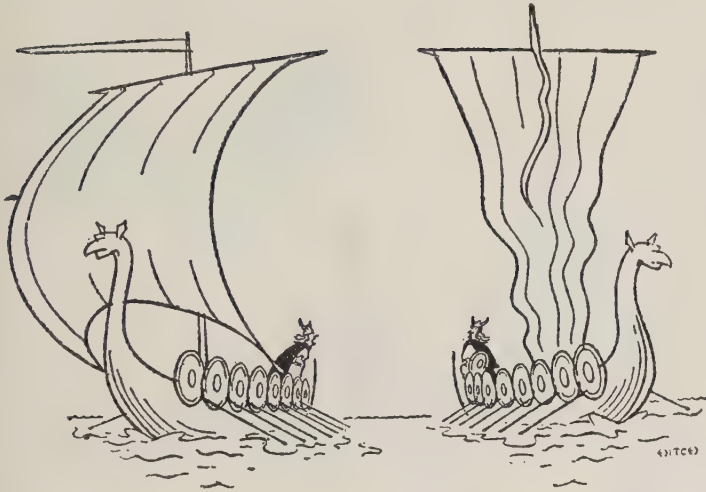


David Low

"STARBOARD, MATE, STARBOARD! ..."



"RIGHT, GIRLS, 'THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S.' ONE . . . TWO . . . THREE . . ."



"THEY'RE STARCHED"



"WORST ORGANIZED STAMPEDE I EVER ATTENDED"



"And what is the fault?" said Eversharp.

"The entire Brigade is facing the wrong way," said Thwaites.

"Yes," said Eversharp, "yes. This year we thought we'd have the exercise running in the other direction for a change. I doubt, McBludgeon, if the landlord of the Brown Jug heard the word of command."

E. E. TOMS

Tout le Monde

"**ERE's** a picture of me with 'Arry Wragg," shouted the little man in the jockey's cap. "I don't care if I never see none of you again, but I 'ave an 'orse that's not even in the bettin'. For 'arf a crown you can 'ave it. Virtually gratis," he added classically.

I sneered and moved on towards a large figure in a check coat who was holding up a sheaf of five-pound notes.

"You know me," he cried. "I went through the card at Pontefract last week. Every race a winner. To-day I 'ave been given two 'orses that will come 'ome hunopposed. You can 'ave Gordon. You can keep Charlie Smirke. Mine are the authenticated winners." He put away his bundle of notes and hauled out a large and imposing envelope. "I am the only man 'ere that received a ticket from the Lord Chamberlain for the Royal Command Performance."

"Got your cards, more like," suggested a voice from the crowd.

"You may laugh," said the large man, "but 'ere," he dug in another pocket, "is a picture of me with Lord Rosebery at Ascot."

My lip wrinkled in contempt and I moved on again towards a tall, lean individual in immaculate jodhpurs who was standing before a ground-sheet covered with form-books, notes and silver.

"I was a trainer," he said mournfully, "and I was warned off: I can't tell you the 'ole story now, but 'ere is a photograph of me leadin' in one of my winners at Windsor." It looked to me much more like a stable-hand leading out a loser at Warwick, but I forbore from comment. I smiled to myself, and then my attention was caught by a ferocious roar a little farther along.

"I'm 'Arf-a-Dollar 'Arry, and I've found it, I've found it."

"If you took your clothes off you'd be Harchimedes," said a cynical onlooker.

"You needn't 'ave the next winner, my friend," replied the raucous voice, "but my analysis of the latest form leads me to believe that only one 'orse 'as any chance, I want you all to take advantage of this knowledge. Go in the ring, 'ave a good bet, and thank me afterwards. I could charge you five oncers for this information, but I shan't. I shan't even charge you a quid; not even 'arf a bar. Two shillings and sixpence, ladies and gentlemen, is the price of knowledge."

The red face of the speaker glared about him. "I don't 'ave to do this," he said; "I do it as a favour to the bettin' public. I don't live in Shadwell, you know." He brought out a visiting card and waved it before our eyes. "'Arf Moon Street," he



said significantly. "And on the 'phone. The best address of any tipster 'ere to-day."

I shrugged my shoulders disdainfully and went to place my bet, unmoved by these various pleas. As I approached the line of bookmakers' stands, a wizened nervous little man drew alongside me, proffered me a slip of paper, and whispered without hyperbole: "Sixpence, mister." Taking pity on this naïve and uncomplicated offer, I handed over sixpence. He gave me the slip, whispered "God bless you, mister," and retired rapidly into the crowd.

The slip stated simply, in block capitals, "EGGSHELL."

I backed my original horse and thought no more about "Eggshell" until it won by three lengths at ten to one. I was somewhat annoyed at this, and I was strolling away from the rails, regretting that I had not put at least a nominal sum on the horse, when I saw my wizened friend again. What was worse, he saw me. Head up and shoulders back, he strode towards me, bellowing in a stentorian voice: "I gave that 'orse. You could all 'ave been on, like this gentleman 'ere. 'E will vouch for the truth of what I say." Reluctantly I vouched. "And now, sir, you will, of course, be the first to 'ave the second leg of my day's double for the modest sum of five shillings." With a smile on my face and rage in my heart, I paid up and received my second slip of paper, then I slunk into the anonymity of the crowd. I passed a young couple, and before I drew out of earshot I heard the man say "See that supercilious bloke, Glad, that was talking to that little feller? Dead clever they are. 'E never 'ad the winner; 'e's just a confederate."

"Cool!" said Glad. "'E looks quite the gentleman too."

RICHARD D. FAULL

Masters Now

"RECEIVE and forward the traffic mentioned on the other side thereof——"

"Who are you talking to?"

"I'm addressing the Railway Executive, Southern Region."

"It's not a tone to adopt in addressing the Railway Executive, any region."

"It's not a tone which, left to myself, I would ever possibly adopt. It's a tone which the Railway Executive puts in my mouth. I have a chair——"

"Many people have chairs."

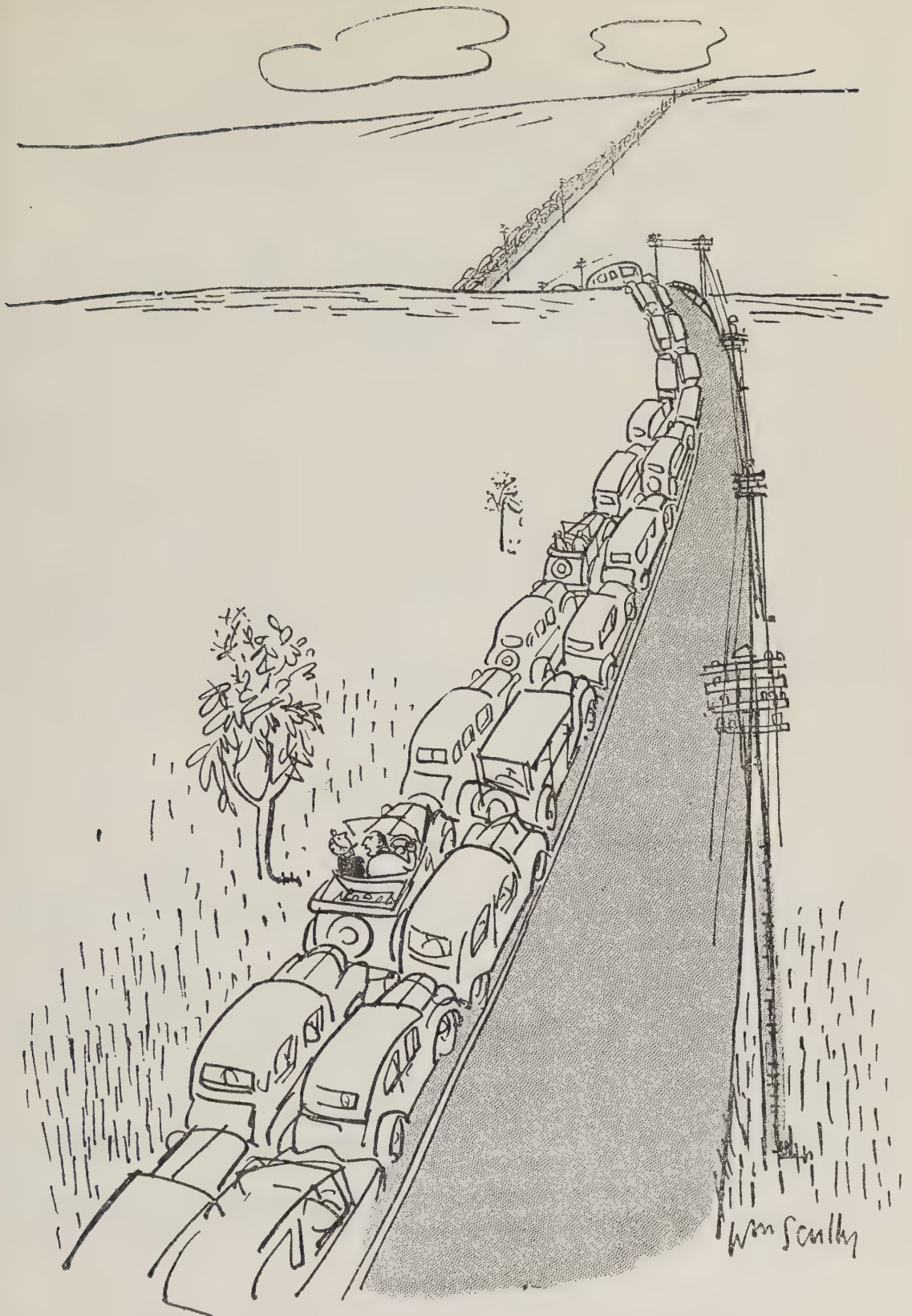
"This is a chair which I wished to take with me on the railway."

"You were sick of standing in the corridor?"

"I'd just bought it, and was taking it home. They gave me a ticket for this chair, and on the back of the ticket was this address."

"What address?"

"I mean this little speech to the Railway Executive, Southern Region. 'To



"IT'S VERY LUCKY WE ARE BUMPER TO BUMPER—WE'RE OUT OF PETROL"

THE RAILWAY EXECUTIVE, SOUTHERN REGION,' it said at the top. Then I was supposed to say 'Receive and forward the traffic mentioned on the other side hereof——' (on the other side, in a little box marked DESCRIPTION OF TRAFFIC, it said 'Chair') '—upon and subject to the appropriate Standard Terms and Conditions of Carriage at Owner's Risk——' I hope I'm bringing out the effect of the capitals?"

"Did you say at owner's risk?"

"The chair was going in the guard's van. What the guard did with it was, of course, my risk. It's only reasonable. '—And the Regulations contained in the Railway Companies' Book of Regulations relating to Traffic by Passenger Train or other similar service and, when carried by water, upon and subject to the "Conditions of Carriage by Water" included in the said Book of Regulations.'"

"You were getting them pretty well tied up."

"Not only them—anyone who took over from them. There was a second paragraph. 'This request,' it made me then go on to say, 'shall be deemed to extend to any Company or person into whose possession the luggage or merchandise may pass for conveyance or custody.' I've kept the ticket. One of these days, when I've got the courage, I'm going to produce it out of my pocket and try it on a porter. 'Receive and forward,' I shall say, 'the traffic mentioned'—and I shall mention my suitcase—'upon and subject to the appropriate Standard Terms and Conditions——' I might even get him to show me what's in the Companies' Book of Regulations. I ought to know. For one brief minute I shall feel I really own the railways."

G. A. C. WITHERIDGE

Easy to Operate

IT was a pity that both Miss Jones and Miss Thompson caught colds and stayed away last Monday while the telephonist was on her autumn leave. It meant that the new girl had to go on the switchboard.

She is a bright girl and a trier, but even a small switchboard takes some getting used to. Sanders, the junior, who has a natural flair for such things, showed her how to work it. He swiftly demonstrated the methods of dealing with incoming and outgoing calls, and as he flicked switches and started and stopped buzzers the new girl sat entranced. This was thrilling.

"There you are, then, Rosie," he said. "Think you can manage?"

She said yes, she thought so. Sanders left her and prepared to go on what he calls his morning round.

Alone in her little compartment, Rosie gazed at her two lines of switches and waited for something to happen. Almost immediately one of the eyeballs along the

top of the board fell open with a shattering buzz. She pulled down its switch. The eye miraculously closed and the buzzing stopped; what next?

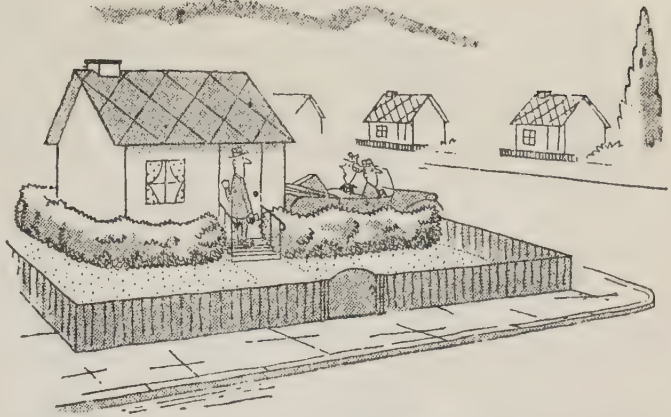
Yes, of course. This was an outgoing. She lifted the receiver and answered. It was Accounts wanting the bank; the very call that Sanders had demonstrated! Eagerly she pressed the exchange switch, consulted the list and began to dial the number. Just then the bell rang for an incoming call on the other line.

Rosie jumped, but did not get into a panic. She did, however, dial the wrong number. When she found herself through to Plastic Playthings, with the new call still insistent, she was faced with an unforeseen situation.

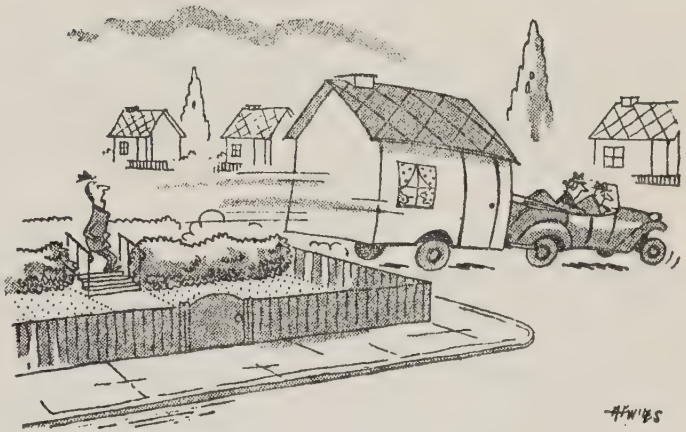
She remained calm. Accounts would have to wait. She sought to rid herself of the wrong number, and turned her attention to the new call. When she answered it she was surprised to hear the caller already talking to Plastic Playthings.

While Rosie was considering this curious phenomenon, another of the eyeballs opened. She closed it promptly and cleared the first line. That was better; now she could answer the caller, a rather excitable woman who did not care for plastic playthings.

It was unfortunate that Accounts grew impatient just as another call came through. Rosie manipulated her switches and brought about some surprising combinations and conversations. She began to detect a note of irritation in some of the voices, and decided that the time had come to seek assistance. Opening the door, she hailed the first passer-by, who chanced to be the Secretary. He stared at her and continued on his way, probably wondering who was behind him.



"WOULD YOU MIND CALLING IN A FORTNIGHT'S TIME? WE'RE JUST OFF ON A LATE . . ."



". . . HOLIDAY"

AWB

The next to pass was the Export Manager, a large and kindly man. He paused and asked if he could help her. She explained the situation.

"I'll send Sanders to you," he promised.

She said that she thought Sanders was out, and the Export Manager, who was still young at heart, came into the little room and looked at the switchboard.

"Now what exactly is the trouble?" he asked.

"Well, Accounts want the bank, but they've got the Blue Water Line. Then there's a Mrs. Pratt."

"The General Manager's wife," he murmured. "What is she saying?"

"She's asking him if he remembered about the bishop's umbrella; at least, she's asking Raw Materials about it—and Accounts too, I think."

The Export Manager took the receiver from her and said "Hullo!" Then he listened attentively. What he heard seemed to shake him, but he was a man not easily dismayed. He joined in with determination.

"Hullo! Accounts? Hang up, will you? Get off the line. I say get off the Blue Water line. Not you, madam. No, this is not the bank. Sorry, madam, just a slight confusion caused by crossed lines. I'll put you through."

He scanned the switches, pressed one underneath "Gen. Man." and twiddled the handle. Then he said "Bother, wrong line," pressed the one below it and released the first. As he did so, two more eyeballs opened and buzzed.

"What did that?" he gasped.

Rosie obligingly shut them for him. It was kindly meant, but the Export Manager now found himself speaking to five extensions, Mrs. Pratt and the Blue Water Line. It was almost like broadcasting. He recognized defeat. Replacing the receiver, he turned off all the switches.

"Best to make a fresh start," he said to Rosie. "When they come on again, just deal with them one at a time. Ignore everyone else. I have to go to a meeting now, but I'll get hold of Sanders and send him to help you."

He had been a junior himself once, and knew where to look. Within five minutes he found Sanders drinking coffee and discussing Saturday's football with a few friends who also happened to be on their morning rounds. A tolerant man, he explained the emergency that had arisen, and Sanders departed in haste.

The Export Manager went on to his meeting, transacted some further business and kept a luncheon appointment. The afternoon was already advanced when he returned to the office. As he passed the telephone room he suddenly remembered. Opening the door, he peeped inside.

The new girl was sitting alone at the switchboard, the receiver to her ear.

"You're through," she said, and pressed a switch. An eyeball opened. She closed it, dialled a number, pressed another switch, took a sip of tea, stopped a buzzer, nibbled a piece of cake, flicked up a switch and hummed happily to herself. Then she glanced round and saw the Export Manager. She greeted him with a friendly smile.

"All right now?" he asked.

"Oh yes, thanks. It's quite easy, really."

He closed the door and went to his room, thinking wistfully of his vanished youth.

NORMAN HALL

Fireworks for Forty

WHEN this class is a little quieter I shall choose four trustworthy children to give out the paper and chalks.

CHILDREN! All hands on heads—shoulders—in laps! I should think so indeed! Why on earth you should be so fussy on this particular Wednesday afternoon I don't know! You're usually such good, sensible little people on Drawing afternoons.

My dad says can I go home early, miss?

Why, Michael? One minute, dear. Brian Bates, come here instantly and put your pencil box on my desk. Very lucky you will be, my boy, to get it back after hitting Anne like that!

Well, she put her tongue out at me.

Then I expect she was provoked. Stand by the board.

But can I?

Can you what, Michael? The next child who fidgets, whispers or slams his desk lid will be slapped! The place is a literal bear-garden this afternoon. Any more of this fuss and I give out the papers and chalk MYSELF!

That's better. John and Elizabeth, paper. Richard and Patrick, chalks. Draw a frame round—in ONE colour only, please, John Todd. That rainbow effect you did last Wednesday was all over your good blazer by playtime. For pity's sake, Michael, don't stand drooping about by my desk fiddling with the red ink! You're supposed to be drawing your frame.

But you never said if I could, miss.

Could WHAT?

Go home early.

But why? Did you bring a note?

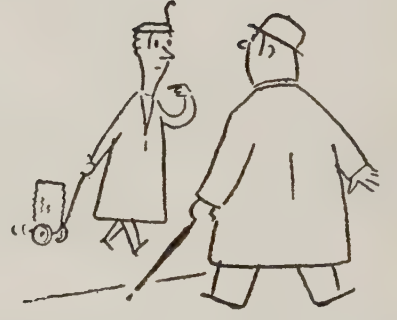
No, but my dad wants to let off my fireworks for me, before he goes to his darts match.

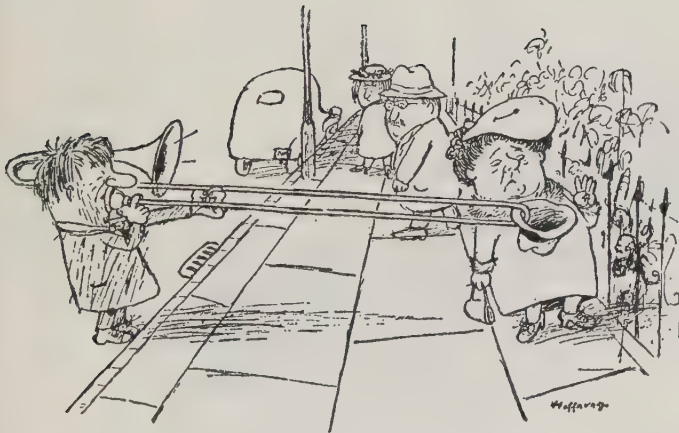
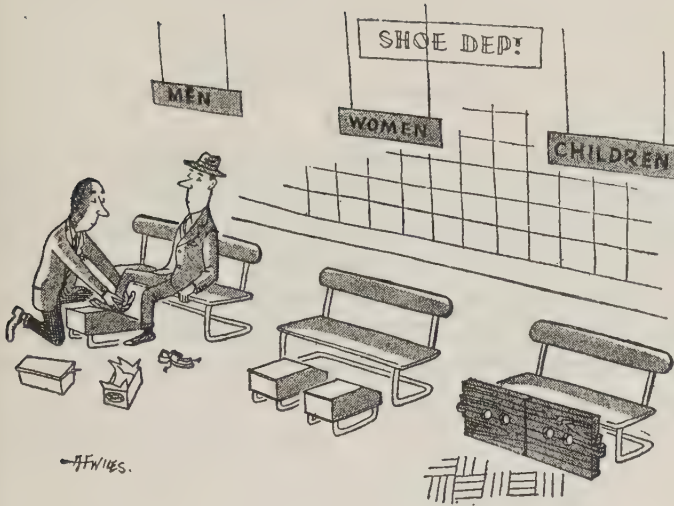
Ah, of course! Now that explains a lot. No, Michael, I'm afraid I can't let you go early, but you shall all be out very promptly to-day. Hands up those who are going to have fireworks or a bonfire to-night.

I've got a guy!

I'm sharing with next-doors!

So am I! Ours is a lot bigger'n your'n!





Not so ugly, though!

I've got six rockets!

Pooh, we've got two dozen! And catherine wheels, and squibs, and golden rain, and witches' fire, and them bangers——

What fireworks have you got, miss?

None, dear.

What a shame! You could have some of mine.

Or mine. I can easy spare dozens.

It's really very kind of you, children, but I couldn't think of taking your fireworks. When you get as old as I am you really prefer something quieter, you know.

Now what I should like much more would be some beautiful pictures of you all enjoying your bonfires and fireworks. All ready? Roll up your sleeves then, blazers on chair-backs, John Todd, and let me see who gets down to work first.

What a lovely, peaceful class! That's more like Wednesday afternoon! I can see I shall have to send a particularly quiet little worker to Miss Judd soon, to ask for three or four dozen extra red and yellow chalks . . .

D. J. SAINT



BACK ROOM JOYS

HAVING PAID BILLS

Paying bills
 Is conventionally one of the major ills;
 But restitution is made
 By bills-having-been-paid.

We have grouped the accounts for action, have cleared the decks,
 Made out and signed the careful laborious cheques,
 Folded, enveloped, sealed, addressed, stamped the lot,
 Have parted with all we've got—
 But the more that's true the more we feel scrubbed and clean,
 Our sense of honour illuminatingly keen.
Actively virtuous, generous even . . . Oh no,
 We're not the sort of people ever to owe;
Overlook for a moment, perhaps; mere laziness, yes—
 How long have we had that dress?—
 But look at that *mass* for the post!
 We're certain we're better than most;
 We can hear them all saying "She's one of the ones who pays";
 And for several days
 We use our account at the shops with a confident vigour
 That makes our succeeding month's bills quite incredibly bigger.

JUSTIN RICHARDSON

HELPMEEET

In a book called *Stopping Smoking*
 Which I picked up at the station
 I found a hint that showed imagination.
 It seems you leave a cigarette just poking
 Out of a brand-new packet on the table;
 This is a Symbol of the dread Temptation,
 A concentration
 Of the whole lure of smoking. One is able
 To look at it with proud deliberation
 And murmur "Can
 This trivial cylinder defeat the Will of Man?"
 Then, passing by, erect, austere,
 One sucks a gum with conscience twice as clear.

I met this challenge with a certain zest
 And set the trap with tremulous delight;
 But every time I went to take my test
 My wife had been there first and failed outright.

DONALD MATTAM

It's All Yours

THIS is my first day. I am selling coats and so far I have sold one. To myself. The department is getting busier and I am trying to get myself out of my corner and force myself to approach a customer. The Supervisor is looking at me, so I move forward. I stand behind a customer.

"Can I help you, madam?"

"Er—" says madam.

I wait.

"Yes," she says. "Can I see a coat?"

"Certainly, madam. A straight coat, or a fitted coat, or a swagger, or a jigger?"

"I don't know."

"Well, here is a very nice . . ." And we try them on. All of them. Dozens of them.

"As a matter of fact," madam says, "I really want a blouse. I think I'll come back for a coat some other time."

I put all the coats away and look for someone else. The Assistant Buyer is watching me.

"Can I help you, madam?"

"I would like a coat," madam says.

I have learned my lesson. "What colour?" I ask.

"I don't know," says madam.

"Green?"

"No."

"Blue?"

"No."

"Black?"

"No."

"Brown, red, yellow, beige, stone, purple, mauve, orange, navy?"

"No."

"Well——"

"Haven't you anything else?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Then I'll leave it, thank you."



The Floor Manager is staring at me.

"Can I help you, madam?"

"No."

"Can I help you, madam?"

"No, thank you. I'm just looking."

"Can I help you, madam?"

"No, thank you. I've got the money, but I'm just looking."

"Can I help you, madam?"

"I am the Senior Staff Officer."

"I beg your pardon."

I move to the other side of the department.

"Miss!"

"Yes, madam?"

"Have you the coat that was in the window about five or six weeks ago with two pockets and green buttons? Only I'd like it with red buttons."

"I'm afraid I already have a customer, madam. I'll get you another assistant."

The Buyer is watching me.

"Can I help you, madam?"

"This is a *very* pretty colour. Blue, isn't it?"

"Green, madam."

"Oh, is it? What a pity. I don't like green. I'll leave it, thank you."

"Can I help you, madam?"

"She wants a navy fitted coat with a forty hip. Yes, that's a nice one. Try it on, dear. Oh, it's wrong on the shoulders. She has funny shoulders. That's why I always come to help when she buys a coat. Yes, it must be navy, she's always had navy. That's better. Her husband will like that. Bert will like that, dear. We'll have that. Good. Here's the bill, dear. Thank you. Good morning."

"Can I help you, madam?"

"I want a tea-pot."

"A tea-p——"

"A green one. A *good size*. And I do not want——"

"This is the coat de——"

"—a straight spout, I want a curved spout. It makes all the difference between——"

"This is the co——"

"—a bad cup of tea and a good cup of tea. My old Aunt Teresa always used to say——"

"MADAM!"

"Yes?"

"This is the coat department."

"Oh, *is* it?"

"Tea-pots are on the first floor. If you will come with me——?"

I send her down the emergency stairs which lead to the storage rooms in the basement.

The Buyer is walking towards me. She does not like me. We meet. She draws a deep breath.

But I *shall* be in again tomorrow—to complain about the coat I sold to myself.

MARJORIE RIDDELL

So We had a Nice Talk

THERE'S nothing like a good conversation on a Monday morning. It sets one up for the week. Mine was with the Metropolitan Water Board.

"Hello," said I.

"Hello," said the Board.

"You know that notice of yours? I dare say you remember those lines about Good King Wenceslas looking out on the Feast of Stephen? Well, that was what it was like up here, whatever it was down your way, only Good King Wenceslas didn't have to let the boiler out. And he didn't shave. I don't know whether the Board shaves——"

"I beg your pardon?"

"And I dare say you remember those lines about the Ancient Mariner having water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink——"

"*Nor any* drop to drink."

"Have it your own way. Well, of course, there was plenty to drink, only it was all frozen, and I had to dig it up out of the garden and boil it on the gas stove."

"I think there has been some mistake——"

"No, there hasn't. I know you people. In the summer you make me pay extra for water in the garden, and then there's a drought and you say I mustn't use it, and I still have to pay; and in the winter you turn it off when I want it hot in the taps to have a bath with, and you still make me pay. You don't suppose the milk makes me pay when it's turned off for a few days and I don't use it, do you? Pipes? No, the pipes are as warm as toast; it isn't frozen at all, it's just *off*."

"The water at the main——"

"Yes, and who rules the main, I should like to know, if it isn't the Water Board? Making slaves of us all."

"You may have an air-lock——"

"Yes, and I may have an heirloom. It's nothing whatever to do with you."

"—or a bit of grit in the ball-valve——"

"Bit of fiddlesticks in fairyland. And whose grit is it? It's not mine, it's yours. You must have put it in with your water, and now I have to use water that



"THE FORM IS TO SPLIT UP INTO SMALL GROUPS AND WANDER IN CASUAL,
SO THEY WON'T TWIG ANYTHING . . ."

"I'm afraid you are under a misapprehension. What you want is a plumber."

So I had one.

But it was a good conversation, anyhow.

isn't yours at all, and burrow for the beastly stuff on the lawn with a shovel, like an Eskimo. Is the Board ski-ing to-day, by any chance?"

"The water was only off for three hours."

"It's still off."

"I assure you it isn't. This is the season of goodwill——"

"And this is a good piece of my mind. Here I am in my snow-boots digging up water, and only eight slopping days to Christmas."

"Ten to be accurate."

"Ten popping days, digging up water that I get for nothing, and paying you for yours that I don't have. Supposing you were brussels sprouts, and were turned off for one or two meals, and I had to eat the grass under the snow, you wouldn't have the cheek to put them down on the bill, would you?"

EVOE

Back to Dawks

"YOU'LL find the instructions," said the assistant, "on the lid of the box," and as I thanked her she was already turning away to attend to a more promising customer.

The box was about three feet long and two feet wide, and the instructions were printed in six-point Bembo:

"'Franchise' can be played by any number of persons. (Extra 'tibbles' and 'spinters' can be bought at any 'Franchise' stockist's.) Each player in turn throws one of the 'google-dice'—the red cubes—until it points directly to one of the players. When this happens the other players cry 'Mush,' which denotes that the player indicated has been appointed 'Trustee' for the first 'Spiel.' The 'Trustee' issues 'tibbles' (one of each colour) to each player, and stacks the 'spinters' on the board, in the square marked 'depot' . . ."

That was enough for me. I had spent the best part of my fog-bound morning looking for a cheap, simple, jolly game, and I had found only expensive boxes full of complicated instructions, coloured cardboard and queer counters. Most of these games, I suspect, are invented by disgruntled and backward-looking City types, for most of them deal with sordid finance and economics, or abstruse fiscal matters. There are games for monopolists, speculative builders, spivs, Customs evaders, racketeers, profiteers, hoarders, money-lenders and so on, and they are all unsuitable, in one way or another, for my kind of party.

The assistant watched me carefully as I replaced the lid.

"We've a new game over here, sir," she said. "Very popular. Sold hundreds of them. It's called 'Gatt.'"

"I should like to buy two dozen old-fashioned marbles," I said.

She was sorry but they didn't stock marbles.

At the little general store on the corner of Wilmington Street I bought two dozen marbles for sixpence, and after tea I introduced my family to the simple delights of the ancient game.

First I drew a circle with a stick of chalk on the green carpet of the living-room. Then I rubbed it out with the sole of my shoe and drew a better one.

"How do we play?" they asked.

"It's very easy," I said. "No complications whatever."

"Can we all play?" they said.

"The game," I said, "can be played by any number of persons."

I handed each player a marble. "This is your taw or shottie," I said, "and these are the rinkers. You will kneel behind this line which is called dawks and project your taw or shottie at the rinkers."

"Like this?" said James.

"No, no!" I said. "You must keep your nunk in; that is, your fist must remain in contact with the ground. No fobbing, please!"

James shot for the rinkers, trying to track his taw over to the sideboard, but the shottie stuck in the ring.

"Aha!" I laughed, "now you've done it. You're fat!"

"What does that mean?"

"That you've got to go back to dawks, of course."

We played for about two hours and I won every game. Old as I am.

BERNARD HOLLOWOOD

Headline Writer's Craft

"'ICE, FOG SLOWS TRAFFIC,' according to this headline in the *Evening News*."

"'SLOW TRAFFIC.'"

"When traffic is slowed it becomes slow traffic. Of course. What else?"

"The verb should be plural."

"I see what you mean. 'ICE, FOG SLOW TRAFFIC.' No. No good. The way that reads it needs a comma."

"Another comma, you mean. Where?"

"Well, after 'FOG.'"

"You read it as a list? I don't see any reason why you should."

"The reason, I think, is that word 'slow.' You don't use 'slow,' other than in headlines, as a verb. You slow things up or you slow them down. You don't just slow them."

"We'll slow them down. 'ICE, FOG SLOW DOWN TRAFFIC.'"

"What about the traffic up?"

"Up what?"

"Up traffic. Why isn't the up traffic slowed like the down?"

"All right then—up. 'ICE, FOG SLOW TRAFFIC UP.'"

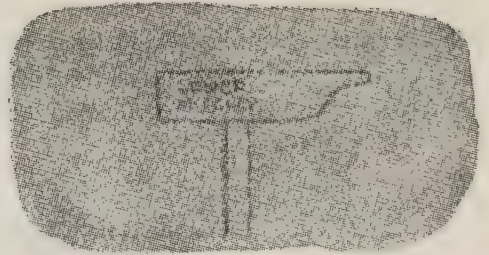
"Then you lose the emphasis. This is a headline. You've got to finish on a strong word—'TRAFFIC.'"

"You're being too fussy. What do you want? 'ICE, FOG SLOW DOWN UP TRAFFIC, UP TRAFFIC DOWN?'"

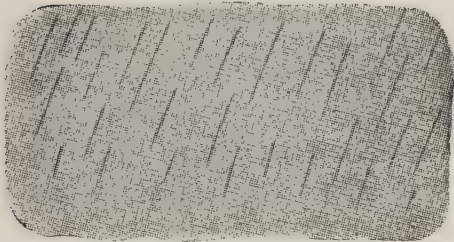
"It still doesn't finish on 'TRAFFIC.' 'ICE, FOG SLOW DOWN'—(or 'UP')—'BOTH UP AND DOWN TRAFFIC.' How about that? As a matter of fact, now I come to read on, I find the headline means just what it says. 'Prolonged snow'—it says in the news item—'was forecast by the Air Ministry to-day for the London area.' Then a new paragraph. 'The snow warning followed a twelve-hour fog blackout of parts of the country which delayed road and train transport.' 'Fog'—



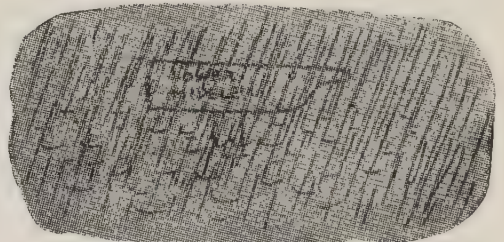
IF THERE SHOULD BE A FOG IN LONDON, IT'S ALWAYS—



FIFTY TIMES WORSE IN LOWER MIDGLEY:



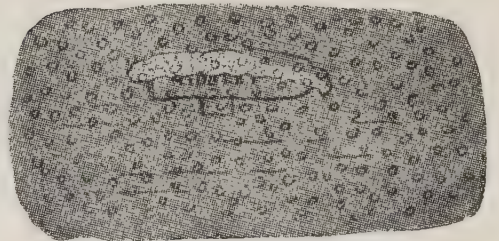
IF THERE'S RAIN IN LONDON, YOU CAN BET THAT—



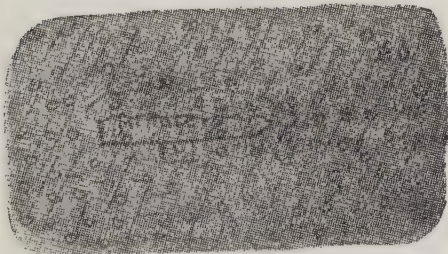
LOWER MIDGLEY WILL BE PRACTICALLY INUNDATED:



IF THERE'S SNOW IN LONDON, IT'S ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT—



LOWER MIDGLEY WILL BE COMPLETELY SNOWED UP:



IN FACT YOU'D WONDER WHY ANYONE WOULD LIVE IN LOWER MIDGLEY IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT—



MOST LOWER MIDGLEYANS WORK IN LONDON

you can see is what the headline means—'SLOWS TRAFFIC.' It's a statement. But they're afraid you might miss it. Life is short. Receptiveness to whole sentences is doubtful. They have to capture your attention. So they introduce it by a one-word announcement—'ICE.'"

G. A. C. WITHERIDGE

Residents' Lounge

I DON'T think The George has ever got more than two stars in anybody's classified list of hotels. It has neither modernized itself nor gone old in a big way.

The Residents' Lounge is on the first floor. Here any residents who do not care to mix with the rest below may lounge on the tight, glazed chintzes between off-pink walls, relieved in their turn, and in almost equal extremity, by the Relief of Ladysmith. By the end wall a mentally deficient adolescent, cast in bronze and inscribed PURITY on the moulded base which sets in below her diaphragm, stares brokenly at the carpet. But there alone tea is served; and it was the need for tea, as a meal, which took me there that afternoon.

I did not take in the details of the company—not all at once. I merely perceived that there was company, and that I had interrupted their silence with far more damaging effect than if I had interrupted a conversation. I slid into a proud, emaciated armchair on one side of the hearth, displaying a satin cushion so like an edible "satin cushion," even to the touch, that it seemed slightly sticky. I stared into the fire. This, after all, is a traditional inactivity, and the fire itself was well worth staring into. The piled coals burned, like the tyger, with fearful symmetry, and flickered on the sootless fireback in strict rotation, working up to a crisis every twenty-five seconds. The heat, at first imperceptible, gradually made itself felt from a point about eight inches higher up.

All this took me some time to work out; and by that time the voices had gradually become distinguishable as such. To say that there was conversation is to overstate the case; but human speech, in its barest and most elementary form, was occurring. It was impossible, even then, to tell who was speaking, let alone what was being said. It was difficult, even with the eye, to catch anyone in the act, though here and there a twisted lip or a flicked eyebrow suggested that communication had just been broken off. The flutter of small, shapeless sounds was human but unidentifiable: even the characteristic differences of sex do not apply when the vocal chords are barely brought into play.

To the eye, however, though necessarily only in quick, sideways flashes, the company became gradually apparent; and with the trained eye, to see is to classify. There were the retired north-country manufacturer and his wife, sitting placidly with their backs to Purity, previously dozing but now undoubtedly in some clan-

destine and domestic communication. There was the professor, with ribbon-hung glasses and a pile of books, occupying one end of a sofa while the school-master, with a big moustache, horn-rims and an erudite thriller, occupied the other. There was the raw young couple, tandem cyclists and possibly even newly-weds, facing Purity; and there were the Orientals, very suave and baffling, sitting with cat-like grace on two impossible chairs and staring at the Relief of Ladysmith with incredulous and hostile curiosity. And into this restless sea of stealthy communication, which I had first mistaken for silence, there fell presently a clear, sudden, unequivocal sound. Something dripped.

The noises stopped, leaving what was easily identifiable, now that it had occurred, as genuine silence. No one actually moved, but there was a restless flutter of eyes. Ears were cocked, though even in the Oriental this does not involve overt movement. Gradually the tension lessened and the silence, though never definitely broken, was burred and lost its edge. Then, just as the silence reached vanishing point, just when the interruption had been dismissed as insignificant, it dripped again.

It was a broad, wet sound, almost a plop; and the most impassive of listeners could not doubt that it came from inside the Residents' Lounge. I held my breath. I think we all held our breaths, because when the drip came again, as it did, much



sooner this time, we all let them go together in a faint, chiming sigh, like the wind in the chimneys of a doll's house. The tension mounted with an unbelievable rapidity. Only the Orientals made any success of concealing their emotion.

By the fifth or sixth drip most of us had located the sound on the polished boards behind the main sofa. By the eighth we had seen the spreading patch on the ceiling; and then, before any word had been said, the corner of a sheet of ceiling-paper wilted silently away and the drip became a trickle. Right in the middle of the room, shining and incredible, a wire-thin column of water vibrated gently between ceiling and floor.

Words broke out on all sides but, with a nightmare unreality, from the wrong directions. "Dear me," said the manufacturer in a dry, thin, scholarly voice, "I am afraid there is a leak somewhere."

"Eh, Fred lud," said the professor to the schoolmaster, "soom woon's left bath-toob rooning."

"But darling," said the raw young woman, "*do* look, *too* frightful. Better tell Charles and ask him to cope. He's got spanners and things."

"Say, wadya know?" said one Oriental to the other. "Looks like sumpn boist or sumpn."

The door opened and a woman came in with a bucket. She clicked her tongue



"AND HERE'S A GOUACHE OF ME AND BABY PADDLING, WITH OUR HOTEL IN THE BACKGROUND"

with annoyance and gave the ceiling a sharp look. The water stopped. She walked to the middle of the room, knelt and mopped perfunctorily at the floorboards with a cloth. Most of the water seemed already to have passed on. She dropped the cloth into the bucket with a moist clang; and as she did so a sudden gust of wind from the open door slapped the corner of wet paper neatly back into place. The woman got to her feet and went out, shutting the door behind her. No one else had moved.

For a moment, in the silence, panic was absolute. Eye sought, and avoided, terrified eye. Only Purity still gazed at the carpet in cretinous dejection; for the rest it seemed that the catalyst might be too strong to be resisted. It was the erstwhile manufacturer who saved us. He swept us all deliberately, one by one, with a cold glance, got out his spectacles, opened the book on his lap, pursed his lips and began to read. It was gallantly done. Tea came, by instalments, five minutes later, and was eaten in sonorous silence.

P. M. HUBBARD

HOYDENS

Hoydens wear trousers and whiskery checks
 And sweaters and shirts with the wrong kind of necks,
 Hoydens look stunning in jodhpurs, of course,
 Though one can't be too certain which one is the horse.

Hoydens remember when you were at school
 And were not in The Team and were rather a fool;
 Hoydens play hockey until they're quite old,
 They do daily dozens and take their baths cold.

Hoydens don't claim to be clever or subtle,
 But this I will say—and but me no rebuttal—
 Hoydens are sterling and sporting and tough,
 And hoydens are British—which should be enough.

Hoydens take fences but can't take a hint,
 They look at the pictures but shy at the print,
 And when hoydens see verses they turn over quick—
 So I doubt if they'll notice this modest half-brick.

K. V. RICHARDSON

THERE'LL ALWAYS BE . . .

Indo-China (now Viet-Nam)
 Borders Thailand (née Siam).
 India's part Pakistan.
 Good-bye Persia, come Iran!
 Under Mr. de Valera
 Ireland changed itself to Eire.
 Britain stoutly keeps its name,
 It's called England just the same.

JUSTIN RICHARDSON



GIOVANNETTI

CRAFTE SHOPPE

We run the local Handcraft Shop
 With poker-work and home-made scones
 And *really nice* elevenses
 For wives of dons.

We keep a poster on the wall
 About the village Weavers' Guild;
 With "Heather Honey—on the Comb"
 Our window's filled.

The *avant garde* of Berkshire hire
 Our basement for discussion groups,
 And for the Very Young we sell
 Old-fashioned hoops.

Our postcards framed with coloured moss
 Go well—especially Botticelli.
 And with the profits from it all
 We're buying Tele.

SONIA PARRY

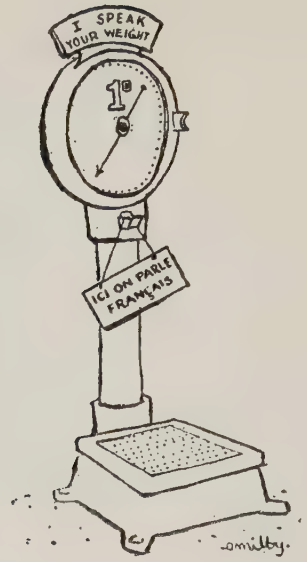
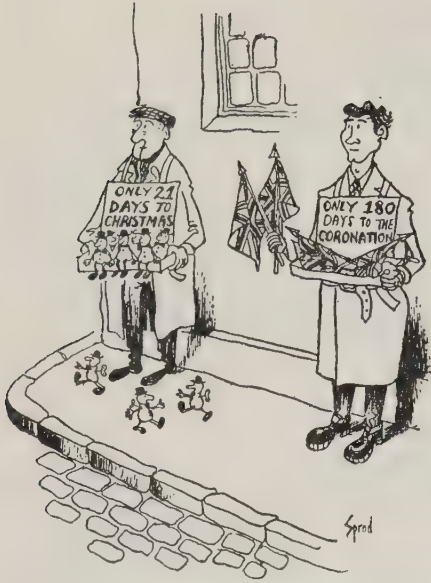
Self-Portraiture

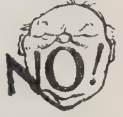
I HAVE just read a novel in which the heroine, writing in the first person, takes every opportunity of describing herself. She sees in the mirror "her long slender legs, her jade green eyes and her vivid red hair." The reader is not allowed to forget these attributes, for a few pages later she "combs out her long red-gold hair and changes into a white linen dress which shows off the exquisite lines of her figure to the fullest advantage." And the best of luck to her. I am seriously considering following this uninhibited precedent in a novel in the Raymond Chandler vein which I have had on the stocks for some time:

I caught a glimpse of my face in the bar-room mirror. It was as expressionless as a basalt slab, but the scar I collected from the little Jap officer on Okinawa was high-lighted like a neon sign. My eyes, grey as kittiwake's wings, stared unwinkingly back at me.

"Hold it, Sluggsy," I said, moving easily forward on the toes of my neatly proportioned feet.

"O.K., Godolphin," he whispered, "if you want it, you can have it." Then





the fat slob took a swing at me. I rode the punch, taking it on the steel cannon ball of my flexed biceps. Then I hit him, but good. The lion rampant on my signet ring took him full on the mouth. He squealed like a stuck pig, and I hit him again, a short-arm jab on the button. Every pound of my hundred and ninety stripped went into the punch, and he was right for choirs of angels. I looked down at him from six foot two and one-half inches up, shoe heels discounted. I sure felt good and I grinned at my reflection. This time my teeth shone back at me. A little guy appeared from a side room, a police positive cosy in his fist as elbow gloves on a hostess. I didn't want to pass the time of day, and I let him know I was all-American right block, Notre Dame, class of 'thirty-seven, with the point of my shoulder. He never moved after he hit the floor. Some ribs busted, I guess.

I was breathing easy, pulse seventy-two, and buying myself a drink from my flask when Georgia walked into the bar. I wiped my firm mouth with the back of my bronzed hand and said "This place is a morgue, have a shot of rye." She nodded and looked round. Her eyes were grey too, but not so much of a smoky-sea shade as mine, nor so wintry. After all she was a woman, and you can say that again, brother; she didn't have to be so tough.

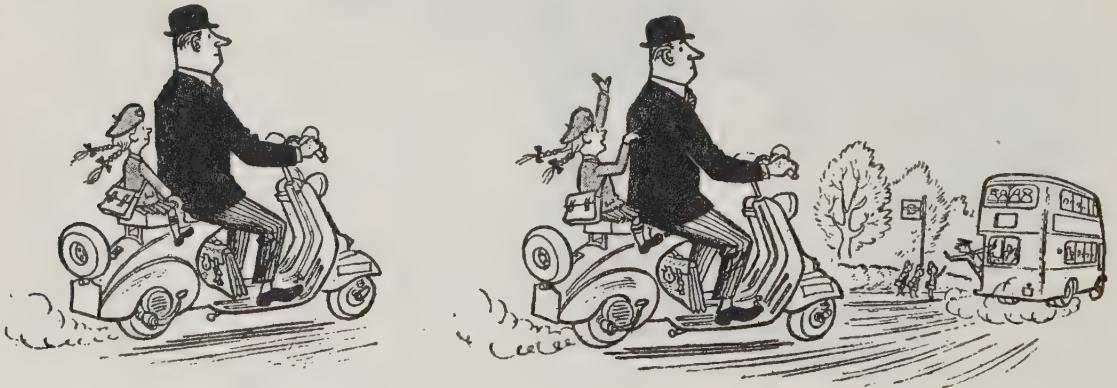
"You can't forget you were Golden Gloves heavyweight, can you?" she asked, having taken in the bodies.

Remarks like that embarrass me; I'm just an ordinary guy, so I said nothing. Just sat there fingering the cleft in my square jaw.

"Let's go down to the Tulip Bowl and take to the waters," I suggested. "I want a swim."

Georgia smiled at me. "O.K. Cliff, anything you say." My first name is Rory, but everybody calls me Cliff, I just seem to strike them that way.

We climbed aboard the convertible and set off down town. Georgie was carrying the torch for me; I could see her looking at me out of the corner of her eye. I guess she could see quite a deal out of that corner. We touched ninety along



Sunset and even my crisp hair ruffled attractively in the wind. We made the Tulip Bowl in seven minutes flat, and went off to change. Georgie came out in a black Bikini and I put on Tartan Gabardine shorts. I climbed up on to the high spring-board and I was taking the kinks out of my limbs when some guy put a slug through my broad left shoulder. I did a neat jack-knife, came up for air, and went into a fast right-arm trudgeon to the edge of the pool. Whoever the guy was, he had taken the breeze, but Georgia was worried sick. She dug out the resident medic to give me a look over.

"Quit worrying, honey," I said. "I'm O.K."

The medic nodded. "It won't kill you, son; just a .38 through the fleshy part of the shoulder."

I looked at him. "Watch your big mouth, bud," I said evenly, "my shoulder don't have no fleshy part . . ."

RICHARD FAULL

At the Play

WANTED—NEW STOCK CHARACTERS

CRITICS often complain bitterly that someone in a new play is only a stock character, as if that were a very insulting thing. I feel this shows an ungrateful attitude to a very loyal body of men and women whose job it is to make us feel at home in the theatre, and therefore all the readier to be pleased with more original excitements. Really there is nothing against stock characters as such. Most of the people in Restoration comedy are types, easily switched from one play to another; and, if it comes to that, we ourselves are out of a pretty well-thumbed card-index.

The only legitimate grouse against stock characters is their appalling longevity.





"I'M NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. IT'S BAD ENOUGH TRYING TO KEEP THE CHILDREN
AMUSED FOR ONE WET DAY"

Until death finally overtakes them they continue to haunt the theatre, antic shadows of the past that have no meaning in the contemporary scene. But, of course, it is playwrights who must carry the can for all this. They are far too soft-hearted. They hate to turn old faithfuls out to grass, and they have a sneaking feeling that what was good enough for Pinero must be good enough for them. Whatever the reason, this reluctance to bow to social changes long ago accepted by every member of the audience can make the theatre an eerie sort of place.

One of the hardiest survivals is the myth of the green baize door. Beyond it, one is made to feel, stands an army of disciplined retainers of whom the career diplomat butler and the epigrammatic maid carrying the sandwiches are merely representatives. Occasionally a blackleg playwright will introduce a pale reflection of kitchen facts, but with the slightest encouragement young men still ring for their shoes and greasy dishes are whisked into polite limbo. As strange an anachronism is the persistently antique behaviour of old ladies. Dramatists have at last written off lace caps as a lost property, but decline to admit that for every great-grandmother found crocheting in a reminiscent coma there are now ten flogging seven-horse cars from one committee meeting to the next. Other instances teem to mind of stock



characters miraculously free from income tax, bureaucratic control, or even the shortage of whisky.

That this head-in-the-sand ostrichism has continued into the middle of a social revolution makes it doubly absurd. If the playwright doodling at his desk will only turn his back when the old stock characters step forward he will find no shortage of candidates from the other side of the medal. For one, the Senior Civil Servant clamours to be taken on. Action will not be required of him, and he will prove an immensely useful visual reminder that we have entered the Post-Carefree Age. So will the Psychoanalyst, encroaching on the field of the Vicar. The Spiv should also be engaged as an important symbolic figure, taking the place of the other captains of enterprise put out of business by the State (the kerbside edition has arrived, it is true, but we must get used to the genus in its higher flights). In the sphere of toil two fresh stock characters are urgently needed: at the top, that fascinating enigma, the Labour peer; at the bottom, the daily, only she must shed all relationship to Mrs. Mopp.

If once such key-positions were stormed I am sure the way would be open for plays full of thrilling background significance. It would quickly be assumed that a baronet, if nourished, worked in football pools, and that in every aunt's knapsack was the key to her teashop.

ERIC KEOWN

The Matchless Boxes

THE vicar put his parcel down beside his chair and accepted a glass of sherry.

"We have a bone to pick with you, Charles," said Purbright's wife.

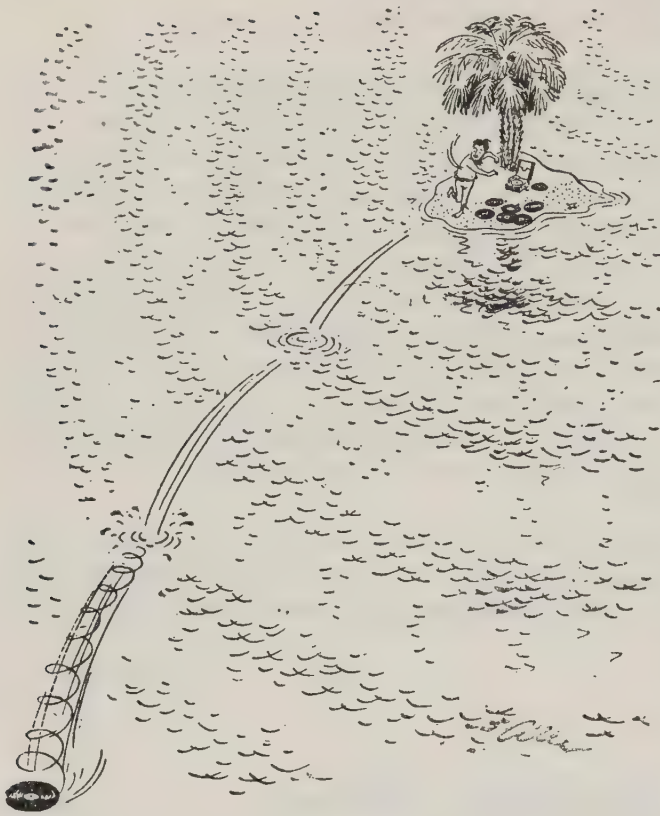
"Little do you know," said Purbright, "what a dangerous time you have chosen to come and visit us."

"To come and visit us *at*," said the vicar.

"Am I right," asked Purbright's wife, "in saying that you set my son a holiday task for last holidays?"

"Yes," said the vicar, holding his unlit pipe in the manner of one accustomed to modelling for tobacco advertisements, and looking round absently for a match. "Your son has the privilege of learning divinity from me. In an effort to teach my class the names of the Books of the Bible, and to occupy their little hands during their holidays, I required of them that they should make a Bible Library: a small wooden bookshelf with books made of match-boxes and labelled with the sixty-six Books of the Bible."

"Give him Hezekiah," said Purbright's wife. "He needs a light." Purbright handed a match-box across.



"I must say," continued the vicar, "that your little lad's effort was a fine one; much work had been done, even if the result was a rhomboid as sturdy as a soap-bubble. I gave him twenty-seven out of fifty."

"Thank you very much indeed," said Purbright. "Which boy got top marks?"

"Johnny Clamp," said the vicar. "A most gratifying effort: polished mahogany and little brass handles; forty-nine out of fifty I gave him. If he had not spelt Zephaniah with an 'f' he'd have had full marks. The boy has capabilities beyond his years."

"And a father who's a master joiner with Cloud and Butterwick's," said Purbright.

"Purbright works in an office," said Purbright's wife.

"I am not good with my hands," said Purbright. "I cannot even keep a lighter serviceable—and how we need one in this house just at present. My carpentry is normally confined to the daily task of pushing the screws of the hinges of the garage door back into holes too large for them." His voice caught. "That soap-bubble took me four hours and two orange boxes."

"I have hurt your feelings," said the vicar.

"No, no," said Purbright in a high voice. "Oh, no. But I do think that a wooden bookshelf is too much either for the son of a sedentary worker or for the sedentary worker himself."

"It is not so much, Charles, that we object to your setting whole families a holiday task," said Purbright's wife, refilling sherry glasses. "After all, we are your parishioners. We do not even greatly mind turning to and earning marks for our son, unethical as such a proceeding would normally be. But we do object to the way you have disorganized our home."

"That library," said Purbright, with emphasis, "used up all our match-boxes. My wife and son spent all afternoon——"



"YOUR EXHAUST'S EXCESSIVELY NOISY!"

"To the accompaniment of bangs and crashes from Purbright in the garage," interposed his wife.

"—writing Jude, Zephaniah, Amos, etc., on little labels, and sticking them to our whole household stock of boxes of matches. 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Leviticus . . ."

"And Hezekiah," said the vicar, looking at the box in his hand.

"I cannot understand how the Authorized Version came to omit the Book of Hezekiah," said Purbright's wife. "I am sure you often read us lessons from it. However, we kept that book back."

"It was lucky we did," said Purbright. "Apart from a box in my pocket, it was the only one we had. We are in a terrifying mess. We keep Hezekiah in here, and my box on the kitchen stove. In neutral territory, by the telephone in the hall, we keep the button-bag with the matches from the sixty-six boxes in it. From this bag we replenish the two boxes. At least, that was our plan."

"But that sounds a reasonable arrangement," said the vicar.

Purbright rose to his feet and stood before the fire. "It's the sort of reasonable arrangement," he said, "that looks well in a pamphlet on office and warehouse management, but for practical housekeeping it is useless. Unless there is a kitchen cupboard full of boxes of matches to steal from my wife, and unless I have half a

dozen boxes on my desk for my wife to steal, nothing gets lit. We are normal people: we do not, with careful forethought, take the box to the bag, fill the box and take it back to the stove or in here. What we do is to get the bag, take a match out of it, strike it on the box, and leave the bag by the box on the stove. Then the other one, finding the bag absent from the telephone, goes to the kitchen, brings the box and the bag in here, strikes a match, lights the fire and leaves the bag and both boxes in here. In the last week I have found innumerable variations: box and bag on the stove and box in here; box, box and bag on the stove; bag and two boxes by the telephone; bag with box inside it, in the wood-shed and box on the stove; box by the telephone, bag in here and box in my wife's handbag; and now, Hezekiah in your pocket——"



"Olympic!"

"Oh," said the vicar, surrendering Hezekiah.

"—the other box in my pocket, and the bag up there on the mantel-piece. Imagine yourself in the kitchen at this minute, longing to boil a kettle."

The vicar looked up. "It's a nice bag," he said.

"That's another thing," said Purbright's wife. "It's the button-bag. We've nowhere to put the buttons." She pointed to a heap of buttons resting upon a sheet of newspaper in the corner.

The vicar reached down for his parcel and opened it. "I brought back your rhomboid soap-bubble with all its books intact," he said. "You could keep the buttons, neatly classified, in the little shelves."

"Certainly not," said Purbright's wife. "The matches shall go back from bag to boxes, and the buttons back into their bag."

"The reason I make the suggestion," said the vicar, finishing his sherry and rising to his feet, "is that you may need those boxes again."

"Whatever do you mean?" asked Purbright.

"I shall soon be setting the task for next holidays," said the vicar. "A church complete with fittings—font, pulpit, lectern, everything—all to be made of empty match-boxes."

A. H. BARTON

New Line

MESSRS. Camshaft and Throttlebody Bros. (I said into the dictaphone) copy to the Office Manager the Sales Manager Mr. Havering dash please call at the Sales Counter and receive against a plain advice note made out to you one each "Spaceship" type radiator mascots "Condor" "Dan Dare" and "Venus." Please endorse Note "for demonstration not to be left with customer." Dear Sirs, we thank you for your letter dated the 14th inst. enclosing Order No. 00013 raising one gross radiator muffs, shrouded, and one gross blue bonnet mascots "Shanter" type.

We must point out that we cannot supply the goods against this order *in toto* that means "completely" Miss Sherlock since the "Shanter" type of mascot is now obsolete and has been replaced by the various "Spaceship" styles bracket see our enclosed catalogue page 16 close bracket see you enclose catalogue Miss Sherlock.

We would take the opportunity of outlining briefly the main advantages of the "Spaceship" mascot. It is produced in various pastel shades, and chromium; and our designers have endeavoured to anticipate future spaceship trends by incorporating new features. E.g. they have added a realistic defence turret in rear which represents an original method of fighting off paralysing rays, etc., and which is not yet shown in the illustrated periodicals dealing with the spaceship, nor in the models in the toyshops bracket Patent No. SS 40940 stroke 11 stroke 53 close bracket.



"YOU MUST READ IT—DON'T LET THE FIRST FEW VOLUMES PUT YOU OFF"

Paragraph we venture to state that no car will be without this mascot; and the demand from children's tricycle retailers for the modified type bracket with movable parts close bracket has been very gratifying.

Paragraph may we direct our Mr. Havering dash whom you have already met in connection with our reinforced gaskets dash to call on you to demonstrate?

Assuring you of our best attention at all times, we remain, etc.

FERGUSON MACLAY

This is a Stick-up

I DON'T know what Miss Whibley will say.

It seemed so simple at the time. The chairman read from the agenda, "Pistol for Act Three," and I said, with ballistics written all over me and the confidence of a man who passes a gun-shop daily, "I'll fix that," and we went on to discuss dropping the prompter from the programmes. It appeared as "promoter" last year and caused some bad feeling.

But nothing like the bad feeling I'm going to cause Miss Whibley.

The London gunshop showed me the very thing. The cost of hire was absurdly low, the blank ammunition ridiculously cheap. Already I felt the glow that rewards a man who has said he'll do something and done it. "Excellent," I said, putting the weapon in my brief-case. "I'll take it."

The man reached over and took it out again, then went back to blowing down a Spanish musket. "Not without a certificate," he said—"Firearms Act, 1937."

"Oh," I said.

"Call back any time," said the man, dropping the pistol in a drawer. "With the certificate."

In the light of this I had left things a bit late. The production was four days away, and they asked me about the gun at rehearsal that night. When I made my entrance and said "Move and you're a dead duck. Bang!" Miss Whibley, instead of crumpling to the floor as usual, said that it was time we rehearsed with a real shot, otherwise I should be saying "Bang!" on the night. "I'm getting it," I said. Miss Whibley said "There's not much time." I said "It'll be here," and she said she should hope so, and the producer said "All *right*, 'she crumples to the floor.'"

Luckily the police station and the railway station are conveniently juxtaposed at Hayheath. I started five minutes early on the next morning and popped in, saying briskly as I entered, "Firearms Act, 1937," hoping thus to suggest some slight immediacy.

The constable questioned me closely, as is proper in these violent times. The weapon was for use on the stage? In an amateur dramatic production? *Only* on the stage? To fire blank cartridges? Would I use it personally? Would anyone use it but me? Where was the weapon coming from? How long should I have it? Had I a licence already? Had I any ammunition in my possession? How much should I want? Was there any——?

But in the end I passed with flying colours, and the constable gave me a pink form which, I saw from a quick glance, would need completing in surroundings of contemplative ease.

"I'll bring it in to-night," I said, and dashed off. I had heard three trains draw out already.

An older constable was on duty in the evening. He knew nothing of my case, but heard me out patiently, tapping the pink form with his notebook. He was surprised when I confirmed that I was not already a holder of a firearm certificate, as the form I had spent most of the day completing was, in fact, an application for a renewal, and in the circumstances entirely meaningless. "Come to think of it," the constable said, drawing up a stool to a shelf of reference books and making himself comfortable—"you've raised quite a few queries here."

Time passed. The constable got down and stretched his legs. He came and leaned on the counter. "As a matter of fact," he said, "you don't want a certificate at all." He turned away and began taking down particulars of a lost dog from an elderly lady in musquash.



"But," I said, bursting in rudely, "I can't get the gun without one."

"Name *and* address on his collar?" he said to the lady. And to me: "What you want is a Letter of Authorization from the Chief Constable. You'll have to fill up another form."

This, when I got it, seemed very much like the other one, but the paper was a different colour. I took it away. I was late for rehearsal.

It was the first constable again next morning. Neither of us mentioned that the form I now brought in wasn't the one he'd given me. It seemed better to let it slide.

"I shall want to collect the gun to-morrow," I said. "We shall have to manage to-night's dress rehearsal without it. But to-morrow . . ." I tailed off persuasively.

"To-morrow, eh?" said the constable, and

shook his head. Then he went into the next room and conferred with two other men. He rang up several people, and looked up a few books on the shelf.

"Call to-morrow," he said, and smiled reassuringly.

It seemed too good to be true.

At the dress rehearsal I shot Miss Whibley with my old briar pipe. "Bang!" I cried. She gave me a terrible look as she fell.

It was the sergeant on duty next morning. He heard my story in full, which took some time by now. He threw in a shrewd question here and there about the purpose for which the weapon was required, whether I already held a certificate and

so forth. At last he said "Well, sir, that all seems in order. Suppose you call in, say, Monday of next week."

Monday of next week.

"Look," I said. And I told him. About Miss Whibley—everything. I must have been powerfully moving because in the end he came out with a suggestion surely unparalleled in the annals of officialdom. It was irregular, he said, and he wasn't at all sure he ought to do it, he said, but if I cared to tell the gun-shop to give him a ring he would get through to headquarters in the meantime and confirm that my letter of authority, though not producible, did in fact exist. "Sergeant," I said, "I—you——" I broke down, I think.

The man at the gun-shop was screwing a hammer on a blunder-buss when I broke in on him with the glad news. He went on screwing it. His authority to release firearms, he said, came from the Metropolitan Police at Scotland Yard. Where they got *theirs* from was no concern of his. All he knew was that if all the station sergeants in Sussex called him in deputation on their bended knees it wouldn't make a ha'p'orth of difference. He was sorry. Of course, if I'd like to ring up Scotland Yard—but he'd tell me now, I shouldn't get any change out of *them*. It was the Firearms Act, 1937, that was the trouble. If they——

Scotland Yard is a big place. Rather departmentalized, you might say. In my state, perhaps, it was a good thing. It passed a long afternoon.



"HENRY—YOU'VE FORGOTTEN YOUR GLASSES AGAIN"

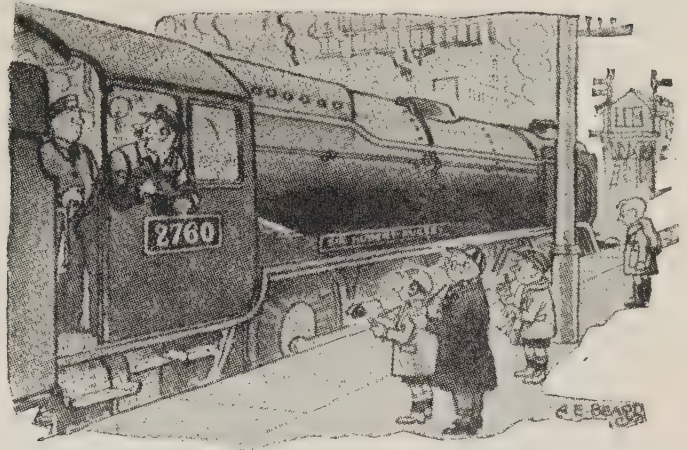
THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'



"NOT HERE, SILLY—IN THE DINING-ROOM!"



"WHO'S THERE?"



"THAT'S THREE NEW ONES TO-DAY—A MUNSBIDGE GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
A WEST ROCKHAM SECONDARY AND A REDCLIFFE COLLEGE"



"THINK OF ALL THE POOR LITTLE BOYS WHO HAVEN'T
GOT TELEVISION"

THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'

It struck me, as I crept into the Memorial Hall this evening at the end of Act Two and began to put on the grease-paint, that I ought perhaps to have tried the Home Secretary. But I was tired, tired. You can only do so much. Now, my muffler knotted and my cap pulled well down, I have barely the energy to scribble this brief account—my vindication, in a way—on the back of a few spare programmes. Act Three is already under way. I have had my "Five minutes please" from Mrs. Tailpew, the call-boy. I can do no more now but make my entrance on cue, through the property window.

"More and you're a dead duck!" I shall cry. I shall not cry "Bang!" but I shall bring down, with cruel precision, my silk evening sock full of sago.

I don't know what Miss Whibley will say.

J. B. BOOTHROYD

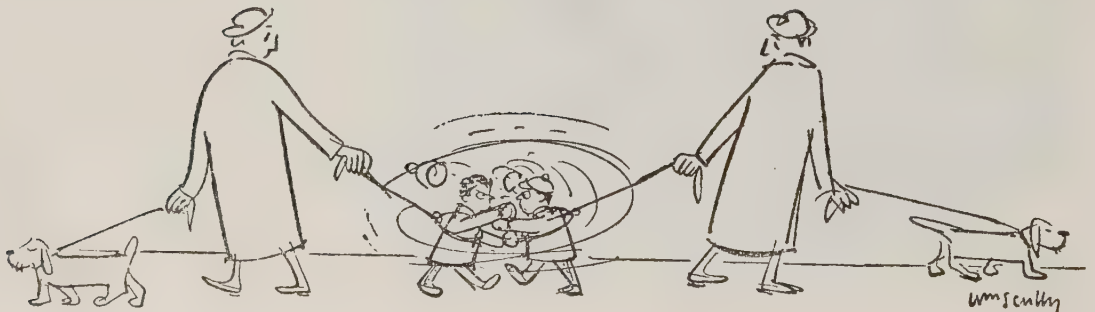
RIPOSTE

To editors with space to spare
 We women drivers prove a boon;
Ad nauseam, when jokes are rare,
 We brighten up some smug "cartoon."

Men love to sketch us while we learn,
 Or park upon a roundabout,
 Or back through garage walls, or turn
 With both our indicators out.

Yet once—forgive us for recalling—
 We drove, perhaps, those self-same men
 On war-time roads, where bombs were falling:
 And no one thought us funny then.

MARGARET CAMPBELL BARNES



POST-GRADUETTE

I was at Newnham, by the Cam;
 Grannie never read a book.
 Watch me mince last Tuesday's ham;
 Grannie had to have a cook.



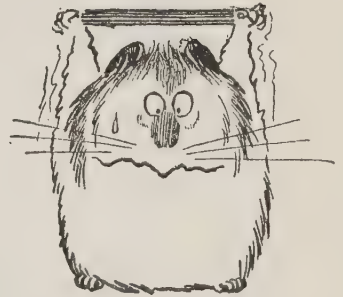
Latin makes you wise and happy;
 Poor uneducated Grannie!
 Latin helps me wash this nappy;
 Grannie had to have a Nannie.



Mine was a pretty good degree;
 Grandmamma could hardly spell.
 See how well I get the tea;
 Grannie had to ring a bell.

Newnham *ruined* my papa;
 That's how families progress.
 Would I swop with Grandmamma?
 There's no Latin word for "yes."

JUSTIN RICHARDSON



GOVANNETTI



THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'

OLD SWADDY WONDERS

INDIA DAY, JANUARY 26

We've marched out o' Hindustan, the last flag's flown,
 truck and tank and mule and man; the Last Post's blown,
 and Gunga Din has got his stripes—I'll bet he's proud o' that:
 but what 'v us Old Army types and our old-sweats' way o' chat?
 Will the new rookie-wallahs take a dekkho at a chit?
 If we say "Char's up" for tiffin, will they know what's meant by it?
 For when we talk o' cantonments, a puggree or a peg,
 it'll just be old ex-issue like the puttee round your leg:
 and the new-style body won't take a second look
 at the old-time swaddy with his old bundook.
 But perhaps they'll holler "Show a leg!" in the lines at Barrackpur
 and talk o' flash and philabeg and wish 'em back once more.
 For an army gets its lingo from a long way back
 and it doesn't live on jingo or that kind o' tack.
 It'll take a foreign fashion for the things it wants to name,
 for it knows the simple swaddy is everywhere the same.
 And we'll both have our Bilati if the call-up's made once more,
 it'll be the same old Blighty as it always was before.
 For we've marched out o' Hindustan and the Raj is hard to find,
 but we've brought a bit out with us and we've left a bit behind.

ALUN LLEWELLYN

THE HORSE

I bought a horse at Amritsar,
 At the Baisâkhi fair.
 The horse had very bulging sides
 And long and matted hair;
 It also had a temperament,
 And was in fact a mare.

The man who helped me buy the horse,
 He must have made a packet,
 Despite the fact that he was in
 An upper income bracket
 And wore a pair of snakeskin shoes
 And European jacket.

The girths could hardly be got round,
So massive was her pot.
She had presumably been backed,
But hadn't learnt a lot.
Her canter was like falling logs;
She hadn't got a trot.

She was impossible to stop
And very hard to steer;
If I pulled one rein hard enough
Her face came to the rear,
But she went happily ahead,
Finding her way by ear.

She had an urge to go south-east
Which nothing could assuage.
She threw me into ecstasies
Of unavailing rage.
She bit my future wife when we
Were in the wooing stage.

I rode her for ten years and more
Through all that listless land;
I rode her in the northern hills
And in the southern sand:
And every ride was just about
As much as I could stand.

Those days are dead (and so is she);
Things are not as they were.
I left the saddle years ago
In favour of a chair.
I cannot now afford a horse,
But do not greatly care.

P. M. HUBBARD

LINES COMPOSED UNDER THE INFLUENCE
OF STRONG EMOTION

My garage has a sliding door,
And I have caught my finger in it.
I used to boast of it before
("My garage has a *sliding* door");
It doesn't thrill me any more,
It lost its charm in half a minute.
My garage has a *!!* door,
AND I HAVE CAUGHT MY FINGER IN IT!

G. D. R. DAVIES

* Sliding?

A Visit to Harwell

I WAS very well taught at school a large number of things, most of which I have subsequently discovered to be untrue. I learnt my history from Mr. Aldous Huxley, for whom in about 1919 I had to write an essay explaining why there could never again be any dictators in the modern world; and, when I turned from history to science, a delightfully unfrocked clergyman spent the greater part of a term telling us how the atom could never be split. I remembered it well because my misdemeanours led me to have to write out a hundred and fifty times: "You cannot split the atom, because if you did, it would not be the atom"—which was at any rate logic, even if it was nonsense. Then I went on to Oxford, and there they told me that the atom might be split, but, if it was, it would not make any difference to anybody.

We live and learn, and so I reflected when I went to visit Harwell. I presented myself, like Dante, at the gates of Hell, and there was given what looked like a piece of india-rubber, which I must wear—so I was told—to prevent my bones from rotting away. I took an oath to reveal none of the secrets that I might learn to Stalin—an oath which I have had no difficulty in keeping, as I did not understand one word in fifty thousand that was said to me. I plunged down into what I may call the semi-bowels of the earth. There I found myself looking at clocks which went round the wrong way and strange zinc funnels with horrible functional lines that pierced up into the outer air. Strange young scientists came up on pneumatic elevators from the depths proper of hell and gave to me wholly unintelligible explanations of what I was seeing.

"From the Bulmer formula and the quantum theory postulates, it follows," one

of them said, "that the hydrogen atom has a single sequence of stationary states. You understand, of course?"

"No," I said.

"That's right," he said, "you see, the numerical value of the energy in the n th state is Rh/n^2 . You see that?"

"No," I said.

"That's right," he said.

"He means," said the other one, "that if you fired a lot of balls out of a sort of cannon they would all bound off when they came up against the—er—the—er—what d'you call it?"

"But have you fired a lot of balls out of a cannon?" I asked.

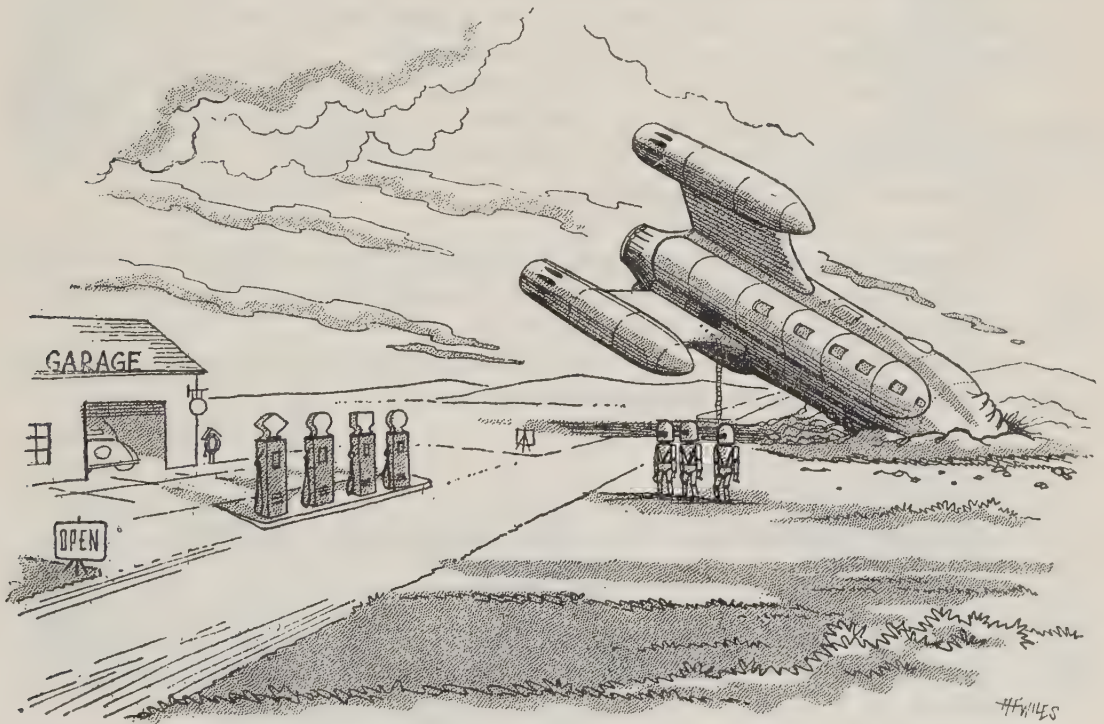
"No," he said.

"I understand perfectly," I said.

"This is the century of the common man," said the other scientist. "We don't believe in putting things in highfalutin language."

"These politicians," said the first scientist, "they think that they can control us, but even the best of them don't understand the first thing about it."

"There was a bishop the other day," said his colleague, "who said that he



"WHY DON'T THEY MOVE OR SAY SOMETHING?"

believed in God. I cannot understand the impertinence of people in the twentieth century who talk about what they cannot understand."

"But how many of you do understand what is going on here?" I asked.

"Oh, of course, quite a lot of people understand their particular department," they explained, "but very few indeed can see the whole picture."

"Tewkinson, I suppose you might say, understands it all," said the first scientist.

"I suppose so," said the other scientist, "but then he's dumb, so there's no way of knowing. Thompson did understand it, too. But he's dead, of course."

"Of course," said the first scientist, "but he's dead, and, since he never wrote down what he had discovered intelligibly, no one will ever know what he did understand."

"Well, then," I said, "what it comes to is that there are you two."

"Oh, I wouldn't say . . ." they began together.

"This has nothing whatsoever to do with atom bombs," they said. "This is only concerned with atomic development for beneficent industrial purposes."

"And how do you develop it?" I asked.

"Well, you see those two buttons in the floor in front of you." I saw them. "When we have carried our researches a little bit further, then it will be possible by pressing the right-hand button to release energy which will enable you to travel from here to New York in five minutes."

"And if I press the left-hand button?" I asked.

"Ah, well," said one of the scientists, "that might be serious. That might set up a nuclear reaction which would disrupt the universe."

"As a matter of fact," said the other, "it's the right-hand button which will disrupt the universe and the left-hand button which will carry you to New York."

"No, it isn't," said the first. "It's the other way round."

"Of course it isn't," said the second.

"Of course it is," said the first.

"A lot of people have very exaggerated ideas about these explosions," they told me. "There is no real reason to think that they would destroy all life on this planet. They would merely destroy all human life."

At this moment in wandered a stray and very mangy cat, lay down very firmly on both buttons, and nothing happened whatsoever.

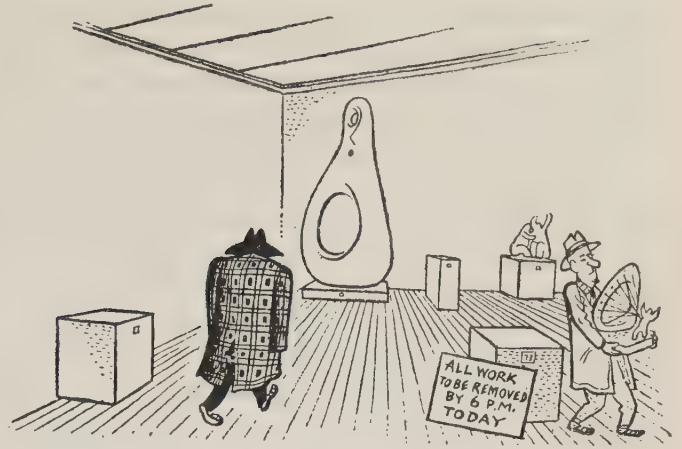
CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS

In Search of Billington Road

THE stranger paused outside the station and looked about him uncertainly. "Can I assist you?" I inquired. I was feeling in a helpful frame of mind.

"Thank you," he said. "I am trying to find Billington Road."

I was disappointed. I had never heard of Billington Road. If he had asked



me for Mayflower Avenue I could have told him where it was immediately. I have lived there for twelve years and know it well. Or again, if he had wanted Station Approach I could have replied at once that he was standing on it. However, handicapped as I was, I determined to do my best for him.

"What sort of a road is it, longish or shortish?" I asked.

"I don't know," he replied, "but the number I want is 143."

I pondered. "Longish, I should think. Do you know anything else about it?"

The man hesitated. "It has a pig-bin in it. My friend mentions a pig-bin in his letter."

"Good!" I said. "That narrows the field. A longish road with a pig-bin. Does he say what type of pig-bin?"

He drew a letter from his pocket and examined it. "No, he doesn't say what type."

"A pity," I said. "It would have helped a great deal to know whether Billington Road has a plain converted dust-pin, a pivot-top, or one with a lid which can be operated by a foot-movement. This last sort is pretty rare, and the only one in the district, as far as I know, is over there by the wall. Now," I said emphatically, "if it could be established that the road you're looking for had a pig-bin of this kind, there's no doubt Station Approach is what you want. And this is Station Approach."

"But there are no houses here," objected the gentleman.

"A good point," I said. "That eliminates Station Approach, and from this we can take it that Billington Road hasn't got a pig-bin with a foot-operated lid."

There was a short silence as he digested this extra piece of information.

"You can't help me then?" he said.

I was surprised. What did he think I had been doing! Before he met me his knowledge of Billington Road was negligible. Now he knew not only that it was longish but it hadn't got a pig-bin with a foot-operated lid. In addition he had learned Billington Road wasn't Station Approach. Nevertheless I decided to overlook this thoughtless remark and continue the investigation.



"WE THREE KINGS FROM ORIENT ARE . . ."

"Is it near the Town Hall?" I asked. "If it is, you're as good as inside your friend's house, for I can give you foolproof instructions how to get there."

"I don't know," he said lamely. "My friend says nothing at all about the Town Hall."

"Dear me!" I exclaimed. "It would have been better if your friend had mentioned the Town Hall rather than the pig-bin."

"Well, thank you for your trouble," he said. "I'll ask someone else." He turned and walked away. I followed, unwilling to be beaten so easily.

"Look here," I said, drawing abreast, "there's a newspaper seller just round the corner. He's been there for years. We'll ask him."

"You are very kind," he answered, "but please don't bother."

"No trouble at all," I assured him.

I bought a newspaper. "Is Billington Road near here?" I asked.

The newspaper seller removed his hat and scratched his head. "It's gone, years ago," he said.

"What!" I cried.



"KEEP ON LOOKING—WE MIGHT SEE SOMETHING"

"Pulled down just after the war," he explained.

I turned to the gentleman. "That letter hasn't been delayed, I suppose?"

"It was written a fortnight ago," he replied. I thought I detected a slightly impatient note in his voice.

"Are you quite sure of your facts?" I said to the newspaper seller.

"Course I'm sure," he said indignantly. "You ask my brother-in-law at the Baths. He lived there."

In the circumstances I decided to take his word for it.

The gentleman interposed "It could have been rebuilt."

"Oh, it's the *new* Billington Road you want," said the newspaper seller.

"Of course!" I snapped.

"You didn't say," he said aggressively. "I thought you wanted the old one."

"Well, where is the *new* Billington Road?" I asked.

"Dunno," he said. "I think they put it up somewhere else."

"Thank you once again," said the stranger, and moved off speedily.

Suddenly I thought of an excellent suggestion.

"Hi! Sir," I shouted. The gentleman appeared to increase his pace. "I've got it," I said breathlessly. "There's a policeman on point-duty about a mile down the road——"

"It's quite all right," he broke in. "I've decided to telephone my friend and ask him for directions. I'm so sorry you have been troubled."

"Don't mention it," I said. "The nearest 'phone box is in the station. I'll take you there." We walked back up the approach.

"I should be glad to know how to get to this place myself," I laughed. "You never know, someone else may ask me for Billington Road."

"I hope not," he said.

I waited in the booking-hall while he telephoned. As he came out of the booth I asked, eagerly, "How do you get there? What did he say?"

"He told me to go round to the back of the station and take a taxi."

"Good idea!" I said. "I'll just show you where the rank is."

T. F. DAVENEY

Somewhere About

"GINGERBREAD," pondered Miss Twist, resting her forefinger thoughtfully against her cheek like a clergyman in a photograph. "I know I have an excellent recipe somewhere, full of black treacle, if only I can lay my hand on it."

She rose and attacked a pile of magazines on the window-sill.

"It isn't urgent——" I began, but Miss Twist was sending a barrage of

weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies flying one after the other on to the sofa and did not appear to hear me.

"It's jotted down on a piece of deep blue paper, dear, with a deckled edge. Pretentious in the extreme, and no choice of mine. My cousin Florence has sent me writing paper Christmas after Christmas, ever since the Boer War, and each more ghastly than the last: though I do feel that this year she has reached a new rock low, or whatever that compelling modern phrase is. One might just as well write on sugar-bags."

She finished demolishing the pile and stood deep in thought, her fingers thrust through her grey hair. Suddenly she caught sight of herself in the mirror.

"Eldritch locks!" she said, pointing a skinny finger at her reflection. "Now I really know what that means, dear, though no nearer the gingerbread. To work, to work!"

She flew to her bureau and tugged open the top drawer with difficulty.

"I often pop an odd paper in here. Do look at this! A bellringers' outing to Skegness, before the war, in one of those charabancs with a hood and, I should think by the look of our hair, no mica side curtains that buttoned on and split half your nails! Would you remember those, dear?"

She flung out a clock pendulum, a pack of "Happy Families" cards, a packet of dwarf nasturtiums and a nasty snarl of assorted wools.

"This is the most likely spot in the house," she said. "I know I put the recipe in just such a hidey-hole. The bicarb. goes in with the warm milk. Take a look at that!"

She passed over a yellowing pamphlet, with horrifying illustrations of the respiratory system in three colours.

"Got up by a crank uncle of mine. He had eccentric ideas on breathing. One long in, and two short out, I think he advocated, or am I thinking of morse? He was carried off with congestion of the lungs."



She now emptied the drawer out on to the back page of *The Times*, and I replaced two glass lustres, a wooden mushroom for darning socks and a withered ornamental gourd, which had rolled over the edge.

"Please don't bother——" I began, shocked at the havoc I was creating.

"Stay!" said Miss Twist, jumping lightly over *The Times*. "It may be in the chest on the landing!" She led the way nimbly upstairs. "I remember putting a pile of local papers in there last week, ready for posting to Monty in Southern Rhodesia, and it may have slipped among them. A wag, that boy! He once hung all my dolls from the balcony, with strings round their necks, and said he was having a French Revolution. Full of imagination, but inclined to astigmatism!"

She ceased her energetic diving for a moment and surfaced.

"This is the new wing of young David's research laboratory," she said, thrusting a small photograph into my hand, "and anything more unpleasant than those poor women holding up six floors with their heads I can't imagine. What d'you call them? Dairy cats, in the crosswords, dear, but their real name always evades me."

"Caryatids?" I ventured.

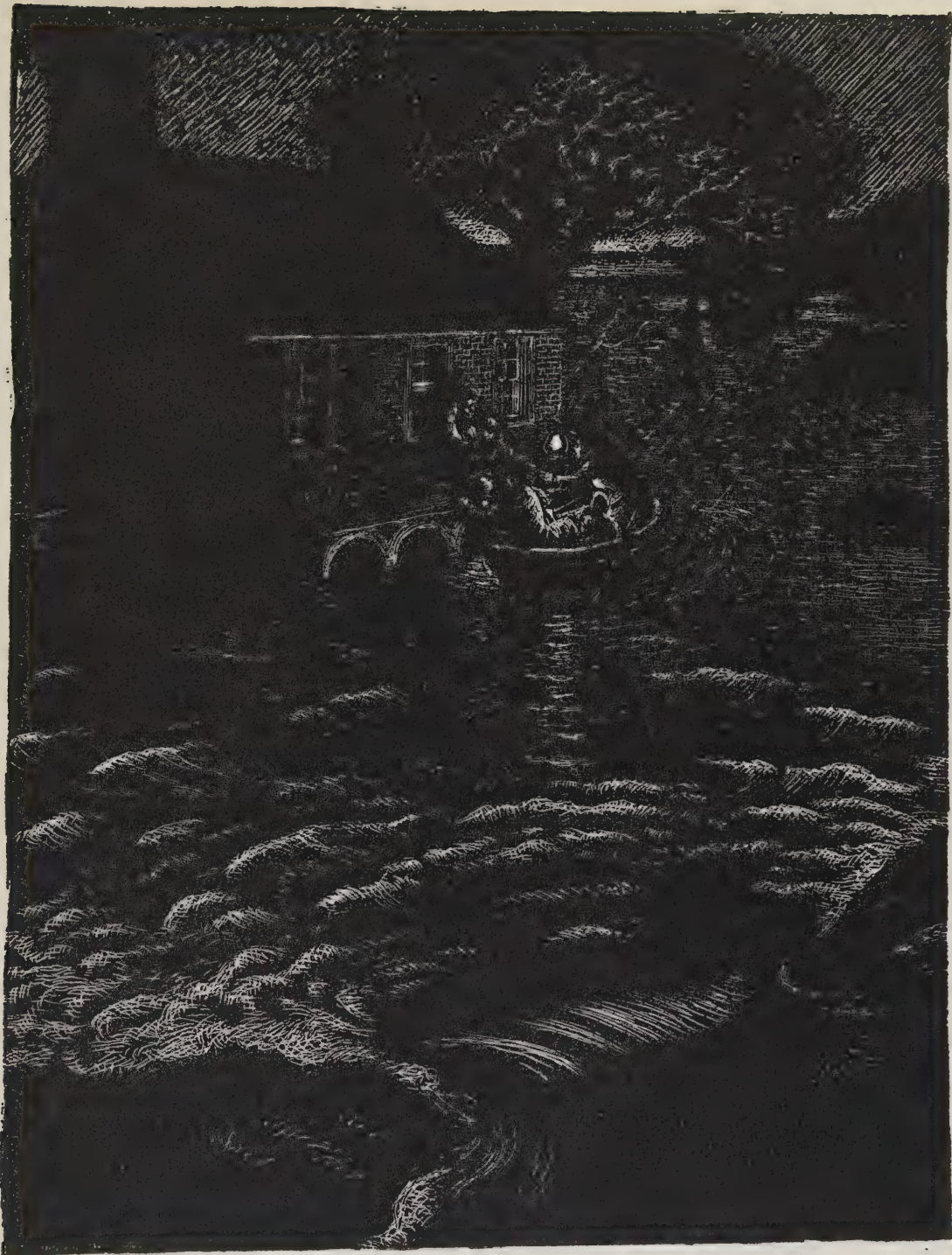


"WELL, I'M NOT BUDGING FROM HERE UNTIL I UNDERSTAND IT"

"That's it, dear." She banged down the lid. "No further forward here, I fear." She played a thoughtful little tune on a warming-pan for a few seconds, then stopped abruptly.

"I have it! Mother's reticule!" She darted downstairs again, her thin legs as spry as a bird's, and took out the bag from behind the wireless set. She extracted a bundle of papers, many of them of the despised deep blue.

"I'm using it up gradually, dear. Laundry lists, suggestions for W. I. meetings (and if anyone is so foolhardy as to suggest basket-making, after poor Miss Potts nearly had her eye whipped out with that dangerous piece of



So farre, so fast the eygre drave,
The heart had hardly time to beat,
Before a shallow seething wave
Sobbed in the grasses at oure feet:
The feet had hardly time to flee
Before it brake against the knee,
And all the world was in the sea.

From "The High Tide on the Coast of Lincolnshire, 1571" by Jean Ingelow

cane at the demonstration, I shall be very much surprised) and several hand-picked recipes. Ah!"

She pounced on one piece, read it through and tucked it briskly into an envelope, which had "Water Colours of the Constable Country by a Gentlewoman" printed on the top, and handed it over to me triumphantly.

She rose from the sofa, and the tide of magazines swept to the floor and mingled with the flotsam and jetsam that covered *The Times*. Picking our way over it all, we reached the door and bade each other an affectionate farewell.

It was an excellent recipe, as I found when I got home and studied it. But only for those who like chutney.

D. J. SAINT

Fop's Farewell

I SHAN'T be well-dressed this year. As the Americans say, crisply if in defiance of parsing, the hell with it. I'm too old now. At seventeen you fall in love quite madly with ties of a tender blue; at twenty-five you get it rather badly with the double-breasted waistcoat; at thirty-four you're in the Air Force hoping, despite world chaos, to find a batman who can polish a buckle without getting the stuff all over the belt. But when you reach my age the well-dressed man has had it.

This has been coming on for some time, I realize that. Among the many factors which have been inexorably at work are the hat whose brim curls in what is subtly but clearly the wrong way; the silk muffler which stealthily unfastens itself as I enter my hostess's garden and, pinned mysteriously by one end at the back of the neck, dangles the other to the knees; the double-breasted dinner-jacket which remains largely bunched round my waist as I rise to dance; the hacking-jacket whose rear flaps are obsessed with the idea of entering the hip-pocket whenever anything else does; the——

However. What has chiefly, or perhaps merely decisively, made me a renegade from the world of fashion is the collar-stiffener. There was a time when the only recognized collar-stiffener was starch. Happy days, those. Now, the stiffening of collars is an operation removed from the sphere of the shirtmaker and launderer into that of the scientist and engineer. What was once a harmless strip of shaped fabric has become a strutted and buttressed monster; its components, if they are not exploiting their protective colouring to lie unseen at the bottom of the bath, can drive a man mad before breakfast. The newest of these horrors is the oblique parallelogram which unflinching gets itself into the collar-point in reverse, throwing up a small triangle of unstiffened material like the corner of a badly made paper hat, and then resists removal by wedging its upper end in a concealed selvedge. Even the simpler form, an extension—a reduction, rather—of the old corset-bone principle, gets over-

long and must be cut down with nail-scissors, thus acquiring a poniard quality enabling it to pierce its poplin tunnel and fall with a light tap on to the agenda of a heads of departments meeting . . . Or over-short, not to be reclaimed even with eyebrow-tweezers, and later going to the laundry for pulping. What of the "permanent" device, two legs with a spring, toggle, escapement and so forth, reputed to guarantee immaculacy in collars of all styles, but in practice more likely to hang all day with one leg exposed until pointed out by a stranger on the evening train?

It is time, I think, that man returned to the honest, rustic collar-band and stud. This would do away not only with collars but with ties too. And not before time.

With painful slowness, the well-dressed man learns that he has only two kinds of tie: those that tie at the first attempt with an exquisite knot of perfect inverted-cone shape, but—having been chosen by wealthy aunts in Basingstoke—are of unthinkable design and hue; and those of unexceptionably tasteful plain pastel shades, acquired by the half-dozen in moments of rare and impulsive excess, whose knots model themselves on the freak potato.

It is possible, I grant, with early rising, a calm mind, no breakfast and three missed trains, to wrench and pummel one of the tasteful ties into a shape just good enough to be found dead in . . . but only if the finished work is viewed through half-closed eyes from a point as far removed from the mirror as the size of the bedroom permits: then the wrinkled bulges remain mercifully unseen, and it is possible, by the exercise of dynamic self-deception, to pretend that the tie's narrow end, back to front, is not already making its first sly advance to a forward position. But it is not satisfactory. There follows a day of unremitting struggle, fingering, tugging, savage under-tucking, and repeated contraction of the stomach muscles while the broad end, darting from under the waistcoat, is seized and thrust in the top of the trousers.

The bow-tie—but no.

This year, at last, I am abandoning the battle of the exposed shirt cuff. This, as I learnt long ago, is one of the hallmarks of the well-dressed man, and I have striven after it since my late school days. I am sounding the retreat now. Let the well-dressed man have his hallmark. I don't want it. Not any more.

The thing is simple enough in theory. Your shirt sleeves are half an inch longer than your jacket sleeves, that's all. In the past I have always taken pains to explain this to shirt salesmen. Our business has been conducted on this understanding from the first, and when I put on the shirt—which is as soon as I have reached home, cut the string, ripped off the brown paper, torn away the inner transparent bag, removed several sheets of stout but poor quality cardboard and plucked out (as it later emerges) all the pins but two—I stand for some minutes before the mirror admiring the half-inch of shirt cuff gleaming at each wrist. I throw out my arms and say "Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a valued privilege to . . ." But by this time the cuffs have gone. I get them back and hang on to them. "When the last speaker," I continue, with clenched fists, "made his reference to . . ."

One of them frees itself and vanishes. Getting it back, I lose the other. It is hopeless. When I go downstairs to supper I tread cautiously, knowing that if I stagger I shall have to take the weight on my elbows, for at all costs I must hang on to my cuffs long enough to exhibit them in the dining-room. This I just achieve. Then, a mouthful of soup—bang goes the right cuff; a morsel of bread—bang goes the left.

This year I am wearing my shirt sleeves rolled up. Cut off, even, I haven't decided yet. My ties will be tied in reef knots. I just don't care. My collar-points can curl up like chrysanthemums. Let them. And whoever said that the well-dressed man is the man who looks as if he never gave a thought to his appearance can call at my address any time and see how wrong he was.

J. B. BOOTHROYD

Catchum Coloured Person

*"Eeny, meeny, miny, mo
Catch a —— by his toe,"*

recited one of the three little girls as I went by. I held my hands to my ears in horror.

"Tut, child!" I said primly.

The poor children looked up at me. They cannot have had the least idea what the word meant.

"What is your name?" I asked the one who had been reciting.

"Eeny."

"Listen, Eeny," I said, sitting on the bench beside her. "Do you know that is a very wicked word?" Eeny was silent. "Don't you know that's a very naughty word?" I repeated.

"It's my name," she said.

"No, no," I said. These children must be sunk in the very depths of ignorance. It would be a virtuous act to instruct them. I looked round for Meeny and Miny. They had disappeared. I looked back at Eeny. She was rising from the bench like a lark. I hauled her back.

"Listen, Eeny," I said, watching her warily, "in that rhyme of yours there is a very wicked word which you must promise never to use again."

Eeny remained silent. Perhaps she was a backward child.

"How did it go?" I asked, trying to make it simple for her. "Eeny, meeny, miny, mo, catch a Negro by his toe . . ."

"Not Negro. ——."

I shuddered. For a moment I almost understood the state of mind of the Victorian savages who would strike a child.

"No, no, Eeny," I said faintly. "That is the dreadful word you must never

DIARY FOR 1953

use. Do you know what it means?"

"Silly," said Eeny. "It means a black boy."

How could I explain the thing simply to this child? She seemed to lack the most ordinary mental equipment.

"You know, Eeny," I said, lightly but seriously, "there are people whose skins are darker than yours or mine——"

"I know," she said, with a horrible grin. "Black men. ——s."

I set my teeth and forged on.

"But you must remember," I said, "they are people just the same as you and me. They have the same thoughts and feelings inside themselves. They are sensitive; that means they can be easily hurt."

Eeny seemed not to have heard most of this. She was looking round to see where Meeny and Miny had gone to. I tried to make the matter clear to her by putting it in a nearer, more personal way.

"Eeny," I said sharply, "suppose you were a little coloured girl."

This actually drew her wandering attention.

"Oo," she said. "What colour?"

Was the child an idiot? "Dark-skinned," I said.

"You mean black?"

I buried my face in my hands, but took it out in time to haul Eeny down to the bench again.

"If you were dark-skinned," I said determinedly, "if you were a little native girl, would you like people to call you black?"

"What's native?"

"Native," I said patiently, "means born . . . well, it's usually used to mean born in a hot country."

Eeny clapped her hands.

"I'm a native," she said. "I was born in August."

I was at the end of my resources. I felt all I could do was to put the case as clearly as I could to this child and then leave her before she started her witless, complicated talk again, hoping that in future years some fragment of my talk would come back to her.

Thurs. JAN. 1
Got up and went out in
morning to the office. . .
went down to the
bank for the . . .
then came home and
did some work. . .
then a good job of
work in evening.

Fri. JAN. 2
Got up at 8.20 and
went down to the
bank to be ready
for the afternoon
with the 2000
and a lot of cashed
people who did. . .

Sat. JAN. 3
Got up at 8 o'clock
and papers and
took wife shopping
in town. Had lunch
Benson and had
a drink and
at the house.

Sun. JAN. 4
Got up at 10.30
read papers. Played
patience. Had no
to bed

Mon. JAN. 5
Got up at
7.30

Tues. JAN. 6
Got
Up

Holloway

"Listen, Eeny. If you ever meet any little dark-skinned boys or girls, you must remember that they are just like you. Try to remember they are people like ourselves. Try to remember to treat them *very* gently and *very* kindly, and remember, Eeny——"

At this point I shook her slightly.

"Remember, Eeny, never, never describe them as black or call them—or call them ——s."

Eeny's attention had wandered again. She was staring sideways, grinning all over her face, and struggling to get away. I looked round. A little Negro boy was standing on the path.

"Come on," he said, grinning back at Eeny. "We're waiting for you."

"Who are you?" I asked him, *very* gently and *very* kindly.

"I'm Mo," he said.

R. P. LISTER



"ANOTHER RESERVE OFFICER CASUALLY STEPPING OUT ON TO A WING THAT AIN'T THERE ANY MORE"



POST-PRANDIAL ODE

How sleep the brave who sink to rest,
 Letting their Sunday lunch digest,
 While sisters, daughters, aunts and wives
 Cope with the dishes, forks and knives,
 Retrieve each errant coffee-cup,
 And wash them—*very quietly*—up?



I much regret it, but—to tell
 The truth—they sleep extremely well;
 Quite unmolested, it would seem,
 By conscience or by troubled dream;
 Oblivious of each well-timed sigh
 Uttered by those who tip-toe by . . .



So sleep the brave who sink to rest.
 And since I chance to be their guest
 I'll leave them at this point, I think,
 And join the rest who brave the sink.

E. V. MILNER



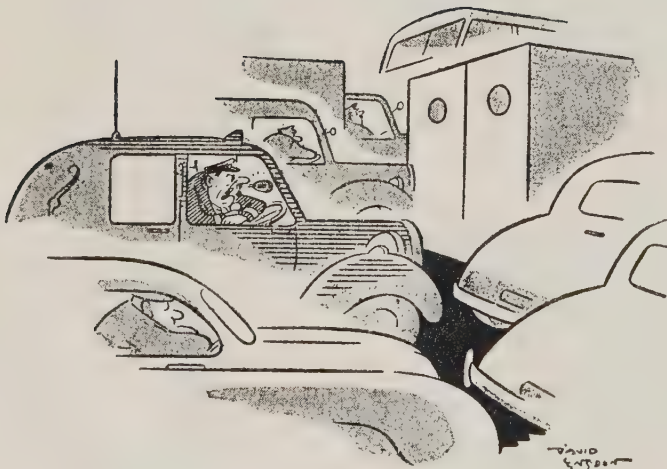
GIOVANNETTI



"I'VE GOT ONE IN THIS YEAR'S ACADEMY"



"DEAR SIR COMMA WITH REFERENCE TO YOUR ESTEEMED INQUIRY RE QUOTE B-Y-C-Y-C-L-E UNQUOTE BRACKET SIC BRACKET HYPHEN PUMPS . . ."



"OH, 'PROCEED AT ONCE' YER RUDDY SELF . . ."

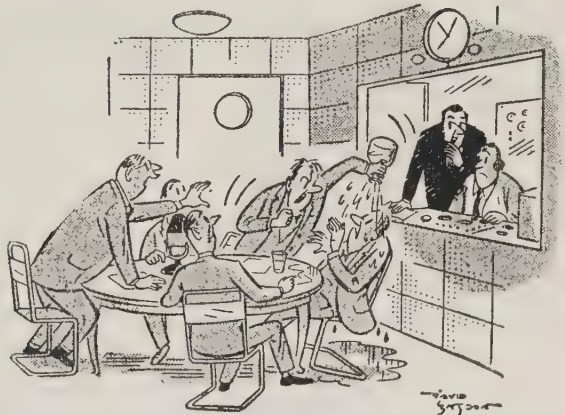


"PLEASE DON'T GET UP"

W. Jackson



"... FURTHERMORE, I BELIEVE MYSELF TO BE THE FIRST WHITE MAN TO UNDERTAKE THIS JOURNEY ON FOOT ..."



"HE'S CERTAINLY FLAT OUT FOR THE 1953 RADIO PERSONALITY AWARD"

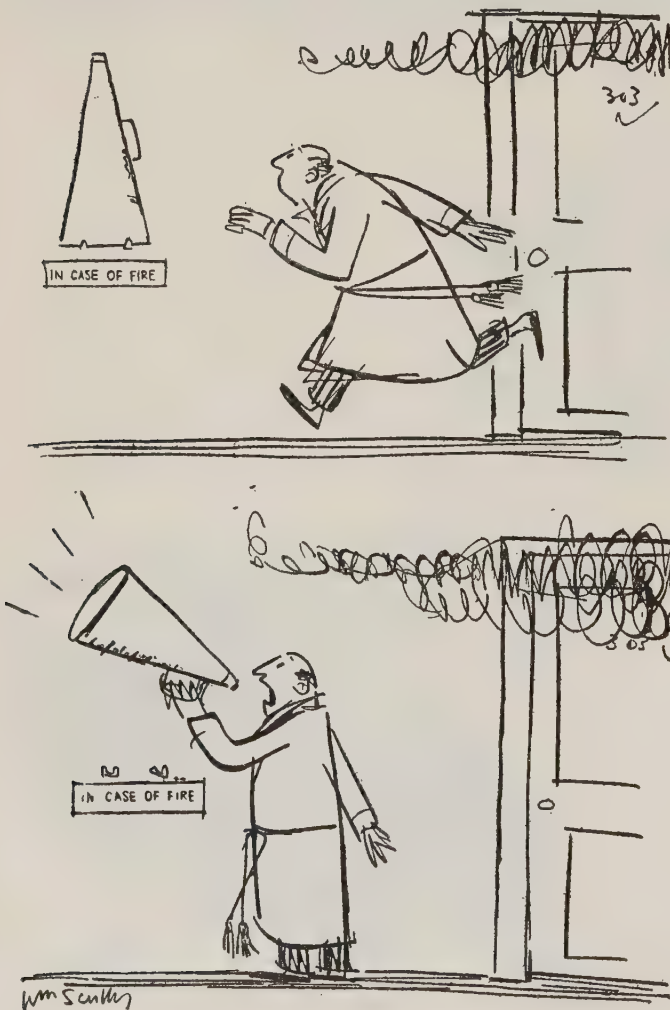
No Picnic for P.C. 1250

To: The Chief Supt.

From: P.C. 1250

SIR,—*Re* Press headlines, P.C. and Woman Spent £95 at Club, I venture a word sticking up for a Constable on this class of duty, having personally had a recent basinful, with respect, and not yet myself as a result. Sir, who is on trial, that's all I say? You have to read these reports right down the bottom to find the Accused successfully mulcted, and the Constable made out a playboy right and left.

First I hear is the Super sends for me when I come off the beat dinner time



Monday and proceeds to mention a Special Job in recognition of good work done (forty-one motorists that week booked for yellow parking, and the barrow-boys well shuffled round at rear of Leicester Sq.). Naturally I think of some Coronation Plum such as crowd control, something after that class of duty, and it was a shaker when he comes out with this other, which is not my cup of char at all as we say in the Station canteen, pardon the phrase. (No error, there's plenty of educated constables in the Division, Hendon and that, well up in West End ways and calling Waitah, and the like. Why me, as I told Super?)

Further (1) I have never frequented a night club, short of once apprehending a gent therein after illicitly driving the length of a One-Way, and (2) am not in

possession of evening wear, known to be obligational at the Haunt named, and (3) have no experience of working jointly with a W.P.C., and (4) and lastly, did not join the Force to indulge in flesh-pots at taxpayers' expense. These points when put Super overrules, stating a Constable goes where sent and does what told. As to evening wear, a set for duty use was kept hanging inside the door of the Felonious Entry cupboard, which only wanted a brush and as good as new. As to W.P.C. Merribole, my assigned oppo, she was an experienced officer and would not let down the Force.

I therefore saluted and retired to the Constables' Room, there received with winks and such remarks as Who was that lady I seen you with last night, etc., only proving a foretaste of Press headlines and false public attitude in general.

Sir, I do not wish to criticize W.P.C. Merribole, as this officer seems well qualified and knows her Judges' Rules and the Caution flawless, with more wind on a whistle than many a male constable, let alone being a well-made young woman with long red nails and a hair-do like a pile of gold rope, but when we step from the Rolls, her covered in jewels and me in the Station evening wear with the waistcoat gusseted ad hoc, and she states, Go ahead while I powder Darling, mine's a large Martini, I have bodings of a heavy assignment. W.P.C. Merribole is in the Case very whole-hearted.

It does not seem proper to me to take alcohol until after the Permitted Hours, our objective being to ascertain if this is what goes on, but the W.P.C. pooh-poohs, stating it would look fishy to suddenly start on intoxicating liquor on the stroke of 3 A.M. after all night on minerals, etc., and orders champagne, Chateau Veuve and the like on a festal scale, also some type of whole small bird each at fifty shillings odd, which was only the commencement.

Now, sir, I am not an eater or drinker of any status, and the pace of this assignment was all that my sense of duty could keep up with, so that what with the wine and the music, particularly the violinist playing over my plate while I salved my conscience by expounding the Identity Parade irregularities in the case of Oscar Slater, and coffee and liqueurs to follow, I regret I do not remember the latter portion of my first tour of duty, being woke up by the W.P.C. outside my lodgings in Epping Street, E., with a request for two pounds to pay the driver. It appears, unfortunately, we have left with our Case uncompleted, it being not yet 3 A.M. when W.P.C. Merribole and the headwaiter assisted me from the scene of the (alleged) crime.

Well, sir, there are officers who, feeling as I felt next dinner time, would have requested removal from the Case, but as we are taught at Peel House, police work is not a thing of glamour and excitement like in books, but mostly just patient dogged slogging, and I therefore prevailed on myself to discharge three more gruelling tours of duty of this type, eating and drinking with no thought for personal danger, you might say, and showing courage and determination beyond the call of duty by dancing extensively on the last two tours, W.P.C. Merribole stating this would serve to avoid suspicion. In the small hours of the Friday, aided by self discipline and



"IT'S FOR THE WATER PIPES"

very painful feet owing to tightness of Station pumps, I finally succeeded in retaining consciousness until my police watch showed 3 A.M., and was able to utter the words Two Large Whiskies. These arriving at 3.3 A.M. precisely, Case was complete and the W.P.C. showed her warrant-card and took appropriate action. My work concluded, Nature stepped in and I collapsed at 3.5 A.M.

Well, sir, as I am now convalescent and shall soon be back with my fellow-constables, I would respectfully ask this report to be embodied in the next Divisional Circular, making the nature of such assignments clear to all. Also I would urgently request being struck off the role for duties of this type, with a preference stated for Warehouse Roof jobs, Mad Axe slayers, something after that class of thing.

Hoping this finds you, etc.

(P.C.) J. B. BOOTHROYD (1250)

Tell Mother, Now

"WELL," my mother said, "you look a bit better now I've got some food inside you. I thought it was a ghost getting off the train when I went to meet you. It's a good thing I can get you home every so often or you'd never live. I can do quite a lot even in two days. Now, tell me what you've been doing since you were home last."

"I've told you in my letters," I said.

"No you haven't," my mother said. "You never tell us anything in your letters. I never know anything or anybody and I'm expected to sit placidly in the dark with my imagination running round and round and your father calmly carrying on as though nothing had happened."

"Nothing has happened," I said.

"Well, what *has* happened?" my mother asked.

"Nothing," I said.

"What have you been *doing* then?" my mother asked.

"Just ordinary things," I said. "I've been to the theatre, I've been to the cinema, I've been out to dinner, and so on."

"I know one thing you never do," my mother said. "Walk. You never go for a walk, do you?"

"Yes," I said.

"No, you don't," my mother said. "You spend all day in a stuffy office and all evening in a stuffy cinema and you go to bed full of smoke and germs. You never give your lungs a chance. And then you're amazed when you wake up with one cold after another. I've never seen you without you've got a cold."

"I haven't got a cold now," I said.

"Yes, you have," my mother said. "You ought to go for a brisk walk every morning before breakfast and breathe. Well, come on—what else have you been doing? Who did you go with to these places?"

"Different people."

"Who?" my mother asked. "Philip? Have you seen any more of Philip? He sounded nice. I was glad when you said you liked him because I thought from the very beginning he sounded nice. Mrs. Alcock thinks he does, too."

"Who's Philip?" I said.

"*Philip*," my mother said. "You told me you met him at a party when you were wearing your new blouse."

"I don't know anybody called Philip," I said.

"Of course you do," my mother said. "I remember him very well. You said he'd just come back from Switzerland."

"Oh, that's Trevor," I said.

"Well, Trevor, then," my mother said. "How is he?"

"Quite well, I think," I said. "His wife has had 'flu, though."

"*His wife?*" my mother cried. "I didn't know he was married! Why didn't you tell me he was married?"

"Why on earth should I? I only mentioned him along with everybody else."

"Of course you should have told me!" my mother said. "What am I going to tell Mrs. Alcock? I don't know why you can't write sensible letters instead of bits and pieces that I have to read between. I tell you everything that happens here, don't I?"

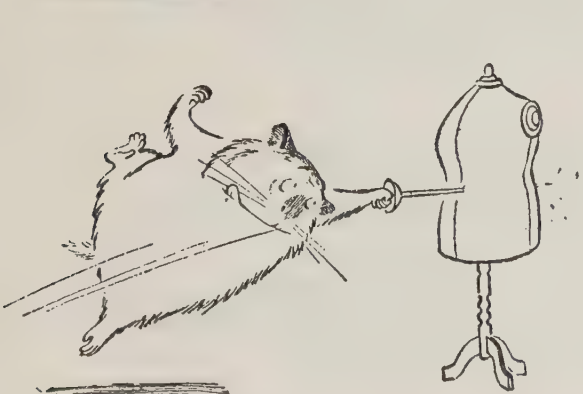
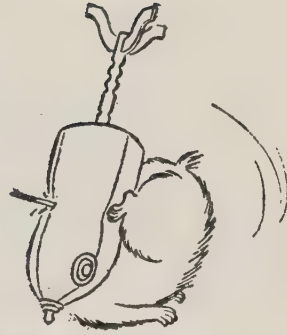
"Yes," I said.

"I told you about the new postman and what Mrs. Frazer said to Mrs. Maple about Mrs. Grainger's curtains, didn't I? I told you we've got another bus-stop, didn't I? I told you about the public meeting in the village hall when it was carried unanimously that Wether Bilbury stands firmly behind the United Nations, didn't I?"

"Yes," I said.



"CATHODE TUBE'S GONE; NOTHING TO DO WITH THE INSTALMENTS. PASS IT ON"



"There you are then," my mother said. "When you go back to London just try to send nice, long, newsy letters that I can talk about instead of lying awake for hours when your father won't even stir. Especially," my mother added, "in the hairdresser's."

MARJORIE RIDDELL

... AND HEAVEN TOO

ADVENTUROUS Male Companion for Expedition S. America. Knowledge classification tropical fish essential.—Write Box L.493, The Times, E.C.4.

GENTLEMAN desires to contact ardent churchgoer (C. of E.) who would be interested in the production of gramophone recordings of six well-loved hymns (A. and M.) by well-known cathedral choir. Sales at home and overseas assured.—Write first instance Box D.1120, The Times, E.C.4.

I have always been very adventurous. I have doubled Cape Horn in a schooner.

I have stopped yaks in their tracks and tamed tigers with a look.

I have more whales to my credit than a whole-time head harpooner.

I have gone spinning for tunny in a dinghy with a mackerel hook.

I have handled hammer-head sharks with nothing by me but a hatchet.

I have paralysed the giant polypus with a blow and put it in the bag:

But when I had to classify the catch as well as merely to catch it,

The Latin was always the snag.

I am male, too—so male that my presence throws into a fever

Everything female in sight. My movements have a massive grace.

My chest is as cosy as the chest of a curly-coated retriever.

My hands are broad and sinewy. My voice is a resonant bass.

Mothers in a flurry of fright nobble their nubile daughters,

And even police-women cower behind culverts when I come in sight:

But the genera and species of fish observed in tropical waters—

I never could get them right.

And I am companionable, tolerant, never cross or depressing.

Poets tell me their fancies like deep calling to deep.

Cabbies chaff with me. Children worry me to help them in dressing

Darling dollies, and dogs to help them in worrying sheep.

Young wives tell me their troubles without restraint or apology.

Clubmen compete for my company in a way that verges on absurd:

But when it comes to a degree in Tropical Ichthyology,

I can't do better than a Third.

I shall not sail the Amazon. The *Don* and the *Magdalena*
 (If still in the service) may go there without me when they will.
 I suppose some virile and jolly ichthyologist will be the gainer
 (And I hope the alligators get him and the Amazons make him ill).
 I shall go elsewhere for my gamble. My interests are polyhedral.
 I shall stake my last red cent (ignoring obvious whims)
 On the overseas sales of the choir of a quite well-known cathedral
 In a half-dozen hand-picked hymns.

P. M. HUBBARD

BALLADE OF AN UNABASHED NONENTITY

I sing, O Mediocrity, of thee!
 Not Stirling Moss's pace, nor yet a crawl,
 But *average* is good enough for me;
 Ambition never held me in her thrall:
 She strikes me (when I think of her at all)
 As worse than Fancy for "deceiving elf."
 The peaks of eminence must often pall;
 I don't aspire to dizzy heights myself.

I never feel the slightest urge to see
 The fabled site of Cetewayo's kraal,
 To play Macbeth, Ophelia or Smee,
 Or cross the wide Atlantic in a yawl,
 To bag the biggest tiger in Bengal
 Or be a world-famed connoisseur of Delf
 Or play for Sussex and be bowled first ball:
 I don't aspire to dizzy heights myself.

I neither shine at sparkling repartee
 Nor wield a baton in the Albert Hall
 Nor live alone in bee-loud Innisfree
 Nor own vast offices in London Wall,
 Nor have I ever, that I can recall,
 Wished to know more of Ghibelline and Guelph
 Than Gibbon touched on in *Decline and Fall*.
 I don't aspire to dizzy heights myself.

Envoi

Why, Prince! How fortunate that you should call!
 I just want something off that topmost shelf.
 You'll need a pair of steps, although you're tall—
 I don't aspire to dizzy heights myself.

D. A. WILKINSON

BONFIRE

Somehow our bonfire afternoon fell flat.
 Paper and straw were useless, so we broke
 Dry sticks, and found some paraffin to soak
 The windward side. The bonfire roared and spat,
 Lost interest, hissed and snivelled. After that
 We puffed in turn till we could hardly croak.
 By sunset a blue foolish wisp of smoke
 Rose from it, like a feather from a hat.

The evening shuffled away in slippers feet.
 But in the orchard, mocking our earned ease,
 Our bonfire flowered and flared against the night.
 None warmed numb fingers at that glorious heat,
 And no one noticed the pruned apple-trees'
 Fantastic postures in the orange light.

PETER DICKINSON

IRONS FOR THE IRON DUKE!

[For, it is said, artistic reasons, the sculptor omitted stirrups and other details of harness from the equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington which stands in the forecourt of the Royal Exchange.]

Let stirrups be given, at last, to the Duke
 To ease his discomfort, to end its rebuke.
 If not for the Waterloo story—if not
 Because of Peninsular glory forgot—
 Yet seat him securely and hold him in awe—
 Remember he's Hornblower's brother-in-law!

MARK BEVAN



Excursion into Opera

EARLY last month I was asked by a powerful group of London musicians to write a libretto for a light opera based on the life of William Wordsworth. I refused. A week later, returning home in the early hours of the morning after a dance, I was set upon by three masked men and roughly handled. For two days I was confined to my bed, and on the third I received an unsigned postcard bearing the words "What about the libretto *now?*" I went to my desk, took a clean sheet of paper, and scribbled down the following lines, which I dispatched by the evening post:

WORDSWORTH'S SONG O' THE ROAD

(WORDSWORTH *and the entire company*)

All. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wordsworth. Sandwiches!

All. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wordsworth. Haversack!

All. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wordsworth.

Hat! Stick! Pen! Ink!

Book! Brush! Comb! Drink!—

and Awa-a-a-a-a-a-a-y

All. (Tramp, tramp, tramp!)

Wordsworth.

—with the petty conventions, the endless dissensions,

The foolish pretensions, the vain apprehensions!

I shoulder my load!

All. He shoulders his load! Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wordsworth. Fre-e-e-e-e-e-e-e-e

All. (Tramp, tramp, tramp!)

Wordsworth.

—from the foul execrations, the false allegations,

The wild fulminations, the vilifications,

I follow the road!

All. He follows the road! Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wordsworth.

It's little I care, on the hillside bare

To be caught in the pouring rain!

All. TRAMP!

Wordsworth.

I scamper along with a smile and a song
Till the sun comes out again!

All. TRAMP!

Wordsworth.

Though the thunder roar on the dark lake shore
And the glittering lightning flash!

All. TRAMP!

Wordsworth.

I laugh with glee at the blasted tree
As into an inn I dash!

All. Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

Tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wordsworth. Awa-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-y

All. (Tramp, tramp, tramp!)

Wordsworth.

—with the daily vexation of versification,
The exacerbation of constant creation
Of sonnet and ode!

All. Of sonnet and ode! Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wordsworth. To-da-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-y

All. (Tramp, tramp, tramp!)

Wordsworth.

I shall take a vacation from civilization,
Eschew cerebation and deep meditation
And follow the road!

All. And follow the road! Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Wordsworth. Energetic, magnetic,

I follow—

All. You follow?

Wordsworth. Prophetic, poetic,

I follow—

All. He follows!

Wordsworth. Ecstatic, erratic,

Emphatic, Socratic,

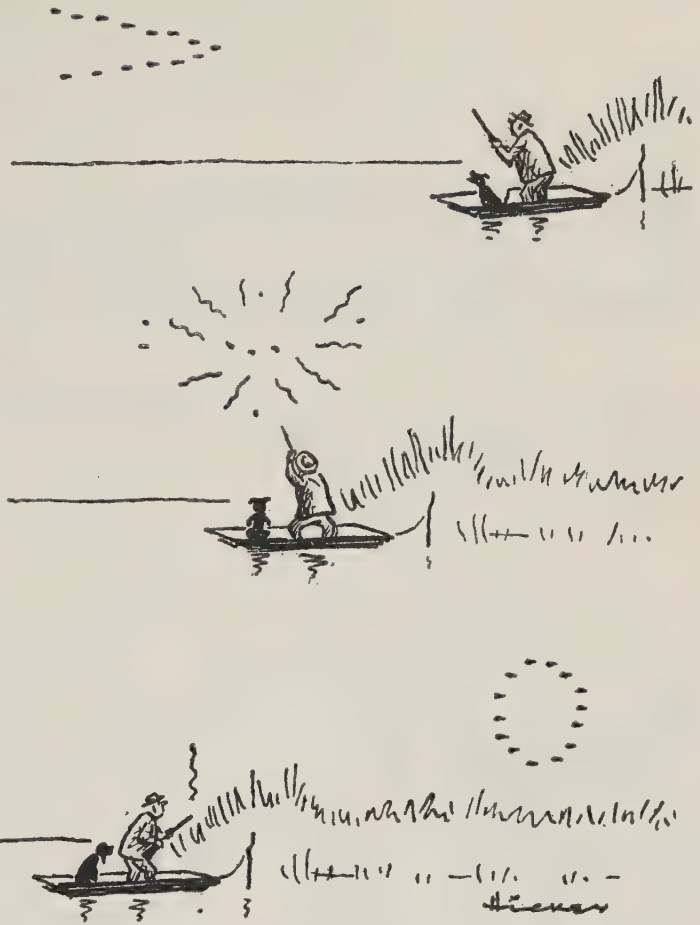
I follow—

All. He follows!

Wordsworth. The ro-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-d!

Well, whether or not these lines will turn out to be the sort of thing required by this formidable clique I cannot of course pretend to say, but I must admit that I felt easier in my mind when they were posted.

Immediately after breakfast on the following morning I took up my pen and set to work once more, but this time with greater deliberation. It seemed to me reasonable enough to suppose that Wordsworth's sister would become a prey to melancholy when he had departed for his walking tour, and I decided that, immediately after the Song o' the Road, Wordsworth and the entire company should march away, leaving Dorothy alone on the stage. She would then sing a song, and it would, of course, be an exceedingly mournful one. I completed Dorothy's lines without much difficulty, but when I had considered them for a few minutes it became clear to me that their pathos was such that some sort of relief was absolutely essential. I therefore decided that a few shepherds should remain with Dorothy, and that they should shout rollicking choruses at suitable intervals in the song. It necessitated a few alterations in the original version, but the final effect fully justified the labour:



THE CORN IN ITS PRIDE

(DOROTHY WORDSWORTH and chorus of shepherds)

Dorothy. The corn in its pride to the sickle must fall—
Shepherds. With a rumble-dum, tiddle-dum!
Dorothy. And time the Avenger lies waiting for all—
Shepherds. With a diddle-um!
Dorothy. The shepherd who sings as he bounds o'er the lea,
 By nightfall a-writhing in torment may be.

Shepherds. With a rumble-dum, dumble-dum, tumble-dum-dee!
(and a tiddle-um).

Dorothy. Our portion on earth is affliction and care—

Shepherds. And a diddle-um!

Dorothy. Each day we are given fresh trials to bear—

Shepherds. With a rumble-dum, tiddle-um!

Dorothy. And thus it should hardly surprise you to know
That your flocks have expired in the depths of the snow.

Shepherds. With a rumble-dum, tumble-dum, dumble-dum-do!
(and a tiddle-um).

Dorothy. The blossoms of summer bloom but to decay—

Shepherds. The future is gloomy, the outlook is grey—

Dorothy. A blight has descended on all we survey—

Shepherds. And a tiddle-um.



"TIME OF ARRIVAL—14 HOURS, 31 MINUTES, 6 SECONDS . . .

All. With a rumble-dum, tumble-dum, dumble-dum-day!
 The future is gloomy, the outlook is grey,
 And a blight has descended on all we survey—
 (And a tiddle-um).

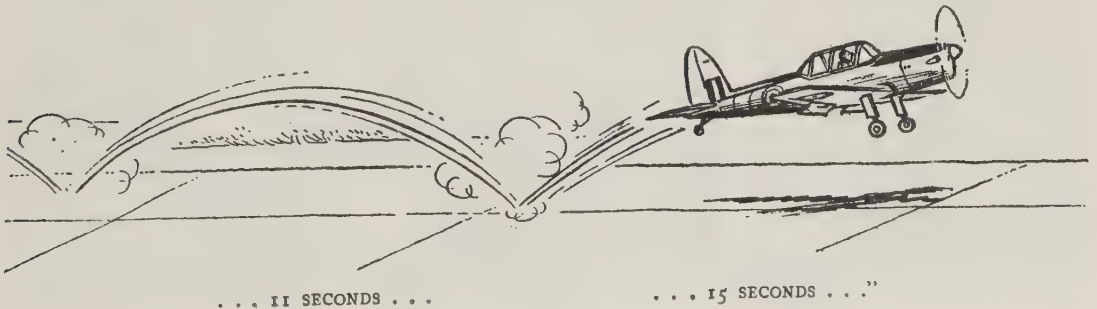
It is now some three weeks since I posted these lines, and I have not yet received a reply; nor have I been molested in any way. It may be, of course, that some uncertainty has arisen as to whether I am, in fact, the right man for the job. I have now sent off "We Three," a trio for Wordsworth, De Quincey and Coleridge, and a duet, "Shun, shun the decanter," for Wordsworth and De Quincey. These should put the matter beyond doubt, I fancy.

T. S. WATT

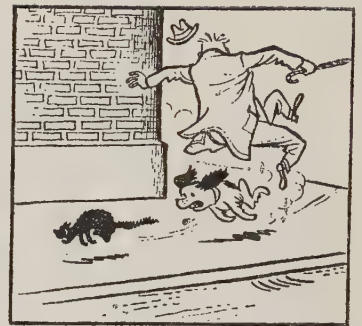
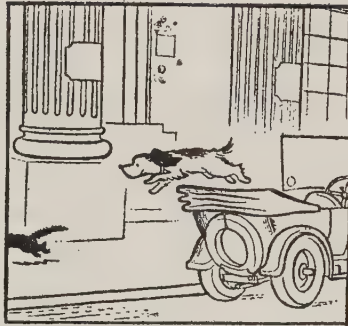
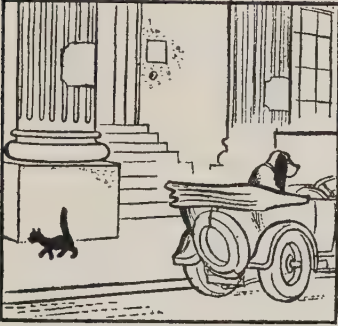
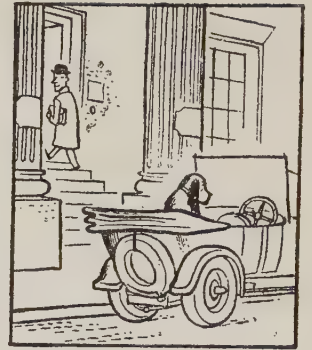
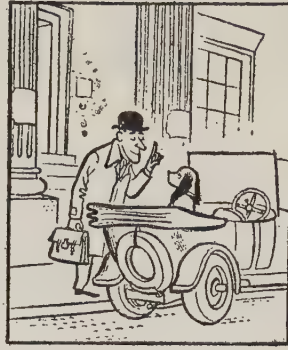
Success Story in Advance

THE story properly begins when the Works Manager called me into his room—and me still in my rough dirty overalls, although my hair is tidy enough—and told me that he had decided to give me a chance in the Drawing Office. The line of my clean-shaven jaw firms as I try to thank him, but he smiles my words genially on one side with: "We know a good man when we see him. Make sure that you don't let my judgment down." I bow my head; I am slightly overawed by the unexpectedness of the wonderful chance being offered me.

"Now," and the kindness suddenly leaves the Works Manager's eyes, and he becomes again the hard-headed business man I have always known. "There's just one thing. You're going straight home to tell the good news to the little woman. She'll be in the kitchenette wearing a check apron, and she'll put down the frying-pan and come and sit on the edge of your chair, and she'll say 'I'm proud of you, Bill'—your first name *is* Bill, I hope?" I nod. "Then you'll plan for the future—that little house, the clearing off of the instalments on the television, and so on. All



THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'



right so far," went on the Works Manager, after a pause. "Then one night, some time afterwards, the little woman, wearing a housecoat now—and there's a refrigerator in the kitchen—sits on the edge of your chair again.

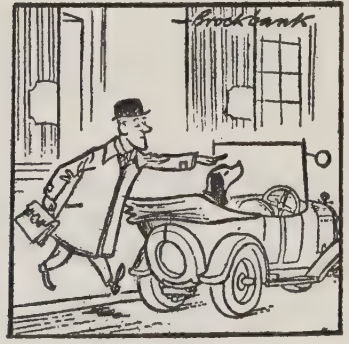
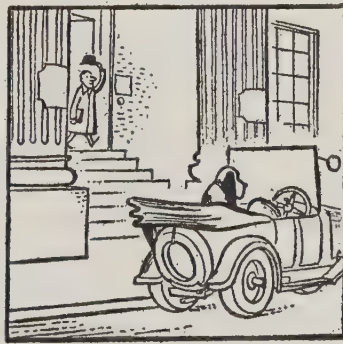
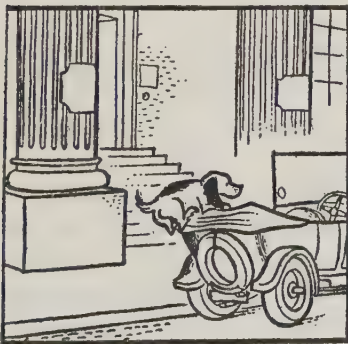
"'Anything wrong at the office, Bill?' she asks lightly. But you can see she knows instinctively that something *is* seriously wrong. You hedge; you mutter something about being rather tired. But—she knows. Then you blurt out the truth. You tell her that somehow you just can't get on. You can't concentrate. Mistakes are happening that shouldn't happen. You hold your head in your hands and admit that only that day I had called you in to my room and, in a frank talk, had told you that unless . . . You see?"

I moved uneasily in my chair.

The Works Manager lighted a cigarette. "Shall I tell you what your wife says now? She says 'You'd better see a doctor, darling.' Wretchedly, you agree . . . And you go to see the doctor. You sit in his consulting room, and he asks you the usual questions. He knows what he is looking for—he recognizes the symptoms. He's known many cases like yours before. Perhaps he taps his teeth with his pen; perhaps there's a pregnant silence when you've told him everything. But don't let that fool you.

"Suddenly he rises, opens the glass doors of a cabinet and produces a little jar with the label turned towards you so that you can read what it says. He gives you the jar, waving away your thanks. 'If more people took this just before going to bed there would be much less for us doctors to do,' he says. You take the jar and return home with a new hope."

The Works Manager stubbed out his cigarette. I waited for the climax to his story. He went on: "A week passes. Until one evening you burst into the kitchen at home, throw your hat anywhere, seize the little woman round the waist and waltz her up and down. 'Why, Bill!' she exclaims, half annoyed because perhaps she's just been turning pancakes. But her heart is singing, because this is her old Bill, the Bill she had loved, had had faith in—no longer the Bill who, just for





a while, had seemed beaten, scared. Then you tell her that I'm so pleased with your work that I've recommended that you become Area Representative . . .

"Together, arms entwined, you walk to a cupboard, and she lifts out the jar. She holds it up and says 'We owe it all to you.'"

The Works Manager jerked open a drawer in his table. "I have here a jar containing exactly what is in the jar of my story. Take it now, and it will save the three of us a lot of misunderstanding, and you in particular a lot of unnecessary trouble in the future. We keep a supply nowadays to give to employees who are being promoted . . ."

FERGUSON MACLAY

172, or Can You Increase the Allotment?

THE mystic number 172 is more germane than might be supposed to the subject under discussion, which is means of communication, freedom of the Press, and all that department of affairs which we are normally glad to leave to the Cultural Committee of the Council of Europe. It is, in point of fact, one of the more arresting of the phrases from which the Postmaster-General invites the public to choose in

sending telegrams to members of the Forces overseas. It refers, as I understand it, to a grant-in-aid made to the sender by the addressee, rather than to the size of the kitchen garden.

The authorship of these aphorisms is a closely guarded secret of St. Martin's-le-Grand, but there is no doubt that the man (if it is only one) is an artist, spanning the whole gamut of human emotion in the phrases 1 to 356. Some maintain that the work is a symposium, and that position is not entirely untenable. Is it likely, it is argued, that the contributor of 134 ("No") and 138 ("Yes") could rise to the beatific heights of 271 ("Hearing your voice on the wireless gave me a wonderful thrill")?

Against this view it is pointed out that the writer could compose 356 phrases, neither more nor less, whereas an editor compiling an anthology would have stopped at 350 or gone on to the next round hundred. We can imagine the rest for ourselves; 357 ("Am at end of tether"); 358 ("Have embraced Islam") . . .

Shades of meaning are allowed for in these phrases to satisfy the most sensitive of telegraphists. Compare, for instance, the off-handedness of 4 ("Parcel received: many thanks") with the warmth of 303 ("Parcel was just what I wanted: many thanks"). Or the plain man's 132 ("Have done as you asked") with the professional touch in 349 ("Have acted as you requested"). One can imagine a beleaguered corporal cabling a frenzied 351 to his solicitor ("Let me know when you find out") and receiving the cold assurance of 350 ("Will keep you fully advised").

The author is evidently getting on in life, and has had some success. The three phrases 103/106/113 ("Glad if you could send some money/Have you sent



"QUIET, QUIET. FOUR THOUSAND, EIGHT HUNDRED AND FORTY-TWO POUNDS, NINE AND TWOPENCE, FIVE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED . . ."

money?/I do not need money") can be ascribed to his early, middle, and later periods. But he makes provision for those less fortunately circumstanced with his 100 ("Have sent you — pounds"), or, what is perhaps more to the point, his 101 ("Have sent you — dollars"). He can be effusive, as in 344 ("Hospitality of people here wonderful"), and even familiar—63 ("Good show: keep it up")* and 309 ("Regards to the gang").

For some reason the P.M.G. is remarkably reticent about this code. It is not printed in the Post Office Guide, and one has to ask to see a copy at a telegraph office. It is not as though codes were forbidden in telegrams: if anybody wants to cable to Mr. Malenkov 91/350/131 ("Congratulations on your promotion/will keep you fully advised/what things do you need most urgently?") the Special Branch might start asking questions but the Post Office will not turn a hair. The question arises, then, of why such a code, greatly expanded, should not be in more general use to dispose of the daily trivia.

Consider the Press. Could not the newspapers give their readers a code to follow (as the *Daily Herald* does with greyhounds) and print their headlines thus?—

482

173

257

which, being translated, would mean "Tanks Out in Teheran/Police Fire on Mob/Moussadek Appeals to Majlis." Or again, if things go badly later in the season:

386

24

355

which everyone would know at a glance to mean: "England Hopes Fade/Bowlers in Command/Rain Stops Play at Old Trafford."

Think of the space it would save.

G. D. TAYLOR

* Cf. 119 ("Good Luck: keep it up").

Parties: Being a Host

YOU can give two kinds of cocktail parties—those that "go too far" or those that "never really get started." You can tell which kind you gave the next day when your best friends ring up to thank you. "I'm afraid last night's party . . ." you say hesitantly down the telephone. There is just that perceptible pause which tells you

that your friend Cora Campbellfoot is summoning all her "good scout" loyalty together and wants you to know it.

Then, twice as bright as life, she screams down the 'phone: "Nonsense, darling. It was a *wild* success. I got the impression everyone was enjoying themselves *madly*." Once again there is a slight pause and then, "I don't think you could *possibly* have stopped Sybil Applerot from having so much, if that's what's worrying you. But it is a pity, of course, because she does such *silly* things . . ." *Like stopping a whole gin over my new coat and skirt.* "Harry said to thank you very much. He enjoyed himself enormously. And the youngest Tomtom boy came round with his overcoat this morning, so *that* was all right." *He got soaked to the skin finding a taxi, but . . .* "It was sweet of you, darling, to let us bring Ann. Her first grown-up party. We wondered if that Nicaraguan *quite* realized she was only just sixteen, but . . ." *As it is, the morning post has already brought a most unsuitable invitation to the seaside, and she's given him her school address, so heaven knows! . . .* Your party, in fact, went too far.

On the other hand, if it never really got going, Cora's reassuring coo down the receiver will tell you so straight away. "Of course not, dear. Harry and I thought it was a *lovely* little party. It was so nice to see such a lot of old friends again. I had *such* a long chat with Maimie Mappin . . ." *One hour, to be exact, and she was no whit altered since we christened her little Miss Dreary for 1931.* "Oh my dear! don't worry about *that*. You can trust Harry to look after himself." *He certainly had to; he says he had one refill in an hour and a half, and that was with iced nail varnish.* "Ann? Oh, no, dear, not unhappy. She always cries when she's over-excited. I'm afraid she's a bit young yet for grown-up parties." *All the same, to be left for over an hour with Colonel Plimmer would be something of an ordeal for Elsa Maxwell herself. I should have cried with sheer boredom hours before . . .* Your party was really a non-starter.

Once, however, you have decided whether you want your party to go too far or to hang fire it's fairly easy to make sure of either effect. For a really slow party, there's nothing like "cup"—either the cold, sticky variety with a vegetable flotsam or the lukewarm sort usually known as "punch." If you do decide on "cup," however, remember that it's catching, and that if you live in any but a very wide social circle there's liable to be a "lot of cup about" at parties you go to for some time to come. "We were so fascinated by the claret cup you gave us last week that we've tried one of our own. Only we've added Demerara sugar and willow herb. We *hope* you'll think it's an improvement."

You can't really expect them not to want to get their own back. But to obtain the full flattening effect of "cup" there is nothing like a New Year's Eve party. A basis of heavy, cheap red wine and cold tea will guarantee that even those business acquaintances from Hendon, whose jokes tend to be as "near the knuckle" as they are pointless, or "fast" little Mrs. Piggott, whose high spirits have gathered speed ever since her divorce way back in 1925, will be yawning their heads off in half an

hour. And they *all have to stay there until midnight*. That's the glory of it. Even the dark man who goes out to greet the New Year with greenery may well fall asleep on the snow-covered doorstep. For a really dead party there's nothing like New Year's Eve on "cup."

To get a party to "go too far," of course, requires more expenditure. But with the right guests you can still do quite a lot on comparatively little drink. A good basis can be found in the Brashers, that childless couple we all know, eternally young, eternally back-chatting, becoming "uncle" and "aunt" to more and more of their friends' children as the years pass them by. The Brashers have always been out for fun rather than responsibility, and fun they'll see they have on the noisiest possible terms. Watch her shout "Ugly Mug" across to her husband, and he replying with "Tuppence" or "Buttons" or "Where's that ghastly woman of mine?" For ever Myrna Loy and William Powell in the *Thin Man* era. Their jolly, leg-pulling flirtation can usually be relied on to end in a good stand-up scene before the party's over. With a little cheap champagne, the Brashers and a blonde for him to get off with, your party will have gone too far before it's time for dinner.

ANGUS WILSON

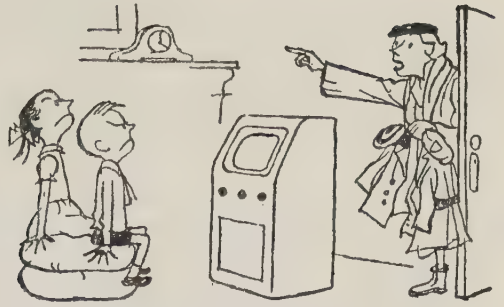
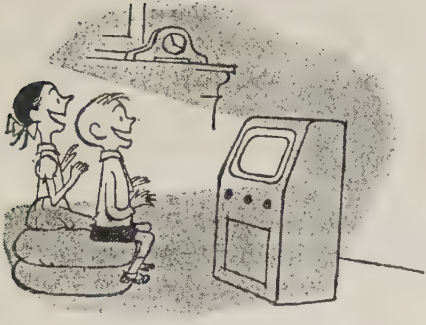
How to get on with Novelists

NO one feels the least embarrassment when presented to doctors or barristers or stockbrokers. Yet the words "Have you met Mr. X? The *novelist*, you know," still cause a few people slight confusion. This confusion is quite unjustified. Nothing is easier than to get on with novelists if you master a few simple rules.

Should you not merely recognize the writer's name but have actually read one of his works, the opening is child's play. "Of course, it's years since I read *Poodle in My Lap*. Actually I was still at school, so you can guess how long ago that was. But I simply *adored* it, though I daresay I wasn't awfully critical then. *When* are you going to write another novel?"

The author will probably reply that he has published six novels since *Poodle in My Lap*. Clasp your hands and cry: "But how marvellous! Isn't it *extraordinary*, I never heard of them? I shall go to my special girl at the library to-morrow and *insist* on her digging them up for me. I'll tell her I've met you and that'll remind her of your name. People often ask her to recommend them something to read."

If two novelists have the same surname and you are not quite sure which Mr. Puce you are talking to, do not get into a panic. Calmly ask him whether he is Peter or Paul and, whichever he answers, exclaim: "Ah for *me*, you're *the* Mr. Puce! I don't care *what* the rest of the world thinks." If he is Peter, commiserate with him on never having had any of his books turned into films and ask him how many thousands of dollars Paul got for the movie rights of *Silver Beetle*.



NORMAN MANSBRIDGE

If he is Paul, be careful not to embarrass him by referring to the novel on which the picture was based. Congratulate him on the cast and assure him that, with Semolina Glacia and Cosh Brannigan in the star parts, people will flock to see it no matter what the story is. Then pay him the exquisite compliment of taking him into your confidence and telling him how you have always secretly longed to get into films.

Do not be disconcerted even if he turns out to be that tricky third Mr. Puce who is only known by initials. Wing your way straight to his heart with an arch little scream. "Aha! . . . You can't catch *me* out! I'm not one of the vulgar herd who think there are only *two* Puces!"

If the name is unfamiliar, it is wiser to stick to

eager, intelligent questions. Writers are like children. You can win their trust and affection at once by entering imaginatively into their little world. Here are a dozen well-tried favourites which will not only put them at their ease but convince them that you really understand them.

(1) Does it just *come* to you or do you sometimes have to *think*?

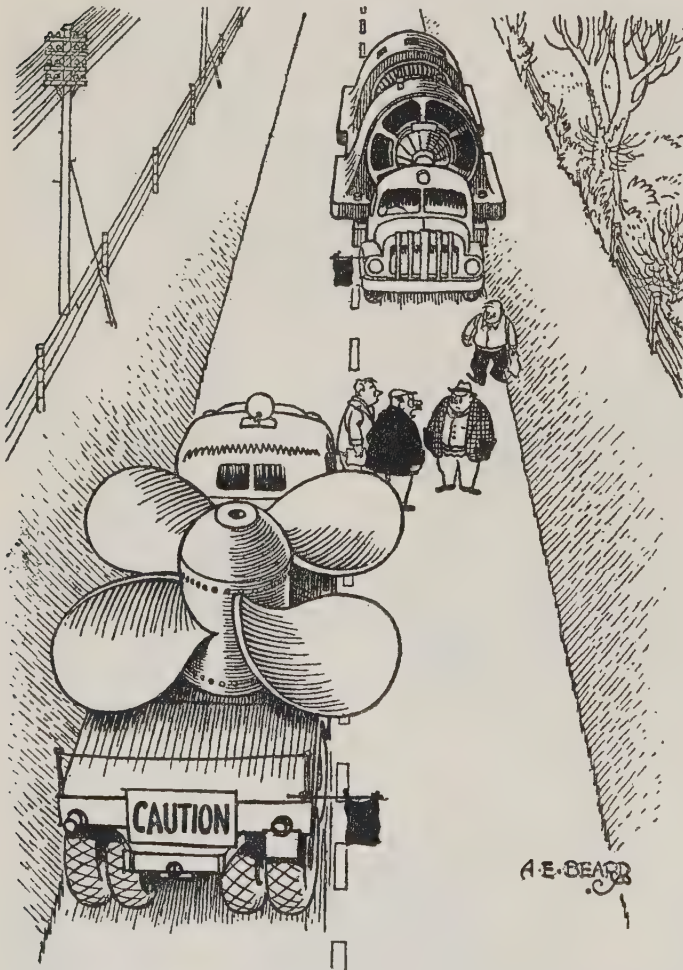
(2) Do you still have to write it all out or have you got to the stage where you can do it straight on to the typewriter?

(3) Do you think of a title first and then make up a plot to fit it, or the other way round?

(4) *Do* tell me whatever gave you the *idea* that you could write novels?

(5) I know everyone's supposed to be able to write *one* novel. But how on earth do you go on and *on*?

(6) Do you realize how lucky you are? Not having to *work* for a living, I mean.



"SAME HERE—EVERY DETAIL PLANNED, THEY SAID, BRIDGES CHECKED, CROWDED AREAS BY-PASSED, DIFFICULT CORNERS AVOIDED, *EVERYTHING* TAKEN CARE OF . . ."

(7) I expect your *first* thought is always "Would it make a film?", isn't it?

(8) Do you have to *pay* to get a novel reviewed? Or is it done for nothing when you're well enough known?

(9) Still keeping up your writing?

(10) Do you do it every day or only when you're inspired?

(11) Shall I tell you something extraordinary that happened to a friend of mine? It might give you a plot for your next novel.

(12) Would you mind telling me your name again? Think how furious I'd be if you became famous and I never realized I'd met you!

Should you be, as you almost certainly are, dying to ask Question 13, do not make the fatal mistake of introducing it too early in the conversation. Question 13 refers, of course, to that manuscript you've got tucked away somewhere; that little impression of spring you just put down, like that, out of the blue or that half-finished novel (*rather* autobiographical, you're afraid) that you might *somehow* find time to finish if you got *real* encouragement. Naturally, you only mention Question 13 to safely established novelists, since it is the most delicate incense you can offer and deeply esteemed and appreciated.

When he consents, as he will with almost pathetic eagerness, to give his professional opinion of your work, there are one or two little points of etiquette you must be careful to observe. Do not forget to mention that you are willing to go to the expense of having it typed when he has read it (your writing isn't *really* difficult once one gets used to it) if he will give you a *personal* recommendation to a *good* publisher. And, however bulky the manuscript, on no account enclose stamps for its return. Nothing is so wounding to an author's sensibility.

Also, owing to the uncertainty of parcel posts, it is wise to wait a full three days before ringing him up the first time to know what he thinks of the contents of the parcel. After a mere half-dozen chatty telephone calls, you will be wondering why *anyone* ever imagined it was difficult to get on with novelists.

ANTONIA WHITE

THE POOLS

I sing of the people who say that the Pools
 Are promoted by villains and followed by fools;
 Of the people who bask in the roseate light
 Of a sect not in fashion but morally right.

In virtue they walk and with pity they speak
 Of the man-hours, the brainwork, the shillings a week;
 O that Hope and Endeavour (they cry) should be bound
 By who's kicking a football which end of a ground!

THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'

With what active indifference their spirit eschews
 The Results that come after the six o'clock News
 And those funny brown envelopes bunged through the door
 With the name of the person who lived there before!

Have they thought of the money a winner can win,
 More than seventy thousand for digging a pin?
 Yes, indeed they have thought; and their answer is—what?
 That they'd rather not have it, no, honestly not.

*But how many such fatuous prigs can there be?
 Well, I don't know how many, but one of them's me.*

ANGELA MILNE

IS THE HORSE SLIPPING?

Horrible thought! For all agree that Man
 Is finer now than when the chap began:
 And most dumb animals, by Man controlled,
 Are sweeter, swifter, than they were of old.
 Our politicians please us more and more:
 And even *Punch* is better than before.
 The bloodhound, once by everybody barred,
 Now works in harmony with Scotland Yard.
 The elephant, the jungle's cunning king,
 Is led about by planters on a string.
 The lion, if he's not behind the bars,
 Is calmly photographed from motor-cars.
 In Art, maybe, we do not much improve,
 But look how well the modern world can *move*!
 Our motor-cars, in Britain and the States,
 Can kill and maim at ever-rising rates.
 Now we dispatch our striplings round the sky
 Faster than sound—we do not quite know why.
 The Universities are full of lads
 Who row, or run, more quickly than their dads.
 The racing greyhound, idol of the sea,
 Is more like liners than he used to be;
 And any night, on some suburban track,
 Some recent record may be beaten back.

TO THE
LAKE



TO THE
LAKE



TO THE
LAKE



TO THE
LAKE



Only the horse, though still considered fast,
 Seems quite unable to surpass his past.
 The best of Derbies was in '36:
 Come on, good horses! Have you no new tricks?
 This year let better than your best be seen:
 You too must break a record for the Queen.

A. P. H.

FAIR SHARES

You can't go out charring and draw full assistance as well—

The folk who employ you won't tell:

You can't run a car and a chauffeur, a gardener or two,

Have a son up at Cambridge *and* hunt and . . . *but lots of them do:*

You can't have a fortune and die leaving virtually nil—

There's a way to look after the Will:

You can't . . .

Yes you can, yes you will, like the rest of the nation;
 For—apart from the fact that all's fair in Love, War and Taxation—

If you *truly* believe opportunity ought to be equal,

There's only one logical sequel,

I.e., that the State must provide it, it has to be national—

So to grab from the State is compulsive besides being rational.

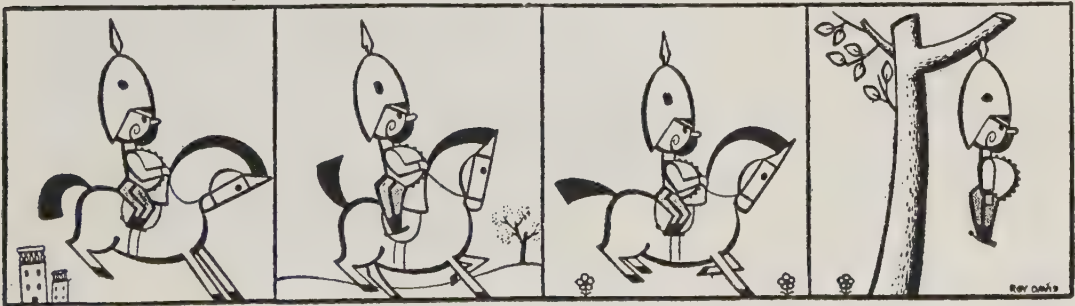
Moreover, to prove you're sincere about *total* equality

You must level down not only incomes but also morality.

Fraternité! Liberté! . . . say it in English, Fair Shares!

And down with all elements putting on ethical airs!

JUSTIN RICHARDSON

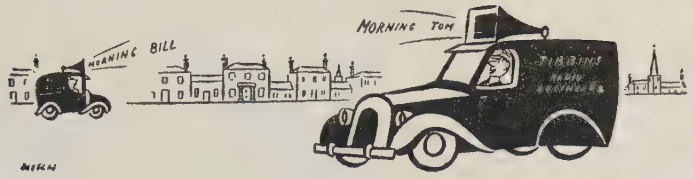




"AND IF I SEE ANYONE PUTTING LESS THAN ONE HUNDRED PER CENT INTO THE TACKLE, I SHALL KNOW WHERE TO FIND MY OPHELIA FOR THE DRAMA FESTIVAL"



"THESE WHITE LINES ARE AN ABSOLUTE GODSEND IN THE FOG"



THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'

JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT

I heard a man singing in Grosvenor Square.
 I could not help seeing the straws in his hair:
 But, oh, he sang sweetly, and sang without cease
 The Blue-print of Freedom, the Battle-song of Peace:
 "By reason, not ruction, we soar to the skies:
 The means of production we nationalize,
 While rapture surprising we bring within range
 By nationalizing the means of exchange."

I'm looking for something to nationalize—
nationalize—
nationalize—

It's the only idea we've got.
Shall it be Chemicals—shall it be Tin?
Shall it be Shipping—Insurance—or Gin?

Sugar? Cement?
Indiarubber—or Rent?

It don't matter very much what.

"I'm in love," sighs the maid,

"Just with love, I'm afraid,"

And that is my own situation:

I don't care a hoot

If it's Football or Fruit—

I'M JUST MAD ABOUT NATIONALIZATION!

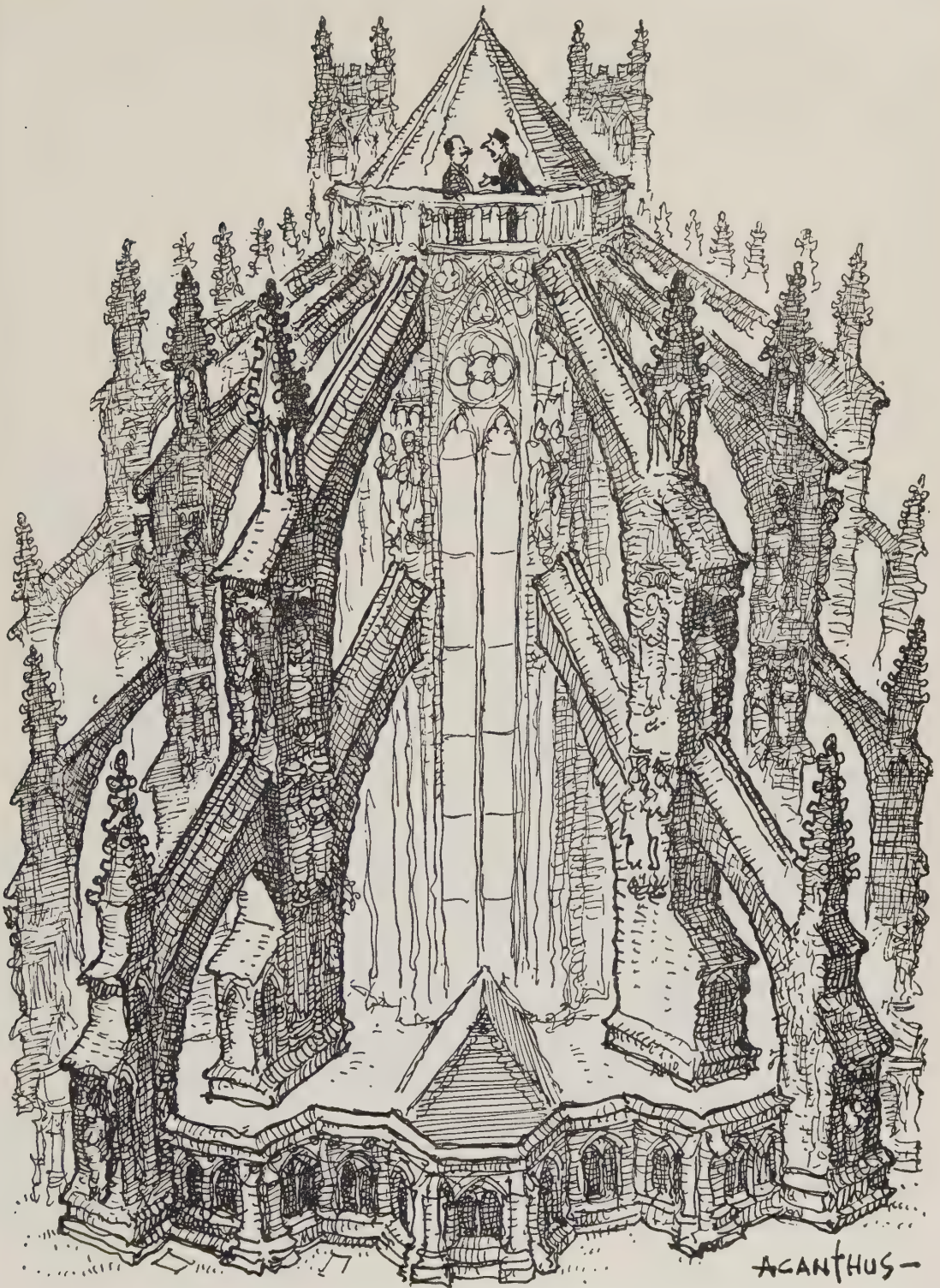
"These bosses," he sang, "do not know how to plan
 The feeble affairs that they somehow began.
 Far better to hand every service and store
 To people who never did business before.
 By reason, not ruction, we soar to the skies;
 The means of production we nationalize:
 And in this revolution we also must run
 The means of distribution (left out in verse one)."

I'm looking for something to nationalize—
nationalize—
nationalize—

It's the only idea we've got.

I have my eye on the grocery shop

(Though we may have to stop at the mighty Co-op.)



"YOU'D NEVER THINK THIS CATHEDRAL IS SUPPORTED ALMOST ENTIRELY BY VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS"

*Hotels—what a mess!
Tobacco? the Press?
It don't matter very much what.
And then all the fools
Who invest in the Pools,
Had much better bet with the nation.
Of course, I don't say
That we'll make the Pools pay—
I'M JUST MAD ABOUT NATIONALIZATION!*

A. P. H.

Letter from a Horse

Hide Park, W.

8 a.m., Tues.

DEAR Mr. P.,—Not being a dab hand at letter writing please excuse spelling etc., but I write from the hart and, as a matter of fact, from the harness, being engaged in an early nosebag, bottom of Park Lane, while the master delivers in Curzon Street, as I am just a labouring animal drawing milk. That by the way.

It is not often, no doubt, that a working pony of humble origins springs to the defence of its betters, but after what I seen this past fortnight, my first tour of duty in the West End, having previously drawn milk in Bethnal Green, where at least they treat their hoarses like human beings, I am impelled to speak. It is a scandal. Talk about the hoarse being the friend of man, that won't go on long at this rate.

First of all, these men come. Every morning regular on the stroke of seven, all dressed alike in greeny-brown and carrying gnus. They do not fire the gnu, but fling them on their shoulders, and slap them, and bang them on the ground when shouted at saying "slo-o-o-ope . . . bark!" "Or-der . . . bark!" etc. Then other men come, not with gnus but with things for noise-making, polished very dazzling except the big round one kept for hitting.

Now let me come to my fellow-creatures (though naturally on a higher plain) to wit the hoarses. They are very well groomed and refined-looking, and I know from whispers in the local dairy stables that they have fine names such as Eisenhower, Tedder, Cunningham etc., supposed to be compliments, it is not known why, give me something a bit less eye-falooting myself, but there it is, men are funny.

Now what happens, I will tell you.

These Cunninghams etc. are harnessed to a lot of old cabs, if you can believe that, Sir. One of the men drives but there is noone inside, which does not make sense either. All the men with gnus line the road called Serpentine Road as it passes a quite pond so named (that by the way), and keep very still. And one or two more

men, without gnus but with smoother coats and very short manes, stand in front of them and keep very still too. And all the men with noise-makers stand at one end, and *they* keep very still. It is all very pieciful, a fine spring morning, cold but suny, that could be good to be alive on for man or beast. That is, until the men gee-up Tedder and Eisenhower and the rest, and they begin drawing their cabs along Serpentine Road.

Then it starts.

Well, Sir, I can only say that the first time it happened, I jumped on to the pavement at the corner of Brompton Road, so you can tell. I thought it was one of those atom booms you get in A Merry Car.

TA-RA, TA-RA, TA-RA! went the noise-makers. TA-ROOTLE-TI-ROO-TI-TA! And the round one went BAM-BAM-BAM! BAM-BAM-BAM! And the men with smooth coats began to ball all together. And the others all stamped their feet and slammed their gnus. And everyone tried to make more noise than everyone else. "Slo-o-ope . . ." (TA-RA, TA-RA, TA-RA!) "... bark!" "Order . . ." (TA-ROOTLE-TI-ROO) "... bark!" "Pre-sent . . ." (BAM-BAM-BAM!) "... bark!" And, sometimes, "Slo-o-o . . ." (TA-RA, TA-RA!) "... o-o-o-o . . ." (CRASH!) "... o-o-ope . . ." (BAM-BAM!) "... bark!" And the bark and the BAM! always saved up until



a hoarse's ear was as close as it could get. And there, going through the middle of it, were Eisenhower and Tedder, etc.

Now. As is well known, a hoarse is partial to soft speach, hissing, pats and the like, not men shouting and balling in one ear and blowing in the other with noise-makers. I am asking the same question as Tedder and Cunningham, etc., to wit—Why? Where is the sense? What is the explanation, except that of horrible cruelty and malice to hoarses? It is not as if once was enough, and they had had their joke and gone home, because no sooner was the old cabs pulled through the torment to one end of Serpentine Road than they are turned and pulled back through another lot, and when the men began to shout "Pre-sent . . ." (TA-ROOTLE-TI-TOO) they always waited for a hoarse's ear to *bark!* into, and when the poor creatures passed the noise-makers they leant forward and let fly their loudest, so it was a put-up job, Sir, as could also be told by the smurks of the men with gnus when the hoarses reared and went sideways with rolled eyes while their drivers remarked to them "Be a good boy," as if you could expect it under the circumstances.

So there it is, and I hope to be passed to the proper quarter. As I say, I write not on my own behoof, but the behooves of oppressed fellow-creatures, also as a Warning. Because if this gets around among hoarses they won't race or work on the railways or anything and small wonder do you blame them. There'll be a strike, that's what, and not only by big nobbs like Tedder and Eisenhower and Cunningham, but such lesser breeds as

Your humble servant,

BOOTHROYD

Good Lord, Jeeves

ALL unconscious of impending doom I was gnawing a solitary bone at the Drones Club and wistfully recalling that golden age when coves like Catsmeat Potter-Pirbright and Barmy Fotheringay-Phipps had reigned supreme, filling the air around with snappy dialogue and bread rolls bandied to-and-fro. I'd reached the point, after a few shots of cognac imbibed to assist the gastric juices, when a less reserved chappie would have burst into the chorus of "Auld Lang Syne" or wondered, with the poet, where the jolly old *neiges* of *a.* had got to nowadays, and it was in this mellow mood that I became suddenly aware of two birds in formal attire bearing down on me from across the banqueting hall—now, alas, empty save for the last of the Woosters.

Though the advancing figures were clearly recognizable as Sir Roderick Glossop and Sir Watkyn Bassett, C.B.E., J.P., respectively, it took me some moments to realize that these knights were actually present in the flesh, and by the time it'd sunk in that they weren't mere shades conjured up from the mists of m. or the pages



GIOVANNETTI

of a cheap edition chronicling some past kick of the heels, they were already standing over my table with expressions that betokened business.

Sir Watkyn was the first to give tongue, and at his tone of voice even my iron nerve began to describe a graceful arc. I felt a kinship with those private eyes of American lit., who glance up from a newly-discovered stiff to find the boys from the Homicide Squad standing around, idly swinging their blackjacks in preparation for a cosy chat about the case.

"Mr. Wooster," said the former bane of Boshier Street, "we are from the Ministry of Rehabilitation. We were informed that the club secretary was to be found lunching in this room."

"I'm the Hon. Sec., Sir Watkyn," I said: an honest admission received by Sir Roderick with what brothers of the P.E.N. qualify as a mirthless chuckle.

"A suitable nominee for an institution so-named, do you not concur, Bassett?" he said.

"Especially apt in view of the establishment's future function," Sir W. agreed. "You are, of course, aware, Mr. Wooster, that these premises have been requisitioned w.e.f. to-day's date as a *State Home for the Mentally Deficient* . . ."

". . . and that I, as Governmental Psychiatrist," said Sir Roderick, coming in pat on his cue, "will be in charge of the scheme, which is to be implemented forthwith."

"Here, I say," I protested, rallying from the ropes, as one who recovers from a right cross, "you can't do that, you know! The members won't stand for it!"

"There are no members, Mr. Wooster," Sir Watkyn said, planting another *banderillo* in the quivering hide. "We've already ascertained that. And if it is the free board and lodging which as club secretary you receive here that causes your patent anxiety, why, you are in no danger of losing it. Sir Roderick, I am sure, will gladly sign the certificate insuring your future as an inmate of the Home—eh, Glossop?"

It was the K.O. delivered with full force to the softer parts of the anat. I had crumpled over the table, gasping for breath, when through the loud singing in my ears a familiar and well-loved voice spoke sharply scattering the opponents to right and left.

"Gentlemen," it said, "I wish to have a word in private with Mr. Wooster, if you please."

The big fight was over. Before you could say Sugar Ray Robinson, Sir Roderick and W. Bassett had beaten it, murmuring "Yes, Minister," and "Certainly, Lord Jeeves," in the most obsequious of accents, and the hand, it seemed, of a ministering angel was holding a beaker of brandy to my lips.

"Jeeves," I said fervently, "lives there a man with soul so dead as to resist the incomparable Jeeves?"

"Thank you, sir. The tribute is much appreciated."

"I merely quote from *The Daily Herald*. But wait a sec.," I said, as full con-

sciousness flooded back to the brain, "didn't I hear those two blighters address you as Minister? And Lord Jeeves? Or was it a dream?"

"The Government has been kind enough to reward my trifling services with a peerage, and also by inclusion in the Cabinet, sir."

"As Minister of Re-Thing?"

"Habilitation, sir. A little more brandy, if I might so suggest? I fear this news has come as a grave shock to you, sir."

"Worse than that, Jeeves. The loss of this job would be the last straw." I raised my measure on high. "To your success, Jeeves, which you dashed well deserve."

"Thank you, sir. But you were saying about your position as secretary here, and its importance to you . . ."

"Supreme importance, Jeeves, financially speaking. Nationalization and sur-tax have taken their toll. The Wooster millions are, in fact, down the drain. Need I say more?"

"It is a plight shared by many in these times, sir. Your friends are unable to assist?"

"*Friends*," I echoed bitterly. "Shall I show you the typed note I had from Mrs. Bingo Little's secretary? Or the stern refusal received from Stiffy Byng's spouse, the Bishop of Blandings, formerly the Rev. Stinker Pinker? The receipt of such missives is souring to one's sunny nature, Jeeves."

"Man is an ungrateful animal, sir. But perhaps I might be of some little help, if you'd allow me . . ."

"How?"

"The offer of employment, sir?"

"What kind of employment?"

"I hesitate to say, sir."

"Don't hesitate. Out with it. Beggars can't be c., Jeeves."

"Well, sir, the post of secretary to the Junior Ganymede Club has fallen vacant in the past week. I could confidently promise you the appointment if you so desire."

"But the Junior Ganymede's a club for gentlemen's personal gentlemen. How could I get in?"

"By accepting a temporary position as my personal attendant, sir . . . If I may say so, you would not find me too exacting an employer."

We Woosters are nothing if not adaptable. My hesitation was of the briefest. "Jeeves," I said, "you're on! Let's drink to that!"

"Thank you," said Jeeves, as I ladled out liberal portions. "Er—. . . not all the soda, Wooster."

"No, sir," I said, falling without effort into the new rôle. "I will endeavour to give satisfaction, sir . . . I mean, m'lord."

Blood and Thunder

A MAN we called Old Blood and Thunder taught me surgery. He was one of the last of the magnificent general surgeons who have been swept away by the stiff scientific brush of modern medicine. He saw himself clearly as the professional descendant of John Hunter, Ambroise Paré, and Astley Cooper: he could cut his way proudly into any accessible corner of the body, set a fracture, draw a tooth, nip out a pair of tonsils, or spread a linseed poultice. He believed that all diseases were curable by the removal of a sufficient number of organs, and that everybody was better off for an operation; all he asked from his patients was the courage of his convictions.

Blood and Thunder lectured at the bedside with feudal grandness. His attitude towards his hospital patients suggested squire and tenants; he treated his assistants as gamekeepers, the nurses as valuable but untrustworthy domestics, and us students as his own imbecilic younger sons. His Thursday morning ward rounds were our most frightening experiences in education since leaving school. He towered at the patient's head, stern in frock-coat and cravat, contemptuous of the passage of time and the necessity for lunch: we gathered timidly round the other end, trying to slip our aching feet on to the lowest bar of the bed.

He suffered fools badly. "You, sir!" he snapped at me on my first round as his dresser. "You would be called Argyll Robertson, would you not?" I came across the name later in a textbook of ophthalmology, and found it described "a small irregular pupil that reacts sluggishly."

In the operating theatre he held dangerously conflicting views on bacteria. Everyone was forced to obey the rigid rules of asepsis, and the nurse with a wisp of hair below her cap was described loudly as a "septic Jezebel." But Blood and Thunder regarded his own flesh as in some way supernaturally antiseptic. He scrubbed his hands with the impatience of a man submitting to a foolish and rootless convention, and often scratched his left ear in perplexity with his sterile glove in the middle of an operation.

I believe that surgery was to him an art as personal as painting, and he was damned if he would tolerate any frustrating Listerian barriers between himself and his patient. Only one man ever questioned him about it—a new student, rash in his innocence. "Why do you always wear your mask *below* the end of your nose, sir," he asked, "when you tell us to tie ours across the bridge?"

"Because my nose is a damn sight cleaner than yours, sir!" he roared in reply.

When Blood and Thunder turned sixty and retired, his silk hat in the Staff common room was replaced by the self-effacing trilbys of three successors. The good all-round surgeon is now as rare as the all-round athlete, for every human viscus has come under the microscope of specialization and surgeons to-day are proud of the few

operations they are capable of performing instead of the many. The solitary surgical adventurer, who was checked only by his professional conscience and the traditions of the Royal College, has become the centre-forward of a therapeutic team and is largely ignorant of the sort of game being played by the wings.



No longer is he lord of the theatre, whose foot-step subdues sisters and silences students: instead, he treads softly in fear of expert contradiction by biochemists, physiotherapists, statisticians, and psychiatrists. He is slow to anger and to surgery; he diagnoses as precisely as an X-ray and counts the success of the operation on what he leaves rather than what he takes. He is apologetic to his house-surgeons, who master the latest complications in biochemistry before he can; he is terrified of offending a



nurse, and possibly further thinning the Matron's staff; he is humble to his students, who have discovered that even surgical dressers have their dignities and address him with their hands in their pockets.



Gais

Old Blood and Thunder's endearing arrogance sprang largely from confidence in the financial gap that separated him from his hospital patients and students. He had a house in Queen Anne Street, another on the Thames, fishing rights in Devon, and shooting in Scotland. He charged two hundred guineas for removing an over-nourished stomach, and insisted on his guinea-a-mile extra for a consultation in the country. His successors at the disposal of the National Health Service are paid by the "notational half-day," and unless they can persuade their private patients into

a nursing home are tied to the operation charges in the Ministry's *à la carte* menu.

The senior surgeon may even be pleased to abandon his fee. "A remarkably fine refectory table," I said, when having dinner with a surgical colleague. "Yes," he agreed. "A gastrectomy, that . . . appendicectomy last week for the chairs . . . what do you think of my china? Some gallstones!" I complimented him on the claret. "And so it ought to be," he told me. "It's Lady ——'s kidney."

RICHARD GORDON

On Parties—Being a Guest

I EXPECT your big invitation for the year was Lucy Ellesmere-Scrant's. It was for most people. It means that, in some sense or other, you've arrived. That the poem you read on the Third, or the by-election you contested so pluckily and unsuccessfully, or the journey you made almost to the Gobi Desert, or even your brief appearance in the famous Shackerby divorce case, did not pass entirely unnoticed.

Be sure that Lucy Ellesmere-Scrant would not have invited you unless she thought that your little effort, in whatever field, was—at any rate for the moment—"interesting." Don't inquire too closely what Lucy means by "interesting." Although it is the concept on which her whole social life depends—and she has long ago given up any hope of a private life—she could not give you any positive definition. "Interesting people" for her are those whom she vaguely senses it might one day be unwise not to have invited to her parties. Her feverish occupation is to make sure of "finding" such people before any other hostess.

Of course, in doing so she inevitably runs the risk of asking people who ultimately do not make the grade. But she is very quick to weed out such failures. Indeed, statistically the wastage is very high, about forty-five per cent. As she says herself, however, "Social life just couldn't go on unless hostesses were prepared to take a chance."

It is perhaps the fact that your invitation was rather a gamble which causes Lucy to look through you when you first arrive. All memory of your little poem, your plucky canvassing, your heroic journey seems quite to have left her. Make no mistake, however, she remembers perfectly well; she wouldn't have asked you otherwise. But newcomers have to be put in their places, to say nothing of through their paces. As a first step in your trial by ordeal, Lucy will look at you very closely for a moment, as though you might be the cook's boy-friend got in by mistake, and then, with a triumphant cry—"I know whom *you* must meet," she will say; "Marjorie White-Rennett."

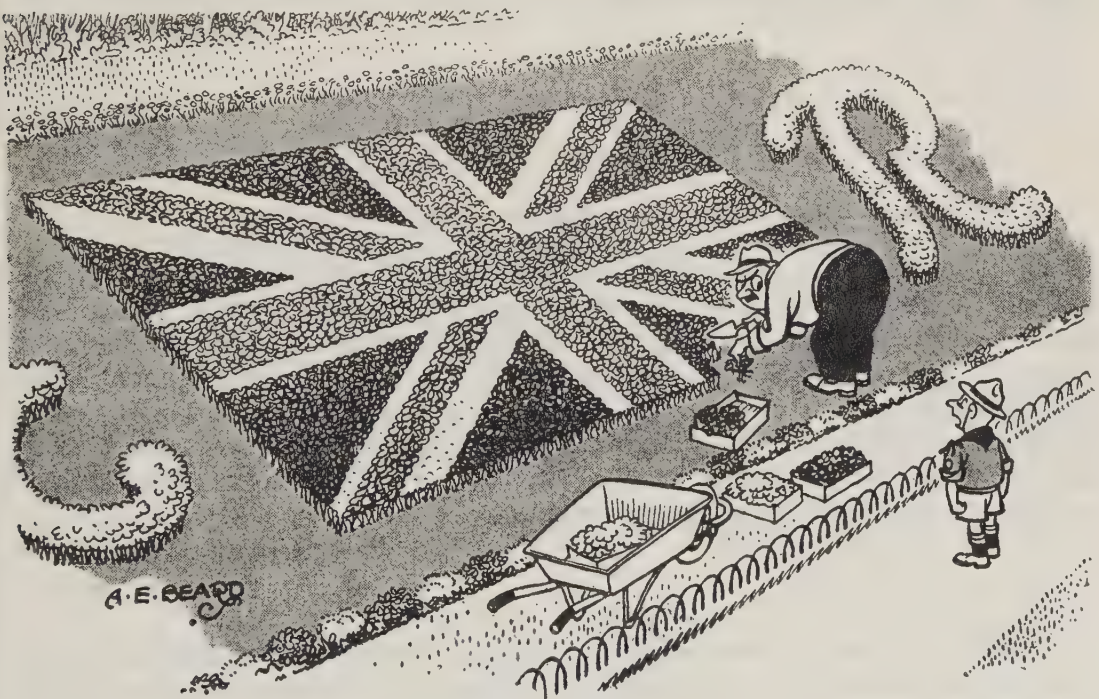
Mrs. White-Rennett has to be disengaged from earnest conversation with someone who appears to be her oldest friend, and this, perhaps, puts your introduction

at a disadvantage. At the mention of your name, her smile, though sweet, is vague enough to assure you that she has no idea of your identity. Once again, however, you would be mistaken. Lucy and Marjorie run in team; Marjorie's dinners are complementary to Lucy's cocktails.

Not that she will give the game away too soon. Be sure there will be no mention of your poem, your election, your voyage, your evidence, on this occasion. Marjorie will probably pin-point your home-town and then fire a series of questions at you. "Do you know the Lowndses? Mrs. Kettle? Old Lord Bog? The Quoppits?" Probably you will know none of them, and her face will express neither surprise nor pleasure. But if, by some lucky chance, you did know Milly Kettle at one time and embark enthusiastically on your admiration for that old bore, Marjorie, throwing her head back, will look at you with half-closed eyes and wrinkled nose.

Over each of your shoulders in turn she will smile and wave to other guests. Occasionally she will shout to friends—"No sign of Nina," "Tom's left for Madrid after all," and so on. At last, as you are hurrying nervously through your account of Mrs. Kettle's garden party, she will suddenly call, "*Darling* Ronnie" and, touching your hand ever so lightly with her fingers, "So nice," she will say and be gone.

There still await you, however, the ordeals by youth and by old age. The ordeals



"YOU REALIZE IT'S UPSIDE DOWN?"

by youth, perhaps, will come in the person of Roderick Mome, the most brilliant of our older university's æsthetes. Roderick specializes in rudeness. Willowing above you, "I *hated* your little poem," he will say, or "That dreary voyage of yours. Thank God, you never *got* to the Gobi Desert. That would have been *too* much." And if, at last, enraged, you try rudeness in return, Roderick will turn to his young woman—there is always one with him, usually with a mat of horsetail hanging down her back like an old flue-brush—"He's not very good at being rude, is he, sweet?" Roderick will say, and the young woman will answer: "Oh! definitely a failure."

Ordeal by old age may well come through Mrs. Crayfer. Brilliant Henrietta Crayfer who knew Meredith—now so very, very old. Not that Mrs. Crayfer will let you talk of Meredith—certainly not. The price of chickens, a new type of boiler she saw at a friend's house in Suffolk, the defects of her refrigerator—these are her chosen topics. And then, just as she is dismissing you, you manage to get out Meredith's name. Mrs. Crayfer pounces. "Dear Mr. Meredith," she says, "he would have been sadly lost in modern conversation. Although I dare say with his brilliance he might have made something even of refrigerators and boilers."

* * * * *

Defeated and trembling, you decide to depart, when, lo! Marjorie White-Rennett, all smiles, says, "Dinner on Tuesday. Eight o'clock. Just a few real friends. Don't say you can't, because I count on you." It's all right really.

ANGUS WILSON

Truthful Answers

DEAR MR. BENTJMAN, —I am honorary secretary of the University Ink Club and am instructed to invite you to address us on "The Art of Journalism" next Saturday. Our usual procedure is for the Committee to entertain the guest speaker to light refreshments at Patsy's Pantry in the High Street at 6.30 p.m. The meeting begins at 7.45 with business. The speaker commences at 8 p.m. and is expected to read a paper lasting from three-quarters of an hour to an hour so as to allow plenty of time for questions afterwards. I am afraid this is rather short notice but we have great difficulty in getting speakers.

Yours faithfully,

ARTHUR PIKE

Dear Sir,—The only sentence I like in your letter is the last as there is truth in it and it does not surprise me. I do not like light refreshments so soon after tea and can picture the stodgy cake, synthetic cream buns and lukewarm coffee-extract at Patsy's Pantry. Even

if I had the time to write so long a paper the subject is not one which I would choose. There is no art in journalism. It is the last refuge of failed authors, and the fact that you ask me to discuss journalism reminds me painfully that I am one of its practitioners. So does your mis-spelling of my name. Finally I must tell you that undergraduates frighten me.

Yours truly,

J. BETJEMAN

DEAR MR. BELGIUMEN,—Here in Haltwhistle we have established quite a flourishing literary coterie where we read each other's poems out loud. It is our practice, every so often, to invite a guest critic to come and listen to our work and to help the Chairman and Committee to award the annual prize. The session is unlikely to last more than three hours. As we are a small and entirely voluntary society, I am afraid we can offer no fee, but can guarantee you an enthusiastic audience. Mrs. Skull, our Chairman, asks me to say she will be delighted to give you dinner and a "shakedown" at her house afterwards.

Yours sincerely,

DULCIE BINDLETHWAITE,

Hon. Sec.

Dear Madam,—You must be mad if you think I will travel all the way from Berkshire to Northumberland to listen to a lot of egocentrics reading out their own drivel. I already know a lot of people and am too old to enlarge my acquaintance by adding your Chairman, Mrs. Skull, to it. I can imagine the drying grape-fruit, cool fried fish, sickly trifle and literary small-talk to which I would have to submit before my three-hour ordeal. I can imagine, too, that Haltwhistle is a bleak spot, so I would not appreciate a "shake down" in that city, if city it be, which I doubt.

Yours sincerely,

J. BETJEMAN

SIR,—My Borough Library Committee requests me to demand you to give a series of four lectures on "Modern Architecture" on four successive Mondays.

As these public lectures are in the nature of an experiment, whether they will be continued depends on public response.

It is not our custom to offer a fee, but we have made arrangements with the Victoria and Albert Museum to make not more than twelve slides, provided it is understood that they become the property of the Borough at the conclusion of the lectures.

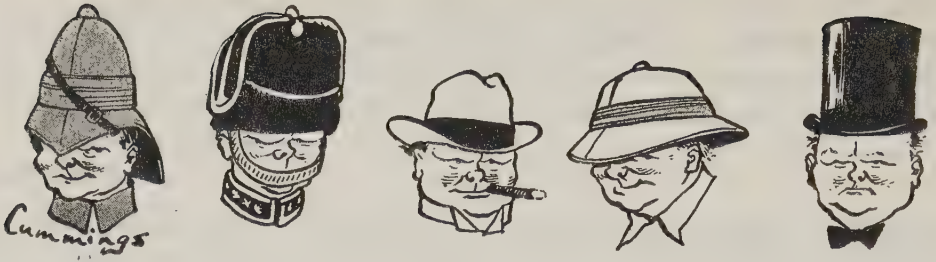
Yours faithfully,

H. RIGGS

per pro Town Clerk

Sir,—I have received your insulting demand. Boil your head and that of the Town Clerk.

J. B.



SONNET FOR A LESSER OLYMPIAN

Glory be for the things that are tossed away:
 The satiric doodle between the formal sittings;
 For straggly spots of hawkweed in railway cuttings,
 And people in carriages going the other way;
 For the abandoned postures of sleeping kittens,
 The smell of a neighbour's baking, and the gay
 Squeaks of an orchestra getting ready to play;
 For old news on the bottoms of drawers among the buttons.
 For the things that will not go down in History;
 For ridiculous things with causes beyond our guessing
 And without effects to speak of, as far as we know,
 Praise—to the absent-minded divinity
 Who is wondering what he did with those snatches of blessing
 He had in his hand only a moment ago.

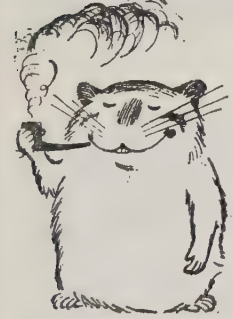
PETER DICKINSON

DICTIONARY REVISION

MIDDLE EAST EDITION

Negotiate. (*nĭ-gō-she-āte*).
 (v. i.&t.) [Co-operate,
 In private parley or debate,
 In efforts to accommodate
 Divergent views. (Now out of date)]
 To rave in public; execrate;
 Reject attempts to mediate;
 Endeavour to intimidate
 By threats of murder. (*Of a State*)
 To foster xenophobic hate
 In order to expropriate.
 (*Of treaty-terms*) to abrogate.

JUSTIN RICHARDSON



ALWAYS THE GENTLEMAN

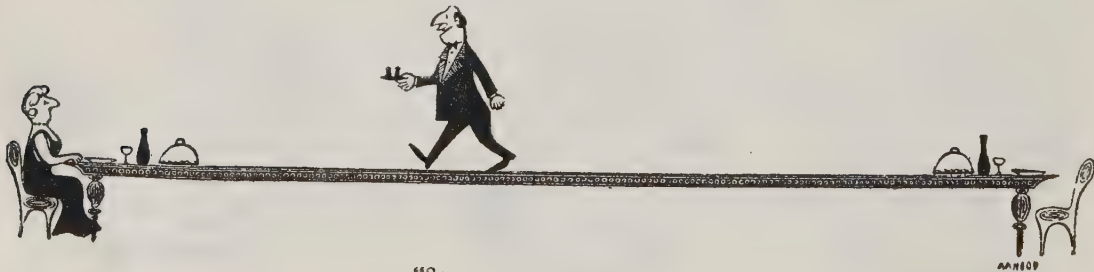
*Gentleman, owing to sudden change of plan,
Offers ten seats on the choicest part of the route.*
(No doubt the gentleman is taking his family to Cannes—
Mum and five kids and Sis and her family to boot,
A largish party for any gentleman
And one not easy to suit.)

*Willing to dispose of them at original price
To applicant, preferably visitor from overseas.*
(Always the gentleman, ready to sacrifice
Personal profit for a gesture in times like these.
And overseas currency—dollars to be precise—
Doesn't just grow on trees.)

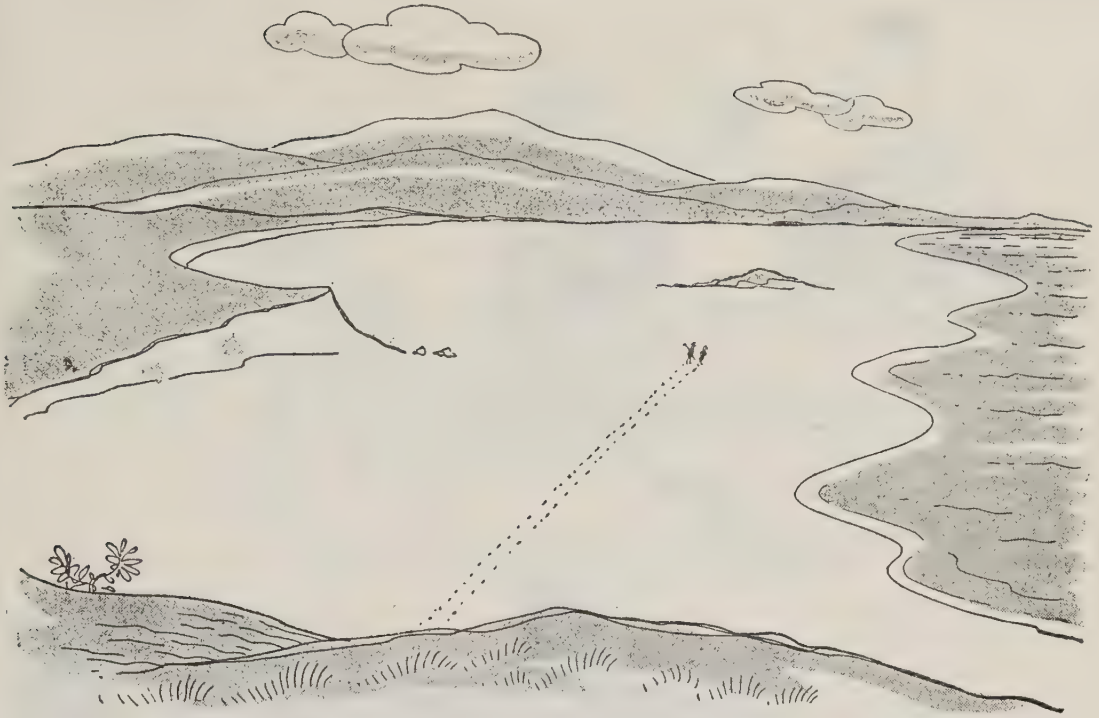
Lots of gentlemen offering seats, as though
It were not so much a Queen's Coronation day
As the latest, lavish imported musical show,
Or something special in the way of an air display,
Or a new variety billed for a month or so
And featuring Danny Kaye.

But we, whose Queen will be crowned and who would, no doubt,
Run barefoot to Jericho if she commanded it—
We must ask these gentlemen to count us out,
And gather the rags of our dignity round us, and sit
At home, and let the B.B.C. tell us all about
The gentlemen's benefit.

P. M. HUBBARD



"SALT AND PEPPER, DEAR?"



"THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THIS SPOT, ONE DOESN'T SEE A SOUL . . .

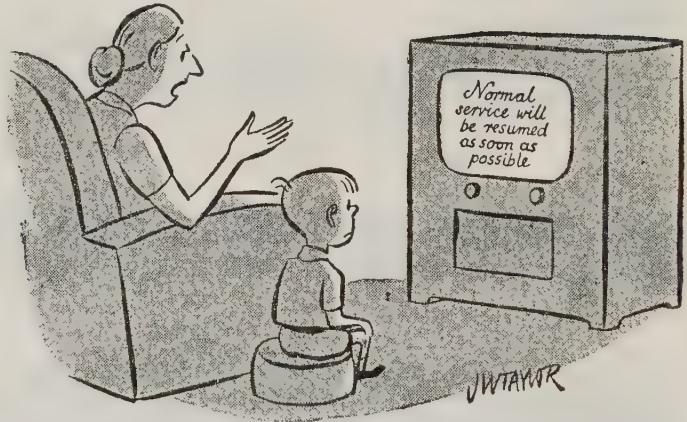


". . . FOR HOURS"

THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'



"OH, DID HE? WELL, MY FATHER MARKED IT AND HE SAYS IT'S WRONG"



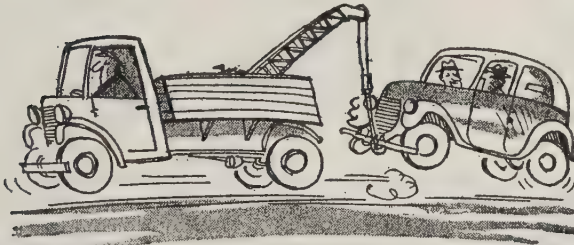
"SEE—YOU CAN'T ENJOY IT IF YOU WON'T LEARN TO READ"



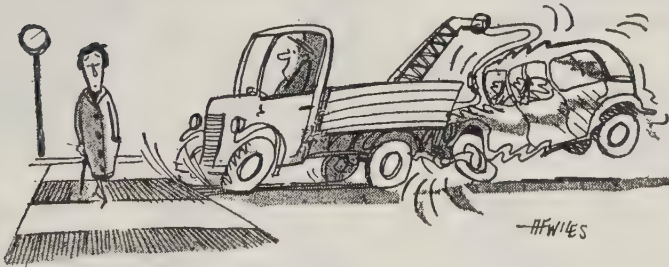
"I MUST SAY IT WAS A BIT OF LUCK RUNNING INTO YOU LIKE THAT!"



"I SUPPOSE YOU KNOW YOU'VE GOT DORIC CAPITALS ON CORINTHIAN BASES?"



"I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL IT WAS NOTHING . . .



". . . MORE SERIOUS"



THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'



ROYAL ROUTE

The Queen of Britons is not crowned
 Nor loved the more on land and sea
 By virtue of proceeding round
 Eternal streets unendingly.

Small homage to that love we pay
 If, like the gazers at a fair,
 We stretch the ceremonial way
 Too far for mortal strength to bear.

Shake out the maps of London roads,
 Ten thousand multiplied by ten
 Eager to see, from packed abodes,
 Her glittering coach, her mounted men.

But shall the pageant be in vain
 Because it was not clearly seen
 In Hackney Wick and Willesden Lane
 And Bermondsey and Bethnal Green?

The Orb, the Sceptre still are hers
 And still the Crown, although the view
 Is somewhat distant from The Firs
 In Araucaria Avenue.

Better to think that there are parts
 Of Empire where the splendour lies
 More closely in the people's hearts
 Than in the dazzling of their eyes.

EVOE



"MORNING, MY LORD—THAT'LL BE NINEPENCE"

THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'



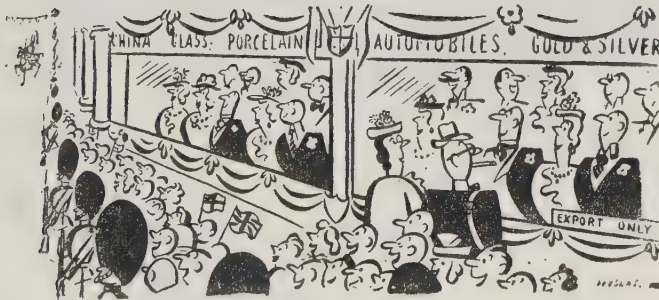
"WAVE YOUR FLAG, DUCKIE"



"POSTCARDS—SEE WHAT LONDON USED TO LOOK LIKE—POSTCARDS"



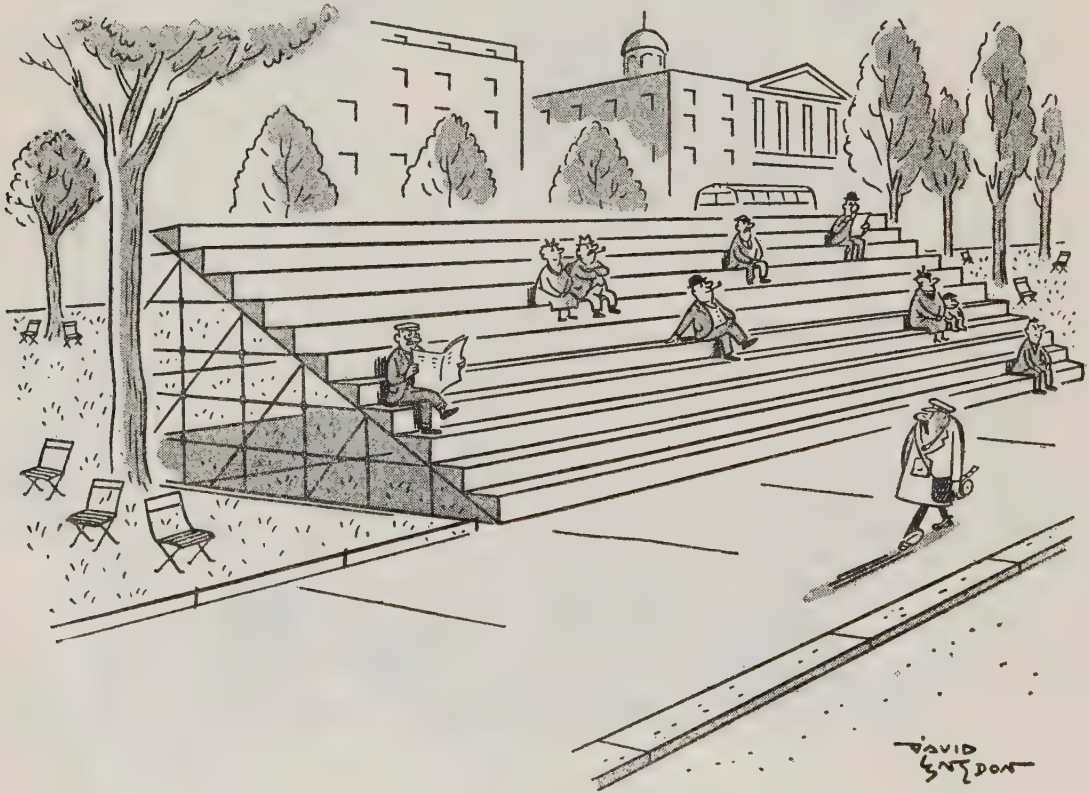
"YOU ARE SURE THIS IS THE ROUTE, AREN'T YOU?"



THE PICK OF 'PUNCH'



A. H. Bell.



DAVID LINDSAY

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