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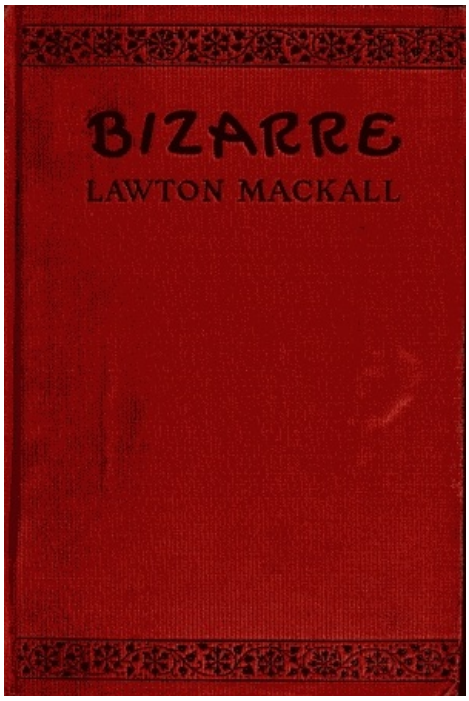

BIZARRE

By the Same Author

SCRAMBLED EGGS

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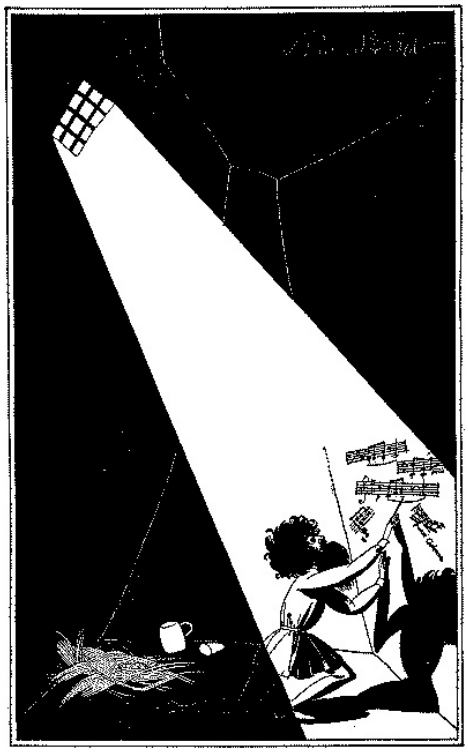
[Pg 4]



His symphony depicted the sorrows of Russia, the height of the steppes, and the agonies of indigestion.

[Pg 5]

BIZARRE

By

LAWTON MACKALL

With 26 Drawings

By LAUREN STOUT

NEW YORK
LIEBER & LEWIS
1922

[Pg 6]

[Pg 7]

To my favorite poet

[Pg 8]

Virginia Woods Mackall

The author thanks Life, Judge, The Century, The Quill, The New York Times, The Literary Review, *and* The New York Tribune *for kind permission to include in this volume certain contributions to those publications. He hopes he has remembered to ask such permission in each case.*

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PREFACE

As good form requires that an author mention in his preface the persons to whom he is chiefly indebted, I take this opportunity of stating that during the preparation of this book I became appreciably indebted to Dr. Warren S. Holder, my dentist, Mr. William Vroom, my tailor, Mr. M. Tesshow, my stationer and tobacconist, and Messrs. Acker, Merrall & Condit, my grocers.

Although these gentlemen neither "corrected the proofs" of my book nor "saw it through the press," nor allowed me access to rare documents and family letters, nor treated me to intimate accounts of their fathers and great uncles as they knew them; though they did none of these customary things, nevertheless I became decidedly their debtor—and still am.

Indeed, without their stimulus this book might never have been written.

L. M.

[Pg 10]

[Pg 11]

, , , ENCLOSED PLEASE FIND , , ,

WHAT-NOTS

[Pg 12]

MINIMS

JANGLES

WHAT-NOTS

[Pg 13]

UNSOLICITED PERSONAL ADORNMENTS

[Pg 14]

[Pg 15] ave you ever, on returning home from a round of calls, discovered upon your coat a large, obtrusive spot?

Stricken with horror, you wonder how long it has been there. Did you have this adjunct when you appeared before your wealthy aunt? That severe female has never quite approved of you, and now this will finish you as far as she is concerned. Did you exhibit yourself thus disgraced at the Brumleighs'? You recollect that the maid eyed you queerly when she opened the door, and [Pg 16] that Mrs. B. had frequent recourse to her lorgnettes. Then, too, both the Greens and the Worthingtons seemed a little stiffer than usual.

How did you acquire it, anyhow? It looks and feels like ice cream of a very rich quality; ice cream that has drippled merrily in leaps and bounds. But you had no ice cream today. Neither did you talk to anyone who was having ice cream.

Perhaps you have been struck by ice cream, just as people are struck by lightning. The weather does such peculiar things nowadays.

I have a gray suit that is a constant prey to spots. Its frail color—a sickly, betwixt-and-between shade, chosen in haste and repented of at leisure—puts it utterly at their mercy. And they flock to it.

Things sticky and glutinous pounce avidly upon it; nor is its seat reserved from paints and varnishes. Sauces afflict it. Oils take advantage of its helplessness. Grass bedizens it with garish green.

I try my best to protect it—but what can I do? What am I against so many? While I am rescuing [Pg 17] my left elbow from the machinations of a passing dish, I unwittingly suffer my right cuff to be enticed by the gravy in my plate. As I walk discreetly in the middle of the sidewalk, an automobile out in the street salutes me with a volley of mud.

And the most notable spots happen mysteriously. They appear out of the air, as it were, like the pictures that frost makes on window panes. I submit the phenomenon of their strange origin to the scientific world as an instance of spontaneous generation.

This spotability of my gray suit is surpassed only by the achievements of my blue serge. (I shall not here discuss my English tweeds, nor my Scotch cheviots, nor the braided cutaway and the lounge suit that I had made for me in Bond Street, for fear the reader might divine that I never possessed those garments.) This suit is not a victim to spots—it deliberately invites them. It is a connoisseur, a discriminating collector.

Scorning such vulgarities as paint and pitch, it seeks the exotic, the outré—amazing stickinesses, bewildering viscosities, undreamed of goos.

Although delighting in intricacy of design and delicate nuances of shading, it prefers durability to [Pg 18] all other qualities. Some of its antiques—particularly a brownish white one, resembling an octopus, over the front pocket—have stood the test of time and clothes brushes.

On three occasions this remarkable collection has been almost entirely destroyed by benzine, but each time the principal specimens have survived intact. These cleanings divide the history of the suit into four epochs.

Spots of the fourth (or present) epoch are of small consequence; spots of the third and second epochs are more interesting; while spots which antedate the first great deluge are quite rare. Among these last are the octopus and other gems of the collection.

Once, when I had become exceedingly irked at having to go about clad in pseudo-tapestry, I handed the suit over to a desperado of a ladies' and gents' tailor—a man who had the reputation of being capable of getting anything out of anything or anybody—and besought him to raze the frescoes.

He attacked them after the manner customary to cleaners; that is to say, he drove out the spots [Pg 19] with smells. Only, he used smells that were nothing short of brutal. The rout was complete.

When he brought the suit to my room on Saturday night, I could hardly believe my eyes. Being forced, however, to believe my nose, I hastily opened the window. I could understand why the spots had departed. I even felt sorry for them.

Not daring to put the suit away, for fear of contaminating the rest of my apparel, I hung it over the back of a chair by the window.

But the incoming breeze, instead of carrying the aroma away, wafted it directly toward me. It was certainly strong. It fairly assaulted the nostrils. One good whiff of that vicious chemical was almost enough to make you dizzy.

It treated me as if I were a spot.

I picked up a book and tried to read, but could not concentrate my attention.

The spot-destroyer was continually interrupting. My head was spinning so that I could hardly see.

I realized that the life of a spot was not a happy one. [Pg 20]

Thinking that smoking might help, I was about to light a cigarette when I remembered reading in the papers of people who struck matches in fume-filled rooms and then were blown blocks and blocks without knowing what hit them. So I gave that up, and sat a while dejected.

Then another scary thought came into my mind. What if I should be asphyxiated? I pictured myself being found dead in bed, having been extinct for hours and hours, and the mournfulness of it broke me all up.

Overcome with emotion and spot-destroyer, I gathered a few things into a suitcase and went out to spend the night at a hotel.

When I returned to my room on the following evening the aroma had gone, and the rays of the setting sun, illuminating the old blue suit as it hung there on the back of the chair, showed me a host of familiar faces—particularly that of an especially offensive brownish-white octopus over the pocket. They had come back every one; not a design was missing.

SHELF CULTURE [Pg 21]

man of education and refinement like you needs books befitting your culture—your place in the world," said my visitor. He spoke as though he were a revered friend of the family. But actually he was not just that. I had never seen him before. He was honoring me with a call at my room on Freshman Row.

I had come to college to get in touch with Belles-Lettres, and, lo, Belles-Lettres were seeking me out! Recognition had come far sooner than I had hoped.

To appreciate what I felt, you must know that Belles-Lettres' ambassador was [Pg 22] no ordinary person. He had the clothes of a clubman, the benignity of a clergyman, and the dignity of an undertaker. There was scholarliness in the droop of the pinch glasses on his aquiline nose and as he talked he kept lifting his curiously arched eyebrows in a manner that fascinated the beholder.

From the subject of my culture in its broader aspects he progressed by easy gradations to my culture in its relation to the works of Hawthorne and Irving, the two authors indispensable to a man of discerning taste, the authors whose writings constituted the logical nucleus of the well-bred student's library. He was happy to be able to tell me of the rare opportunity that now lay in my grasp of acquiring the immortal and exhilarating works of *both* these masters at one and the same time—in one and the same set.

The urgency of my need for Hawthorne and Irving being thus established beyond the shadow of a hesitance, the only thing for me to decide fairly and squarely was whether they should come to me in blue half-morocco or in red buckram. The splendid showing that either set would make in [Pg 23] my bookcase was attested by the accordion-plaited binding sample which at the proper moment he produced and unfolded. Nearly a yard of titled book-backs!

I signed on the dotted line and accepted his congratulations, while he accepted my two dollar deposit.

About a week later the box arrived. Eagerly I lifted forth the magic volumes which were to put me on a new intellectual plane. Somehow the bindings seemed to need breaking in. They creaked and cracked at the hinges and the pages clung together in little groups clannishly. The gluing of the backs was queer, yet casual. The "hand" that had tinted the "elegant colored frontispieces" was evidently a heavy one.

No matter: Hawthorne and Irving were mine. I had been taken into the higher circles of culture.

That very evening I plunged into "Mosses from an Old Manse". I stuck at it. Each day I balanced my morning's Shredded Wheat with Hawthorne Mosses at night, till the entire volume had been [Pg 24] systematically consumed. Then, having created my new literary universe, I rested.

Today no one can stump me on Mosses. Mention the Old Manse to me and my whole manner changes. My face lights up with intelligence. My eyes sparkle. My nostrils dilate like those of an old fire engine horse at the clang of an alarm gong. Yes, right this minute I can give you moss for moss.

If only I had gone on and read all the other volumes of the set.... Who knows? I might now be dean of a college or a second Dr. Frank Crane. Alas, I continued to rest on my Mosses, arguing sophistically with my conscience that these books, the nucleus of my ultimate library, were

precious possessions not necessarily for immediate perusal. Time-defying classics like Hawthorne and Irving would keep and be equally enjoyable years hence, if not more so; in fact, it would be almost extravagant to use them all up in the beginning. So it was tacitly decided that we three—Nathaniel, Washington, and I (the first two in red buckram, the latter in invisible yet palpable Freshman green)—should grow old together. [Pg 25]

The fourth member of our little group, he who had introduced us, had dropped out. I neither saw nor heard from him again. It would seem that he worked like lightning, striking in the same place only once. Not so his firm, however. They struck me by mail each month with awful iteration.

But before a year had passed there descended upon me another emissary of intellectualism. This personage expounded to me the doctrine of the De Luxe. I learned that an edition of any author, no matter how reputable that author may be, was mere dross if published for the public at large. Only as a subscriber, possessing a numbered set of a limited edition, could one obtain the quintessence of literature. *Fiat de lux.* Let there be e-lite.

The fact that this prophet of almost-vellum exclusiveness was physically a fat and florid Irishman whom a wiser man than I might have mistaken for a saloon keeper in his Sunday clothes, did not hamper his spirit. Enthrallingly yet confidentially he discoursed on Selected Literature for the Serene Few. I could be one of those Serene Few. [Pg 26]

I could. I did. I signed.

In his display room, to which this rotund spider lured me, I examined, enraptured, sets of all the leading *de luxe* writers. There was Pepys with pasted labels, Smollett and Fielding with special illustrations, twelve volumes of the World's Best Oratory, a bobtailed set of Stevenson, the inevitable Plutarch in fool morocco that was very like shellacked paper, and many more. But the *magnum opus* of them all was a green buckram affair in thirty tall tomes calling itself "The Bibliophile Library of Literature, Art and Rare Manuscripts". To emphasize the word Art in the title there was, as an adjunct, a three-foot portfolio of reproductions from paintings. Here was something that cast Hawthorne and Irving into the shade. It was world-wide, wonderful. (Later I came to know it as the "Hash"!)

As in a trance, I said yes to the "Bibliophile Library," to the Great Orations, to the much-shorter R. L. S. Later I took on a few more.

My finances grew groggy. Indeed, Europe's difficulties over paying her war indebtedness are as naught in comparison. Then at last the miracle happened: the book concern mislaid their record of my indiscretions—and all scowls ceased. [Pg 27]

For three years. Then rediscovery. Collectors, collectors, collectors—not the sort that A. Edward Newton writes about. They came faster than I could insult them. Litigation. Cash compromise. Formal return of books.

Such is the story of "My Life With Great Authors; or, The Horrors of Dunning Street".

But I shall not allow it to "take its place among the successful biographies and intimate journals of the season". Distinctly not. It is for the *élite* alone. It is to be published on sugar-cured oilskin, the edition to be limited to two numbered copies—one for me and one for the ashcan.

[Pg 28]

PORTABLE PIGEONHOLES

Aside from a few unimportant physical distinctions, the chief difference between man and woman is that his pockets are in his clothes, whereas her solitary one dangles fitfully from her hand. Man is girded about with these little repositories for the safekeeping of his belongings; while woman, less interested in conservation than in cosmetics, holds her booty ever accessible, so as to be able at any moment to dispose of $3.98 or powder her nose. The ding of her husband's cash register and the click of her dangle bag mark the systole and diastole of married life. [Pg 29]

Man delights in multiplicity of pockets. He must have clusters of them, layers of them, pockets within pockets. Otherwise his search for anything he has hidden on his person would be uninterestingly simple. Fancy, for example, the monotony of traveling, if, at the call "All tickets, please!" there were but a single pocket to excavate. And how difficult it would be, when riding on a street car, for one to put up an appearance of searching madly for his purse while he allowed his companion to pay the fare.

The instinct for stowing away things in pockets, manifested in childhood by a proneness for smuggling home from parties such contraband as strawberry tarts and layer-cake with soft icing, continues throughout life. But as one grows older the reason for these caches is less and less obvious. The delectable but adhesive loot in the boy's pocket is soon separated (as much as possible) from the lining, and devoured in rapture; but the dry accumulations of the middle-aged man, such as useless ticket stubs, old newspaper clippings, business cards thrust upon him by salesmen or accepted absentmindedly when handed to him on the street, unposted letters which he promised three days ago to drop into the first mail box—all these lie buried and forgotten until resurrected on suit-pressing day. He secretes them with the infatuation of a dog interring bones. Only, unlike the sagacious hound, instead of getting rid of them by this process, he merely turns them into encumbrances.

[Pg 30]

A pocket that has long suffered from congestion will sometimes take matters into its own hands and empty itself. Without bothering to give any warning of its intention, it acquires a hole in one corner and then quietly disposes of its contents. In this way small but useful change departs, in company with your latch-key, via your trouser leg. And your unfortunate fountain pen, let down suddenly as though by the springing of a trapdoor, falls clear to the bottom of the inside of your waist coat, where it lies prostrate, gasping out its last spurt of ink.

[Pg 31]

There is a treacherous kind of pocket, inhabiting a vertical slit in the side of an overcoat, that simulates openness when it is actually closed; so that the unwary owner, imagining himself to be putting a thing into a safe nook, is really poking it through a hole and dropping it upon the ground.

The average tailor has an unpleasant sense of humor. He allows you fifteen pockets, and then proceeds to fit your suit so closely that not a single one of them can be used. Unless you take the precaution of stuffing each pocket with cotton batting when he tries the suit on you, he will systematically take in all seams and buttons, in such a way that a post-card inserted in the breast-pocket would be sufficient wadding to throw the entire coat out of shape. (Perhaps he goes on the assumption that when you have paid his bill you won't have anything left to put there.) Every pocket is a latent distortion—put something into it and you have a swelling, a tumor. Utilize your hip pocket as an oasis and you have a bustle.

[Pg 32]

These cares and tribulations are, as we stated at the beginning of this treatise, the lot of man alone. For woman, while accepting the responsibility of the vote, has thus far avoided the responsibility of the pocket—preferring to let her husband be a walking warehouse for two. It is her method of maintaining him in subjection. If she, too, were bepocketed, she could not keep him on the jump picking up things she has dropped and trotting back for things she has left behind. Nor, if she were not in the habit of making him dutifully store her gloves, fan, handkerchief, etc., on his person, could she put him in the wrong by taking him to task for forgetting to return them.

No, woman is too wise. She talks very blandly about equality, but so far the only representative of her sex to wear a real pocket is the female kangaroo.

SIMILE

[Pg 33]

Mortimer was as bold as orange-and-pink hosiery, and Simile was as elusive as a cake of castile soap. When, at the appointed hour, he repaired to her house, as punctual as a bill collector, she tried, like a street-car conductor, to put him off.

But his mind, like the face of a cutie, was made up. Becoming as eloquent as a man in a telephone booth which you are waiting to use, he said: "Simile, I love you!"

Her lips quivered like a ford, but the look in her eyes was as far away as Brooklyn.

"Ah, marry me" he pleaded, his voice sounding as hollow as a campaign pledge, "—or I shall be as wretched as porous custard."

He edged nearer to her, till he was almost as close as the air in the subway. He gazed anxiously at her face, the way a person in a taxicab gazes at the face of the meter. Her skin was smooth as a confidence man and clear as boarding-house soup. He put his arm about her slender waist, which was slim as a librarian's salary.

[Pg 34]

Yielding suddenly, like a treacherous garter, she murmured, in a voice as soft as stale crackers, while tears rushed to her eyes like shoppers to a bargain counter, "I am yours". And she clung to him like barbed wire.

A thrill of joy went through Mortimer like a highwayman. "Ah!" he cried. "Then I am as happy as a coincidence!"

THE BEATIFIED RACE

[Pg 35]

It is wrong to assert that our fiction magazines have lost their power to inspire, to uplift. High romance and whole-hearted cheerfulness have not deserted them. These qualities have merely migrated to the advertising pages. The morbid, unpleasant fiction is only a short interlude between the innocent joys of Nabiscos and fireless cookers, and the wholesomeness of Mellin's Food. After sin and adulteration comes 99-44/100 per cent pure.

The people in the advertisements help us to forget those in the stories. These pictured endorsers display a generosity that I have not met with elsewhere. They offer me, a total stranger to them, the most delicious refreshments, costly gifts in silverware, whole suites of furniture; they make me aware of "long-felt" wants; they volunteer to teach me Spanish or osteopathy or plumbing in ten lessons; they propose to send me immediately a portable house in many pieces, or a new lease of life in many doses. They take a most personal interest in me, enquiring sympathetically, [Pg 36] "Are you bilious?"

Here, I confess, I sometimes feel embarrassed. When my old family doctor asks me, in the privacy of his office, questions of this sort, I am prepared to answer them; but when, as I am turning over the pages of a magazine at a public news-stand, someone bobs out from behind a respectful soap advertisement and accosts me brusquely with, "How is your liver?" or "Are you bowlegged?"—I feel positively uncomfortable.

This forwardness, due to the bad influence of the fiction characters, is, I regret to say, a trait of some of the women. (How sad it is that editors should wilfully allow them to be contaminated! I have seen a little Campbell Soup girl of quite a tender age, placed on the same page with a heroine whose only topic of conversation was *unmoral love*.) Luxuriant creatures, as unabashed as they are beautiful, invite my approval of their stays, and make disclosures of the most sensational kind. All of this may be in accordance with the modern ideas of frankness, may be [Pg 37] part of the sex-education campaign—but somehow I can't get used to it. I am still old-fashioned enough to believe that woman's place is in the home, especially when she is undressing.

However, while the behavior of these people toward me is occasionally a bit disconcerting, their deportment toward each other is uniformly admirable. In their own sphere they lead model lives.

Their family devotion, for example, is a treat to behold. Just see Mama and Papa and Susie and Marian and little Jack, all seated around the dining-table! From their happy smiles it is easy to tell that they love each other and Jell-O. After dinner, dear kind Papa will not bury himself in the evening paper, as selfish, inconsiderate papas do—he will give Mama and the good, rosy-cheeked children each a stick of Spearmint. Then all the family will gather 'round the fire in peaceful attitudes and listen to the phonograph, which protects the atmosphere of their home; and Susie will sit on the arm of Papa's chair and fondly compare their Holeproofs.

Later, when Susie's bright young man, dressed in a nobby Kuppenheimer suit, comes to win her [Pg 38] heart with a box of Huyler's, Mama whom Papa still adores because her complexion is youthified with Pompeiian, will take Marian and little Jack upstairs and show her maternal tenderness by teaching them how to make Colgate's Dental Cream lie flat on a Pro-phy-lac-tic. They learn gladly, for they love Mama and wear garters and union suits just like hers.

Even more remarkable than the family devotion of these people is their supreme capability. They never do anything without brilliant success. Papa can, whenever he feels the inclination, build a launch, or become a magnetic speaker, or earn eighty dollars a week in his spare time, or evolve a thriving chicken farm from two eggs. When he goes fishing, you see him in the act of reeling in a six-pound trout; when he goes duck hunting, you see him casually bringing down a bird with each barrel; and when he plays billiards, you see him, in a backhand position and a Donchester shirt, executing a shot that would make the reputation of even a professional. [Pg 39]

Look at him now, seated at his desk in his office, directing a great business, without the least worry or effort. See the respect on his employes' faces! At this very moment he is concluding a deal that involves millions. And yet how calm he is! All because he wears B. V. D.'s.

In short, the race of endorsers, produced by the eugenics of advertising, is not subject to the ills that ordinary flesh is heir to. They are the heroes of the present age, deified, like Greek Orion, in the realms of "space"—long-legged, serene, divinely handsome. We, poor mortals, humbly try to imitate them, and lay our wealth at their shrines, as did the Ancients at the altars of their gods. Our Ceres is Aunt Jemima; our Mercury is Phoebe Snow; our Adonis is the Arrow Collar youth; our Venus is the Physical Culture lady; and our Romulus and Remus are the Gold Dust Twins.

[Pg 40]

[Pg 41]

Le plus grand tournoyeur sud-patte.

JOUEZ BALLE!

New and better ideas of child education are steadily making their way. Nearly every one now acknowledges that the school room should be primarily a place of entertainment, that the true vocation of the teacher is to amuse in an instructive manner, and that study is really a scientific form of play. Also, it is quite generally admitted that methods which involve mental effort on the part of the child are not to be tolerated.

So much progress has already been made. But now there has just appeared a book which bids fair to carry the educational advance as far ahead again. This book, entitled "A Baseball Primer of French," substitutes for the conventional pedantry of conjugations, syntax, etc., a vivid account in French of an imaginary world's series. Any boy who studies it will understand it instinctively; for if the foreign text prove obscure, he has only to read the English translation underneath.

The author, Speed Stevens—who, it may be remembered, was captain of his college nine,—shows a profound knowledge of baseball. Indeed, it is on account of his ability as athletic coach that he holds his position of instructor in French at Croton. [Pg 42]

The following extract gives an inkling of the rare pedagogical value of the book:

Dans le dixième point, avec deux hommes

In the tenth period, with two men

sur bases et un sorti, Harburg éventa. Alors

on bases and one out, Harburg fanned. Then

Bill le Rosseur ramassa sa chauve-souris et

Bill the Walloper picked up his bat and

marcha à grands pas à l'assiette. Hank

strode to the plate. Hank

Harrigan, vrai à ses lauriers de plus grand

Harrigan, true to his laurels as the greatest

vivant tournoyeur sud-patte, partit avec un

living southpaw twirler, started off with a

tirer-dedans qui faisait zip-zip, entaillant une

zipping in-shoot, scoring a

frappe. Le suivant fut un bal. Dugan, au

strike. The next a ball. Dugan, on

premier, descendit avec son bras et vola la

first went down with his arm and stole

deuxième base, mais Brown fut mis en dehors [Pg 43]

second base, but Brown was put out
au troisième. Alors la cruche mis en dessus
at third. Then the pitcher put over
un bal saliveux: frappe deux. Puis, vinrent
a spit-ball: strike two. Then came
encore deux bals. Le comte était maintenant
two more balls. The count was now
trois à deux, et les éventails s'asseyaient sans haleine.
three to two, and the fans sat breathless.
Bill assomma une longue mouche qui tomba
Bill knocked out a long fly which fell
volaille. Il suiva celle-ci avec une volaille
foul. He followed this with a pop
poppeuse, qui l'aurait fini n'eut été un
fly, that would have finished him,
manchon stupide de la part de l'attrappeur.
but for a stupid muff by the catcher.
Harrigan devenait grincé, et Cathaway,
Harrigan was becoming rattled, and Cathaway,
voiturant de la ligne de côté, lui criait, "Bras
coaching from the side-line, yelled at him, "Glass
de verre! Il monte! Il monte!" La [Pg 44]
arm! He's going up! He's going up!" The
cruche envoya une goutte facile; Bill débarqua
pitcher sent an easy drop; Bill landed
là-dessus carrément, le menant par-dessus la
on it squarely, driving it over the
tête de l'arrête-court, loin dans le champ
short-stop's head, far into left
gauche. C'était un oiseau d'une frappe. Dugan
field. It was a bird of a hit. Dugan
entailla, et puis Bill, gaiement circlant les
scored, and then Bill, gaily circling the
sacs, glissa sauf chez soi, pendant que les
bags, slid safe home, as the
blanchisseurs allaient sauvages.
bleachers went wild.

THE ART OF PACKING [Pg 45]

With a Disquisition on the Science of Rooting for What You Have Packed

traveler is a person who escorts baggage. He may think he is taking a trip for business or pleasure, but, whether he be journeying from Brooklyn to Hoboken with one trunk, or touring Europe with a bevy of handbags, his real occupation consists in chaperoning impedimenta.

There is something almost touching about the way in which he looks after his little flock —seeing that they are properly tagged, counting them anxiously to be sure that none [Pg 46] are missing, defending them from the cruelty of expressmen, pleading for them at the feet of customs inspectors. He has care for the humblest satchel. If it be lost he will set down three full suitcases and seek after it until he finds it.

Not that he is actually *fond* of his luggage. But he has packed it and brought it with him, and therefore he is under obligation to it; is responsible for its well-being.

He knows in his heart that many of the clothes he has brought will never be worn, and that most of the books he has stowed away—dry looking volumes which he long ago decided he ought to read but which somehow he has never got 'round to—will not be opened. Nevertheless, he has these things with him, and it is his duty to cherish them and see them safely back home again.

As he unpacks his belongings at the first stop, he wonders what his state of mind could have been when he packed them. Why had he deemed his shaving brush *de trop*? And why, oh why, had he abandoned his faithful slippers? Had he imagined that two left-hand rubbers constituted a pair? [Pg 47] Five hats and caps are all very nice, but why did he put in only four handkerchiefs? And even an array of fifty-seven neckties affords poor consolation for the total absence of socks. As for the bathing-suit, the morning tub would be the only place where he could use that, and even there it would hardly seem appropriate.

Anybody with the price of a ticket can travel from one city to another, but it takes a real genius to pack a trunk. The art must be practiced in its purity; there must be no mixing of the pancake (or roll-'em-up) style with the flapjack (or spread-'em-out-flat) style. Such eclecticism is pernicious.

Considered from another point of view, packing is a fascinating game. You put all sorts of objects in a trunk, the baggage man churns them thoroughly, and then you take them out again and try to guess what they are. You meet with a hundred different surprises. For instance, you never would have dreamed that a derby hat could turn inside out, or that a single suit could acquire ninety-three separate and distinct creases, or that a book could swallow a mirror and have [Pg 48] indigestion from it, or that a bottle of ink inside seven wrappings could break and assert itself over a pile of shirts and a month's supply of collars.

But the great paradox of packing is that a trunk is always full when you close it and always three-quarters empty when you open it. The trunk that nothing but violent stamping will shut is the very trunk that, a few hours later, bounces your possessions about like beans in a rattle; so that when you lift the lid again you find them huddled forlornly in a corner, exhausted and battered from their shuttle-istics.

Another peculiarity is that nothing that you want is where you think it is. The garment that you clearly remember putting in the right-hand front corner of the top tray is sure to turn up at last in the opposite part of the bottom. Indeed, sooner will the Sphinx give up her secret than the trunk give up the thing you are looking for. To dig up *de profundis* a shoehorn that you need is a more remarkable achievement than to unearth a new Pompeii. [Pg 49]

Rooting is a science. Suppose, for instance, you wish to locate a pair of scissors without disturbing the general order. You begin by classifying the scissors in your mind, in order that you may calculate their position in the trunk. You consider them with reference to the following scheme of arrangement, which you recite as if you were an elevator boy in a department store:

1. *Main Tray.* Shirts, collars, hats, handkerchiefs, *and* toilet articles.
2. *Mezzanine Tray.* Dress clothes, neckwear, art goods, *and* bric-a-brac.
3. *Basement.* Shoes, hardware, suits, underwear, books, medicines, *and* sporting goods.

Concluding, after due deliberation, that the scissors are equally appropriate to all of these, you start in on the main tray, sliding your palms around the edge as though you were easing ice-cream out of a mold.

No scissors.

You delve deeper, using the back of your hand as a plow-share.

[Pg 50]

No scissors.

Refusing to be baffled, you leave no garment unturned.

No scissors.

Growing a trifle impatient, you take out the main tray and tackle the mezzanine. This will be a simple matter, because it is so shallow that you have only to feel around the edges.

No scissors.

Perhaps they got shaken into the middle. You burrow there, making considerable work for the

clothes-presser.

No scissors.

Now you are genuinely angry. You toss the mezzanine upon the arms of a chair. It is a rocking-chair, and it slides the tray gently forward and deposits it face downward on the floor.

Pretending to ignore this, you plunge both arms into the basement so violently that the lid unclicks and gives you a cowardly blow on the back of the head.

You rise up and vow that this your chattel shall flout you no longer. Seizing it fiercely, you turn it upside down—you dump its contents about the room. [Pg 51]

No scissors!

Then there steals into your mind a vision of the above-mentioned cutlery lying on a chiffonier in a room hundreds of miles away—and the realization that they are probably lying there still.

[Pg 52]

AGRICULTURE INDOORS

The usual package of seeds has not arrived. Is the Hon.——, my Representative in Congress, neglecting me? The uncertainty appals.

Year after year this eminent legislator has favored me with floral tributes in kernel form, so that I have come to think of them as my inalienable rights as a constituent. True, as is the case with the thousands of other voters in this urban district which he represents, I have no facilities for horticulture. Living in a New York apartment seven stories up and unequipped with arable soil (the nondescript substance which deposits on my window sills from outshaken mops above would scarcely qualify as loam), I have been at a loss as to what disposition to make of said seeds. [Pg 53]

"My dear friend," writes the benevolent legislator, "I am inclosing a list issued by the Department of Agriculture showing bulletins available for free distribution, which contain very valuable information for all classes of readers." And he invites me to choose any six, by number, that he may promptly send them to me.

Only six! To select that limited allotment from so alluring a galaxy is difficult, not to say bewildering.

No. 73 catches my eye—"Fly Traps and Their Operation". I simply must have that one. It seems to promise an insight into the mysteries of oratory. Perhaps it may enable me the better to appreciate my M. C.

Nor can I hope to live a rounded life if I fail to assimilate No. 940, "Common White Grubs," and No. 920, "Milk Goats," and No. 788, "The Windbreak as a Farm Asset". [Pg 54]

That makes four already; to which I must certainly add the kindly No. 1105, "Care of Mature Fowls," and the arrestingly realistic No. 1085, "Hog Lice and Hog Mange".

Thus my six choices are used up, and I am but at the threshold of this new world of knowledge that lies tantalizingly before me. What of No. 685, celebrating that splendidly uncompromising American growth, "The Native Persimmon," and the intriguingly cryptic Nos. 515 and 1143, revealing the secrets of "Vetches" and "Lespedeza as a Forage Crop"? Surely this coveted information should not be withheld from me.

Why should I be deprived of the privilege of reading aloud to my family No. 762, "False Cinch Bug—Measures for Control," and No. 1127, "Peanut Growing for Profit," and No. 948, "The Rag-Doll Seed Tester"? If such romances were available for every one there would be less senseless gadding about on the part of our young folks. Let the flapper fill her mind, not her flask, with No. 767, "Goose Raising," or No. 757, "Commercial Varieties of Alfalfa". And let her heed the warning against short skirts in No. 1135, "The Beef Calf". [Pg 55]

It has been said that there is in America insufficient appreciation of architecture. Ah, true, my friends. Let the multitude con No. 438, "Hog Houses," and, as examples of chaste suppression of meaningless ornamentation, Nos. 966 and 682—"A Simple Hog-Breeding Crate" and "Simple Trap Nest for Poultry".

Included in this invaluable list are to be found not only the frankly practical but also the vividly dramatic. Offsetting such everyday but significant matters as No. 1189, "The Handling of Spinach for Shipment"; No. 1153, "Cowpea Utilization"; No. 1161, "Dodder," and No. 978, "Barnyard Manure in Eastern Pennsylvania," there are offered imagination stirring themes like No. 835, "How to Detect Outbreaks of Insects"; No. 874, "Swine Management," and No. 1003 (one that should be especially prized by the impecunious), "How to Control Billbugs".

Until I read this list I had no idea that spiritualism had entomological phases which Conan Doyle seems to have overlooked. Again and again there is mention of strange creatures and their psychic "controls": No. 1074, "The Bean Ladybird and Its Control"; No. 1060, "Harlequin Cabbage Bug and Its Control"; No. 897, "Fleas and Their Control," and No. 975 (presumably throwing light upon the immigration problem), "The Control of European Foulbrood". [Pg 56]

More comprehensible to me are the following. Anent home life and pets: No. 1014, "Wintering Bees in Cellars"; No. 1104, "Book Lice," and No. 846, "Tobacco Beetle and How to Prevent Loss". (Does one keep the beetle on a leash, I wonder?) Bolshevism: No. 1054, "The Loco Weed". Chambers of Commerce, Get-Together Clubs, etc.: No. 993, "Cooperative Bull Associations". Prohibitionists: No. 1220, "Insect and Fungus Enemies of the Grape".

All in all, there are at least thirty bulletins which every citizen of this metropolis needs to make him an intelligent voter. And my M. C. allows me but six! [Pg 57]

"My allotment being limited," he explains. But why should his allotment be thus limited? Since he grants that the bulletins are indispensable to my enlightenment, it is not for him to apologize, but to see that I am fully supplied with them. To protest that the Department of Agriculture cramps his largess is no excuse, for does not almighty Congress rule the Department of Agriculture and run it in the interests of the People and not for the sake of a lot of rubes? No; let him spur the department to greater efforts, press the presses to greater output.

When my little son looks up into my eyes and asks, "Daddy, tell me about the flat-headed apple tree borer," am I to answer him:

"Sorry, my boy, but Bulletin No. 1065 was denied me by a niggardly government?"

My M. C. will not have done his complete duty till every home in this city boasts a five-foot shelf of bulletins and the head of every family can gather his dear ones about the radiator in the evening with a cheery:

"Ah! now we take up No. 956, 'The Spotted Garden Slug.' Every one who pays strict attention gets a hollyhock seed." [Pg 58]

Only then will the true function of government be realized.

Meanwhile....

The seeds have come!

SNOWY BOSOMS [Pg 59]

At the risk of seeming churlish, a veritable outcast from society, I confess that I have no great fondness for snowy bosoms. I realize that they are generally considered beautiful, and that their virgin whiteness is the embodiment of unyielding purity; and yet I cannot but prefer the more comfortable *negligée* shirt.

If only they could be soft-boiled. I would so appreciate a three-minute one. (I know it would sit better on the stomach.) The white could be firm enough to hold together, and yet not so much so as to require a knife to break into it.

Gala chemises that approached this ideal did appear several seasons ago. Their frontispieces were encrusted with a swarm of very young tucks, which rendered them quite docile. But these gentle, easy-going garments, with their pliant pleats and amenable button holes, could not survive. They were, alas, too soft. They lacked the stoicism of starch. They could not hold their own against the sterner-fibred armored breastworks. [Pg 60]

And so we men of today when we go to perform our evening devotions to the ladies have upon us the same old white plague.

I might find some consolation in the fact that my aversion to it is shared by all laundries. Yes, the laundry is my avenger. With Machiavellian guile it invites shirts, seeks them, welcomes them, professes a yearning passion for them; and then subtly destroys them in secret. Commit an insufferable new stud-smasher to a laundry and note the fate that overtakes it. See what happens to its bold front. A week later it will be brought back to you with its spirit quite broken, and its tail between its sleeves, and held in subjection by a squad of menacing pins.

The moment you rend the veil of wax paper with which they have discreetly concealed its destitution, you are amazed to find how it has aged in one short week. It has become like the sear

and yellow leaf. There are crow's feet at the corners of its buttonholes. It is so weak that they have had to send it on a paste-board stretcher to keep it from going all to pieces. [Pg 61]

Your erstwhile festive buckler now looks more like the bosom of Abraham.

INTERIOR DESPERATION [Pg 62]

It is easy nowadays to get advice on how to arrange your home. The Woman's Page in any newspaper will tell you just how your living-room ought to look, just how your hallway may be beautified, and just how your kitchen may be transformed into a scientific laboratory. Scores of books by experts on the subject undertake to instruct you how to change your home from a place to live in to a work of art.

Realizing that my abode needed a little toning-up along modern æsthetic lines, I consulted a book called "The Dwelling Beautiful," which I had been informed would give me just the help I needed. "It is not necessary that your furniture, rugs, hangings, and pictures be *expensive*," says the author, reassuringly. "The only essential is that they be beautiful in themselves and in restful accord with each other."

Pray, gentle writer, did you ever see my belongings? Did you ever see the marble-and-walnut parlor table that Aunt Jessamine gave me; or the streakily-stained Mission piano, with mottled glass panels and gew-gawy candle-brackets, that my wife won in the guessing contest and is therefore inordinately proud of; or the case of stuffed birds which Uncle Lemuel left me in his will? How am I to make these things "beautiful in themselves and in restful accord with each other?" [Pg 63]

The truth is, none of our furnishings are gregarious. From the green rug whose acrid hue assaults every other color in the room, to the wonderfully and fearfully made "ornamental" lamp, each thing is what the advertisement writers would call "*different*". Rabid in their nonconformity, how am I to make a happy family of them?

The main feud is between our heirlooms and our wedding presents—the former being atrocities in oak, walnut and plush of the Victorian era, and the latter, present-day garishnesses; so that the general effect might be likened to a colon: one period on top of another.

The author of "The Dwelling Beautiful" would probably suggest that I get rid of some of these incumbrances. The lamentable fact is that I *can't*. My relatives would disown me. For my whole family connection—not to mention my wife's (about which much might be said)—takes upon itself to police my belongings. Every visit of a relative, even the casual call of my most distant cousin, means a critical inspection, a careful stock-taking of heirlooms and wedding presents. [Pg 64]

A person who gives you anything as a wedding present never forgets it. His taste may be erratic, but his memory is inexorable. Because a thing happened to catch his fancy in an off-moment, it is anchored in your home forever. And the feeling of self-appreciation for his generosity, which he experiences whenever he beholds his gift in after years, prevents him from admitting, even to himself, that he was out of his mind when he bought it. Hence, you are doomed to be its perpetual curator, with the obligation to display it prominently, so that whenever he chooses to enter your house he may see it and claim it with his eye.

An heirloom is still worse. Each one that you have in your possession might have gone to somebody else, and that somebody else feels that he or she would have appreciated it more than you do. Nevertheless, for you to disburden yourself of a single heirloom by presenting it to the person who coveted it most, would be to precipitate a family crisis. [Pg 65]

Take, for instance, that case of stuffed birds. Every time Uncle Lemuel's daughter sees it she tells me how much it always meant to her, and how the old house seems empty without it. Yet whenever I offer to make her a present of it she bursts into tears, and sobs that her dear father wanted me to have it, because I had once told him I liked birds, and that therefore she would be the last person in the world to deprive me of it.

So, along with all the rest of the harmony-killers, I am saddled for life with this ornithological incubus. It is true, as Cousin Ophelia says, that I like birds; but my fondness for them does not continue after they are defunct and stuffed; neither does it include *owls*, whether alive or dead, and there are no less than three owls in that cabinet—gloomy, dusty, evil-looking fowls, their big yellow glass eyes wide open and staring. I'll wager they had their eyes closed when Uncle Lemuel shot them. He never was much of a sport. [Pg 66]

Be that as it may, these lugubrious specimens are on my hands. I kept them in the living-room till I couldn't stand them there any longer. (Strangers would ask me how I happened to take up taxidermy.) Then I removed them to the dining-room, where they promptly took away my appetite. Transferred subsequently to the nursery, they caused Mamma's Pet to go into convulsions of terror. I offered the cook an increase in wages if she would take the cursed things into *her* room; she threatened to leave. I made a pathetic appeal to my wife to take them into hers; she reminded me coolly that Uncle Lemuel was *my* uncle. Now they are in *my* room, in the corner where I used to keep my favorite chair.

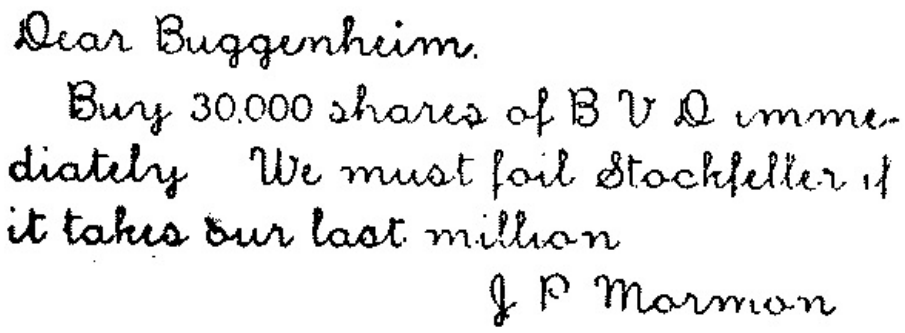
But something tells me that they may not endure there forever. I am a mild-dispositioned man, long-suffering, and tractable; but that cabinet of birds is too much.

Some day you may see clouds of smoke pouring out of my windows and fire-engines pulling up at my door. If you do, don't feel sorry for me or censure me. A burning need will be satisfied. It will be a case of sponsored combustion. [Pg 67]

THE WRITING ON THE SCREEN [Pg 68]

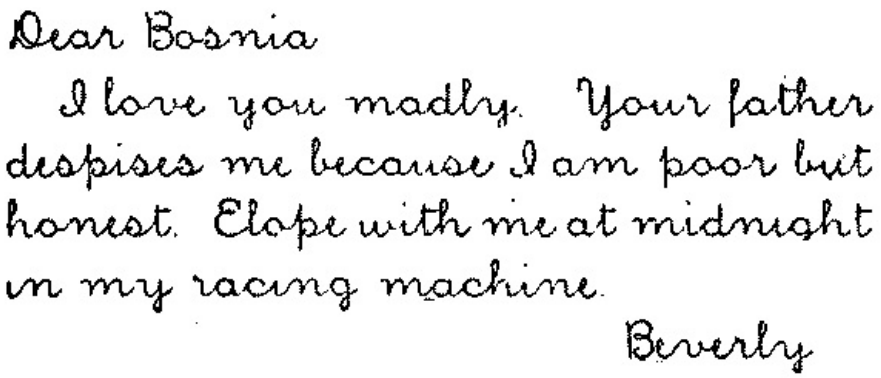
Being interested in human nature in all its manifestations, I have lately made a study of handwriting as it is shown in the moving pictures. I undertook this research because I had been given to understand that chirography, when scientifically analyzed, revealed every nuance of human character; and because the personages in moving-pictures, being intensely dramatic, could not fail to have striking individualities as penmen.

Let me give some of the interesting examples which I found. Here, for instance, is a confidential communication from a great financier to one of his associates:



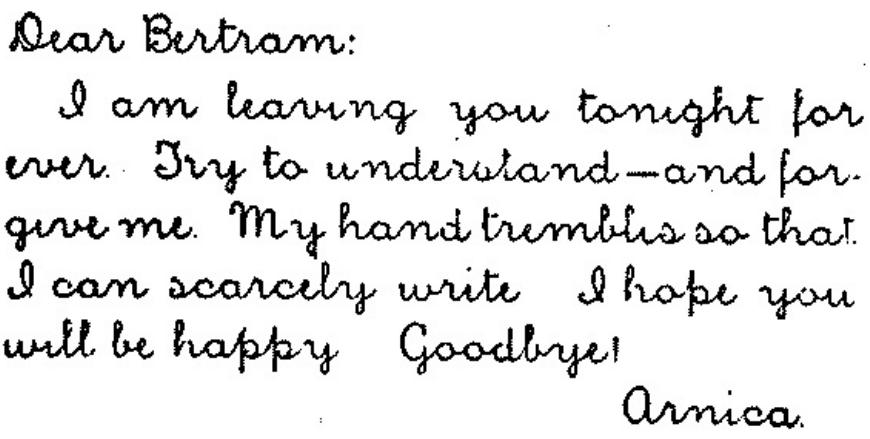
Observe in what a firm, steady hand this is written. It shows that the great financier can be cool even in a crisis. No wonder he is successful. He always looks ahead; he never crosses a T until he comes to it. Clear-visioned he is; his I's have their specks on straight. Such a man will go far without being missed. [Pg 69]

The next specimen is a letter written by the dashing young hero to the heroine. It reads:



Stanch and dependable. His passion is intense, yet he is too loyal to betray it. Note the uncompromising uprightness of his L's. You just can't help trusting him, because, as he says, he hasn't any money.

Here is a letter penned by a wayward wife. Fraught with tense emotion, it is indeed a moving human document. She writes:



What a wealth of sorrow this handwriting displays! Poor, unfortunate woman, tearful and yet volatile! Her M's are bowed with grief, and yet they have an arch look. Out of touching deference to her first love she makes a desperate effort to be neat; she is not willing that her husband's last memento of her should be a sloppy one. Even when about to commit a sin, she still retains that [Pg 70]

refinement of nature which he has always reverenced, that indescribable feminine delicacy which was wont to reveal itself in such little acts as shrinking visibly at the touch of unclean overshoes.

There are innumerable other examples which might be cited, handwritings of every conceivable kind; but the endless variety of them would merely tend to bewilder. Therefore I shall give only two more and without extended comment; for, indeed, their characteristics jut out quite protuberantly.

The little six-year-old child raises her face wistfully from her piece of angel food and scrawls:

[Pg 71]

Dear Daddy:

Mama and me wish you would come home.

Melba.

Truly a revelation of the artistic nature. In contrast to this, let us examine what Jimmie the Dope, escaped convict, scribbles to his confederate:

Steve:

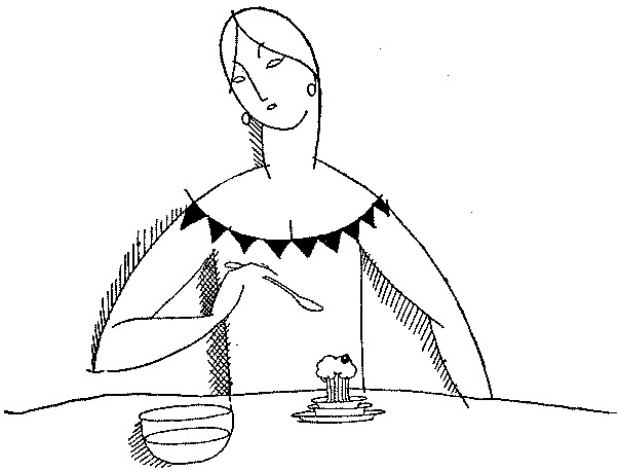
Be there wit yer tools at one o'clock to-night ready to do the job. But look out fer that Italian named Isaac McJavish, he's a "stool-pigeon"

Jimmie.

This particular specimen has a tragic interest for us. It demonstrates the failure of our modern institutions. Here is a man forced by society into a felon's trade who was capable of earning an honest living as an instructor in penmanship.

[Pg 72]

MUSIQUE GLACÉE



Of all strivers after the Ideal none have so kindly a method as the architects responsible for those pleasing structures termed French pastry. Whatever they create is delicate, delectable, imbued with sweetness. Putting aside the thought of future fame, these gentle artificers devote their labor to works as perishable as they are exquisite: meringues, sculptured in ambrosial stucco, that melt to nothing; roseate cakelets of which the crimson splendor endures no longer than a sunset; kisses that are all too brief; tarts which, frail as flowers, succumb quickly to hunger in the dessert. These crust craftsmen pour forth richness as song-birds do, creating rapture for but a precious moment. If ordinary architecture is "frozen music," then surely this Gallic refinement of it is "*musique glacée*".

[Pg 73]

There are many styles, ranging from Perpendicular Gothic to Powdered Rococo—so many, in fact, that one could scarcely hope to masticate them all at a single sitting. (Two or three is the most I have ever been able to account for.) Yet each style, if found in its purity, merits attention as an embodiment of good taste. For even the humblest cream puff, despite the looseness of its design and the unpretentiousness of its exterior, has an interior well worth investigating.

Perhaps the most important landmark in all the realm of pastry is the tradition-hallowed and chocolate-roofed éclair, whose long nave affords sanctuary for whipped cream or custard. (Not necessarily *chocolate*-roofed, however: the eaves may be tinged instead with a soft patina of *café au lait*.) This mellow-hued pile, eminently edible, is cherished by multitudes of devotees. [Pg 74]

Another structure beautiful in ruin is the massive patty that serves as donjon-keep for oysters. Upon its crumbling ramparts parsley has found root, and encircling its fissured base is a broad moat of gravy. Gaunt, sugarless; no oyster can hope to escape.

An equally notable tower is the stately white charlotte russe. Its impenetrable wall of cardboard, re-enforced inside with a doughty thickness of cake, rises sheer from the glacis of the plate and terminates in crenelated battlements over the edge of which hang masses of cream, ready for the invader. Upon the topmost pinnacle is posted a sentinel cherry.

Of contrastingly mild aspect are the various crisp terraces—those luxuriant Hanging Gardens, where fruits of every sort are spread out in gorgeous profusion: rows of gold-gleaming apricots; neat hedges of orange plugs; happy pears and orderly better-halves of peaches; a bed of sugar-fed strawberries, each tucked in snugly; grapes chaliced in fluted pie crust; jocund apple chips [Pg 75] and banana checkers, cuddled cosily slice against slice. Truly a paradise in pastry!

And there are a host of other fair shapes: the pantheon-like Kossuth cake, beneath the low dome of which is a votive offering of cream; the amazing custard skyscraper, with its innumerable floors, no walls, and gaily iced roof; the Byzantine *baba au rhum*, inlaid with tutti-frutti mosaics and steeped in subtle enchantment; and countless others—fanes, kiosks, minarets, pavilions, reliquaries of jam—baffling description or digestion.

Frail, ephemeral, created with no thought of permanence; and yet we should hardly enjoy them more if they were built of everlasting marble. The craftsmen who design them, scorning personal glory, do not sign their works. For theirs is the true æsthetic spirit, so rare in this commercial age. Their handiwork faithfully bears out the precept "Tart for Tart's Sake".

THE CARE OF THE HUSBAND [Pg 76]

The average young wife is regrettably inexperienced in the matter of husbands. Unless it has been her fortune to have a wise mother or a divorce, she is likely to be quite ignorant of how to care for and train the "big stranger" who comes into her life. Therefore these precepts of friendly counsel may not seem to the matrimonial novice altogether amiss. The advice I would give is simple (in the fullest sense of the word); so that after the young wife has had a few husbands, she can dispense with it, if not sooner.

Feeding.—This is the most important problem a wife has to face. The husband must be made to feel that he is well fed. Otherwise he will not be contented and docile.

During the first week after marriage, when he is still quite infantile and tender to the point of mushiness, he may be fed from the hand or spoon. This method will be found especially satisfactory in cases where the husband shows symptoms of sickly sentimentality.

Throughout the entire first month he will be so demanding of care, so bewildered by the strange [Pg 77] new world in which he finds himself, as to be barely able to maintain sanity; in short, he will be so soso that she will have to prepare all the food herself, or at least make him think she does.

But later a change of diet will be found necessary. He will demand scientifically prepared foods. If the change is managed in the right way, it can be accomplished with only slight upset to his disposition. Simply alter the feeding formula so that the total quantity is lessened and the proportion of sugar and burnt materials is increased. It will soon take effect. In a day or two he will say, with a worried look, "Darling, I'm afraid the cooking is too much for you." And you know what he really means. After that the transition to avowedly professional cooking will be quite painless.

Outings and Play.—During the first few months the husband will not need many outings. He will be happy and contented if allowed to romp about the house. Such toys as hammers, picture wire, [Pg 78] curtain rods, etc., will keep him occupied.

Later, however, there will come a period of restlessness. Then you must take him out more and more, and let him run and play with other husbands—after you have made sure, of course, that they are good, well-behaved husbands. The companionship of these innocent sports will tend to make him one himself.

When, as time goes by, he reaches the stage where he begins to take notice, the wife must be very careful, for he is highly impressionable. At this time a wife will do well to look out for her husband herself, instead of entrusting him to some empty-headed girl, whom she may not really know at all. If he needs amusement let her divert him with brightly-colored silks and baubles which she wears and he pays for. Let her take him to see the pretty theater, and show him the beautiful mountains and the big blue ocean, and tell him fairy stories about economy, and teach him to draw nice big cheques in his little cheque book.

Discipline cannot begin too early. The husband must be taught that he can only have the things [Pg 79] that his wife decides are best for him, and that no protesting on his part will do any good. If he proves fretful, chide him by threatening to go live with your mother. If, after that, he is still

unruly, threaten to have your mother come live with you.

In this way he will soon learn to mind. Indeed, before long you will be able to show him off before company with the assurance that he will behave just as you have trained him to; and you will have the satisfaction of hearing your friends declare he does you credit.

Awakening his mind.—This is one of the chief duties and responsibilities of wifehood. It cannot be shirked. For while no husband is expected to know anything at marriage (the fact that he got married attests that), he is expected a year or so later to look intelligent when the lady next to him at dinner discusses Coué and Scriabine, and to know that Gauguin is not something to be got from a bootlegger. For him not to know these things would be a reflection on his home training, or, in other words, his wife. She will be considered negligent unless she has instilled into his [Pg 80] rudimentary mind a smattering of whatever is accounted smart. For every wife is judged by the way she brings up her husband.

Note.—If in the above treatise I have borrowed from the learned doctors who have written concerning the Care of the Baby, I am sorry; for I see no prospect of ever being able to pay them back. Even this small note of mine will be discounted.

TERMINOLOGY OF TARDINESS [Pg 81]

Our late demented newspapers are in a plight. They are no longer afflicted with a shortage of paper, but they are still cramped by a dearth of names for their afternoon editions. All the stand-by titles have been exhausted. By midday the "Home Edition," "Night Edition," and "Special Extra" have come and gone, and there is still the whole afternoon with nothing left to tempt the tired business man but various grades of "Finals". New nomenclature is needed, names that will stir the imagination and summon the cents.

Desirous of doing what I can toward alleviating this distressing situation, I venture to suggest the following schedule:

8 A. M.—Late Edition—*One star*

9 A. M.—Extremely Late Edition—*Two stars*

10 A. M.—Inexcusably Late Edition—*Three stars*

11 A. M.—Hopelessly Late Edition—*One constellation*

12 M.—Midnight Edition—*Two constellations* [Pg 82]

1 P. M.—Tomorrow Morning Edition—*Group of planets*

2 P. M.—Tomorrow Afternoon Edition—*Complete solar system*

3 P. M.—Day-After-Tomorrow Edition—*Comet*

4 P. M.—Next-Week Edition—*Large comet*

5 P. M.—Next-Month Edition—*Unusually large comet*

6 P. M.—Next-Year Edition—*Complete zodiac*

7 P. M.—Special Doomsday Extra—*Milky way and nebulae*

OPPRESSORS OF THE MEEK [Pg 83]

I am not afraid of bloated bondholders. I suspect that they are just humans like myself, only that they have money.

But I am afraid of their servants. *They* are not human. No one ever saw them eat or sleep or smile.

My millionaire host may overlook the fact that I am using the salad-fork for the fish; not so his English butler. This austere personage takes note of my error in silence, and, when the salad course arrives, steals up behind me like Nemesis, and lays by my plate the fork that correct form demands. I feel chastened.

His eye is always upon me. I can't even take a sip of water without his calling attention to it by stealthily refilling my glass.

If he didn't watch me so closely when I am helping myself, I wouldn't be so nervous. As it is, my hand trembles under his grueling stare. Just at the critical moment when my tongful of asparagus, conveyed like a hot coal, is poised in mid-air between the serving-dish and my plate, I [Pg 85] flinch, and there is a green-and-white avalanche. I make a frantic slap at it as it falls, and by good luck it lands on the plate. To be sure, some of the stalks are craning their necks perilously over the edge, but that is a small matter compared with what might have happened. I rake them into the middle of the plate, sit gasping at the thought of my narrow escape.

[Pg 84]

My host may overlook the fact that I am using the salad fork for fish; not so his English butler.

There is an awkward pause. The bon mot I was about to utter apropos of an opera I had never heard has left my mind entirely. I can't think of anything to say. Finally, in desperation, I remark idiotically to the dowager at my left, "I love asparagus; don't you?"

The next time he passes a dish, I lose my nerve. I lift my hand to help myself, and then, as I catch his eye, draw back, shaking my head. No, I won't take any chances.

After that I keep to a strict diet, eating only the things that appear on my plate when it is put down in front of me. If the plate arrives naked and empty, naked and empty it remains, even though the course consist of my favorite delicacy. I suffer the pangs of Tantalus.

Alligator-pear salad—more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold—is offered to me. I [Pg 86] covet it. Everything gastronomic in my nature craves it, but cowardly fear restrains me (it looks slippery), and I refuse it. I could almost weep.

As the dinner proceeds and my modified hunger-strike continues, I begin to regain confidence. I feel that my abstemiousness, implying as it does a jaded palate and an aristocratic indigestion, is highly fashionable. I fancy that in refusing ambrosia I am showing a godlike superiority.

I expand with self-assurance. Just watch me startle these plutocrats with my scorn of their costly food. I'll make myself the lion of the evening.

"May I help you to shortcake, sir?" asks a low, ironically respectful voice.

My pride collapses. The butler has seen through me to the cowardice in my heart. From his lofty pinnacle he stoops to succor me. But I rebel.

"I'll help myself, thank you," I retort, for I am on my mettle now, and boldly prize off a towering [Pg 87] segment of the dessert. Would *I* let a menial reveal to the whole table that I was afraid to help myself? Never! Why, I'd sooner—

Dizzily the creamy thing totters, keels over, and falls with a sickening flop, a mushy sound, as of the impact of a wet sponge. Juicy red berries gambol hither and thither.

For a moment the shortcake lies helplessly on its side like a jellyfish that the tide has left. But only for a moment; for a wrecking-crew, made up of the butler and his assistant, comes hurrying on the scene. With emergency plate and scraper they remove the debris, while I turn purple and clutch at my collar for air. Then, after a mortifying amount of crumb-gleaning and cream-mopping, they spread a napkin before me in the presence of my swell friends, as if to shield the cloth from further depredations. I draw back to allow them to put it there, and in so doing squash a hidden strawberry against my waistcoat. As a final humiliation, a fresh piece of shortcake is brought to me *already on a plate*.

If there is anything more formidable than an English butler, it is an English valet. Somebody [Pg 88] else's valet, I mean; for I suppose that if a person had one long enough, he could get so that he wouldn't be afraid of him. But as for a perfectly strange English valet!

"Your key, please, sir," demands Hawkins upon my arrival at my friend's summer palace. He bows slightly.

"What key?" I ask uneasily.

"The key to your traveling-bag, sir."

I am just stopping overnight on my way home from a house party in the woods, and all my spare raiment is soiled and bedraggled.

"So I can unpack your things, sir," threatens the Great Mogul.

"Never mind, thank you," I stammer. "I've lost the key."

"Very good, sir," he replies and goes.

But not permanently. When I return to my room at midnight, elated over having trounced my host in countless games of billiards, I am met at the door by my oppressor. In his hand is a small object.

"I fetched a locksmith out from the city, sir, and 'ad 'im make this for you, sir. It fits quite correctly, sir." [Pg 89]

And one glance about the room—from the snaggle-tooth comb on the dresser to the frayed pajamas the mussiness of which no festive laying out can hide—makes me aware of my utter ignominy.

Since when I have confined my week-end visiting exclusively to lumber camps.

PUTTING PEDAGOGY ACROSS [Pg 90]

There is much well-meaning propaganda in progress for the preservation of professors. Alumni are appealed to, bankers are buttonholed, and in every college club the diagram showing the Big Game play by play has been replaced by a dial showing how many millions have been garnered to date for the fund; all this in order that the saying "Live and learn" may be reversible as "Be learned and yet live".

Wouldn't it be more humane (instead of giving the professors money, to which they are not accustomed) to teach them how to "sell" themselves? Today every one is paid according to how completely the public or the plutocrats are "sold" on him. Only salesmanship can save the scholars.

The time is ripe for some gilt-edged grad such as Morton K. Mung, President of the Newark Noodle Corporation, to announce, when stalked by the subscription squad: "No, gentlemen of the Adopt a Professor Committee, your suggestion that by donating seven cents a day I keep an instructor in paleontology from starvation, or be godfather to an authority on Sanscrit at eight cents, strikes me as impractical. With the cost of living rising again, next year they will want nine and ten cents—and you see the position that would put us in. [Pg 91]

"No, gentlemen, I'll do better. I'll solve this situation once for all by loaning my general sales manager, Mr. Blat, to dear old Weehawken for two months, and he will give the members of the Faculty the same tutoring course he gives the men we send out on the road. Within a year after they leave his hands these same profs you've mentioned will be writing 'Success Through Sanscrit' and 'How I made My Pile with Paleontology' for the *American Magazine*."

At the conclusion of this loyal speech the committee would give a long cheer and depart checkless but with a new vision.

And, sure enough, the pale pedagogues would emerge from Mr. Blat's snappy seminar simply exuding system. They would possess the Power to Meet Men, the Personality that Wins. Laboratory recluses would burst forth primed to impress with Bigger Biology—Contains More Bunk. [Pg 92]

The Sanscrit savant, formerly threadbare, but now a nifty dresser, would immediately hop a train for New York and breeze into the office of Hugh G. Wads, senior member of Wads & Wads and Chairman of the Trustees of Weehawken University.

"Good morning, Mr. Wads," he would say aggressively. "I've come here this morning to talk Vedas."

"Vedas? I don't get you. Never heard of such a stock. It isn't listed on the big board, and if it's traded in on the Curb, the dealings must be pretty small. Besides, I thought you were a professor at Weehawken."

"Right. I am a professor, if you choose to put it that way. Technically, though, I'm a promoter, and my proposition is VEDAS (Trade mark copyrighted 2000 B. C.)."

"Vedas? I still don't get you."

"Ah, that is precisely why I am here. I was sure you would want to know—Cigar?—Well, Vedas are the wisdom songs of India. Mellowed by forty centuries in the parchment. One hundred per cent Hindu. Classy yet conservative; noble yet nobby. You know what caste is among the Brahmins?—well, that's how exclusive these are!" [Pg 93]

"Indeed."

"Yes, and I'm offering them for immediate delivery to students."

"But how does this concern me?"

"I was just getting to that. This is a proposition which requires considerable capital for its

development. At the present time only seven students have asked for Vedas, yet I have estimated that the supply of Vedas now mellowing out in India is enough for at least 180,000 students. Which means that if we created the demand—why, think of the business we could do! When you come right down to it, a Veda, when presented in the right way, can be as catchy as a Kewpie."

"Hm. How much money would you need to start with?"

"Fifty thousand dollars. Besides my salary, which would be $15,000 outright, plus a bonus of one and one-half cents per Veda per student, there would be the cost of advertising in the college catalogue, the conducting of a circularizing campaign to a selected list of student prospects and the publication of a promotion organ to be entitled 'India Ink.' Then, too, of course, I would have to have a commission on gross tuition receipts and text book sales and an ample expense account for entertaining in the class-room and in my home. Now will you kindly put your name here on the dotted line?" [Pg 94]

"Before I guarantee you all this money, tell me one thing. What is the real value of these Vedas?"

"They are the quaint quintessence of conservatism, and will occupy youthful minds menaced by modernism."

"I'll sign."

Succored by the science of salesmanship, any professor would be able to achieve affluence. Fortunes would rise from footnotes; and there would be big money made in bibliography.

COACHING FROM THE SIDE-LINES [Pg 95]

Thanks to the roadside advertisements, driving a car has become as easy as playing a pianola. You just watch the instructions that appear along the edge, and regulate your levers and pedals accordingly. Thus, when you see:

DANGEROUS CURVE

Sound Raspon

—you reach instinctively for the button of your electric horn. Later, seeing:

SHARP DESCENT

Apply Eureka Non-Slip-able Brake

—you comply gracefully. A mere twist of the wrist or dislocation of the ankle does the trick. [Pg 96]

He that reads may run. Any man who has ever watched an organist pull out stops and push them in again can become a motor virtuoso. Any woman accustomed to following instructions in cutting out a dress pattern, can grasp the idea as easily as, when told to, she grasps the lever which operates Bingo's Northpolean Radiator Cooler. It is so simple that it is imbecile.

Every peculiarity of the route is heralded. All its little irregularities, its deviations from straightness, its bad declines and sudden uppishnesses, even the small faults which an easy-going person would overlook, are held up sternly in warning.

GUSTY CORNER

Raise Breez-o Extension Wind-Shield

SANDY STRETCH

Spray Gears With Anti-Grit

PUDDLES

Apply Splashol Emergency Mud-Guard

[Pg 97]

RAILROAD CROSSING

Put Ear To Locomotive Detectaphone

DANGEROUS BOULDER

**Before Ramming This Make Sure
Achilles Collision Buffer Is
Properly Adjusted**

VILLAGE SPEED TRAP

Apply Backfire With Ready Constable Exterminator

Occasionally, as a relief from the faults of the road, its favorable points are dwelt on. Thus,

MOUNTAIN VIEW

Enjoy it Through Auto-Flex Non-Refractory Goggles

In general, however, the emphasis is upon the perils of the way, as—

Only 1 Mile to

HOTEL SOAKUM

(Here no specific instructions are given, it being understood that the accessory involved is one's pocketbook and that the directions are: "Open All the Way.") [Pg 98]

The system has one drawback. The signs never fail, yet there is such a thing as trusting them too implicity. I knew a man who, as the result of trying to obey seven signs telling him to "Be Sure to Dine At" as many different inns, stripped the lining of his esophagus. And I knew of another man—a timid, earnest, nervous old gentleman—who depended on signs so completely that one day, at a dangerous part of the road, being suddenly confronted with the command:

USE PLEXO

he fell into a panic. "Plexo, plexo!" he muttered in bewilderment. "Where *is* the plexo lever? I can't find the plexo button! Something terrible will happen unless I find it."

It did. As, with trembling fingers, he fumbled through the entire outfit of attachments, he forgot to steer, and unluckily ran off the edge of a precipice; so that he did not live to learn that plexo was a massage cream.

FAST AND LOOSE

[Pg 99]

There is no constancy so affecting as that of a faithful button. Friends may be devoted; yet they seek your company partly for the pleasure of it. Dogs may show the uttermost fidelity; but you feed them. But the attachment of buttons is without taint of self: it is pure, spontaneous.

This loyalty is the more remarkable when you consider how empty their lives are. The outlook through their buttonholes is but a narrow one. Their daily labor, a mere mechanical buttoning into and out of an uncongenial flap, is deadeningly monotonous. (I have

seldom known a button whose heart was really in its work.) In surroundings so little adapted to the building up of character, they display a stanchness that is akin to stoicism. Indeed, many a button will stick doggedly to an old weatherbeaten garment long after the perfidious nap has fled. [Pg 100]

There are, unfortunately, buttons wanting in probity, deceitful buttons that pretend to be strongly attached to you when detained by but a single thread, irresponsible buttons that fly off at a tangent, immodest buttons (of the cloth-covered variety) that disrobe in public. But deliberately vicious buttons are rare. The fact is, few buttons would go to the bad, were it not for the heartless indifference of their owners. Too often a headstrong young button, that might easily have been saved had it been brought up short the moment it showed signs of looseness, is allowed to reach the end of its rope, fall, and be utterly lost.

And the dereliction of one may mean the ruin of its family. I was told of a sad case, once, where an entire clan of brown buttons, dwelling happily together on the front of a coat and waistcoat—polished, distinctive buttons they were, not be matched anywhere—were cruelly banished, because of a single erring member. [Pg 101]

While to neglect buttons is most reprehensible, there is such a thing as showing them too much indulgence. For buttons must not be coddled: when toyed with, they droop.

Tender-hearted women, actuated by sympathy and not realizing the consequences of what they were doing, have been known to *pamper* buttons. Because a button has a pleasant, open countenance, one of these misguided persons will support it on her costume in idleness. She may even surround herself with a retinue of glittering sycophants that never knew a buttonhole—great saucerlike hangers-on, lolling on their stems; brazen braggadocios, flashing with insolent militarism; and puny silken pettinesses, mere pills of buttons. Often I have been shocked to see a swarm of these drones perched indolently on the show part of a garment while, underneath, a squadron of industrious hooks and eyes grappled with the work to be done.

Such sights are, to thoughtful people, almost as depressing as the massacre of helpless shirt buttons by a baleful flatiron. Are buttons to become effete? Will they, in the course of generations of *dolce far niente*, lose their stamina? The signs are ominous. [Pg 102]

[Pg 103]

THE PRIMROSE PATHOLOGY

I am laying an ego. With the assistance of a soako-analyst I am overhauling my instincts, liberating my innate masterfulness. Just wait till you see my rebuilt personality.

It's wonderful what the right soako-analyst can do to your complexes and your finances. My soako is a woman, of course. Male soakos are best for feminine mind-patients; but any man who needs to have his psychic self revamped should hand over his unconscious to a sympathetic lady soako. The attunement is lovelier. She can more understandingly separate him from his inhibitions and his dollars. [Pg 104]

My soako and I, we have talks by the hour. At fifty dollars per. We talk about criminals and insane people and how everybody's crazy if they only knew it. She explains how that dream I had after eating that stringy Welch rarebit—that dream about throwing the size twelve overshoes at the canary—proves that I secretly desire to murder Uncle Alfred and elope with Mary Garden. If I could just commit that homicide and meet Mary, these annoying conflicts would clear and leave my unconscious as serenely blank as my conscious. So far, Uncle and Mary are still having it out atavistically in my foreconscious. I must eat some more Welch rarebit.

Before I went to this nerve therapeutist I had fears. But she has cured me. She is all nerve. I thought there were some things one could not mention to a lady. I thought that when visiting a lady, even by appointment (office hours: 9—5) one could hardly make certain allusions without incurring a "Sir! Leave this house instantly and never let me hear your conversation again!"

But now that I have been initiated into the New Freedom, I know that the automatic prehensile response is another fifty on my bill. [Pg 105]

So I am learning, progressing. A new mental day is breaking and so is my bank account. The dun is near.

But when I get my mind—what'll I do with it?

I think I'll become a soako myself and take in lady patients.

FIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

[Pg 106]

This world would be a far different place if there were peace among pens. As it is, however, every pen wears a drop of ink on its shoulder.

Not even the tender ministrations of chamois cloth will soothe its savage heart. It is deaf to sweet reasonableness. Returning drunk from the inkwell, it will smutch the hand that fed it, cast blots upon the fairest names, and ravish virgin sheets of paper. And when you try to force it to a more civilized way of behaving, you discover it has its points crossed.

A pen thus divided against itself will not write. There must be freedom for the black fluid. There must be perfect harmony—two prongs with but a single point, two parts that meet as one. [Pg 107] Disunion is a sign of weakness.

I had a pen once whose prongs became estranged. They were egoists: each followed his individual bent, and was determined to make his own mark in his own field. For the sake of appearances, they took their meals of ink together, but immediately afterward, when pressure was brought to bear upon them, they separated. Yet when one of them, striving too hard after originality, broke under the strain, his widow was left desolate.

More domestic in an old-fashioned way is that staunch, blunt family, the Stubbs. They are firm and substantial sort of pens. By people who dislike them they are called phlegmatic, stodgy, close, stiffnibbed; and it must be admitted, they do lack the sprightliness of the Sharps; but, after all, these unyielding puritans, with their heavy touch, are more trustworthy than their acute but volatile cousins. For temperament in a pen finds vent in sudden splutterings.

The difference in their natures is evidenced by the way they meet obstacles. The Stubbs, [Pg 108] plodding along doggedly, overcome all hazards in the paper; whereas the Sharps, tripping nonchalantly, come to grief at the first bunker, and before they get started again, waste several strokes and gouge the course. And when the Sharps attempt to run the gauntlet of expensive linen stationery (the higher the price, the higher the ridges), they get held up at every cable crossing. But there is a kind of paper—smooth, slippery, insidious—that prompts both the Sharps and the Stubbs to evil ways. They know they are doing wrong, however; for they are ashamed, and conceal their tracks, rendering all tracing impossible.

It is a great pity that pens are not more consistent about their ink giving. One moment they are stingy, and the next lavish. Perhaps this may be due to absent-mindedness.

Beginning a letter to a crabbed old relative, you say to your pen, "Give me a little ink for 'Dear Uncle Jonathan.'"

It ignores the request. You urge again. Still it is thinking of something else. "Here, wake up, now!" (You shake it violently.) "Give me some ink!"

"Why, certainly," it replies effusively. "Take a blot." [Pg 109]

And "Dear Uncle Jonathan" is buried with deep mourning.

Haphazard as their outgivings appear to be, I have a theory that they are in reality quite logical; for I have noticed that *pens spend most ink on things that are worth most*. Thus, a pen that would grudge to disburse a single minim on a cheap sheet of a pad, will gladly expend all it has upon a costly embroidered tablecloth. And it finds the flyleaf of a handsome book (which if separate from the volume it would regard as a mere scrap of paper) amazingly absorbing. If it take a fancy to something large and sumptuous, such as an oriental rug, and yet not have on hand sufficient ink for such an outlay, it will appropriate it with a deposit of spot splash.

However little aptitude a pen may have for writing, it is sure to display rare skill as a fisherman. In the most unpromising inkwell it will catch deep sea monsters that astound you. It will spear great flounders of blotting paper and wriggly eels of string. It will drag up from the bottom [Pg 110] wreckage of forgotten times, prehistoric flora and fauna—an antique rubber band, a female tress (perhaps of some ink-nymph long dead or discharged), a tack bent with age, a perfectly preserved shoe button, a less perfectly preserved mummy of a fly.

The perseverance of this follower of Izaak Walton is admirable. It will cast patiently again and again without a single dribble, and then, all at once, it will come struggling triumphantly to the surface with a whale of a June bug it has harpooned. Whereupon, as is the custom with fishermen who write, it will make a grand splurge of its catch on paper.

In order to prevent such piscatorial dippiness, pen fanciers have bred the *fountain* species, the latest variety of which is self-spilling. Pens of this artificially produced species are very nervous. They have to be handled with extreme care. For example, if one of them is held upside down, all the ink runs to its head, and there is danger of a hemorrhage. Its digestive system is poor: it regurgitates and bubbles at the mouth. The least thing upsets its stomach. If you forget to put its [Pg 111]

cap on, even in mild weather, it contracts a serious congestion of the throat; with the result that the next letter you write proves dry-point etching.

Taken all in all, pens have a great deal to answer for. The record they have left on the pages of history is a black one. Many a person who has sat down to write something bright and optimistic, has been so disillusioned and embittered by his pen, that he has ended by hacking a hymn of hate or drooling a dirge of despair. Which accounts for most of the world's harsh diplomacy and morbid literature.

Even this essay was originally intended to be cheerful.

ENLIGHTENMENT

[Pg 112]

At last I have found out the awful truth about humanity. I never even suspected it. Till last evening I went along my way cheerfully, blindly, never guessing that my fellow-men were steeped in evil.

But now I know. My eyes have been opened. For last night I went to one of those enlightening film dramas that reveal life as it is. It was called "Her Blackest Sin," and it comprised nine reels of terrible truth.

It was one of those fine moral sermons to which every mother ought to take her son, and every niece ought to take her uncle, and every stepaunt ought to take her Pekingese.

I only wish my daughter could have seen it; but as I haven't any daughter, she couldn't have.

[Pg 113]

She never really intended to become steeped in sin: she was scenarioed into it

This drama shows how a handsome but thoughtless woman may sink in sin without ever meaning to. Yes, the strange and pitiful part about it is that she really never intended to be a fallen, crime-seared creature. She sins witlessly: she is scenarioed into it. Perhaps she is too anxious to please. [Pg 114] She appears at wild cabarets and wears gowns that are cut to the quick, not because she desires to of her own accord, but because it is expected of her by the audience. Lack of firmness leads to her undoing: she is first pliant, then supple, then sinuous. She displays too little backbone, and too much.

Poor woman, what chance has she amid so many dress suits? Only too late does she learn that stiff bosoms cover none but hard hearts, and that there is no gleam so sinister as that of a silk hat, covering as it does baldness of the baldest sort.

Innocent at first, hardly a reel passes before she begins to stop and work her face, just the way the villains stop and work their faces. (Of course, being still a modest woman, she does this only in the privacy of a close-up.) By the seventh reel even her high-minded husband has become afflicted with the taint, and is stopping and working *his* face.

And so the drama progresses, growing blacker and more enlightening every minute. I can't be too grateful to the producers of this film for the unflinching way in which they accepted the [Pg 115] responsibility of my innocence and warned me. If they had not, I should probably have gone to the end of my days without ever knowing that people were at bottom only smiling criminals.

But now, thank goodness, I'm warned and on my guard. I'm posted on sin. When a man comes up to me and shakes my hand, I'll know he's a hawk looking for a home to break up; and when a

woman smiles at me, I'll know she's a vampire.

They won't catch *me*! I'll just watch them surreptitiously when they are off their guard until I see them working their faces, and *then* I'll have them!

For now I am an expert on evil. That film showed me the thrilling seductions of a life of vice; so that if I am ever confronted by them I shall be able to recognize them at once and say how do you do. And at the end there was one of those solemn moral warnings, such as everybody thinks everybody else is supposed to need; so in future I shall know what to avoid in *that* line.

And this entire transformation of my life cost me only thirty-three cents.

HOLIDAY MISGIVINGS

[Pg 116]

When, on Christmas night, I take a private view of the collection of presents I have received, I realize that I am a much misunderstood person.

I sit down sadly and wonder what I could have done to create such an impression. Is there something *queer* about me? If so, then wouldn't it have been more tactful, more kind, to have come to me and told me of it, instead of thus brutally proclaiming it to the world? But that is the [Pg 117] way people are: they will serenely *assume* things they wouldn't have the face to mention.

Those morbid socks!—half hose and half a disease. The loom that made them must have been degenerate. It is plain that they were never intended to be put on, because the paste-board document that lurks in the bottom of the box declares they are "guaranteed against any sort of wear." And these were esteemed suitable associates for my feet!

I have no recollection of sniffling, in public; yet here are nine dozen handkerchiefs, an outfit for someone with chronic coryza. As for the assemblage of pocketbooks, purses, wallets, coin holders, etc., I only hope that after I have paid my holiday bills there will be enough money left to half-way fill the pocketbook I have already.

But the crowd that seems most oppressive is that of the calendars. Am I really so absent-minded as to require seven engagement pads? Am I so lax about settling my accounts that my butcher and grocer and milkman feel called upon to supply me the means of knowing what day of the month it is?

Anything may pass for a calendar, so long as it complies with the law by having a little batch of [Pg 118] months attached to the bottom like an appendix:—a snapshot of Cousin Gertrude's baby (oh, the deuce! I suppose I was expected to give that kid something for Christmas!); a pastoral chromo, entitled "Shearing the Lambs," sent me by a firm of brokers; a picture of a child in a nightie saying its prayers, with the compliments of the Schweinler Beef Packing Co.; a hand-tinted but feebly glued print of Paul and Virginia, inscribed, "Jones and Bergfeldt, Plumbers."

One calendar, consisting of a sheaf of large placards, each purporting to exhibit a specimen of female beauty, is so throttled by its silken cord that when February 1st arrives and I attempt to give one of the beauties the flop-over in order that I may gaze on the next for a while, the situation proves too tense. The eyelet suddenly splits into an outlet, and the jilted maiden, cast off by her sisters, collapses upon the floor.

All of which is most distressing; but no more so than the notion that women seem to have of what [Pg 119] a man likes. I shall never forget the pair of slippers that Aunt Josephine bestowed upon me last year. They were what are technically known as *mules*, but in reality they were a couple of long rafts, each with an arching toe-cabin that would have accommodated both feet. The low racing sterns extended so far aft of my heels that the latter stood almost amidships.

Navigation was difficult. They kept running afoul of each other; so that I would suddenly find my starboard foot partly on the port slipper and mostly on the floor. Sometimes one of them would dart ahead several lengths and capsize, obliging me to turn skipper. No matter how earnestly I lifted their bows, their sterns always dragged. A landsman would have said that my progress resembled pumping a rhapsody on a pianola, or skiing in the Alps.

The unreasonableness of these mules reached a climax one morning while I was visiting the Cholmondeley-Browdens. I encountered my hostess unexpectedly as I was returning from my bath. In the excitement of the moment, both slippers bolted, one of them performing a spectacular flip-flap, and the other skidding [Pg 120] through the balustrade of the stairway and landing below in a globe of goldfish; while I made my escape in a state of pedal nudity.

As for the neckties I have received—truly, Love is blind!

ALL, ALL ARE GONE, THE OLD FAMILIAR FAÇADES

[Pg 121]

Nowadays when it is hard for the casual observer to distinguish Somebody's Mother from Somebody's Jazz Baby, it is not to be wondered at that houses as well as humans are disguising their age. Victorian brownstone mansions that later sank to boarding-house seediness now renew their youth as the "Rubens Studios" or "Haddon Chambers"; drab office buildings, yielding to a sudden access of sand, take on new complexions as talcumy white as those of the flappers passing by.

He would be a tactless and cruel man who would say, "I know when that one's corner stone was laid." Or, "My great uncle knew that one when it was only three stories high." Or, "It didn't have that cornice until its gables began to fall off." Or, "You ought to have seen the stoop it had before they put in the steel braces."

Beauty doctoring to buildings must have become quite an art. It takes skill to know how to eliminate the dark lines under tired window sills, lift the sagging balconies, reduce protuberant bay windows. Only a trained chisel can remove a superfluous ornament in a way that will guarantee against its reappearance. [Pg 122]

We are shocked, though, at the brazenly commercial character that certain sedate houses have taken on in the giddier part of town. Buildings that were formerly quiet residences, keeping themselves retiringly back from the bustle, and modestly shielding themselves with brown balustrades, now shamelessly come forward as close to the line as they dare, meeting the idle stroller half-way, not with lowered shades, but with broad plate-glass assurance, and even displaying scandalous lingerie.

We cannot but feel that buildings thus bedizened in the effort to keep from being neglected, will not command the same reverence that used to be inspired by the mossy old manse or the messy old mill. Theirs is hardly the Age of Innocence.

Would the old home seem as homely to you, after it had been exterior decorated? Would it be as dear? [Pg 123]

Oh, much dearer!—as the real estate agent will tell you, or your own broker.

[Pg 124]

MY MUSEUM

I called her Plury. That is to say, I would speak of her by that endearing appellation when she was running along smoothly and seldom missing in either cylinder. Her real name, however, was E. Pluribus Unum.

You see, I had wanted an automobile, but found that no single make was within my means. So I bought Plury—just as a person who cannot afford beef, veal, chicken, turkey, lamb or pork, orders hash. Individually Fords, Buicks, Overlands, Peerlesses, Simplexes, Pierce-Arrows, etc., were too expensive for me; but collectively, combined in the form of second-hand Plury, I could afford them all, at $132.50. [Pg 125]

Plury was a cosmopolitan. Her rear axle was Italian, her steering-wheel was French, her magneto was Austrian, and her mudguards were Belgian. It was hard to maintain her neutrality. For example, a German cogwheel that clutched with an English one—scarred veterans, both of them—kept the gear box in a constant state of friction. (When such international clashes occurred, it was always difficult to find out which one had started the trouble.) Then, too, among the American-made parts there was much jealousy between those that had come from rival factories. The tires were of four different makes, each boasting a surface specially patented against skidding; but each strove so hard to shove the other three into the gutter, that all four cavorted about the road in a most unseemly fashion.

Many were the heartburnings, the incompatibilities of temperament, of the parts thus yoked together. Whenever these dissentions brought matters to a standstill, I would have to get out and apply the monkey-wrench of peace. [Pg 126]

Plury was hardly a *noble* car in either appearance or speed, yet I was genuinely fond of her. Her lamps had a wistful look—a look as innocent and helpless as that with which poached eggs gaze up at you before they die. As for her slowness, that made little difference; because her speedometer, geared presumably for a racing car, exaggerated. And, after all, what is speed but a number on a dial? While I saw "71" registered there I was not disturbed by the fact that bicyclists were passing me.

I admired her pluck. She would chunk along stoically, accepting other people's dust without complaint, when in a condition of health that would have prostrated any other machine. (Thoroughbreds do not show the greatest endurance.) Bravely she would drag herself home, after a hard afternoon's work, with a leak in her radiator and congestion in all her bearings.

I used to practice vivisection on her, taking her apart and putting her together in new ways. It was a fascinating kind of solitaire, solving the problem of what to do on rainy Sundays. In a few hours' time I could shuffle the parts and deal out an entirely new model. Under my care Plury changed her shape with ultrafashionable frequency. A model that I was particularly interested in trying out was number nine (*i. e.*, the eighth transformation). This was such a daring rearrangement that it seemed too wonderful to be true. But it worked, and thrillingly. In this form Plury exceeded all her previous speed records. The speedometer dial registered 87, and a swarm of gnats had hard work keeping up with us. [Pg 127]

Proceeding at this reckless pace, we approached a hilly curve marked "DANGER: DRIVE SLOWLY." I changed gear. The cogs emitted a grating, crunching sound, as of quartz in a stone-crusher, and then subsided. I got out to view their death grapple.

But I had no sooner set foot upon the ground than the roar of an infuriated claxon startled me so that I leaped clear aside into the ditch. In that instant a huge Fiat, armed with a brazen fender, swung around the curve and rammed Plury in the radiator. [Pg 128]

Plury *splattered* like a charlotte russe hit by a sledgehammer. The road and neighboring fields were full of her.

The liveried chauffeur of the Fiat got out and began to brush the dust from the front of his car. A frightened fat man picked himself up from the floor of the tonneau and called to me, "Are you badly hurt?"

"No," I replied. "I'm all right, I think."

"Good!" he said, in a tone of great relief. "Then let's settle the damages at once, for I don't want this thing to get into the papers." With a shaky hand he drew out a checkbook. "What was the value of your car?"

I hesitated.

"Would you consider *five thousand* sufficient indemnity to close the whole matter—personal injuries, property damages, and everything?"

I considered it!

And after he had gone, I fondly stooped and kissed Plury's tin remains.

[Pg 129]

ON CHAIRS--AND OFF

AS a person who frequently sits, I should like to know why there are so many uncomfortable chairs. Why is it that people who are apparently mild and kind-hearted will foster in their homes, at their very firesides, chairs of the most insidious cruelty? Why will dear old ladies cherish these

household monsters, festooning them with ribbons and fancywork?

Of course I realize that every chair represents some furniture-maker's theory of beauty and comfort, that every lump, ridge, and crook is supposed to have its aesthetic or anatomic reason; what I object to is being tortured for heresy just because I am physically unable to agree with these theories. An innocent-looking willow rocker that stands invitingly on my aunt's veranda is built on the assumption that the human back is in the shape of an S. Perhaps the Apollo Belvedere may have a back like that; but not I. Mine, sitting in that rocker, feels more like the Dying Gladiator's. [Pg 130]

I am fond of Nature and I have the greatest respect for her, but my joy in things sylvan does not extend to rustic chairs. As parlor editions of the woodpile they are certainly ingenious, but their surface, which resembles that of a corduroy road, is hardly adapted to sitting purposes. Then, too, there are always a few nails in evidence. And I can never resist picking at the loose shreds of bark on the arms, with the result that, before I know it, I am sure to skin quite a large place, and then feel mortified.

The city cousin of the rustic chair is the high-backed carved seat. This has a lion's head that catches you at the nape of the neck, and a couple of scrolls for your shoulder-blades. The seat itself is a huge slab of wood that feels like adamant. This chair looks best against the wall, and the fact that it weighs about fifty pounds is one reason why it generally stays there. [Pg 131]

Another massive chair is the Morris. It indeed took the imagination of a poet to conceive of sitting on a folding-bed that was only half folded. When I get into one of these contrivances its bedlike quality makes me so drowsy that I almost fall asleep, yet its chair-like quality keeps me awake—with the result that I remain in a semi-comatose condition, from which I rouse myself occasionally to climb out and shift the rod to another notch.

A variety that is not to be relied on—much less, sat on—is the loop-the-loop species, which is found in cheap restaurants and at amateur theatricals. This consists of a four-legged tambourine, backed by two loops of wood, the outer one in the shape of a Moorish arch and the inner one in the shape of a tennis racket. Exactly half of these chairs in existence have racks under them to hold your hat and gloves, whereas the other half have no such racks; so that exactly half the times I sit on one of these chairs and put my hat and gloves under the seat those articles fall disconcertingly to the floor. [Pg 132]

A kind of rocker much in vogue is a medley of young banisters, a sort of improvisation on a turning-lathe. When new this chair emits a peculiar creaking sound. In the course of a few weeks it loosens up till quite supple, so that, in rocking, the various rods perform a complicated piston motion. This process continues till gradually the chair reaches the stage where at every rock it comes apart and puts itself together again—or almost together.

Best-parlor chairs run to extremes of fatness and leanness. They are either pampered, slender, gilded things—mere wisps of chairs—that offer a most precarious support, or fat, puffy, tufted affairs, satin feather-beds on sticks—no, not feather-beds, either, for they have twanging springs that tune up every time you sit on them. The colors of this latter variety may be endured in winter, but when summer comes it is necessary to suppress them with linen slips. [Pg 133]

One interesting species, the elevated rocker, is nearly extinct. This curious chair, able to skid on rollers like any other, has a little rocking department upstairs, so that it can wobble to and fro on its track without doing the least harm in the world.

I could speak of the personal idiosyncrasies of chairs, such as the trick some of them have of shedding their castors at the slightest provocation; I could tell of the rocker that insisted on sidling away from a reading-lamp; or the chair that, while not supposed to be a rocker at all, teetered diagonally on its northeast and southwest legs—but the chair I am now sitting on has given me such a cramp that I shall have to get up and take a walk.

[Pg 134]

MINIMS

[Pg 135]

[Pg 136]

THE NIGHT OF THE FLEECE

[Pg 137]

Wimley was the mildest man living. Consequently, when Molly said, in her most decisive tone, "Nonsense! I won't hear of your going back tonight, before you've even seen our new tennis-court," he realized that he would have to stay over the week-end.

Not that he didn't want to, in one way; for he liked Molly, and admired the way she bossed the servants and ran the house for her mother. Then, too, the weather, which seemed to be growing hotter every minute, would be far more endurable out here in Avondale Manor than in the city. What troubled him was the fact that he had not brought a handbag.

"I'll lend you some of Father's things," she went on. "It will be no bother at all."

When the evening drew to a close and bed-ward migration began, he was shown to the guest-room.

"I hope you will find everything all right," said his hostess as she bid him good night.

He replied that he was sure he would. Then he opened the door. The heat met him like a solid [Pg 138] wall. Throwing off his coat, he went to the two windows to see if they could really be open. Yes, they were; but the thick fly-screening kept out any air that might have desired to enter. He glanced at the bed. There was something blue and white lying folded on it. As he drew nearer, he could see that this something was fuzzy. Picking it up, he discovered it to be a pair of woolen pajamas. Horrors! Not even in the bitterest winter could his skin endure the feel of wool. He wondered if Molly's father ever really wore such things. Perhaps his wife had given them to him, and perhaps that was why the old gentleman was staying so long in South America.

Midnight found Wimley still looking the pajamas squarely in the fuzz. An awful thought was in his mind: What would Molly and her mother think of him if they found them unrumpled and therefore unused?

He slid one leg into the proper section: the flannel drew like a mild mustard-plaster. Then he [Pg 139] pulled on the other: he was engulfed. A hippopotamus would have felt comfortable in them at the north pole.

He drew the fuzzy cord several feet before he tied it, then put on the ulster. It had a huge pocket, capable of containing a tablecloth, that hung over the spot where his appendix would have been if he had been internally left-handed. Noting that his feet had disappeared, he turned up the bottoms of the trousers four times, so that each ankle was neatly encircled with a doughnut-shaped buffer.

Then, after throwing back all the covers, he snapped out the light and got into bed. It had one of those patent soft mattresses that, sinking in, hold the body in bas-relief. He rolled and floundered on the thing, but at every flounder he sank deeper. It was a quicksand of a bed.

He recalled Victor Hugo's account of the unfortunate traveler who perished in just such a way: how first his feet disappeared, then his knees, then his waist, till at last there was nothing but a waving hand, and then that went.

He was just preparing to wave when his attention was distracted by the realization that his whole [Pg 140] body was tingling with the heat. He seized the jacket by the middle button and pumped it in and out, trying to pump in some cool air. There was none to pump. Gasping for breath, he crawled to a window. Still no air.

He decided to remove the fly-screening. There was a little groove in the side of the frame where you were supposed to put in your fingers and pull. He put in his fingers and pulled. Nothing happened. Then he did so again, considerably harder, and the screen went sailing out of the window. He leaned out just in time to see it crash upon a row of potted plants. His heart stood still. Had any one heard the noise? He listened for several minutes in agonizing suspense.

Here at the window it was a little cooler than in the bed. Why not emulate the Japanese and sleep on the floor? Splendid! No more squashy, clinging mattress for him! Fetching a pillow, he stretched out in true oriental style.

Quite right, the floor did not sink or yield in any manner. It even gave prominence to certain bony [Pg 141] places which the bed had kindly overlooked. Resisting the thick woolen anklets, it complicated the disposal of his lower limbs. Finally, however, a gentle sleep "slid into his soul."

But about an hour later the slippery thing slid out again at the mere announcement by a rooster that dawn had arrived. Other roosters, wishing to remove all doubts on the subject, repeated with emphasis that joyous day was at hand. Then a large fly buzzed in through the window to say good morning. It perched sociably on his left temple, and began rubbing its two front legs together in a jovial manner.

But Wimley was in no mood for holding a levee. He brushed the fly away. It executed a boomerang trajectory, lit again on the same spot, and began rubbing its legs as before. He brushed it away again. It perched again in exactly the same spot. He was indignant: was *he* to be at the mercy of a miserable little *fly*? It seemed he was.

He got up and paced the floor. Happening to catch a glimpse of his face in the mirror, he beheld [Pg 142] a flourishing crop of black bristles. His whiskers stood ready to be harvested, and his faithful razor was fifty miles away! Panic seized him. He thought of the window-screen catastrophe, of the quicksand bed, of the hard floor; his heart sank. But when he thought of a day in those whiskers, another night in those pajamas, and then *tomorrow's* whiskers, he felt that instant flight was the only thing possible.

Hastily he pulled on his clothes, which felt sticky and moldy and spoke eloquently of yesterday's dust and heat. Then he opened the door and peered out into the hall. No one was in sight; but other doors were open, and out of one of these came a rumbling snore. Could it be Molly's? This ominous sound was more than he could bear; he retreated.

Back in the room once more, he tiptoed over to the screenless window to see what his chances would be in that quarter. Ah, there, close by, was a vine-covered trellis that reached down to the ground! With palpitating heart he swung himself over to it. It oscillated slightly as it received his [Pg 143] weight.

The thorny crimson rambler was decidedly cloying. He no sooner succeeded in detaching himself from one twig, than two more just like it whipped out and hooked him. He reached down with his right foot—down, down—where the devil was that next cross-piece? At last he found it, together with about a dozen new thorns. But when he started to bring

The air was full of perfume and profanity

down his left foot, the twigs from above insisted on escorting him to the lower perch; so that he was now in the clutches of the thorns of both levels. His coat tails had soared to the middle of his back, and his side pockets were nestling under his armpits. The air was full of perfume and profanity.

All at once there was a crack and a tear, and something gave way. The next instant he and the vine were descending rapidly in each other's embrace.

A clump of lofty hollyhocks suffered martyrdom in breaking his [Pg 144] fall. They gave their sap to save him and complete the ruin of his clothes. Disentangling himself from the wreckage, he dashed off down the nearest path, under arbors and pergolas, around sun- [Pg 145] dials and summer-houses, past marble seats with mottos that spoke of rest; till, just as he thought he had reached the edge of the labyrinth, he found himself at the end of a blind alley. In front of him was a dribbling fountain, a vapid-faced female clad in dew and idiotically pouring water out of a parlor ornament. On the pedestal was carved, "A garden is a lovesome spot, God wot." A brown measuring-worm was measuring the lady for garments she needed but would never wear. And the water dribbled and dribbled.

But Wimley wasn't thirsty. Striding over a row of conch-shells and broad-jumping a plot of geraniums, he made for a six-foot hedge that appeared to be the boundary of the garden. A desperate spring, followed by a frantic scramble, brought him to the top of it. He wriggled there like a bareback rider on a bucking porcupine.

Ping! sounded a tennis-racket close beside him. Lifting his face from the foliage, he beheld Molly enjoying an early morning game with her thirteen-year-old brother.

"My advantage!" she called as she raised her racket to serve. But catching an astonished look on [Pg 146] the boy's face, she stopped short and glanced at the hedge. "A tramp!" she exclaimed, moving toward the spot.

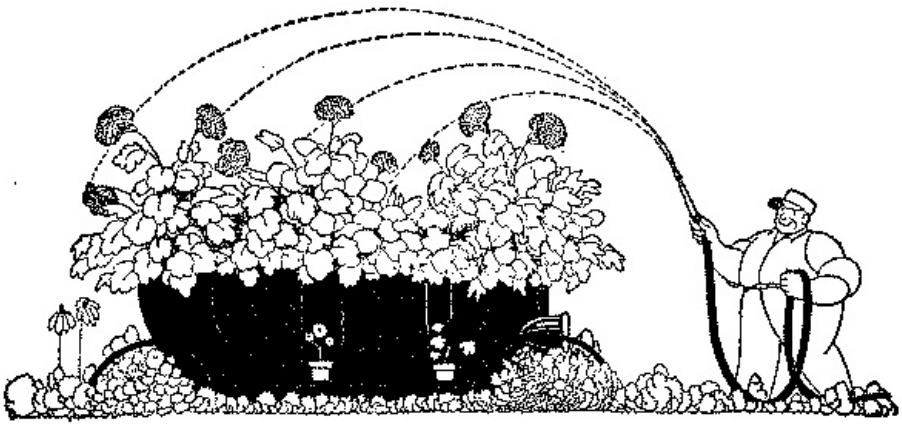
The would-be fugitive struggled to tumble back on the other side. His head and one shoulder disappeared from view.

"Grab him! Don't let him get away!" she cried excitedly.

The boy did so, seizing one foot while she seized the other.

Then, from the depths of the foliage came a voice as shy and as plaintive as that of the hermit thrush, murmuring, "It's Wimley!"

[Pg 147]



BLACK JITNEY

The Auto-Biography of a Ford

(*A twentieth-century revision of "Black Beauty"*)

The first thing I can remember was being shoveled out of a great incubator, called a factory, along with several hundred brothers and sisters. All the men in that factory wore diamond shirt-studs.

While I was wondering at this, an old motor-truck named Mercury said to me with feeling:

"Ah, if all the workmen in the world could be as well off as the ones here, there would be no more poverty, and no people so poor as to have to ride in fords!"

I was loaded on a freight-car and carried many, many miles. The car jolted so terribly that I should have gone all to pieces had I not been built for jarring. None of the train-crew showed me any sympathy. They were wicked men, and used language that frequently sent a tinkle of shame to my mudguards. I did not then know, as I do now, that the purest-minded automobile has to endure all its life words and tones of the most shocking sort. [Pg 148]

My first master was a careful and conscientious man. He had a large garage full of fords, and he always kept a sharp eye on the door to make sure that nobody who walked out carried off one of us.

One day a man came in with a twenty-dollar bill that he wanted changed.

"Sorry," said my master, "but all I have in my cash-drawer is $2.69. I'll have to give you the rest in fords."

Whereupon he handed him me and one of my brothers and three extra tires, which just made up the amount.

This new master, whose name was Mr. Pious, was very good and humane. He drove me with a gentle foot, and he would say to his children: "Be kind to Black Jitney. Never scratch him or bend him." The chubby little fellows grew so fond of me that before long they would trot sturdily beside me. [Pg 149]

Their mother, however, was a cold, imperious woman. She cared nothing for the feelings of a ford. She would drive me at a heartless pace till my radiator was parched with thirst and my gears fairly cried out for oil. Speed was her one desire, and naturally *I* could not satisfy her. Even when I ran so fast that the effort made me shake from top to tires and I was in danger of losing my lamps, she would call me "ice-wagon" and "rattle-trap" and other cruel names, and refer unkindly to the fact that she could count the palings of the fences that we passed. Finally, this hard-hearted woman prevailed upon her husband to sell me and buy a big sixteen-cylinder Pope-Gregory. This car, as I afterward learned, was so vicious that the very first time she took it out for an airing it assaulted three helpless chickens and a pig.

My next master was a young man whose private life was such as no well-brought-up automobile could have approved of. Every evening, after he had kept me in the garage all day long fuming with impatience and spilled gasolene, he would make me carry him for hours and hours with some young woman who ought to have known better. [Pg 150]

What sights and sounds I had to endure—I who had always kept the strictest decorum! Worst of all, his deplorable conduct began to affect me. I found myself thinking thoughts which I had never permitted to enter my mind before, and looking with more interest than I should at seductive, satin-trimmed limousines. My morality was in danger of skidding.

One evening while my master was dining with a young woman at a roadside inn I was left to wait in the adjoining garage. But I was not alone; for close beside me stood a little French landaulet, the most immorally alluring car I had ever seen. Her lines were exquisitely shapely; she was a goddess on wheels.

"Good evening," she sparked enticingly. "Aren't you the car that stood next to me at the country club last Thursday night?"

There was a daredevil gleam in her lamps which set my carbureter a-splutter.

"Yes," I answered, infatuated. [Pg 151]

"I knew you, even though you tried to hide your name. Wasn't it lovely—just us two in the moonlight, touching tires!"

A quiver ran through me. I knew that unless I could back out in a hurry, I was lost. I tried hastily to reverse; she had me completely short-circuited.

Heaven knows what might have happened had not my master entered at that moment and saved me. The instant he laid hold of my crank I gave vent to my pent-up emotions in a way that nearly burst my muffler; and when he pressed down the pedal, I fairly leaped through the door in flight.

As it was, I was seething with nervousness. My motor throbbed so violently that I could hardly hold still while the young woman climbed into her seat.

Off we sped down a dark and narrow road. I had no control over myself, and neither did the people I was carrying seem to have control over me or over themselves.

All at once my left fore tire exploded violently, veering me aside into a mile-post. My master and the young woman landed in a clump of bushes, but *I* was maimed for life. Bad example and bad association had ruined me. Many an innocent, unsophisticated car is thus driven to destruction all because its owner fails to live up to his moral responsibility. [Pg 152]

I lay there all the rest of the night, while my gasolene ebbed away drop by drop. In the morning some men came out from the city and dragged me in. They performed a most painful operation on me, amputating various shattered members and grafting on several feet of tin.

Then, before I was really convalescent, I was sold to a new master. This person was a harsh-speaking, unfeeling man, who cared for nothing but money. He drove up and down the streets all day, inviting people to get in and ride; and when they did get in, he forced each one of them to surrender a nickel.

He was very cruel to me. Instead of showing any consideration for my broken health, he would say openly, "Well, I'll get what use I can out of this one, and then buy another." Not once did he

ever throw a blanket over my hood in cold weather or steady my slipping wheels with chains. He was so penurious that whenever he drove me through a crowded street, he would shut off my gasolene, and make me run on what I could breathe in from the exhausts of other cars. [Pg 153]

Wretched indeed is the old age of an automobile. Bereft of the beauty it had when it was a new model, it declines into squalid neglect. No amount of painting and enameling can restore its youthful bloom.

One day this master was driving me through an amusement park when I broke down completely. He got out, and prodded me brutally in the magneto. I had not the strength to budge.

He grew very angry, and the people in the tonneau demanded their money back. A crowd of idlers gathered to witness my humiliation.

Becoming purple in the face, my master nearly twisted my crank off. He heaped upon me the most insulting and unjust imprecations, as though it were my fault that my health was gone, even making distressing insinuations as to my ancestry. Words failing him, he fell to belaboring me with a hammer and monkey-wrench.

The spectators looked on with indifference. Some of them even urged him maliciously to the attack. [Pg 154]

"I'd *sell* the thing for fifty cents!" he exclaimed, with a shocking oath.

Suddenly an elderly, kindly-faced man pushed his way forward through the crowd. "I'll give you that for it," he said. "Only stop battering it!"

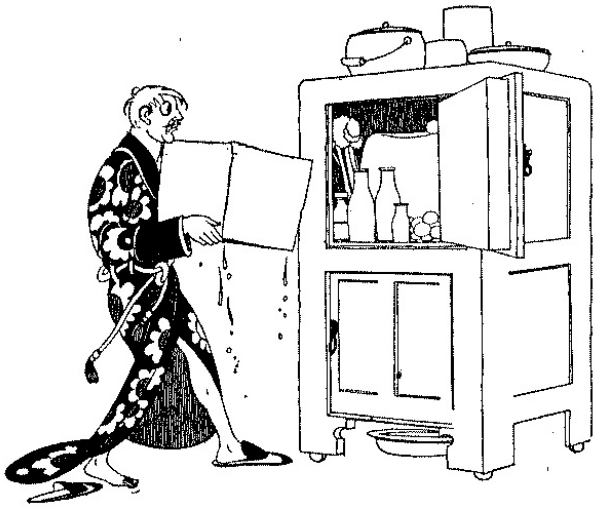
My master left off hitting me. He looked surlily at the speaker and then at the crowd.

"You can have it," he said between his teeth.

Hot tears of gratitude dropped from my cylinders as my deliverer pushed me to his nearby home. From that moment to this I have never known anything but happiness.

For my dear old master is a retired gas-fitter whose hobby is landscape gardening. Relieving me of my tired wheels, he has pastured me in the center of his front yard and planted me full of geraniums. I am lovingly taken care of. My kind master waters me regularly and curries me with a trowel. My working days are over. But what makes me happiest is the knowledge that I can never be sold.

[Pg 155]



LIGHT BREAKFAST

"Henry dear," said Mrs. Brush gently, without raising her pretty head from the pillow, "it's nearly half-past eight."

"What!" exclaimed her husband, sitting up vehemently and staring at the clock. "Where is Maria? She's supposed to be here by seven, isn't she?"

"Perhaps she didn't come today."

"That good-for-nothing darky! I'll go and investigate." Plunging energetically into his bath-robe and slippers, he sallied forth on a tour of the apartment. [Pg 156]

No Maria sweeping in the hall; no Maria straightening up the living-room or library; no Maria dusting in the dining-room; no Maria preparing breakfast in the kitchen.

"How provoking!" sighed Mrs. Brush.

"Provoking? I call it outrageous."

"Yes; I'm sorry, dear, that this will make you late to your office."

"Oh, I'm not bothered about *that*, for I've just put through some new efficiency systems which enable me to accomplish a tremendous amount of work in a very short time. What I can't stand is

having that darky *impose* on us."

"But, dearest, maybe she's sick."

"Then she could have sent us word by telephone. No; she's taking advantage of the fact that you are young and inexperienced. But she'll be sorry for it. I'll discharge her myself."

"Now, please don't get excited, dear. If you discharged her, it might be days and days before we could get another." [Pg 157]

"That wouldn't make any difference. We'd simply take our meals out. Except breakfast, of course. *I'd* get that."

"You?"

"Yes. We'll start this morning. If you'll attend to the dusting—later in the day, I mean—I'll bring you your coffee before you get up, just as you're used to having it."

"But, Henry—"

"It won't be any trouble at all. Nothing is, no matter how unfamiliar it may be to you, if you go at it intelligently, scientifically." When Mr. Brush was obsessed with an idea, it was useless to oppose him. The best policy was to let it take its course. "As I have often told you," he continued, "housekeeping could be greatly simplified if you women would only—"

Seeing that he was about to launch into a homily on efficiency, such as she had heard him deliver at least twenty times in the three months she had been married to him, she said:

"If you're going to get breakfast, hadn't you better hurry and take your bath?"

"That's so," he admitted. Shuffling briskly to the bathroom, he was soon foaming at the mouth with tooth-paste. [Pg 158]

There was a loud buzzing sound from the direction of the kitchen.

"Henry!" called Mrs. Brush, "there goes the dumb-waiter. Shall I answer it?"

"No; I'll ho," he replied pastily out of the corner of his mouth. Still busily agitating his tooth-brush, so as not to waste any time, he paddled to the dumb-waiter and called: "He'o! Whash you wa'?"

"Garbage!" replied a gruff voice. A rattling of ropes announced that the car was on its way.

Mr. Brush opened the "sanitary garbage closet," and, screwing up his face and tooth-brush, seized something that was mighty unlike a rose. He held the pail out at arm's-length as he carried it to the dumb-waiter.

Buzz, buzz, buzz, went the buzzer.

"Huh?" gurgled Mr. Brush, nervously swallowing a generous amount of tooth-paste.

"Garbage!" repeated the voice.

Mr. Brush looked helplessly at the can on the dumb-waiter and then at his incapacitated hands. [Pg 159]

"Put your garbage on!" roared the voice.

Mr. Brush sputtered; then, extracting the tooth-brush with the fourth and fifth knuckles of his left hand, he shouted back indignantly:

"I 'id!"

"Then why didn't you *say* so?" And down went the dumb-waiter with a jerk.

Mr. Brush returned to the bathroom. As he was in the midst of shaving, the buzzer sounded again. This time he was on the alert and ready for any argument. Leaving his razor, but not his lather, he hurried back to the kitchen in a combative mood.

"What do you want?" he yelled defiantly as he opened the door of the dumb-waiter. There was no answer; but facing him on the shelf of the car stood his empty pail, silent, stolid, indifferent to his bravado. He snatched it off and returned to his ablutions.

On account of the extreme lateness of the hour, he decided to finish off with a quick shower-bath, first hot and then cold. Just as he removed his last garment, the buzzer sounded again.

"Aw, go ahead and buzz!" he said between his teeth. [Pg 160]

As he stepped into the hot downpour, the door-bell rang.

"Whoever that is can wait."

But apparently the person in question had no desire to do so, for the bell sounded again and again. To complete the symphony, the telephone chimed in with its merry tune.

"Gwendolyn!" called Mr. Brush, distractedly amid the roar of waters.

But she, having fallen into a pleasant doze while waiting for her breakfast, did not hear him. The bells and buzzer had by this time settled into a sustained chord like that of the whistles at New-year's.

Bounding out of the tub to the mat, Mr. Brush wrapped his form, which still glistened with pearly drops, in his bath-robe, and slip slopped frigidly down the hall.

"Hello!" he cried, snatching off the telephone-receiver. "No, this is *not* Schmittberger the butcher!" Then he darted to the front door. Opening it, he found the postman waiting with a

letter.

"Two cents due, please." [Pg 161]

The buzzer continued its heavy droning, and the telephone started up again.

"Two cents, two cents," repeated Mr. Brush in befuddlement.

The postman stared.

"Two cents; yes, two cents," reiterated Mr. Brush, groping immodestly for pockets where there were none.

"You said that before."

"Oh, excuse me! I'll get it right off. Now, where did I put that purse? Let me think." But thinking in the neighborhood of that telephone was an impossibility. He would have to quiet the thing. So, clapping the receiver to his ear, he protested, "Hello! hello!"

"Will you *kindly* give me Schmittberger's butcher shop?"

"Good grief!" he exclaimed, letting the receiver fall. It swung by its tail, pendulum-wise, barking infuriated clicks.

Mr. Brush staggered to the bedroom. With reeling brain, he ransacked all his chiffonier drawers for the purse which was lying in plain view on top. By the time he had discovered it and started [Pg 162] back to the door, the buzzer in the kitchen was having delirium tremens. Floundering to the spot, he gasped:

"What do you want?"

"Ice!" was the husky reply.

"All right, I'll send it down. No, I mean, you send it up."

As the dumb-waiter rose, the temperature fell, and Mr. Brush soon found himself in the presence of a beautiful blue berg. With chattering teeth, he reached forward and drew it to him. The door of the dumb-waiter closed automatically, and he was left alone in the kitchen with the iceberg in his arms.

How to open the ice-box was a problem. After attempting unsuccessfully to cajole the catch by fondling it with the corner of the berg, he tried nudging it with his elbow. It would not take the hint. Indeed, it refused utterly to move until he got down on his knees before it and rubbed it with his shoulder.

Finally, however, the door opened, disclosing a rival berg, attended by a throng of bottles, siphons, and butter-crocks. A cold, inhospitable crowd they were, resenting any intrusion.

Thus rebuffed, Mr. Brush, who felt as though he were being frozen and cauterized at the same [Pg 163] time, deposited the berg upon the cover of the wash-tubs. It coasted forward, threatening an avalanche. Clutching it at the brink, he paused, and wondered what he would do next.

The door-bell saved him the trouble of deciding. He had entirely forgotten the postman! Setting the berg upon a chair, he scurried out, and offered him a dollar bill, chattering apologies for the delay.

"Haven't you anything smaller?" asked the postman, impatiently.

"N-no, I d-don't think so."

"Then why did you keep me here all this time? I'll have to come back later."

He started off.

"Stop! Wait a moment! I'd rather make you a present of the ninety-eight cents. Oh, glory! that'll have to be gone through with all over again!"

Discouraged and shivering, he leaned against the side of the doorway. In so doing, his eye fell upon a collection of objects that had been deposited in front of the sill—the morning newspaper, [Pg 164] a bottle of milk, one of cream, and a bag containing a long loaf of bread. He stooped over and gathered them up carefully one by one. Just as he had stowed away the newspaper under one arm and gripped the bag with his left hand and the two bottles with his right, the chilliness in him culminated in a sneeze, and everything fell.

Both bottles smashed. Landing just on the sill, they distributed their contents impartially outside and inside.

Finding that the proportion of the flood that the bread and the newspaper were able to sop up was small, though they did what they could, Mr. Brush hastily procured a bucket and rag from the kitchen, where the ice was indulging in a flood of its own, and set to work mopping. As he sprawled out into the hallway, gingerly squeezing out ragfuls of cream and broken glass, the door opposite was opened and a handsome woman appeared, attired in fashionable street dress. She looked him straight in the eye.

Mr. Brush clasped his bath-robe to him, made a frenzied recoil, slammed the door, and collapsed into the pool of milk.

"Henry dear, is breakfast nearly ready?" called his loving wife. [Pg 165]

Enraged and dripping, he leaped up with sudden strength, and started for the bedroom, spluttering incoherent expostulations as he went.

At that moment there was heard the sound of a latch-key, and a grinning black face appeared.

"Good mawnin', sah. Somefin' seems to be spilt heah."

Fetching a large cloth, she set to work with easy dexterity.

Mr. Brush, fascinated, watched the lake disappear.

"You bes' get dress', sah. Ah'll have yo' breakfas' ready in a couple o' minutes."

"Thank Heaven you're here, Maria!" he said fervently. "I was almost afraid you weren't coming."

THE MAN OPPOSITE

[Pg 166]

Mildred congratulated herself on having conquered her timidity. She had come all the way down-town by herself, had looked through several stores until she found just the curtains she wanted; and now, ready to return home, she got on the 'bus as calmly as though she had been a New Yorker and a married woman all her life.

It being the rush hour of the afternoon, the conveyance was quite crowded. Mildred thought at first that she would have to sit on the backward-facing bench up front, which she disliked; but luckily she found a place on one of the seats opposite it. A moment later even the less-desirable bench was occupied.

The person who took the place on it directly facing her was a tall, dark man of about forty, with piercing black eyes and an aquiline nose. Mildred kept encountering his glance. There was something about it that disturbed her. She flushed a little.

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His face seemed vaguely, uncomfortably familiar. Where had she seen him before? She was sure he wasn't anyone who had waited on her in a shop, nor any of the tradesmen who came to the door of her apartment: he looked too much the man of the world for that. Neither was he one of the few friends of her husband whom she had had a chance to meet. She could not place him. Happiness, and the absorption that goes with it, had made her oblivious of outside things.

Whoever he was, his glances rendered her more and more ill at ease. She looked out of the window, she looked up at the advertisements, she looked down at her lap. No use: she could *feel* his gaze.

In vain did she reason with herself that he was not staring at her intentionally, but was merely directing his eyes straight ahead of him, as anyone might do. No; not even the protecting presence of the other passengers could reassure her. She felt almost as though she and the hawk-like stranger were alone in the conveyance.

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Several times she thought of getting out and taking another 'bus. But the evening was growing dark, and she might have to wait a long while in a part of town she knew nothing about. And suppose he should get off after her!

The blocks seemed hours apart, the halts at corners interminable. Passengers got out in twos and threes. *He* stayed.

Looking down at her hands, which nervously fingered the chain of her reticule, Mildred hoped and prayed he would go. But he did not.

The people who had shared the bench with him had moved to forward-facing seats as soon as any were vacant. He remained where he was.

It seemed she had seen that face somewhere—behind her, following her.

This recollection threw her into such a fit of trembling that she let fall her handkerchief. Before she could recover it, he bent forward with a quick swooping motion, seized it in his long fingers, and held it out to her. She took it trembling, hardly able to murmur, "Thank you".

He appeared about to speak.

Mildred rose in terror and retreated hastily to a place several seats back, across the aisle.

[Pg 169]

What would he do? Would he follow her? Were his eyes still fixed upon her? She dared not look; but a reflection in the window pane increased her fears.

Street after street went by. The last other passenger got off. Still he stayed. Mildred's furtive observations via the reflecting window pane never found him looking out to ascertain what part of town it was. Gradually she was forced to the sickening conviction that he was watching, not for any particular street, but to see where she would get off.

As her corner approached, she rang the bell. He rose. She moved quickly to the door. He followed her, smiling presumingly.

As she stepped down from the platform, her knees were so weak that she almost fell. Her heart pounded. Instead of running, as her terror prompted her to, she could with difficulty maintain a panting walk.

The man followed—not hurrying, but relentlessly, like an animal that is sure of its prey.

When she entered the doorway of the apartment house, he was barely ten yards behind her. She knew he would turn in also. He did.

If only she could get into the elevator and escape before he arrived! [Pg 170]

The car was at one of the upper floors. She rang desperately until it appeared. The instant the iron door slid back, she flung herself in, gasping:

"Quick! Take me up quickly!"

"Yes, miss," replied the startled but drowsy elevator boy—as a tall form passed in after her. Mildred shrank into a corner, quivering.

"Fou'th flo'," announced the boy.

She sprang out. As she staggered totteringly down the dim corridor, she heard the man step out of the car.

Her latch key! Her latch key! She fumbled frantically in her handbag; then groped for the lock.

The man drew nearer.

She was helpless, cornered at the end of a dark hallway. Almost hysterical she let the key fall and closed her eyes.

At that moment the door opposite was unlocked briskly, and a lusty young voice inside yelled: "Hello, Pappa!"

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LUCY THE LITERARY AGENT

"I know you will agree with me," said Lucy, "that these stories by Perth Dewar are quite remarkable, quite the most distinctive things of the kind that have been done in years, and that your readers will like them immensely."

Ethridge the Editor said nothing. It was unwise to contradict her; for of all the personal-touch literary agents, Lucy was the personal-touchiest. So he let her run on and on, trusting that eventually she would run down. Also she wasn't bad looking—in her aggressive way. [Pg 172]

"You've read them?" she queried suddenly.

"Why, certainly," he lied, glancing with studied casualness at the Reader's Report slip attached to the blue manuscript cover.

Ethridge never read anything he could possibly avoid reading. He was one of those successful editors who edit by belonging to the best clubs and attending the right teas. Mere perusal of manuscripts was not particularly in his line.

The Report slip said: "Costume stories of Holland in the 17th Century. Only moderately well done. Not suitable for this magazine."

"Who is this Dewar person, anyhow?" asked Ethridge defensively.

"You mean to say you haven't heard of him? Why, my dear Mr. Ethridge! Dewar is a man of independent means—lives on his estate down in Maryland and writes stories between fox hunts. Enormously gifted."

She failed to add, however, that Dewar had offered to let her keep any money she received for the stories—provided she could get them printed.

Resting her white elbows on Ethridge's desk and eyeing him with calculating coyness, Lucy knew that he had not read the stories. She would make him wonder if she knew he hadn't. [Pg 173]

"What do you yourself honestly think of them, Mr. Ethridge? Candidly, now. You're always so delightfully frank with me, Mr. Ethridge. That's why it's such a pleasure to deal with you. How did they strike you?"

"Really, Miss Leech, I don't see how in our magazine we could possibly—"

"Now, Mr. Ethridge!" She held up a reproving finger, laughing roguishly. "But what's the use of our trying to discuss imaginative literature here in your busy office with the telephone ringing every moment—or threatening to ring—and your discouragingly pretty blonde secretary—the

minx!—popping in continually to see if we're behaving!"

Ethridge smiled complacently. Why be an ogre?

"I tell you what. Let's have supper at my studio this evening," continued Lucy. "It'll be so much more satisfactory to discuss things sensibly, without interruption."

So he did, and they did.

At breakfast it was finally decided that the series by Perth Dewar should consist of ten stories, including four still to be written. [Pg 174]

Ethridge salved his conscience by resolving secretly that they should all be published in the back of the book.

In due course of time the first story appeared. It contained a mean reference to the Knights of Pythias, or Mormonism, or a former Vice-President of the United States, or something; for which reason the issue containing it was suppressed.

Whereupon the buried issue became a Living Issue. The intelligentsia rushed to the rescue with highbrow hue and cry. Round robins were circulated. Newspaper columnists got sarcastic. Liberal cliques chittered. Perth Dewar became suddenly significant.

The issue containing the second story was sold out the day it appeared.

By the time the third one was out, Professor Lion Whelps, of Yale, proved in an article in the Sunday *Times*, that Dewar's attitude toward women was like Turgeniev's, and Professor Brando Methuseleh, of Columbia, discovered he had cadences. Sinclair Lewis inserted a mention of him in the forty-ninth edition of "Babbitt". Nine British novelists hurried over to lecture on him. [Pg 175]

And Ethridge?

He was made. In acknowledgement of his peerless editorial acumen that could discern true genius at a glance, the directors of the magazine doubled his salary and gave him a bonus to keep him from being coaxed away by the "Saturday Evening Pictorial".

And Lucy?

Ethridge married her to keep her quiet.

THE CREEPING FINGERS

[Pg 176]

rs. Whoffin's figure resembled that of the punch-bowl behind which she was standing: it was broad and squat, with a slight tapering at the base. And her mind was like the punch: sweetish and characterless, with scrappy rinds of things floating about in it. Each guest who presented a cup received the same dipperful and the same set of remarks.

"Good evening. I'm *so* glad you could come! I just love hearing ghost-stories, don't you? See that log over there?" She pointed to a huge gray hulk that lay at the side of the open fireplace. "That's *real driftwood*, and it ought to give just the right kind of light. I found it myself on the beach, and had the gardener bring it home in a wheelbarrow. Look, it's all honeycombed with age." [Pg 177]

A tall, serious-looking young man stepped forward and extended his glass. He knew that that was the way to please her, and she was the woman who he hoped and feared would be his mother-in-law.

She beamed.

"Do have another, Mr. Carson."

He did; for he was in a desperate mood. He was to leave for the city on the early morning train, and this evening would be his last chance to propose to Polly for several months. Somehow, despite his best efforts, the psychological moment had never arrived.

Just then Polly sailed into the room, fresh and rosy, in a flutter of white muslin. He put down the glass and hurried over to her.

"Good evening, Polly," he said in an ardent undertone. "Couldn't you slip away from this crowd and take a stroll on the beach?"

"No, George; I'm hostess tonight." She shook her head, including some airy little curls, which seemed to make light of her refusal. "We are all to gather around the hearth and listen to the stories." Then she added teasingly, "Besides, it is in your honor that mother is giving this party." [Pg 178]

"Yes; she's very kind, I'm sure," he said awkwardly.

"Think of all the trouble she has taken over that log!"

Carson faced her with squared jaw.

"Listen to me, Polly. There is something serious I want to talk to you about. Before I leave you, I —"

"Polly," called Mrs. Whoffin, "isn't it time to begin?"

"Perhaps it is," she answered innocently. "What do you think, George?"

"I think the story-telling might as well begin at once," he said stiffly.

A few minutes later all lights were turned out. The score of young people had settled themselves about the room in comfortable attitudes, some on chairs and sofas, some on cushions on the floor, while in the midst of them sat the narrator, a girl of eighteen, who affected a deep morbidity. [Pg 179] Gazing into the fire, she began her tale as though she were in a trance.

Carson sulkily picked his way after Polly toward a seat beside the hearth. Just as he was reaching it, he tripped over something bulky.

"Why, that's my log!" exclaimed Mrs. Whoffin, from the back of the room. "Dear! dear! Why hasn't anyone put it on the fire?" The story waited while Mrs. Whoffin scurried forward and personally supervised the placing of the log upon the andirons, and then sat down beside the hearth opposite Polly.

"Do go on!" cried several voices. "You stopped in the most exciting part."

The narrator, looking daggers at Mrs. Whoffin, paused long enough to show that she didn't *have* to go on unless she wanted to, and then resumed her tale:

"Suddenly, as he lay there in the haunted room, on the very bed where the old man had been murdered, he felt an invisible hand on the bedclothes."

Mrs. Whoffin shuddered, and a large black ant peered out of a hole in the log to see what was [Pg 180] going on.

"Then he felt a second hand more terrifying than the first."

Beholding his home in flames, the ant rushed back indoors to spread the alarm. Along the highways of the interior he sped, a second Paul Revere, rousing the sleeping insects, of which there were many.

"Oh!" groaned Mrs. Whoffin.

The exodus of Paul's friends proceeded in orderly fashion. "Larvæ and eggs first," was their order. Carrying their infants upon their backs, they filed out of the subway openings in steady processions.

"The hands clutched the covers just above his feet. Fear paralyzed him so that he could neither move nor cry out."

A party of refugees applied to Mrs. Whoffin for shelter. She was so absorbed in the story that she did not see them.

"Then the fingers began to creep up and up, up and up. His flesh tingled with horror."

Mrs. Whoffin quivered like an aspen leaf. She breathed hard, her eyes nearly popping. Other people began to feel creepy.

"They clutched his knee, and—" [Pg 181]

Mrs. Whoffin uttered a piercing shriek, and clasped her knee with both hands. She was invaded. Then Polly screamed, and Carson began to slap himself on various parts of the anatomy. There was a general panic. Girls squealed and, clambering frantically upon chairs, shook out their lifted skirts; young men stamped about wildly, mashing ants and people's toes in equal numbers. Mrs. Whoffin, tormented from head to foot, galloped in circles, moaning, "Oh mercy! Oh mercy!"

"Save me, George!" cried Polly, clinging to his arm.

"Yes, darling!" he answered fervently. If the ants had been raging bulls, he would have saved her from them; but they were ants, and their ways were devious. He hesitated, slapping himself thoughtfully.

"Turn on the lights!" yelled some one.

"No! Don't!" screamed half a dozen shrill voices.

"Save me!" repeated Polly, distractedly. "I can't stand this any longer! I'll perish!"

Struck with a swift inspiration, he caught her up in his arms and started for the door. She made [Pg 182] no resistance. Out of the room he carried her, then through the front hall, and down the front steps.

Half-way down the walk she asked:

"Where are you taking me?"

"To the ocean."

"Why, you clever boy!"

People sitting on the verandas of neighboring cottages saw in he moonlight a sight that electrified them with horror. A powerful looking maniac, with a helpless woman in his arms, strode across the beach and began to wade out into the water. Hoping to save her, they ran to the shore and put out in boats and canoes.

"Oh," sighed the victim, blissfully, as Carson let her down into the water, "it feels so cool—and *quiet*!"

"Polly!"

"George!"

"Row harder, Doctor!" cried the steersman of the nearest boat. "He's trying to strangle her!"

THE MAN WITH THE HOSE

[Pg 183]

A feeling of elation is like a feeling of alcohol. Under its stimulus a person may do the most brilliant things—and also the most grotesque.

It was just this feeling that took hold of Jack Carrington when the senior member of the firm invited him to dine at his apartment on the following evening and meet "Mrs. Stockbridge and my daughter." During all the rest of the day the young college-man-learning-how-to-work-in-an-office fairly walked on air, and that night, in his hall bedroom, he went through a sort of dress-rehearsal of the rôle he hoped to play on the great occasion, resuscitating and donning his evening clothes to make sure that they looked as well as they did when he led the commencement prom six months before, and marshaling all the bons mots he could recollect, in order that his supply of "extempore" witticisms might be adequate.

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Still buoyed up by this feeling of elation, Carrington presented himself next evening at the door of the sumptuous apartment-house where the boss lived, gave his name to one of the liveried grandees in attendance, and was shown up to E 4, a gorgeous duplex suite half as large as a house, and renting for twice as much.

Everything went off splendidly. The boss unbent to a surprising degree, Mrs. Stockbridge was most cordial, and the daughter proved to be a fascinator. What was more, Carrington surpassed himself as a social light. He told several funny stories with considerable éclat; and inspired by the thrill of the occasion, even thought up one or two *original* ones that surprised him as much as they impressed his hosts. When, later in the evening, he played bridge as the daughter's partner, he had a rush of hearts and aces to the hand. He made slams big and little at such a rate that Miss Stockbridge complimented him upon his skill. Consequently, when, after two victorious rubbers, he bid his hosts good night and noted from their effusiveness that he had made a very favorable impression, it was no wonder that he already pictured himself a member of the firm and the boss's son-in-law.

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As the door of the apartment closed behind him, he heaved a sigh of triumph. He felt like shouting or doing something violent. Tingling with pride, he strutted down the hallway toward the elevator.

A shining brass fire-nozzle, jutting out provokingly from a coil of hose, attracted his attention. It looked so like the head of some absurd animal that he couldn't help poking his finger into its mouth as he went by. His finger stuck.

Facing the nozzle squarely and taking hold of it with his free left hand, he pulled more carefully. Still it stuck. The finger was beginning to swell and turn red. He tugged it harder, with no result.

Concluding that lubrication was necessary, he leaned over and licked it, acquiring a strong brass taste upon his tongue. Then he pulled hard. More swelling.

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By this time he was in a perspiration of misery. He paused and tried to think clearly, but his mind, which had scintillated all evening, was now a blur. His first lucid thought was that he must unscrew the nozzle from the hose. Why, of course! How simple! But when he tried turning the coupling of the hose, the nozzle insisted on turning with it, and his imprisoned finger was averse to revolving.

Lapsing again into rueful speculation, he tried desperately to devise some means of regaining his liberty. Why not go ring the elevator bell? No; that was around the bend of the corridor, and his tether probably would not reach that far; and, besides, it would be awful to have to explain his plight to a liveried dignitary like the one who had convoyed him up. And suppose the elevator should arrive full of plutocrats coming home from the opera, or high-strung women who would shriek when they saw him with the fire-hose?

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No, that could never be risked. He must think of something else. A little olive-oil would probably do the trick, but how could he get it? If he had thought of that at first and gone right back and asked for it, it wouldn't have been so bad; but now, after nearly half an hour, his hosts were probably in bed. No, it was too late to ring their door-bell now.

Suddenly an ingenious idea occurred to him: he would turn on the water and *squirt* his finger out! Splendid! He reached up and turned the wheel. It made a mournful creaking sound, but no water came through the coil of hose. "It must be shut off downstairs," he thought.

Thanks to the incessant sting of his finger and the maddening exasperation of the predicament he was in, Carrington was nearly frantic.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "I'll have to disturb them for that oil sooner or later, so I'd better do it right off."

With that he started for the boss's door, trailing the hose after him. His heart thumped as he rang the bell. Standing in close to the wall, he kept the nozzle behind his back, thinking it better to explain before displaying his appendage.

There was a sound of slippered feet, and, from the opposite direction, a sound of slipping hose.

The door was unlocked, and the remainder of the canvas-and-rubber coil that had kept back the water unrolled down upon the floor. [Pg 188]

"Who's there?" growled Mr. Stockbridge, arrayed in a bath-robe and squinting out into the dimly lighted corridor without his glasses.

Mortification seemed to paralyze Carrington's speech. Bringing the nozzle forward abjectly, so that Mr. Stockbridge could see his plight, he faltered:

"I—"

At that moment his finger was shot like a bullet from a gun, and the ensuing stream of water caught Mr. Stockbridge squarely in the throat.

Simultaneously, a supreme inspiration came to Carrington.

"I'm a *fireman*," he cried in a disguised voice. "Wake your family at once!"

Whereupon, as Mr. Stockbridge rushed back into the apartment, Carrington, dropping the hose, made a thrilling rescue of himself down the stairway, and darted into the street before the drowsy dignitary in the vestibule could raise his head.

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JANGLES

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THOSE SYMPHONY CONCERT PROGRAMS

[Pg 191]

METROPOLITAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Otto Culmbacher, *Conductor*

Felice Elefantine, *Soloiste of the evening*

I. Gastronomic Symphony—*Kovik-Bordunov*

(a) Allegretti
(b) Pistachio
(c) Chianti
(d) Risotto, con aglio

II. Larghetto *Culmbacher*

III. Aria from "Il Campanile" *Gondola*

(Signorina Elefantine)

(*The Hardwood Piano is used*)

CRITICAL COMMENTS ON THE NUMBERS

I. *Gastronomic Symphony*. It is not certain when Ptior Kovik-Bordunov was born. His parents, being thrifty peasants, put him in a basket and left him on the steppes of Russia. Adopted by a Russian Princess, named Caviar Vodka, he was raised as if he had been her own dog. His early [Pg 192] musical inclination was so pronounced that he was sent to the Warsaw Conservatory, where he served three terms. Soon after being released from this institution he wrote "Samovar," the opera that made him famous. "Samovar" so pleased the Czar that young Bordunov was given a pension and a bath. But alas! either his sudden success or the bath so affected his mind, that from that time on the authorities were obliged to keep him in confinement. The above symphony was written on the walls of his cell, from which it was transcribed after his suicide. It depicts the blight of all his hopes, the sorrows of Russia, the drowning of his fiancée, the height of the steppes, and the agonies of indigestion.

The Allegretti opens with an arabesque tone-poem of somber sweetness, under which strange and varied delights are hidden. Then comes the minor Pistachio, weirdly oriental in color. This is followed by the tempestuous and maddening Chianti. Last of all comes the terrible Risotto, con aglio. Here we have an example of the insight of genius! By itself, the Risotto con aglio would be [Pg 193] almost mild; but coming as it does on top of the Allegretti, the Pistachio, and the Chianti, it is bound to produce a truly tragic finale.

II. *Larghetto*. This étude is by the conductor. (He thought this would be a good place to work it in, the orchestra and audience being powerless to restrain him.)

Herr Otto Fédor Ivan Culmbacher was born of noble parents in Hofbräu, Silesia. He was discovered and imported to America by the brilliant patronesses of the Metropolitan Symphony Society.

A larghetto is a little largo—one without a handel. A composer writes a larghetto when he feels something like writing a largo but isn't, on the whole, quite up to it.

III. *Aria from "Il Campanile".* This opera, though well known in Budapest and South America, is practically unknown in the United States. The aria, "O belli spaghetti," is so vocally exacting that to sing its bird-like notes a prima donna should diet for weeks on bird seed. Here are the words—which are repeated fourteen times in the course of the aria.

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THE ITALIAN	THE TRANSLATION
O belli spaghetti,	Had I the wings of a dove,
O bianchi confetti.	I would fly, I would fly to my love.
Bananni, bananni,	I would fly, I would fly,
E tutti frutti—	Through the sky, through the sky,
O bianchi confetti!	I would fly, I would fly to my love!

(*She waddles off*)

HOW TO KNOW THE INSTRUMENTS

[Pg 195]

(Editor's Note.—The following observations, if carefully studied, will enable the intelligent concertgoer to tell the difference between an orchestra and a dress circle.)

The principal instrument in music is the violin. This instrument is held fast under the performer's double chin and then tickled in the gut with a strand of horse hair until it cries out. Which cruel treatment reacts on its disposition, so that, as the little violin grows up into a 'cello, it becomes gloomy and morose; and when, after a life of nagging, it reaches old age as a crabbed double bass and is relegated to the back of the orchestra, it spends its resentment in querulous grumbling.

Further from the conductor than the violins, and, consequently, more intermittent in their playing, are the Tootle family. Grandfather Tootle, the bassoon, spends his time in dozing: all you can hear from him is an occasional snore. Mrs. Tootle, the flute, is of a romantic turn of mind, doting on moonlight and warbling birds and babbling brooks. She prides herself on her limpid utterance, and admonishes her little son Piccolo not to talk through his nose like Cousin Oboe [Pg 196] Tootle. Her husband, the bass clarinet, takes himself very seriously—and no wonder, for to him falls the unpleasant duty of announcing bad news, such as that the hero has just died, or that the act is only half over.

Quite remote from the conductor are the mysterious somethings that live in kettle-drums. What they are no one knows; but a watchful keeper bends over and listens to them, and whenever, despite his constant cork-screwing, they show signs of aggressiveness, he beats them into submission with a brace of bottle-mops. If this is not sufficient, he calls in an assistant, who cows them with the roar of a whanging Chinese stewpan.

Somewhat nearer the conductor, but yet far enough away to be able to resist his authority until threatened with his stick, are the horns, the most vehement members of the orchestra. A blast from them, besides waking up the audience, always means something. For example, the martial sound of a trumpet heralds the approach of a conqueror or a scissors-grinder.

The old-fashioned hunting horn, from which the modern orchestral horn is descended, was very [Pg 197] simple indeed. In those days every one was supposed to wind his horn, instead of buying it already wound, as we do now.

Yet the modern pretzelized horn is still adapted for hunting purposes. Take as large a horn as you can conveniently carry (a 42-centimetre tuba is preferable) and stand under a tree, with the muzzle pointing up at the bird you desire to hunt. Then play "Silver Threads Among the Gold" for two hours and ten minutes, and the bird will fall lifeless into the horn.

[Pg 198]

NOTES ON PIANOS

A piano is an instrument with eighty-eight keys and twenty installments. You play on the keys and pay on the installments—the latter being by far the more difficult performance. If you do not play in time, you are called down by your critics; if you do not pay on time, you are called on by your collectors.

The keys are arranged in two rows—short, fat blondes in front, and tall, skinny brunettes behind. There are three pedals (one for each foot, and one for good measure): the damper pedal (or muffler cut-out), which puts an end to conversation; the sostenuto pedal, which helps the piano [Pg 199] sustain what it has to sustain; and the soft pedal, which is seldom used, and then only by request.

There are two kinds of pianos—uprights and prostrates. Uprights are used in homes where there is standing room only. Prostrates are used in concert halls—virtuosi prefer them, because they can hit a piano much harder when it is down. The upright piano is frequently pitched in A flat. It remains there till pitched out by the neighbors.

An advantage that this piano possesses is that it keeps the player's back turned to his hearers, which is a great saving to his feelings. Another advantage is that the top serves as a mantelpiece annex; bric-a-brac that won't stand heat but will stand noise is put there. Anything is appropriate —cupids, shepherdesses, brass bowls, painted vases. The only requirement for a place on this repository is that the object be able to make some buzzing, twanging, wheezing, or humming sound when the strings are struck.

Prostrates are built for endurance. Their black finish bespeaks the hard life they lead.

A conflict between one of these indestructible pianos and an irresistible pianist is called a recital. [Pg 200] A non-combatant lifts the lid, and the fight begins. FIRST ROUND: *Nocturne*. (Merely warming up.) SECOND ROUND: *Etude*. (Livelier, but not much heavy hitting.) THIRD ROUND: *Scherzo*. (Considerably hotter; fighting in close.) FOURTH ROUND: *Appassionato*. (Real slugging.) FIFTH ROUND: *Rhapsodie*. (Piano receives fearful punishment. Knocked out in final cadenza, but pianist sprains wrist.)

In learning to play the piano, the first thing to acquire is a good touch, or tread (as it is properly called). Unfortunately, there is a divergence of opinion among authorities as to what a good tread consists in; the famous dictum of Prof. Biffski, of Moscow Conservatory, that you should hammer the hammers, being offset by the equally famous assertion of Hieronimus Dudelsack, the noted Viennese pedagogue, that you should not strike the ivories at all, but massage, or knead them. Herr Dudelsack and his eminent pupils maintain that his tread is the only normal one, that it has [Pg 201] the naturalness of a cat's walking on the keyboard. But the astute Russian insinuates that it produces tangled chords and scales that are short-weight.

But these methods have been rendered obsolete by the heel-and-toe technique of the playerpiano. This wonderful instrument, impregnating the feet with melody and rhythm, has given rise to the modern dances. For a person who makes a habit of playing the pianola simply *has* to toddle the music out of his ankles.

Even more remarkable is the way in which the piano-footy has simplified musical composition. The masters of the past had to toil away painfully with pen and ink; whereas the composer of today can attain the same results with a roll of paper and a ticket-punch. Judging from the progress we have made and are still making, it is safe to predict that the composer of the future will use a shotgun.

THE LIFE-DRAMA OF A MUSICAL CRITIC [Pg 202]

IN FOUR CLIPPINGS

I. ADOLESCENCE

From the Centerville "Clarion":

LOCAL TALENT MAKES SPLENDID SHOWING

The concert held last evening in Masonic Hall was a great success. It certainly showed what Centerville could do in a musical line. From the opening duet, played by Miss Violet and Miss Nancy Stubbs, to the very end of the program, the audience seemed to thoroughly enjoy every number. But the feature of the evening was the singing by Mr. Harry Bowers of "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep". This noble song gave the popular young druggist an opportunity to display his remarkable low notes. Another person deserving of special mention was Miss Helen Smith, who, attractively dressed in pink and carrying a bouquet of fresh flowers, rendered "The Rosary" [Pg 203] with great effect. All in all, the concert was a great event, and a considerable amount of money was raised toward the new fire-engine.

Abraham Lincoln Simpson,
Music and Art Critic.

II. EFFERVESCENCE [Pg 204]

From the "New York Chronicle":

GOTHAM ORCHESTRA PLAYS SCHNITZEL

Warmth of Oriental Color

Adolf Schnitzel's symphonic poem "Aus Bengalien," which was admirably performed last evening by the Gotham Symphony Orchestra, shows a masterly understanding of the folk-music of India. The Bengalese have from the earliest times been noted for their proficience in the arts. Their principal instrument is the *bimbam*, an elongated drum, played upon with any convenient article, such as an elephant's tusk or the bone of an ancestor. When struck at one end, it emits the sound *bim*; when struck at the other, a clear-toned *bam* is produced: hence its curious name. The following melody, known as the "War-Song of Prince Brahmadan," gives one an idea of the capacity of this instrument:

Bim-bim-bam, bim-bam-bim.

The chorus is also characteristic:

Bim, bim!

At the religious ceremonies of the Bengalese, the Futrib, or high priest, plays upon a peculiar one-toned flute, producing an effect of awe and mystery, as this hymn to the sun-god aptly illustrates: [Pg 205]

Too—oo—t!

Toot, toot-a-toot, toot-a-toot, toot;

Too—oo—t!

With this wealth of material to draw from, Schnitzel has constructed a work that is nearly perfect in form. Beginning with a soft *bim-bam-bim*, which is followed by a sinister *toot, toot*, he works up to a climax of marvelous contrapuntal ingenuity, in which the two themes are combined thus:

Bim, toot, bam, toot-a-toot,

Truly the apotheosis of Bengal!

A. L. S.

III. ACQUIESCENCE [Pg 206]

From the "New York Chronicle":

"WASHINGTON" REPEATED

Last night was a brilliant one at the opera. "Washington," the new American music-drama, was given for the second time, with the same cast as before.

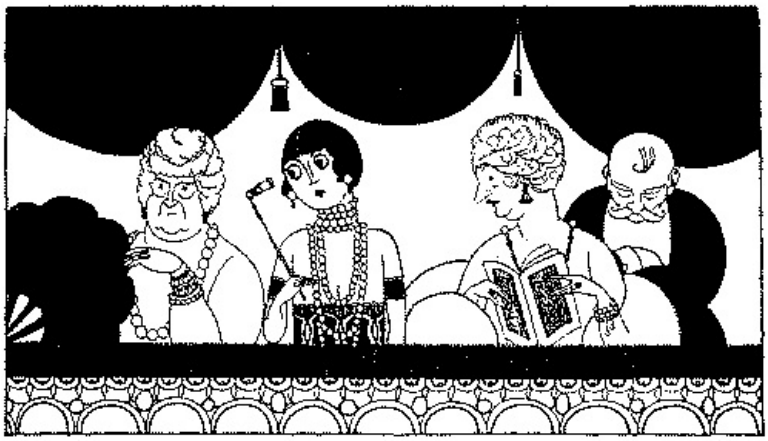
Among those who attended the performance were Mrs. Pierpont Astorbilt, who wore pale nesserole garnished with soufflée; Mr. and Mrs. Plantagenet Carter, the latter in an exquisite creation of blanc-mange; and Mrs. Sibley Harwood-Stevens, in gray limousine, air-cooled with insertion.

Mrs. Reginald Carrington's guests were Lord and Lady Shrewby and the Duc de Vaurien. The latter wore a black dress-suit and a white shirt.

Mrs. Gaybird was present for the first time since the death of her husband. She wore her skirt at half-mast.

(*Unsigned*)

[Pg 207]



IV. SENESCENCE

From the New York "Evening Spot":

BASSOON CONCERT A RELIEF FROM MODERNISM

BY A. LINCOLN SIMPSON

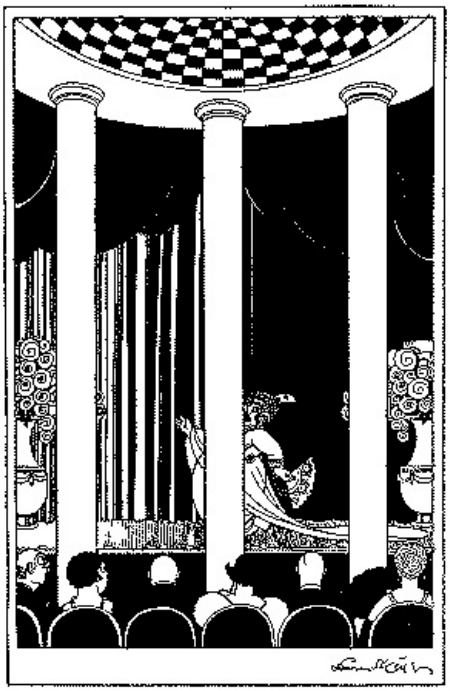
New York is suffering from a plethora of concerts. The fact that the halls are generally crowded is no excuse for giving so many performances. It is unfair to the critics.

Yesterday afternoon, at the concert of the Gotham Symphony Society Ludwig Käse played that great German master-work, the Leberwurst bassoon concerto in F-flat major, opus posthumous. ("Posthumous" does not in this case have its usual meaning of written after the defunction of the composer's brain: it refers to the fact that Leberwurst did not live to publish the work, as his audience lynched him when he played it from manuscript.) This concerto, dedicated to the composer's patron, the deaf old Duke of Pretzelheim, bears the title of "Spring," and this vernal quality was admirably brought out by Herr Käse, particularly in the movement representing influenza. Indeed, it was impossible to hear his sublime sniffulations without being moved to profound coughing. [Pg 208]

François Grisé's "Gingerbread Suite," scored for viola, piccolo, trombone, and celesta, might have been interesting had it been more of a novelty; but, since it had been heard in New York five times within four years, its performance on this occasion was a mistake.

The program included also a symphonic rhapsody on cow-boy melodies. As this is by an obscure native composer and has never been heard before, there is nothing to say about it.

[Pg 209]



Even people sitting behind pillars can enjoy her.

[Pg 210]

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FATTEST

There is no lightweight championship in opera. Stars of the first magnitude are of very considerable magnitude—300 pounds and up. In this class are the expensive prima donnas and heroic tenors (the term "heroic" referring to their efforts to move about the stage). The second magnitude—250 to 299 pounds—includes "jilted beauty" mezzo-sopranos and "hated rival"

baritones. The third magnitude (of which no one takes any notice)—under 250 pounds—is made up of "confidante" contraltos and "noble father" bassos.

Thus, it will readily be seen that fat and fame are synonymous. For, in navigating the high C's, latitude is far more important than longitude.

Italian opera was made possible by the discovery of spaghetti, the serpentine food that produces coloratura tissue. A few miles of this swallowed daily will keep the palate *leggiero* and the figure *larghissimo*.

In like manner, beer is responsible for the national opera of Germany. Who would have heard of [Pg 211] Wagner if Pilsener had never been invented? Where could Wagner have found his massive Brunhildes, his slow-dying Tristans?

Here lies the secret of the failure of our national music drama—we have spaghetti opera and beer opera, but no opera built on an American food. Emaciated from a diet of pebbly cereals and grape juice, our art still awaits the invention of the great American fattener.

For fat constitutes the wonder of opera. When a diva who looks like a hippo surprises us by singing like a canary—*that* is something remarkable. When a languid mass of blubber, for whom the very act of standing would seem a supreme accomplishment, displays the lung energy of a steam calliope and the vocal endurance of a peanut-stand whistle—we are astonished, overcome.

And fat robs the tragic ending of its depression. The sight of a normally-built woman expiring of heartbreak, or any other favorite operatic death, would be most distressing; but the spectacle of [Pg 212] a four-hundred pound consumptive, on a thickly-padded canvas-and-steel rock, breathing forth her everlasting last, like a moping walrus on a cake of ice—such a spectacle does not disturb us in the least, for we realize that all she needs is a fan.

Indeed, the fattest never die. After a prima donna is no longer able to manoeuver over the operatic stage, she toddles along the carpet of the concert platform, tugging her train like a double-expansion freight-engine, while the audience applauds from sheer amazement. She is an immense success—even people sitting behind posts can see her.

Thin singers perish and are forgotten (there never were any, anyhow); but the gloriously fat ones sing on forever. When Judgment Day comes and the angel blows his trumpet, he will have to toot it with Wagnerian fury plus Straussian blatancy if he hopes to be heard above the aigretted and tiaraed dodos who are still on the yell.

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