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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RED PAINT AT OXFORD: SKETCHES ***

RED PAINT AT OXFORD

Sketches

BY
"PISH" AND "TUSH"

London
GREENING & CO., LTD.
20 CECIL COURT, CHARING CROSS ROAD
1904

PREFACE.

These little sketches must not be taken too seriously, and it must not be imagined that they describe the most prominent characteristics of the good sportsmen portrayed in them. We have only turned our attention to the lightest side of their 'Varsity careers because we think that the most amusing; but nearly every one of the Undergrads referred to has distinguished himself in some less lurid but more useful way. Five 'Blues' altogether have been amassed among the gentlemen who move about and have their being herein; while the Pilot upset the odds of 33 to 1 freely laid against him, scraped through on the rails with a rush at the finish, and secured a creditable 'First.' When he is Archbishop of Canterbury, Freddy hopes to be in the Cabinet, and, it appears already during the short year that has elapsed since we all 'went down,' that Squiff is well on his way to ruling a Province in India. Who knows whether he and the Pilot, in alliance, may not yet be the means of converting that most hearty blot of Ink the Rajah of Jellipore!

ONE AUTHOR.

THE OTHER.

LONDON, *May, 1904.*

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RED PAINT AT OXFORD.

[1]
[2]

I. ON MOTORING TO TOWN.

[3]

Freddy said it was very cheap, and so I went, having only seven and sixpence, which I had borrowed from our landlady.

Freddy had less.

Soon after eight I was aroused by Freddy's acrobatic treble and the shrieks of an impossible check suit.

He mentioned that he was coming to breakfast with me as the men in his digs never came down till ten.

Just then the Pilot announced in a loud and penetrating voice that 'a perspiring stinkocar had arrived outside' and so I hastened on my dressing to the accompaniment of 'The Miller's Daughter,' played by Freddy with one finger and the loud pedal down.

In the middle of the second kidney there was a loud report from the street, and Mrs. MacNab, whose cat consumes an abnormal quantity of our whisky, rushed into the room exclaiming that 'the Chuffer had brought round the hengine.'

Hastily rising I ran down into the street and found a pair of legs performing strange antics on the kerbstone, while their owner's head appeared to be in the petrol tank, at least a voice from that direction declared 'the whole of the — — petrol has gone and (adjectived) itself away.'

[4]

This edifying remark was accompanied by a series of alarming though apparently harmless reports which did not in the least affect the equanimity of the person under the car.

By this time Freddy, having consumed 'kidneys and bacon for three,' appeared in the doorway, disguised in a mangy fur coat and a pair of hideous black goggles.

He straightway proceeded to haul the unknown out of the petrol tank by his legs, at the same time enquiring with unnecessary heat 'Why they had not pumped that mess in at the shop?'

To which query the Chauffeur replied that 'They never did nothink at the shop.'

This answer appeared to satisfy Frederick, who boarded the smell-cart without further parley, and, having seated the Chauffeur behind, pounced upon a sort of lever arrangement, whereupon the car gave two awesome leaps, I jumped aboard, and we found ourselves at some distance from the house.

The Pilot, who appeared in a dressing-gown at the top window, bestowed a pantomimic blessing on us as we shot away, followed by the ironical cheers of two small boys and the Swithin's Hall man from next door, who had kept an early chapel and was accordingly most obnoxious.

[5]

We had scarcely passed Magdalen when Freddy informed me in a hurried gasp that we were bound for London, which communication constrained me to remind him that our joint capital only amounted to thirteen and six, but he merely muttered something unprintable and put on full speed.

We narrowly missed a milkman in Iffley Road and an early bicyclist only just escaped an equally early death.

It was at this point that P.C. Robert Swiller hove in sight; we only noticed a red and angry face but failed to catch his remarks, which, to judge from the way he stamped on the pavement, must have been of a forcible nature.

I think that after this I must have dozed—the Swithin's Hall man plays till 1.30 a.m.—for the next thing I remember was a violent concussion which threw a heavy oil-can on to my foot and the Chauffeur into the ditch.

Freddy, whose ordinary conversation is sprinkled with epithets that do not bear repetition, referred to the ancient rustic whose hay-cart we had shattered, as 'a d—d old crawler,' and added insult to injury by enquiring why his rotten hearse was in the middle of the road.

On the yokel pointing out that our car was in fact in that position, and that his cart was almost

in the ditch, Freddy repeated his former statement and seemed to think that that closed the discussion. Not so the rustic, who showed an aggressive desire for compensation, which was only appeased by Freddy generously presenting him with my card and remarking that I would see he was paid.

[6]

After a short inspection of the ruins we proceeded, and no further incident occurred until we reached Maidenhead, where we bagged a chicken and a small spaniel. Freddy declared that their loss would not be felt and we went straight ahead.

In the next village, Freddy, who resembles a blotting-pad in his capacity for absorbing liquid, stopped abruptly before the 'Sow and Scissors' for a reviver.

After this operation, I, mindful of our victims at Maidenhead, firmly declined to mount the car again unless Freddy gave up the steering wheel to the Chauffeur; this he did, and we soon reached Slough.

Shortly afterwards we entered the village of Little Pudley at thirty miles an hour, marking our passage by a slight entanglement with the village pump; however Freddy succeeded in jerking off the handle before it caught him in the wind, and so no harm was done beyond leaving a portion of our splash-board in the well. The calm of our progress through Hounslow and Chiswick was unbroken, and I was wiping the dust from my eyes preparatory to a gentle snooze, when without any warning except a violent shock, which threw my hat into the neighbouring gutter, the car stopped abruptly; and although we tried each of the handles in turn and subsequently all together, the sparrow-starver remained motionless.

Frederick then spoke.

[7]

When the air had cleared we discovered that the Chauffeur was again seeking the seclusion of his beloved petrol tank, but reappeared with astonishing rapidity just in time to avoid a shower of greasy black liquid which spread itself about the pavement.

Freddy shrieked 'jump,' and we jumped.

Immediately afterwards the car, groaning hideously, made with fearful speed for a saddler's shop, and was only prevented from entering by an opportune collision with a lamp-post. This appeared to annoy the death-trap, for it blew out its bonnet and then reclined peacefully against a metropolitan water-trough, from which all efforts to move it were unavailing.

After a hasty palaver we consigned the dam-thing to the Chauffeur and made for the Shepherd's Bush Tube. We journeyed as far as Notting Hill Gate, and there Freddy, having borrowed my few remaining shillings, left me and went in search of his female cousin. This compelled me to lunch with one Timmins, a man of the Inner Temple, honoured by my acquaintance, but as he had had no warning of my arrival I was obliged to make the best of two old chicken legs and some rather older Gorgonzola, and after borrowing a couple of sovereigns from him, I treated him to a theatre. On crossing Piccadilly, after the performance, we were surprised to see Freddy engaged in altercation with a cabman in front of the Criterion. We crossed over to speak to him and the guileless one seized the opportunity to borrow half a sovereign from Timmins, whose purse and patience are inexhaustible. Then having disposed of the quarrelsome Jehu we decided to take the Templar to dinner at the Cabanero, which invitation he readily accepted, possibly with the idea of getting some return for his money.

[8]

To fill up the time Timmins suggested the Aquarium, a place that both Freddy and I detest, but as we had borrowed about fifty shillings from the unfortunate man, we felt that this was the moment for a graceful concession.

On our arrival we let Timmins out of the hansom first, but in spite of this subtle move I was compelled to pay the cabby, and then firmly resisting an impassioned appeal from a golden-haired lady in the entrance to give her a bracelet or something else, we passed the turnstiles and made with one accord for the nearest bar.

I am unable to state the precise number of cherry brandies that Freddy had consumed during his absence from my care, but his lady cousin appeared to have had a distinctly exhilarating effect upon him. At any rate after two lagers had been followed by a sherry and bitters, he manifested a desire to dance, which was only suppressed by the advent of a uniformed attendant with a Bow-Street-and-seven-shillings-or-three-days glitter in his eye. The small sum of half-a-crown mollified this dignitary, a view of whose face was—as Freddy remarked—cheap at the price.

Then, while Freddy and I were watching a lady in scanty costume who was advertised to dive from the roof into a six-foot tank, Timmins disappeared. After forty minutes' diligent searching, which involved on Freddy's part a frivolous conversation with the young lady at the assorted jewellery stall, we came upon the wanderer.

[9]

He was seated in the centre of the crystal maze and a strong odour of patchouli, exchanging vows of undying affection with a lady of a certain age and uncertain character.

The cab, in which we then set out for the Cabanero, cost me another half-crown, and the dinner which followed took nearly all our remaining bullion.

However it was a great success.

Towards the end Freddy expressed a violent antipathy to the colour of the Turkish gentleman who served us with coffee, and was only quieted by the strains of the 'Girl from Kays' from the orchestra.

Dinner over, we were going downstairs, when Freddy, who appeared unable to find the bannisters, grasped the hand of an ancient and enamelled dowager who was laboriously ascending, and, greeting her effusively, enquired 'if her mother knew she was out.' Leaving the venerable relic speechless and perspiring, we saved ourselves from rough treatment at the hands of the attendants by bolting hatless into Piccadilly Circus, and here we saw the last of Timmins.

He leant into our cab, and after explaining pathetically that he had no money to pay his washing bill and that he had pawned his mother's photograph, propped himself wearily against the railings and took no further interest in the proceedings. [10]

Our arrival at Paddington a few minutes after nine was marked by wild cheers on Freddy's part and the disbursement of my last eighteenpence. A short interview with the station-master resulted in the exchange of my card for two third singles to Oxford, and a final shilling's worth at the expense of Blandford, who was returning from the funeral of an imaginary aunt, filled up the time till the train left.

After a few minutes' travelling Freddy remarked that he would feel more comfortable in the rack, and proceeded to climb up there. A little later we covered him with a seat cushion as he felt cold, and all slept peacefully till Didcot.

When we reached the draughty junction Blandford and I left Freddy, who appeared to be asleep, in search of lip-salve; but we had barely reached the refreshment room when loud crashes, followed by curious oaths and several heavy bumps, brought us back to find Freddy struggling with an inspector and two porters, while a lamp and the window of the third class waiting-room were much the worse for wear.

We conveyed him to our carriage—N.B. I gave the inspector my card—and except for throwing out a seat cushion at Culham, he relapsed into comparative inaction.

The cab in which we reached 129 St. Aldate's was paid for by Mrs. Corker, and Blandford stayed to see Freddy to bed. [11]

When I arrived at our digs the door was opened by Mrs. MacNab, whose cat seemed to have been imbibing with unusual freedom; and I found the Pilot, who had just returned from a bridge party, anxiously measuring the decanter with a pipe-cleaner.

It just occurred to me, as I was going up to bed, that I had given my card to the hay-cart proprietor, to the station-master at Paddington, and the inspector at Didcot, all of whom would have to be satisfied in the morning, while I had to repay Timmins two pounds odd, and liberally fee the Oxford porter whom Freddy had struck somewhere amidships.

Freddy said it would be very cheap; well, perhaps it was.

II.

A QUIET EVENING.

Accrington called it coffee, but Reggie stipulated for a bottle of brandy to be kept in the cupboard. As Freddy and I climbed the staircase in the corner of the Quad we heard the strident tones of our host proclaiming that he was 'looking for a needle in a haystack.' This, however, did not in any way justify Freddy's throwing an empty tobacco tin at him immediately on entering the room, and it seemed only just that the others should show their disapproval of this action by throwing their cushions at Freddy. I alone missed him, but the Pilot was rude enough to say that I must have aimed at Freddy, because I got in a bull's-eye on a tray containing glasses and syphons which was balanced on a Japanese stool in the corner. [12]

When peace had been restored, Reggie, addressing no one in particular, remarked, 'The Pilot was seen at the gathering at Martyrs' Memorial last night.' [13]

'You're an artistic liar,' replied the Pilot, who is not as meek as he looks. And the slight struggle that ensued awoke Fatty, who was peacefully perusing 'Pick-me-up' in the corner. [14]

'I don't know whose rooms these are,' he murmured sleepily, 'but it is customary among gentlemen to offer refreshment to a visitor upon arrival;' and then, after a plaintive pause, 'I have been here just three-quarters of an hour.' After his thirst had been satisfied he was led to the piano, and proceeded to play 'Hiawatha,' 'in order,' as Reggie explained, 'to get it over.' [15]

'Henry Dalston,' said Freddy, addressing the pianist, 'as a balloon you are incomparable, but as an ivory-thumper you only take a gulf, and if the same would swallow you up it would be better still.'

'He takes,' said Accrington wearily, 'he takes at least five pounds' worth of use out of my piano every term; "Hiawatha" about plays itself now.'

'Then why don't you make him hire a piano?' said Reggie.

'He used to,' put in Freddy with a gurgling laugh, 'until we played it the night he was in London, and the Dean had it sent out of College before he came back.'

These revelations were interrupted by Reggie suggesting bridge.

He once taught a Colonial Governor the game at a Swiss mountain hotel, and the Pilot, who

was with him, said he made enough to keep them in smokes for a week.

'Reggie's getting too uppish about bridge,' I remarked, as Accrington produced the cards, 'he thinks he's rather an authority.'

'Nobody,' replied Reggie, severely, 'nobody is an authority on any game till he can be sure of winning money off his opponents.' [17]

'How many does it take to play bridge?' asked Fatty, peevishly, from the window-seat; 'I hate these card games, they're always so dull.'

'Then you shan't be dull, Henry dearest,' said Freddy, landing upon Fatty's lower chest, and then, as he led him by his starboard ear into Accrington's bedder, 'Come with your Frederick, and let us cuddle together.'

As they disappeared, Accrington, moved by reminiscences of former quiet evenings, called after them uneasily:

'Kindly refrain from throwing my pyjamas out of the window, and do not, O do not, spread water about the floor.'

'The only complaint I have to make against the owner of this public-house,' said Reggie, as the Pilot dealt in the slow and solemn manner peculiar to him, 'is that when I came in at the ordinary excursion hour of 1.15 this morning, and demanded a "corpse reviver," the licensed victualler, who had retired to bed, refused to provide me with anything.'

'Freddy, who is doing contracts, says that if you don't get what you want, you may take what you can get, so I took three oranges, a brandy-bottle, and my leave. It was only after Maberly had borrowed the bottle, and served it out to seven men whom he found sleeping in his rooms on his return from the theatre, that Accrington arrived in a costume that was hardly decent, to remark that I had taken the methylated spirits. Of course we went round to see what could be done, but, as Maberly said they had got through three-quarters of the bottle, we decided to leave them in peace.' [18]

'Especially as,' added Accrington, 'when we shouted at them from the Quad, a coal-box, two boot-trees, and an alarm clock suddenly came through the window more or less in our direction.'

'The only sad thing about it,' said the Pilot, as he quietly trumped his opponent's trick, 'is that Accrington must have meant to drink those spirits himself, which in one so young is positively painful.'

'Two in diamonds,' I said, as I put down the score.

'And one in the footbath,' yelled Freddy through the open door, as a splash was heard, and Fatty appeared, dripping from the effects of an immersion in Accrington's tub.

I rose from the table and wiped Fatty tenderly down with an antimacassar; I have noticed that he always repays attentions like these by a sumptuous luncheon, or the gift of a choice cigar imported from Borneo by Dalston senior.

'Your deal, Martha,' said the Pilot, as Fatty collapsed heavily into the best chair.

I had just started when a sound of frenzied yells from the Quad caused me to pause for a moment; the shrieks grew louder, and a string of guttural oaths in very low German floated up the staircase.

'Sport the oak,' shrieked Accrington, but as Freddy reached the door it flew open, and the portly form of von Graussman, our Rhodes Scholar from the Fatherland, burst in and fell flat upon the floor. [19]

'I did my best, you fellows,' panted Cobson, who followed with a red and perspiring face, 'but he's rather fatigued, and he's been sitting on the flower-bed under the Dean's window for the last half-hour. We've put him to bed three times, but he only threw his water-jug out of window, and then came down and posed as Adam in the Quad.'

Von Graussman suddenly sat up, and remarked in a disconnected and peevish way, 'Hoch der Kaiser,' after which patriotic effort he mechanically reached for the brandy-bottle on the table near at hand.

As he removed the stopper with a shaky hand, his eye suddenly lighted on Fatty, who was gazing dreamily at the ceiling. A sudden crack followed, as the decanter caught the unfortunate Henry on the lower jaw, and spread its contents down his waistcoat. Fatty rose with a yell which would have done credit to a wild Indian, and, picking up the poker, made for the German who appeared to be quite unconscious of what he had done.

As he had propped himself against the fender and was softly crooning the 'Wacht am Rhein,' even Fatty saw that violent retaliation was out of the question, and having emptied a syphon down von Graussman's back, in order, as he said, to wake him up, he retired to change his suit. The silence which followed his disappearance was broken by Cobson remarking that it was 'time to get old Grausser to bed.' [20]

'Right oh!' said Freddy, who is always ready for an emergency, 'just you keep a watchful eye upon him while I search for his song-book.' It is well known to all members of Cecil's, that the only way to get von Graussman to bed is to let him sing a song. After he has polished off a German students' drinking chorus, a child of three could manage him with ease.

Unfortunately, as we raised the fuddled foreigner to his feet, Farmborough, who puts the

weight for the 'Varsity, and was practising in the Quad, put a clod of earth through our window. Any little trifle like this is enough to disconcert von Graussman, who immediately made a clear sweep of the ornaments on the mantelpiece, and threw them in one clattering cloud on to Farmborough's head. The immaculate de Beresford, who was crossing the Quad, received a bowl of chrysanthemums over his new winter waistcoat, while the Junior Porter, who had just emerged from the Dean's staircase, was taken somewhere amidships by a carriage clock.

At the first signs of this fresh disturbance, Accrington had hastily sported his oak, but the hoarse curses of von Graussman soon drew the offended parties to the right door, on which they continued to thump with ever-increasing vigour.

The application of a syphon to the letter-slit proved unavailing, and as Cobson had to be back in his digs at eleven, it was imperative to make a sally. The German, who had seated himself in the coal-scuttle, was past help, so we tied him to his throne with a towel, and removed all possible missiles from within his reach. Having taken these precautions, we armed ourselves with our host's last two syphons and some rotten oranges which we found in the coal bunker, and prepared for a sortie.

[21]

'They seem to have left off that d---d row,' said Freddy, 'but they're probably waiting for us on the landing, so throw back the portal, and we'll rout the foe.'

As the door swung back we saw a dim figure on the landing. Reggie took careful aim and caught it in the face with an elderly orange, Freddy bowled a chunk of coal at its feet, while Cobson got in a bull's-eye with a syphon. The sallying party then retired in good order.

'I say, Martha, who was that?' queried Freddy as we closed the door.

'It looked to me like Farmborough,' I replied.

'But,' said the Pilot, who always raises objections, 'this was in evening dress, and Farmborough hasn't been out.'

Just then some person, or persons, unknown, struck a staggering blow on the oak outside. This noise aroused von Graussman, who moved into a commanding position opposite the door, unavoidably taking the coal-scuttle with him. The next thing was the voice of the Dean demanding entrance, which caused the warlike spirit of the company to evaporate instantaneously. Accrington, with the skill born of long practice, concealed himself beneath the sofa, Reggie and I shared his bed, the Pilot, who had taken but a small part in the proceedings, sought the seclusion of the coal-bunker, while Freddy and Cobson stowed themselves behind the piano. Our efforts to induce von Graussman to hide were futile; he still retained his position, and his loudly-expressed contempt for all in authority was, I am told, audible three staircases off.

[22]

The jingling of keys outside announced to the expectant but invisible audience, that the Junior Porter was opening the oak, and the Dean made an imposing entrance to the strains of the 'Lustige Brüder,' as rendered, somewhat indistinctly, by the Graf von Graussman.

As the Dean entered, von Graussman rose with some difficulty, and after making a low obeisance—accompanied by the coal-scuttle—addressed the Rev. Fanny in a short but impressive speech which commenced with 'Mein geliebte und hochwohlgeborn Herr Professor Doktor,' and ended, after indistinct rumblings, with the words, 'damnable inshult,' 'Faderland' and 'Timeforbed.'

After this elocutionary effort was finished, he announced in a feeble voice, that he 'wongohometel morring,' and then fell heavily into the fender. The Dean (who has not used the letter R since childhood) remarked nervously, 'This is a howwid spectacle,' to which the Porter, who makes a point of agreeing with everybody, replied, 'Yes sir, certainly sir, of course sir.'

[23]

'I fear the gentleman is partially, or even totally, inebwiated,' continued the Dean, more to himself than the Porter, and then 'we will wemove him to his bedroom,' which they proceeded to do.

As soon as the melancholy procession had passed down the staircase, a black and dispirited face appeared from the coal-bunker, and suggested that the party should leave for some other and less stirring part of the College.

'It'll be allright for Grausser,' said Freddy, 'dear old Fanny had a sister who died at twenty-nine from drinking eau-de-cologne, and he's had a friendly feeling for the noble army of thirst quenchers ever since.'

'I should suggest that Accrington takes to his virtuous couch,' said Cobson, as we prepared to depart; 'if you put a night-shirt over your clothes, and get into bed, you will naturally be too sleepy to answer any questions the Dean may ask. We'll turn out the electric.'

We descended the stairs without attracting any attention, and just reached the shelter of Fatty's rooms as the Rev. Fanny and the Junior Porter returned to Accrington's staircase.

Unfortunately, though Accrington was too sleepy, as Cobson predicted, to answer the Dean's questions, Fanny spotted a stiff collar protruding from under the surplice, and retired saying that he would draw his own conclusions, and leaving a distinct chill behind him. Anyhow it was a very pleasant evening, and, as Accrington said, it was cheap at the price of four days' gating. The two pounds which von Graussman paid the Sub-Treasurer, and the three weeks during which he remained in College after hall, presumably for the good of his health, are they not duly recorded in the Chronicles of Cecil College, and of Bartholomew Wilkinson, its Dean?

[24]

III.

CONCERNING THE THEATRE.

It was quite sudden.

We were walking down the Corn one Monday morning when a poster in front of the Hyde, depicting a lady whose skin was black, whose hair was red, and whose clothing consisted of a string of beads, attracted our attention. The legend above, 'The Cannibal Girl, Grand Theatre, Tonight,' and the words below in large letters, 'Queenie Hareham,' appeared to move Freddy to tender memories. He gazed at the amazing specimen of modern art for fully three minutes, sighed heavily, and then went straight off to take tickets for Monday and Saturday.

Squiff, who can celebrate any occasion, even that of his aunt's death, with a light heart and much whisky, happily suggested a large lunch to some of the girls.

We decided to give it in Freddy's digs, for as Squiff, whose real name is the O'Rossa and who is descended from Michael, second King of Ulster, naively said, 'They're accustomed to that sort of thing at our place.'

Before the curtain fell on Monday evening fifty young gentlemen had sent fifty notes inviting one or more of the ladies of the company to any or every meal for the coming week. It is not remarkable in the light of subsequent events that Miss Kiddy Childe returned an unqualified refusal to all invitations and that the guardian of the stage-door paid off the back instalments of his rent on the following day. [28]

Freddy returned from the performance in a state of ecstatic delight, and repeatedly alluded to the good times that were coming.

'What's it like?' I asked.

'Glorious,' replied Freddy, 'and where Eileen takes Venus in the private theatricals scene its simply colossal. Here's the programme.'

And this is what I read:—

THE CANNIBAL GIRL.

Book by Tottenham Kort. Lyrics by Frederick Freshleigh. Music by Peter Pedyll.

JACK WARMLEIGH	Mr. Reginald Craven.
ANGUS MACPHEE, M.D.	Mr. Hardoph Erin.
MAJOR PHILIP FITZGIGGIN, D.S.O.	Mr. Fairlie Dunn.
CAPTAIN TITUS GINSLING (S.S. 'Oboko')	Mr. Pensell Ingpen.
THE O'HOOOLIGAN (Purser)	Mr. Sidney Cruikshank.
SOTITE (The King's Executioner)	Mr. Freke.
NOKOP (The Medicine Man)	Mr. John Philips.
HON. ALLAN CHARTERIS, R.N.	Mr. P. Gardner.
JETHRO P. HEEPZOTIN (The minced-meat magnate)	Mr. Lyon Fybbe.
KING CASKOWISKI	Mr. Stainer Black.
DOWAGER COUNTESS BEREHAMPTON	Miss Ethel Gay. [29]
EILEEN MAXWELL	Miss Ina Carlton.
MRS. JACK WARMLEIGH	Miss Kiddy Childe.
LILO	Miss Tiny Trimmer.
NOCLO	Miss Tweenie Tarn.
TOOTOO	Miss Ruby Ramsden.
MRS. MOPPER (Stewardess)	Miss Lucinda Tubb.
LADY BETTY BACKSTAYS	Miss Delia Kaardt.
AND	
HON. MRS. CHARTERIS (late Pussie Pynkley of the Jollity Theatre)	Miss Queenie Hareham.

Islanders, Guests, etc.:—Misses Lily Lingery, Legge, Hawke, Sharpe, Ferrars, Dacent, Milsom, Hamilton, Bond, Jones; Messrs. Davidson, Moss, Lowe, Hart, Isaacs, Disraeli, Braun, Joseffi, Sydenham, Hill.

ACT I. The beach at Dufrotus Island.

ACT II, SCENE 1. The fète of the Nogogos at Caskowiski's Palace.

SCENE 2. Berehampton House, Park Lane.

Wigs by Sharxon.

Ladies' dresses by Maison de Stunim. Hats by Madame Misfitte.

Miss Hareham's costumes by Idem.

'Kiddy Childe,' I said, as I put it down, 'surely that's Squiff's girl?'

'Right O, right O,' said Freddy, 'he's booked her for the whole week, and even now they're cuddling in a private room at the Hyde.'

'But,' burst out the Pilot who was bubbling with suppressed excitement, 'I wrote to her and she answered that, owing to a sad bereavement, she is not accepting any invitations. Now you say Squiff's going to have her all the week; I believe the only thing she's been bereft of—' but here a burst of laughter prevented any further explanation; for the Pilot, as Freddy coarsely puts it, is going to be a devil-dodger; and even his explanation that a clergyman must see all sides of life would hardly cover an occasion like this. [30]

'I've invited Ina and the "Three Little Wives" to tea to-morrow,' Freddy continued when the laughter had subsided, 'you see that makes a girl for each of us.'

Here Reggie expressed his approval by a loud tattoo on a tobacco tin, but broke off very suddenly on Freddy declaring:

'It must be in your digs, because Squiff's got lunch for sixteen and our landlady says she can't undertake tea after it.'

'That's very good of you,' said the Pilot solemnly.

'O don't mention it,' said Freddy, 'we shan't want your rooms again till Saturday, lunch is in Accrington's on Wednesday and at ours on Friday.'

'By-the-bye Freddy,' I remarked, 'tell your girl to bring her complexion with her.'

I stooped behind the arm-chair knowing what was coming, and so the bacca tin which followed this remark fell harmlessly upon the tram-lines outside.

'It seems to me that this week is likely to be faintly tinged with purple,' observed the Pilot meditatively, 'and if the rain keeps clear of us and we keep clear of the Proctors I prophesy a good time for the elect.'

At this point Freddy left hurriedly as the clocks were striking twelve, while the rest of us, after a short but pithy conversation through the window with O.P. 281, retired to bed. [31]

The Pilot and I spent the morning in the arduous duty of cutting lectures, while Reggie went round borrowing money to pay for a theatre ticket for the following Saturday.

At lunch in Fatty's rooms, de Beresford regaled me with a harrowing description of Squiff's misfortunes on the preceding evening.

'You see,' he said, 'poor old Squiff got no answer to the note he sent Kiddy Childe in the interval, so after the show he crawled round to the stage door and waited for her. I suppose a bull-dog must have spotted him, for when they were half-way to her lodgings the Progpiece was seen in full chase behind. Squiff clutched her hand and yelled, "Faster, faster," like the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland, and they did the record down St. Ebbe's into Paradise Square, where they got into her house unseen. Unfortunately it never struck them that their light was the only one in the Square, and this drew the Proctor like a moth. Squiff had barely time to get behind Kiddy's dress-basket and pull a cabin trunk in front of him, when the obtrusive official entered the house and insisted on looking round the rooms. The dear girl shrieked through the door that she was going to bed, and when the Proctor had convinced himself of this, he departed, leaving two men to watch the house. At least this is how Squiff explained the fact that he didn't reach his digs till 12.19.' [32]

'And,' added Fatty, 'the estimable Corker, who has not yet joined the Temperance League, had gone to bed with the door-key in her pocket entirely oblivious of the fact that Squiff had not returned, so Freddy had to haul him up by a sheet.'

'If they do these things on the Monday, I shudder to think of Saturday,' I remarked as I left to play against Barabbas', while the others made for the river. I did rather well over the match, for after amassing 48 I persuaded Accrington to field for me, and returned for our tea-party.

I thought I was fairly punctual, but when I burst into the sitting-room I found the 'Three Little Wives' in one arm-chair gloating over 'Gals' Gossip.'

'I must apologize for Lord Gilderdale not being here to receive you,' I began, when a lady whom I subsequently discovered to be Miss Tiny Trimmer clustered round me and murmured sweetly 'Oh! don't let that worry you! I suppose you're Martha?' From which I gathered that Squiff had not spent all his time behind the basket on the preceding evening. After the sweet thing had introduced me to Ruby and Tweenie as Mr. Martha Cochrane, 'the friend of Kiddy's boy,' we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable on the sofa but were immediately disturbed by Freddy who burst in like a whirlwind, exclaiming,

'I'm awfully sorry I'm late, girls, but I see the lady of the house has received you,' and then, 'where's Ina?' [33]

'Oh I expect she's still on the river with the Rajah,' said Ruby.

'What, old Jellipore?' cried the Pilot, as he came into the room; 'curse those Basutos.'

Further introductions were followed by the arrival of Reggie and the tea-tray, which was presided over by the Pilot, who seemed rather in the cold pending the arrival of Miss Carlton.

During the meal the conversation ranged from Oxford to St. John's Wood via Rhodes' Will and Protection, and on its conclusion Freddy took Tiny into our other sitting-room to inspect my

curious collection of birds' eggs.

Miss Ina Carlton not yet having arrived, the Pilot improvised on the piano while I gave Tweenie Tarn my views on marriage, and Reggie in a distant corner discussed the relative merits of Oxford and Cambridge with the delicious Ruby Ramsden.

After a bit we discovered that the Pilot had silently departed, and then Reggie considerably offered to take the fair Ruby on the river for an hour, and they left accordingly.

At half-past six we smoothed out the dents in the sofa, and Tweenie said she 'really must go.'

We thought it kinder not to go into the other sitting-room, but Tweenie enquired from the passage if Tiny meant to go home before the show or not.

As no answer was forthcoming, after a somewhat protracted farewell in the hall, I put Tweenie into a hansom and went up to dress for dinner. [34]

I did not hear Miss Trimmer depart, and when I left the house at seven the dining-room door was still closed.

All through the evening the Pilot was in a state of suppressed rage, inspired by the unfortunate Rajah of Jellipore, who had, probably quite unconsciously, kept Miss Carlton out on the river about three hours too long.

The Rajah, whose father's harem was the finest in the East, early acquired a nice taste in chiffon, and is apparently endeavouring to form a large acquaintance among the ladies of the stage, obviously, as the Pilot bitterly remarked, for recruiting purposes. However, Peter had his innings on the following day at Accrington's lunch, after which he carried off Ina for a quiet hour on the Cher, much to his host's disgust. The remainder of the day passed off very quietly.

Thursday was only remarkable for a spirited lecture by the Provost on the evils of the stage, delivered to Accrington at the leprous hour of 9.30 a.m.

Our venerable Head had met the lunch party leaving College on the preceding day, and although we all saluted him with the utmost politeness, he did not return our greeting, but passed on his way combing his beard with his fingers, which is always a sign of impending evil.

'The old bird turned very stuffy,' said Accrington, relating the occurrence afterwards, 'and said he seriously thought of informing my parents that I was wasting my time and money, and doing no good to myself or anybody else.' [35]

'The usual formula,' remarked Freddy, *en parenthèse*; 'and finished up with the parting slap that no more lunch-leave would be given me this term. I'm afraid,' he concluded, 'that the last fragments of my reputation have dissolved.'

'A reputation,' remarked the Pilot, solemnly, 'is an expensive and unnecessary luxury in Oxford, and I can only marvel at the fearful efforts daily made by many to retain what was originally only a shadow.' After this sweeping statement the unfortunate Peter was carried off to lunch at Luther House by a person with a pale face and a black cloak. As we strolled back to digs Reggie informed us that the Rajah had monopolised the entire company for the day, and there was nothing to do but to look forward to to-morrow's lunch, which was going, in Kruger's famous phrase, to 'stagger humanity.'

From an early hour on Friday the antique remnant who wheels about Woodman's cart was engaged in carrying delicacies of every kind, from champagne cup to salted almonds, towards 129, and Mrs. Corker, whose tongue has solved the problem of perpetual motion, spent the morning in listening to and immediately forgetting the numerous instructions which Squiff issued from his bedroom.

Freddy, being a Roman Catholic, fasts—on lobster mayonnaise—every Friday, so he journeyed to the extreme end of the Banbury Road to get a dispensation from Father McGinnis, his spiritual adviser. On my arrival at 11.15 with Reggie, an agonized voice from Squiff's room besought me to hurry round to the Purewell Press and demand the menus, which were Freddy's choice, and calculated to make any one sit up. When I returned from this errand I found Squiff, who had reached the collar and braces stage, issuing his fifth batch of instructions to the muddled Corker, who had propped herself against the bannisters and was weeping copiously. [36]

At this juncture Freddy did a cake-walk into the room waving the dispensation, and we toasted the McGinnis in sherry and bitters. Freddy says that no one Roman Catholic priest stays in Oxford for long, the confessions are too much for them. While we were still honouring the Reverend Father a large crowd in the street below attracted our attention, and out of it there emerged Accrington, Reggie and the Pilot, carrying between them Farmborough's bull-pup, the infamous Totters, who had apparently had a slight difference of opinion with a tram-conductor. Having deposited the ferocious animal in Freddy's bedder they joined us in the drawing-room, where the unfortunate Corker met us with the announcement that Woodman had sent round no crockery but soup-plates. This horrible catastrophe instantly revealed Squiff's marvellous faculty for dealing with an emergency. Before we had finished discussing what to do he had returned from next door bringing with him an entire dinner service which he had borrowed from the Hon. Lionel Strongi'th'arm, of Thomas', as the said gentleman was going to attend the biterminal lunch of the Swillingdon Club. This promptitude so surprised Mrs. Corker that she found it necessary to have a cup of tea with a slight dash in it, which Squiff readily granted, as he says the savoury is always better when the Corker has dipped her beak. [37]

At this moment the Pilot, who was more out of the window than in the room, espied our guests

coming down St. Aldate's, whereupon Squiff and Freddy ran down to meet them, while Reggie hastily secreted Squiff's seven signed photos of Mabel Amooore, on account, as he explained, of professional jealousy. Freddy had only just directed them to his bedroom to leave their hats, when several loud shrieks followed by heavy thumps heralded the entrance of Miss Tiny Trimmer, with Totters firmly attached to her under petticoat. As they got inside the door they parted company, and Totters leapt upon the sofa triumphantly shaking in his mouth a piece of frilled yellow silk, which Freddy rescued and locked in his private drawer as a memento. The Corker was hastily summoned to give professional assistance, after which we sat down to lunch, a party of twelve.

The late Mr. Corker's half-brother, a military gentleman of funereal aspect, by the name of Blubb, had kindly consented, for a small gratuity, to assist on this occasion; 'it being,' as he explained to Squiff, 'not my hordinary vacation, but honly to oblige.'

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'I'm so sorry about that wretched dog,' said Freddy, as he settled himself beside Tiny, 'but he was always of an enquiring nature.'

'Oh! he's not so bad as Jellipore,' replied Tiny, 'he sticks like a burr. Why, when we told him we were out to every meal on Wednesday, he had a special one at half-past eleven in the morning for us, and we had to go.'

'I've had over a dozen notes from him since we arrived,' said Ina wearily across the table, 'and he sends me poppies every day, the one flower I loathe.'

'Would you like to go out to Jellipore as Rane?' asked the Pilot.

'No, thanks,' replied Ina, 'I'm going to be the only pebble on my beach, and he's got a regular cartload on his.'

'You do generally appear to be stony, dear,' said Ruby, amidst general laughter.

'Ah! I haven't got so many kind friends as you have,' retorted Ina.

There is no knowing what this conversation might have led to, had not the Blubber appeared at Ina's elbow with uncanny stealth, and demanded in a sepulchral voice:

'Sherry wine or 'ock, Miss?'

'D'you like Oxford?' enquired Accrington, who always makes the most obvious remarks.

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'Oh! it's lovely,' responded Ruby enthusiastically, 'and so exciting. Why, only yesterday I spent an hour in a man's cupboard, because his aunt paid him a surprise visit on her way home from Scotland.'

'How very unpleasant for you, dearest,' put in Lily sweetly, 'but of course you can take care of yourself.'

'That's better anyhow,' replied Ruby tartly, 'than always wanting one of the other sex to perform that duty, like someone I know.'

Here Freddy rapped sharply on the table and cried, 'Parrot-house next door,' which remark effectually silenced the girls, but seriously upset Reggie, who had been preparing a joke for several minutes.

'I suppose you are a great authority on birds' eggs now,' queried the Pilot of Tiny, from the bottom of the table, amid a general silence.

'What do you mean?' demanded the fair one, who had completely forgotten the incident in question.

'O nothing, only you spent two hours examining Martha's collection with Freddy in our digs on Thursday afternoon.'

As nobody appeared to have anything further to say on this subject a holy hush fell upon the company, until Accrington, who had not asked a well-worn question for very nearly three minutes, demanded of Tweenie, 'Have you seen any Freshers' delights?'

'Do you mean Mr. de Beresford's canary-coloured waistcoat?' she asked.

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'Pon my word you're rather hard on poor D.B.,' said Accrington, 'didn't I see you driving over with him to—?'

Here the Blubber, with involuntary tact, created a sufficient diversion by dropping a meringue and then standing on it.

When Freddy had withered the old man with a glance, and more champagne had been dealt out all round, Squiff, who had been carrying on a *sotto voce* conversation with Miss Childe since the beginning of the meal, suddenly looked up and remarked, 'Kiddy's going to dance the "Can-can" for us after lunch.'

When I noticed the startling change which passed over the features of the Blubber, I fancied that he must have seen this graceful display of agility before, and I subsequently found the aged reprobate with his eye glued to the keyhole.

Freddy then proposed the health of the 'Cannibal Girl' Company in a neat little speech, in the course of which he mentioned that he never knew Cannibal girls wore so many clothes before.

'I haven't noticed anything excessive,' put in Reggie, who had hitherto been obscured by the shapely form of Miss Trimmer. He mentioned that he thought three such pretty wives were entirely wasted on an old Mormon like Caskowiski, especially as some of us hadn't even one

apiece.

After this the tables were hastily cleared, and a few minutes later the Bursar of Thomas', as he passed up St. Aldate's, was edified by the spectacle of a large and interested crowd collected in front of the Maison Squiff. At the first glance he could only make out the back portion of someone who appeared to be conducting an orchestra, a hideous discord proceeding from the room; but on putting on his glasses he descried a gentleman standing on a chair and holding a top hat, which a lady, who was making a marvellous display of lingerie, kicked with astounding frequency amid loud applause. 'The whole forming,' as he subsequently remarked to his friend, a genial Tutor, 'A moht degwading thpectacle for the undegwaduante, though, between ourthelves, I've theldom then it better done, even at the Folies Berthères. I hope,' he added plaintively, 'that thethe young thcoundrelth didn't thee me watching from the other thide of the threet.' The Tutor, a request for more details meeting with no response, clutched his hat and started hastily for St. Aldate's.

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After the dance was finished, it was discovered that Ruby and Reggie had silently left the room, 'in order,' as he subsequently explained, 'to talk over Freddy's stamp collection.' We left them in possession of the drawing room, and departed in couples for the river, most of us turning up again just in time for Hall.

On the following day we could see nothing of the dear girls as they had a matinée, and the Rajah succeeded in capturing them for tea. Owing to this I was able to meet Freddy, who was coming from his law lecture at St. Spirits', about 12 o'clock, at Carfax: and having picked up Accrington at the O.U.D.S., we made our way to Butler's, the florist's. Here we encountered one of those startling obstacles that turn the brightest sunshine into overwhelming darkness.

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'We are very sorry, sir, but our Mr. Butler says he can't possibly send any more bouquets round to the theatre on credit,' said the slim young person in charge of the shop, with a weary air. As we could not manage to make up the requisite amount between us, Freddy, after a little tactful persuasion, induced her to fetch the proprietor from his lunch.

The sight of one of the Earl of Paunbrough's cards, of which Freddy keeps a large stock for cases analogous to this, produced an immediate effect upon the obsequious Butler, and he readily consented to supply us with three arum lilies, some moss and a furlong of wire, the whole done up most artistically with the College ribbon, for the absurdly small price of two guineas. This arduous duty successfully performed, we returned to our respective luncheons promising to meet again at the Hyde at 6.30, when a few of us were going to dine together. On my way home I saw Verimisti, the Italian Count from King's, who was madly in love with Lucinda Tubb, a lady whose youth has long been out of sight, though she still keeps it in mind, and often refers to it. That afternoon the Unregenerate narrowly escaped a terrible calamity which might have thrown us all into the deepest mourning and put a sudden end to our innocent jollity. Squiff, who was fielding out in the deep, had been standing at ease for about half-an-hour, when he suddenly bethought him of a photograph of the fair Kiddy in his pocket, and having extracted it, was gazing at it with soulful intensity, when the ball descending like a meteor, struck him violently on the head; but thanks to a cabbage-leaf in his hat and an abnormally thick skull no great damage was done.

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We assembled as arranged at 6.30, a large but select party, though Verimisti who had had a champagne tea with Jellipore and the ladies, had already reached the confidential stage, and after twice shaking hands warmly with everybody, at once started on Accrington with a pointless Italian story which lasted all through dinner. In addition to our crowd from Cecil's we had Blandford of Barabbas', a prominent sportsman, who contributes very generously to the University Chest per the Proctors, St. Quentin of Mary's, and finally de Beresford. I am not very clear as to the events of that night after we reached the theatre; but I recollect quite distinctly that at dinner we emptied a prodigious number of bottles, chiefly in health-drinking, and that Verimisti's speech in replying for Italy was a triumph of incomprehensibility. When our party of ten finally landed at the theatre in a most hilarious mood and all wearing purple carnations, the performance had already started, for we heard the first song being roughly handled by a crowded and enthusiastic house. As we filed into our seats, some of our friends in the dress circle cheered, and we had much difficulty in preventing Verimisti from replying. Blandford created the first diversion of the evening by omitting to turn down his seat, and collapsing with some suddenness on the floor. A large party of twenty-firsters from Barabbas'—most of whom knew Blandford—rose and cheered heartily, the chorus of female savages who occupied the stage passing entirely unnoticed. The entrance of Nokop—the King's physician—however was greeted with great applause and the popular chorus of his song:—

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We've potions and pills,
Curing all ills,
Dispensed by the great Nokop,

was taken up by everyone regardless of time and tune. We were particularly pleased with a gentleman in the second row who conducted the song with much greater success than the salaried official before the footlights. After the third encore, several entire strangers in the second row rose and shook his hand, while a person in a brown bowler hat and knicker-bockers appeared in the wings and made frantic signals to refuse further demands. Von Graussman, who seemed to be feeling the heat in the dress circle, here endeavoured to address the audience to the exclusion of King Caskowiski, who had just made an imposing entrance, and the following dialogue ensued:—

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K.C. (*in a dignified manner*), 'Welcome my dusky subjects.'

V.G. (*suddenly struck by K.C.'s state robes*), 'You vas a Broctor.'

K.C. (*continues*), 'Let our wives attend us to the palace.'

V.G. (*apparently reassured on the former subject*), 'My vriends he vas a Mormon.'

At this point a bulky and uniformed official intervened and von Graussman's companion, a spectacled scholar of Cecil's, was hustled out of the theatre without a chance of explanation, just as Sotite came forward to sing his famous song. The chorus of this, beginning:

'It's tails I win and heads you lose,'

is peculiarly tricky, and even the energetic sportsman in front was unable to keep the field altogether, for the orchestra finished first by a short bar, followed by Sotite and the Barabbas party, the rest of us being left at the post. Verimisti indeed, continued to sing the refrain through the whole of the next verse.

The landing and entrance of the English party created immense enthusiasm, though I failed to see why the Hon. Mrs. Charteris should come ashore in a skirt considerably above her knees, and Angus MacPhee's toppler and frock-coat seemed peculiarly out of place on a Cannibal Island. After the inevitable chorus, there followed the 'Three Wives' song, which received seven encores, and then Freddy, who, we understand had seen the piece before, declared that there was nothing of interest to follow, and drove us outside, 'being,' as he remarked, 'Called to the Bar.' Before we could regain our seats the curtain had fallen on the first act, and finding it impossible to remain in the crowded saloon, we paraded the street for ten minutes. When we got in again we found the second act in full swing, Ginsling and a chorus of female cabin-boys in a cake-walk receiving repeated encores, after which the self-appointed conductor went out to drown the microbes, returning just in time for Mrs. Mopper's song on the perils of the ocean. The last verse of this was entirely lost through the attempted entrance of four members of the Snorters' Club from Tydvil College, who were eventually ejected—after having embroiled most of the audience near the door—by four uniformed officials, assisted by the box-office clerk and two programme boys. But we afterwards discovered that Ironsides, the heavy-weight champion, left a limb of the law on the door mat, while a programme boy who had clung to him was deposited on a hay-cart in the yard of the Hyde. The sympathies of the audience were all with the Snorters, and after a brief though stirring speech from Reggie on the rights of Englishmen, the Barabbas men behind rose en masse and demanded somebody's blood; but when the popular manager explained that the Lessees had gone home in a hansom they were appeased and resumed their seats for Queenie Hareham's favourite song 'They all of them have tried it on with me.' After this the plot, in the fashion of musical comedies, was recklessly abandoned, and Jack Warmleigh did a Coon dance with Lady Betty Backstays. But the Hon. Alan Charteris, R.N., who attempted to sing a love song totally unconnected with the piece, was greeted with loud shouts of 'Go off'; and then ensued a general mystification of the audience by dressing every character as some one else, including Mrs. Charteris' appearance as the Cannibal Girl, which finished the first scene and gave another interval for lip-salve. Our little refreshment cost us nothing this time, as a complete stranger from the dress circle, who described himself in quavering tones as the 'Great Mogul,' absolutely insisted upon providing us all with lotion, though Freddy's back teeth were already under water. Owing to a free fight which took place in the ladies' cloak-room between de Beresford and a most indigestible looking person from Llewellyn's, whose face he said annoyed him, we did not regain our seats until the next act was well under weigh. A gentleman from Barabbas', after having kissed my hand, insisted upon my sitting on his knee, and addressed me fondly as 'The Queen of the May.' Owing to this and a tired feeling which came over me about this time, I saw nothing for quite ten minutes. When I next looked at the stage I found that the theatricals at Berehampton House were going strong, and the tableau representing Eileen Mervyn as Venus with King Caskowski as Apollo balancing an apple on his head, was hailed with rapturous applause. The next tableau showed a lady wrapped in little else but mystery pointing to the sky, but before I had time to enquire what she was supposed to be, the gentleman on whose knee I was sitting suddenly shifted his position and I fell rather heavily to the floor. During the tableaux a fearful din prevented any songs reaching us, while the party from Barabbas' appeared to be having a concert to themselves. At last the curtain fell amid cries of 'Speech' from all sides, and something in dress clothes with an enormous paste stud and a Roman nose advanced in front of the members of the Company and their respective bouquets. His lips appeared to be moving, but as there was no abatement of noise the curtain soon fell for the last time and we felt our way out while two King's men strove heroically to remove the big bassoon.

We enjoyed a most successful supper with our lady friends, at which Verimisti failed to put in an appearance. On our way home we danced the Lancers at Carfax, and after vainly demanding a speech from the Principal of Barabbas', whose house looks onto the High, retired to bed.

Reggie said the departure of the Company on the following morning reminded him of a Roman General's triumph, and proved a positive harvest time for the cabbies. The smallest computation put the number of undergraduates present at a hundred and twenty, but the Proctor on his arrival only succeeded in entrapping eleven, of whom three had leave to go to town and one had come to meet his uncle.

The state of Accrington's clothes, after spending half-an-hour in the lamp-room, was the cause

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of much profanity, while Squiff, who had climbed into a coal-truck, proved quite unrecognisable. But the adventures of the immaculate de Beresford put these misfortunes quite into the shade, for he was carried off in a horse-box to Stow-on-the-Wold, and only returned about 10 p.m. minus his watch-chain and cigarette-case, which he left at that remote spot as security for his dinner and return ticket.

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However, even the solemn Pilot admitted that it was a very good week.

IV. THE MUTUAL HELP SOCIETY.

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The credit of the idea must be given to Reggie; he suggested it at a time when we were all in low water and when his birthday gifts from loving uncles and aunts had just poured into Reggie's receptive hands, so no mercenary motives can be imputed to him. If the idea did not turn out the brilliant success we anticipated, that was due to faults in the system, and not in the promoters.

We were all in Reggie's rooms one day, forming a small committee of Ways and Means, with, as Squiff said, plenty of ways and no means, when Reggie suddenly remarked, 'Why shouldn't we have a fund?'

The Pilot, who conceals a tendency to make obvious and painful puns behind a solemn demeanour, had just begun, 'The fundamental principle—,' when Reggie remarked sadly, 'I am serious.'

When the Pilot had been suppressed with two cushions and a syphon; Squiff inquired, 'A fund, what for?'

'For mutual help,' answered Reggie.

'Oh! a sort of coal-and-clothing-mothers'-meeting-keep-the-baby-warm kind of article,' put in Freddy.

'Not at all,' said Reggie, 'it will be something like this. I propose that each member—'

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'Who are the members to be?' interrupted Squiff.

'That,' replied Reggie with an airy wave of the hand, 'we can settle later. Each member shall contribute say five or eight pounds a term, which will be handed to the Treasurer and kept by him—'

'If Squiff is made Treasurer the money will certainly be kept by him,' interjected the Pilot.

After I had picked up the china ornament and the table-leg which were broken in the subsequent scuffle, Reggie continued, 'The money will be kept by the Treasurer, who will not be a paid official, and used in time of stress by the members. For instance, supposing a summons has to be paid, or a railway-fare to town is required, the member needing the money will go to the Treasurer, and after pledging his word that the circumstances are urgent shall withdraw just as much as is needed and no more. There will also be special rules about repayment.'

'They will be needed,' I remarked; 'and we must also have "urgent circumstances" clearly defined, as I foresee trouble on that score.'

'Well,' said Squiff, 'if every one is agreed, that some such Society is needed, let us draw up the rules at once. If an undertaking like this is left under discussion after the first week of term the subscriptions will have to be lowered to five shillings, and that won't be much use.'

'Rule 1,' said Reggie, tapping the table with a paper-knife, 'That this Society be known as the "Cecil College Mutual Help Society."''

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Rule 2, 'That the terminal subscription be five pounds with no entrance-fee, but that the membership be strictly limited.'

'I think—' began the Pilot.

'Wait a moment till I have read out what I've written down and then we can discuss it,' said Reggie.

Rule 3, 'That all repayments of amounts drawn out over and above a member's own subscription be made within eight weeks.'

Rule 4, 'That every member before drawing out money must pledge his word that the circumstances are urgent. Such urgent circumstances must be taken to mean the entire lack of money on the borrower's part, and the immediate necessity for a loan. Urgent circumstances do not include the need of theatre tickets, bouquets, suppers, payments of accounts before a solicitor's letter has been received, or payment to any tailor or photographer.'

Rule 5, 'That no money be borrowed during the first two weeks of term, and that no member who has failed to make repayment within eight weeks may avail himself of the privileges of membership until such repayment be made.'

Rule 6, 'That in the event of all funds being exhausted before the last week of term, the Treasurer—who shall be elected terminally—shall call a meeting to announce the fact.'

Rule 7, 'That any money left over—'

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'We can dispense with that rule,' remarked Squiff, 'there never will be any money left over.'

'That's all I've got down,' said Reggie, 'discussion may now commence.'

'Supposing,' remarked the Pilot, who is always ready with an objection, 'supposing that the Treasurer himself borrows all the available funds at the beginning of the third week, or that he goes away leaving the money locked up, what is to happen?'

'I propose rule seven,' said Squiff. 'The Treasurer to be unable to borrow without consulting two members, and in case of absence to appoint a deputy.'

'Of course he must keep accounts,' said Freddy; 'and is responsible for collecting repayments and subscriptions.'

'It's a good idea,' I said; 'but will it work?'

'We can but try,' replied Reggie. 'It saves incessant borrowing and is simple; both of which are great points in its favour. Are we all agreed on these seven Rules?'

'Oughtn't we to limit the borrowing powers of each member?' asked Freddy.

'That wouldn't be any use,' said Reggie; 'but we can frame rule eight. That each member only borrow sufficient for his urgent need, and give to the Treasurer a statement of his reason for borrowing. That ought to be sufficient.'

'I think so,' agreed Freddy; 'but we ought to exclude betting from the Urgent Circumstances.'

'Right!' said the Pilot, 'and now for the members. There are five of us, Accrington will be six, von Graussman seven, and Fatty eight: that gives us forty pounds, which will do to start on. Suppose we appoint Fatty treasurer, he has a good head for figures.'

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This proposal was unanimously carried, as Fatty was not present to decline the honour, and the meeting adjourned till the following evening in Fatty's rooms. In the meanwhile the objects of the Club were explained to the other three in moving terms, and they promised their adherence. Von Graussman, whose father is a great Austrian financier, had grave doubts about the scheme, and wrote to his people for advice; meanwhile however, we collared his subscription, and he became, however unwillingly, a member.

A proposal by Fatty, who does not play cards, to exclude Bridge from the list of Urgent Circumstances was negatived by seven to one. The Pilot also was as usual full of objections, but these were overruled, and the Cecil's Mutual Help Society started on its brief, but bright, career.

The first fortnight of the term was uneventful, and marked only by sustained attacks on the integrity of the Treasurer, by bribery and threats in order to induce him to break rule five. These having failed there was nothing to do but wait. On the first morning of the third week—it was a Saturday—Accrington and Squiff met at 9.15 at the bottom of the Treasurer's staircase, and a race ensued for Fatty's bedroom. The official however declared with unnecessary heat that business hours did not begin till 10.30, and so they were obliged to retire till then. At a quarter past ten, Squiff, who is an adept at manœuvring, returned and began a conversation with Fatty who was at breakfast, which lasted till the clock struck half-past and Accrington's step sounded on the staircase, and then he jumped up and remarked quietly 'I want two tenners out of the Fund.' Accrington, who arrived almost breathless, only required a modest five. Fatty took a seat at table with a large account-book and a stylo. He took Accrington's case first as being the simpler, and was quite ready to advance the money, but some difficulty occurred in interpreting the rules.

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'How does one pledge one's word within the meaning of the Act?' enquired the Treasurer plaintively.

'I should make him swear horribly,' remarked Squiff; 'I don't think he's the sort of person I should trust with the funds of any Club.'

The roll which Accrington threw at him did not hit him, but finished the career of a small china dog which had belonged to Fatty's grandmother, and smashed two liqueur-glasses into fragments. When peace had been restored, Accrington produced a summons from Tuneham and Keighley—the piano-people in the High—for 'the hire of piano for two years, tuning, replacing broken keys, do. wires, do. candlesticks, do. pedals, £5/2/-: paid by cash, 2/-. Total owing. £5.' This convinced Fatty, who handed over a cheque for five pounds without demur, and Accrington left rejoicing.

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Squiff's case was harder:

'At the end of last term,' he explained to Fatty, who had assumed a judicial aspect, 'I had to raise money on my motor in order to have four nights in town and do the Rigger Match properly. It is still in Goldstein's clutches: yesterday I got a telegram to say that my Uncle Terence—Sir Terence MacGurkin, my mater's brother—who gave me the car, is coming down here, and wants me to take him for some nice spins. If he finds I've pawned it, there'll be the devil to pay, and the uncle certainly won't pay him, nor me. I shall have to run up to town to-day, get the mo-mo, pay Goldstein, and drive it down here, ready for Uncle Terence to-morrow; and,' he concluded rapidly, 'if the urgency isn't apparent even to you'—'Don't be rude,' interpolated Fatty—'then nothing will ever penetrate your brain.'

'I think,' Fatty had begun, when hurried steps sounded on the stairs and von Graussman appeared clad in a most curious costume, and with unbrushed hair. To him Squiff immediately said, 'I don't think, old chap, that you ought to present yourself in a costume like that before the Treasurer of the Cecil's Mutual Help Society, you look as if you hadn't been to bed all night, and

then had got up too early, if such a thing is possible.'

'It vos alright perhaps that I must be given nineteen pounds by Mr. Fatty from the moneys of the lately formed-and-much-to-be-commended-by-needy-gentlemens-'Elp-Clubs,' he remarked in one breath.

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'Once more!' shrieked Squiff ecstatically.

'I vos not repeading,' replied von Graussman with dignity, 'in der worts of Bilate vot I vos say I had shpoken.'

'What Pilate really said—' began Squiff, when Fatty who had sunk into a sort of reverie, suddenly awoke and thumped on the table vigorously. 'The valuable time of the Treasurer is being frittered away,' he remarked solemnly. 'The case of the O'Rossa is under consideration. He has explained his need for twenty pounds; the only remaining formality is the pledging of his word. When he has done that I will hand over the cheque.' Squiff, who had been speaking to von Graussman, hurriedly pledged his word and left to catch the 12.10 to town, while von Graussman proceeded to pour into Fatty's ears a long and disconnected tale in which the words, 'Boliceman,' 'damnable,' 'fraulein,' and 'gompensations,' appeared frequently, so Fatty gathered that it had some reference to an escapade in town during the week before term. However, as von Graussman was prepared to swear to the urgency of the circumstances, he saw no reason why he should not advance the amount, but discovered to his horror that there were only fifteen pounds left. He explained this to the German, who replied that 'he could sew der matters up mit so much,' and went off with the Club's last money. Fatty, who saw in this a speedy ending to the worries of a Treasurership, contentedly entered the amounts in his book, and then took a cab to his History Lecture at James'.

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It was only when Freddy casually applied for two pounds to pay Foundry deceased—on account—that he discovered that the end of the money did not imply the end of his troubles.

'You lent twenty pounds to Squiff,' screamed Freddy; 'why, you know he's overdrawn his next month's allowance and pawned his dressing case.'

'I didn't know,' replied Fatty placidly, 'besides, it seems to me that those are the very circumstances in which the Club becomes useful and even necessary.'

'Yes, but,' retorted Freddy, 'he won't be able to pay it back for weeks, and I know I shall want to borrow next week.'

'Come early and leave early,' remarked the Treasurer irritatingly. 'If you'd come at half-past ten when the office opens you might have got something. As it is you must wait till some one pays in.'

'Anyhow,' remarked Freddy, 'by rule six you must call a meeting and announce that all funds are exhausted, and I don't envy you the job, as I know Martha was coming round to borrow in the morning, and Reggie is sure to be hard up as well.'

The meeting fulfilled the expectation of Freddy; it was stormy on the part of Reggie and myself, placid on Fatty's, and calmly indifferent on the part of the original borrowers. Freddy demanded a further subscription which Squiff and von Graussman opposed. Eventually we arranged a compromise by which everybody was to pay in three pounds within three days, and the meeting broke up. For the next few days events progressed quietly until another meeting was suddenly summoned to report that Reggie and I having borrowed a tenner each, and Fatty himself—by permission—the remaining four pounds, funds were again exhausted, and as the time for repayment had not nearly expired we were once more at a standstill. Eventually a motion was passed by six to two, Squiff and von Graussman dissenting, that the time for repayment of the original loans should expire on the following Saturday. This caused great perturbation among the borrowers, but by the help of an overdraft at the bank von Graussman scraped up the money, and Accrington paid in his five pounds without any difficulty. The real blow to our Club fell upon us on the Sunday when the third meeting within three weeks was called to announce the absence of funds: this positively staggered us, but we had not counted on Squiff's presence of mind. On the day before, which was fixed for paying in, he had given Fatty his cheque for twenty pounds, and had immediately afterwards drawn out the available twenty pounds—paid in by von Graussman and Accrington—on the plea of Urgent Necessity, which we discovered to be the paying of the overdraft which he knew he must have at his bank, but as the overdraft turned out to his great surprise to be some forty pounds, of course they would not cash his last cheque, and the funds of the Club shrank to a worthless cheque for twenty pounds: this last manœuvre gave Squiff, as Freddy foolishly pointed out to him, another six weeks in which to pay off his debt to the Club, and a proposal to make all loans repayable in three days was lost by one vote. The numbers were equal, all who had borrowed voting against, and all who were free of debt, for the proposal. However, as Fatty had the casting vote, and owed the Club four pounds, the motion was lost. Our attempts to find a method of putting the Society on its legs again failed, and we agreed that we must bury it in the depths of forgetfulness.

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As a gallant attempt to find a solution to a most pressing question it was very praiseworthy, but as a working institution it was a regular fiasco. Fatty explained his subsequent failure in Diver's as the result of having to settle up the somewhat confused accounts of the defunct Club; myself, I attribute it to the fact that he defined Lydia—the purple seller of Thyatira—as 'a province in Asia Minor.'

It was on a Wednesday morning that I repaired to the Maison Squiff and found Freddy in a well-worn blazer perusing a coroneted letter signed 'Paunbrough,' which he silently handed me to read. I discovered that it was a communication from the noble owner of Coffington Castle, County Down, enclosing Butler's bill with a dirty card attached. The latter enquired in terms more direct than polite why the hot place Freddy had been distributing his father's cards about Oxford, and stated that he, the noble Earl, was condemned if he would pay thirty shillings for a bouquet to a low ballet girl. It concluded with the final slap that Messrs. Swindell and Rooke, the family solicitors, had instructions not to pay over another monthly allowance until they received Butler's bill receipted. This crushing communication was pointedly signed 'Your loving father,' and a postscript demanded the return of any more of his Lordship's cards which Freddy might have purloined.

'Rather rough,' I said, 'but you can go on for another month anyhow, yesterday was the First.'

'Not much,' said Freddy, 'the governor's sharper than you'd think to look at him, and he telegraphed to the sharks to stop my instalment yesterday.'

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While we were discussing this trying situation, Mrs. Corker appeared bearing a blue envelope which she shot into my lap. It was addressed to—

Viscount Gilderdale,
129 St. Aldate's, Oxford,

and so I handed it on to Freddy, who courageously opened it. The contents proved to be merely an official confirmation of the noble lord's own letter, which, as Freddy ruefully observed, was 'rather like rubbing it in.'

'Can you pay Butler for me, and then I'll get my thirty quidlets?' he asked.

'I haven't got a penny,' I replied, 'but can't Squiff supply the needful?'

'Oh! he's worse off than we are; but I'm sure he wouldn't mind our taking his silver candlesticks round to Ranger's "for one night only,"' said Frederick. 'They ought to fetch thirty shillings, and then we shall get thirty pounds, and twenty to one are good enough odds for me.'

'Well, at any rate,' I said, 'Let's try the Pilot first, and Accrington.'

'Whatever we do, must be done quickly,' said Freddy, as he searched frantically for a notebook, 'I'm in for Contracts next week, and Anson is heavy on my chest.'

'Let's go along to College,' I suggested, 'Accrington's working day and night for his second shot at Mods., so he's sure to be in.'

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As we reached Cecil's the Pilot emerged from the porch carrying Cook's Commentary on Habakkuk, and three large red notebooks; he is in for Honour Theology, but as in a recent essay he explained the word Gamaliel as meaning 'the Pavement,' while Gabbatha became 'the lady who died after knitting coats and garments,' we fear he is not very far advanced. Without any preamble we demanded thirty shillings, but the Pilot, whose money affairs are in fearful confusion, explained that he had just borrowed three pounds off his tailor, and could not possibly lend us anything.

We accordingly hurried on into College, and found Accrington surveying two summonses spread out on Hawkins' Handbook to Logic, which invaluable work he was endeavouring to learn by heart before Monday.

Freddy had just begun 'Can you lend,' when his eye fell upon the blue documents, and the request died upon his lips.

'No, I'm very sorry I can't,' said Accrington, 'can you?' But nobody laughed at this; the situation was altogether too grave.

It appeared from a perusal of these documents that Messrs. Hooper, of the High, and Daniel Dickens and Co., the picture dealers, had taken out a summons signed by a certain Frank Bolton, Mandatory,—whatever that might be—which bade 'Stephen Kirkbury Accrington appear personally or by his proctor at the Apodyterium of the Convocation House to answer the plaintiff's claim.'

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Some paragraphs on the back remarked 'that if the debt claimed is more than six years old, that if you were then or are now a married woman, or have been discharged under the Bankruptcy Act, notice must be given three days before the hearing.'

These parting shots did not appear to give Accrington any comfort, and he said that he was trying to raise a loan from the family lawyer. We condoled with him, and then seeing clearly that there was no hope for us in that quarter, hastened back to pawn the candlesticks before Squiff's return.

On the stairs of their digs we met Mrs. Corker, who was, as usual with her during working hours, very much out of breath, but she managed to pant at Freddy,

"Ave you seen Mr. O'Roozer, me lord?"

'No,' said Freddy, 'has he been in?'

'O yes, me lord,' replied the old lady, "'e came in about 'arf an hour ago and asked for your lordship, 'e said as 'ow 'e wanted to see your lordship most pertickler.'

'But about ten minutes ago,' she continued, now in a tone of mingled wonder and indignation, 'as I was a-goin up these 'ere stairs, I met 'im a comin' down with them there 'andsome candlesticks under 'is harm, and when I says, "I'll clean 'em for yer, Mr. O'Roozer, if that's what yer wants," 'e said, "No thank yer, Mrs. Corker, I'm afraid nothin' what you could do wouldn't be no use, I think I shall 'ave to soak them," and then blessed if 'e didn't rush out of the front door an' get into a cab, silver candlesticks an' all, a laughin' most haffable.'

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There might have been more of these appalling revelations to follow, but at that moment I caught sight of Freddy's face, on which there had settled a blank look of consternation, and we marched upstairs together, much sadder if wiser men.

'Well, what the deuce we are going to do now, I'll be shot if I know,' he said as we shut the door behind us. 'Squiff's gone and popped the only marketable commodity in the house, and there are thirty precious pounds in London simply waiting for me to send for them.'

'I know,' I said; 'couldn't Webster, your old scout in College, lend you thirty shillings for one day? I've been told that he runs a house at Margate, and is worth nearly five hundred a year. Some of these College servants are regular Croesuses.'

'Yes, that's not half a bad idea, Martha; in fact it's about the only thing we can do; let's go round and interview the old bird at once.'

So saying we descended the well-worn stairs again, and hurried round to see the mysterious Webster, who wears a coat like a banker, and always takes front seats at the best concerts.

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The worthy man readily lent us the needful, and so that little trouble came to an end.

Misfortunes, however, never come singly, and only that evening Reggie and I and the Pilot were progged in the Hyde, and requested in the politest manner to call on the Junior Proctor at Gloucester at 9.30 next morning.

'I suppose,' said the Pilot, mournfully, as we moved off, 'that this is a quid-touch, but where my adjectived quid is to come from I don't know.'

'Je ne sais pas, you don't sais pas, and he doesn't sai pas,' quoted Reggie.

'Freddy gets his oof to-morrow, but certainly not by nine,' I said.

'Then the only thing to be done is to ask the man to wait a day, and borrow the money from Freddy when he gets his cheque,' remarked the Pilot, cheerfully.

On the following morning we dropped anchor in the Gluggins porch at 9.30, and asked for the J.P.'s rooms, which we found in the well-known row of cottages on the left of the garden, with three bull-dogs guarding the door. When our names had been taken, Reggie went in, and came out smiling after a short interview.

'Told me to let him have it by one o'clock,' muttered Reggie, as the Pilot passed in. 'I said I expected a remittance from my aunt.'

In a moment the Pilot also returned looking as solemn as usual. 'He got rather angry when I mentioned a remittance from my aunt, but let me off till one o'clock,' he remarked.

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When I was shown in, I found the J.P., a round and pompous little man, robed and banded, standing by the table.

'I suppose, Mr. Cochrane,' he began at once, 'that you, like the other two gentlemen whom I have just seen, are expecting a remittance from your aunt.'

'No, sir,' I replied meekly, 'my great uncle always attends to these matters, but I am certainly expecting a remittance from him.'

This soft answer, instead of turning away the dignitary's wrath, caused him to grow purple in the face, but he controlled his temper very creditably and merely said,

'Very well, Mr. Cochrane, I give you till one o'clock, but if the twenty shillings are not in my hands by that time I shall communicate with your Provost and make matters unpleasant for you, er—good morning.'

I joined the other two, and Reggie returned with me to breakfast, but the Pilot, who had to attend the Dean's lecture at ten, put off his meal till eleven.

As we made our way through the buttered eggs it became more and more clear that Reggie had a grievance, and at last it came out.

'Here am I, a working man'—this is where I coughed, but Reggie did not appear to notice it—'with two lectures between now and lunch, both of which I am compelled to cut because an unfeeling Proctor is dunning me for a pound, which I must borrow from some one before one o'clock.'

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'Yes, it is very hard,' I agreed. 'But still I believe you have occasionally steeled your heart to cut a lecture even when there has been no Proctor in the background, and after all he can't help it, it's his business; I daresay if you knew him you'd find that he smoked a meerschaum and swore very much like other people.'

'Yes, I know, that's all right,' said Reggie, who never likes to pursue an argument after he has got his own particular complaint off his chest, 'we'll wait for the Pilot to have his brekker and then go round to see Freddy.'

'He's sure to have his cheque by then,' I said, 'and of course he'll lend us the wherewithal.'

The Pilot finished breakfast at 11.20 precisely, and then after carefully perusing the current society divorce case, we made our way to St. Aldate's.

We found Freddy crouching in an arm-chair murmuring to himself passages from Anson, and instantly demanded if the money had arrived.

'Oh, I dare say it'll come some time to-day,' said Freddy, crossly, and muttered to himself, 'Agents of Necessity.'

'That's no earthly good,' replied the Pilot, 'we must find three quid by one o'clock and the oof-tree bears no fruit at this time of year.'

'What's the money for?' demanded Freddy.

'Progged in the "Shades,"' responded Reggie laconically, 'and you are going to pay the fine.'

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'I didn't know it before,' Freddy answered, 'but of course if the money comes in time it's yours.'

'We must manage it somehow,' I said, 'when's the next post?'

'Ring and ask the Corker, I don't know.'

'Which it sometimes comes at a quarter to one, and sometimes at 'arf past,' said the old lady on being interrogated.

When he heard this the Pilot collapsed heavily into an arm-chair, while Freddy, who did not yet fully appreciate the gravity of the situation, went upstairs to search for a note-book in the other sitting-room.

Soon after he had left the room a raucous voice was heard downstairs enquiring for Milord Gilderdale, and the Corker appeared to be engaged in an animated discussion with the owner thereof.

From two heavy thumps on the ceiling I gathered that Freddy had heard the caller's voice and did not desire to interview him.

Mrs. Corker now appeared, and after expressing surprise at Freddy's absence, asked me to interview, and if possible dispose of 'that there houtrageous man in the 'all.'

On descending I found a corpulent man, with a rubicund face and no perceptible chin, standing with a sheaf of documents in his hand.

'Good mornin', sir,' he said, 'Hi come from Dopin and Bleeder's the 'orse-dealers, and I've got a little bill 'ere for yer, honly a matter of fifteen pounds, as I'll trouble you to settle.'

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'Doping and Bleeder,' I murmured, 'I don't know the people.'

'Now look 'ere, sir,' he said with an expression which betokened sorrow rather than anger, 'none o' these little games, you're Lord Gilderdale, haren't you?'

'Certainly not,' I replied crossly, 'next time perhaps you will make sure of whom you are talking to before you descend to impertinence, my man; little games indeed.'

'Ho, then you're the O'Roozer,' he remarked, 'I've got a bill for you for twenty-three pounds seventeen and fourpence.'

'What's the fourpence for?' I queried, but by this time the portly gentleman was getting somewhat angry.

'Never yer mind, sir, it's for value received, hand given,' he said, 'an' our Mr. Bleeder says as 'ow 'e 'opes you'll see your way to lettin' 'im 'ave the money this week, or 'e'll 'ave to take proceedings, which is always most repugnant both for you and hus.'

'Now you've got that off your chest, you can go,' I said, 'I'm not Mr. O'Rossa nor am I Lord Gilderdale. Good-day.'

But the worthy representative of Messrs. Doping and Bleeder was not so easily disposed of.

'Now look 'ere,' he said, 'Hi believe that it's hall a bloomin' 'oax, if yer aint Wiscount Gilderdale, an' yer hain't the Ho Roozer 'oo the blazes are yer?'

At this stage of the proceedings I opened the door and beckoned O.P. 281, who was lounging against the wall of the Town Hall opposite, to advance.

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'I give this person into custody,' I began, but this proved sufficient, the man from D. and B.'s had fled with unprecedented speed, and so after pouring palm oil into the ever-ready hand of the worthy officer, I went upstairs.

I found the other three gazing anxiously at the clock, which pointed to a quarter to one, and appeared to be advancing terribly quickly.

'Hadn't we better call a cab,' said the Pilot; 'supposing the oof does turn up about five to, we shall have to drive to the bank before we can go to the Proctor.'

'Yes, my aunt, I'd never thought of that,' said Reggie, 'It'll take fully another minute and a quarter, say even one and a half, and minutes are exceptionally precious just now.'

At this juncture the Corker, who was as excited as anybody, rushed breathlessly into the room and gasped, 'The postman 'as just left Thomas,' me lord, an' 'e'll be 'ere in a minute.'

'No, by Jingo, that's ripping,' cried Freddy, 'we must be getting off then,' and as he spoke we all rushed downstairs together.

While we were picking our caps out of the collection in the hall, the Pilot, who always acts the part of Job's comforter on these occasions, remarked slowly, 'I say, what shall we do if the draft doesn't come?'

'We shan't do anything, we shall be done,' I said.

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'Well, anyhow, here's the postman and we shall know our fate,' put in Freddy running to the door, as footsteps shuffled on the pavement outside. He threw it open, and clutched a packet of letters from the hands of the postman, and then for the first time for many a long day, he fearlessly tore open a long blue envelope, extracting a letter which he dropped on the floor, and a cheque for thirty pounds, which he carefully examined.

We then got into Morgan's hansom and drove at an alarming speed to the Bank, but to our horror we found the doors closed when we got there, and the grey-haired man, who was sweeping the steps outside, informed us, what we ought to have remembered, that the bank shuts at one o'clock on Thursdays, and it was just striking the hour on Carfax.

'Gloucester,' shrieked Freddy, as we bundled into the cab, and shot down the Corn at a fearful rate in the direction of Gluggins. The black clock over the archway pointed to four minutes past as we got out, I clutching the draft, while Freddy waited in the cab, discussing the prospects of the National with Morgan through the trap in the roof.

The J.P. received us with a frown, and remarked coldly, 'Punctuality is the politeness of princes, Mr. Arlington.'

'I am afraid we put our trust in postmen, not princes,' replied Reggie; 'and ours was late this morning; however, if you wouldn't mind changing this cheque, sir, we're ready to pay you.'

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'Really, sir, your conduct in this matter is most surprising,' said the Proctor; 'first you come here unpunctually, and now you offer me a large cheque on behalf of yourself and your companions, whom I am afraid are no better than you are.'

'But the bank is closed,' put in Reggie.

'How do you mean the bank is closed, Mr. Arlington?'

'It's Thursday, sir,' chimed in the Pilot.

'Well, Mr. Meredith, I don't see, if the bank closes at one o'clock, why you didn't go there before.'

'But Freddy's—I mean Lord Gilderdale's—cheque didn't arrive till one o'clock,' said Reggie.

'I fail to understand what connection Lord Gilderdale has with this matter,' said the Proctor.

'Oh,' said Reggie, 'none of us had any money just at present, but we knew Gilderdale expected a cheque from his solicitors this morning, and he promised to lend us a sovereign each.'

'Oh, then, I am really fining Lord Gilderdale for your delinquencies; this is a very fine situation, Mr. Arlington,' said the Proctor, with a nearer approach to geniality than we had hitherto seen.

'Well, sir, hardly that,' I put in; 'you see all three of us really are expecting remittances of our own as we told you this morning, but as Lord Gilderdale's arrived before any of ours he very kindly lent us three pounds.'

'Very well then, gentlemen,' said the Proctor, 'I don't know that this arrangement is quite regular, or that it would exactly meet with the approval of the Vice-Chancellor, but after all you have produced the amount of your fines, and it is no business of mine to enquire how you obtained that amount. I am sorry to say that I believed at first that your slight unpunctuality was due to disrespect, and that you were trying to do what I believe the present generation would call "pulling my leg" over these cheques, but I see that I misjudged you, and shall ask you to bring the money at ten to-morrow. Good morning, Mr. Arlington; good morning, gentlemen, good morning,' and so saying the little man collapsed into his arm-chair, while we departed on our way more or less rejoicing.

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Freddy, to whom we communicated the result of the interview, soothed our consciences with the very plausible, if somewhat immoral, argument:

'It don't do to give that sort of bird too much truth all in a lump, he ain't accustomed to it; besides, if you start bringin' him up on it, he'll always expect it.'

On our return to 129 St. Aldate's we took Squiff to task severely for daring to dispose of his own silver candlesticks on the previous day; as Freddy remarked, 'What are things coming to when a man can do as he likes with his own property?'

'I know where things are going to,' responded Squiff, 'and that is to Ranger's in Beerage Street, I've had a breezy time lately; thank heaven term is nearly over.'

'Ditto, ditto,' remarked the Pilot mournfully; 'if one looks back at the end of any term, there always seem to be so many things which one might have done and hasn't; and such a lot of entirely unnecessary things which have come off most successfully. When I remember that, out of 751 allotted pages of Cook's Commentary on Habakkuk, I have read exactly 57, the hollowness of

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life comes upon me with crushing reality.'

'Poor old Pilot,' laughed Squiff, 'he's got "the recollections" badly.'

'I shall shortly have "the Collections" much worse,' replied the Pilot.

'Thank goodness,' remarked Reggie fervently, 'that terminal reports are not sent home to our "parents or guardians" from this University; what awful shocks they'd get.'

'A printed record of gate-sconces and fines during residence should be given to every one on their departure, and the number of windows broken by the future B.A. should be certified by the Provost,' I said.

'Or even better,' replied the Pilot, 'a record of theatres attended, with musical comedies marked in red, should be sent to every Dean at the end of each term, by the theatre people.'

'Great Scott, what revelations there'd be; why, some of the most respectable people would lose their characters at once. Poor old de Beresford, who went six times to "San Toy" and seven to "Florodora," is supposed to be a model character.' This from Reggie.

'Chiefly,' I remarked, 'because he never cuts the Dean and always pays the Treasurer "the exact amount of his battels, not requiring change," see College Rules.' [82]

'If we could all acquire good reputations as easily, how happy we should be,' murmured the Pilot pensively; 'somehow I never have been able to get the authorities to take me seriously.'

'You must start by taking yourself seriously,' replied Freddy, 'but it all shows how little our Dons really know about us. Look at old von Graussman, noisy and addicted to beer, but hard-working and conscientious. His character among the Dons is "lazy, rowdy, and conscienceless": you know after a row he's always sent for first. Then take, as I said before, de Beresford, or Accrington, who conceals behind a constant attendance at early chapel and a habit of going about with a logic book in his hand, the most villainous and demoniacal mind and a rooted hatred of all in authority; he's at the bottom of most ructions in College.'

'It's quite true,' I said, 'I am afraid on the whole we're a bad and unvirtuous lot.'

'Looking back on the past term, I see,' remarked the Pilot pointing out of window, 'a blue haze over everything; I can dimly descry several theatres, three twenty-firsters, many large dinners, four Saturday nights, and a couple of outings to town; these, with a slight admixture of lectures and a row in College, constitutes the employment of most of us for the last term; one or two have had schools, but for the rest this is "le monde ou l'on s'amuse."' [83]

'True, O King,' said Squiff, 'but I am going to turn you all out now, as I've got to pack. I've got leave to go down to-morrow: I suppose, by-the-bye, I shall see you all in town on Saturday at the Rugger Match.' [84]

'If not at it, at least afterwards,' I said; 'we'll say the Royal Leicester for choice, I think, and supper at—?'

'We can settle that later; you must go now,' said Squiff hastily, and so we departed, promising to speed the O'Rossa on his way at the station. The chronicles of the Rugger Match, and what happened after it, and before it, and how we all got to it, require a fresh chapter and a new pen.

VI. RUGGER NIGHT.

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It was Friday, the day before the Rugger Match, and every one was considering how to get away, as the College Collections were going on all the morning, and the match began at two o'clock. Those who had been in the Schools, of course, had no difficulty in getting leave; but the excuses offered by the rest were more numerous than truthful. The number of dentists with whom urgent appointments had been made was simply phenomenal, while several men had relatives who had chosen that exact day to leave for the Riviera, or to return from South Africa. The rush by the 12.52, which arrived almost in time for the match, was unprecedented. Freddy, who had been in for a Viva that morning, arrived at the station just before the train started, with a shirt in his coat pocket, and two ties and a collar rolled up in a copy of the *Daily Mail*. He also brought two bags stuffed with unnecessary things, bulging and unlocked; he is, I think, the most untidy person in Oxford. The Pilot, Reggie, de Beresford, Accrington and I were waiting for him on the platform; and de B. had just offered five to one against his turning up, but, unfortunately no one had taken him, owing to Freddy's known unpunctuality. We secured by the use of palm-oil, a carriage to ourselves, and played poker on the way up. We finished soon after Reading, and then the Pilot, who had been in an utterly penniless condition for two days previously, explained for our benefit how he had secured the necessary funds for this expedition. [88]

'You know,' he began, 'that picture "The Golden Dream," by Dicksee; well, I bought that at Gill and Manser's in the Corn, when I came up, and it cost me four guineas. Since then the value of the thing has gone up, and I got nearly seven pounds for it when I sold it to Pickington and Bluster. So I kept the fiver for this little trip; and sent the other people something on account.'

'How did you know the thing would go up?' inquired Freddy.

'I didn't,' replied the Pilot. 'But I knew it wouldn't go down.'

On our arrival at Paddington we separated for various destinations: Freddy and I drove straight to Queen's to meet Squiff who had been up overnight, and found the match had already started; so we made for our seats and proceeded to enjoy the game. It was an excellent fight, but resulted in a draw, which I always consider most unsatisfactory. However, the last ten minutes were so hard fought, and the relief so great, that Squiff, when the whistle was blown, out of pure joy planted his fist through the top of an elderly and portly person with a gold chain, who was sitting in front; the old boy (who had been dancing on one leg and gurgling 'Cambridge' loudly) took no notice, but continued to yell, so we left him, and squeezed our way out. I got into a cab with Freddy and Squiff, and drove off to the 'Cabin' for tea.

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'Poor old Verimisti, who came to town with me yesterday, isn't up yet,' Squiff informed us; 'he was very tired last night, didn't arrive at the 'Knavesmire' till 4.30 a.m., and then gave the cabby sixpence and expected him to be satisfied. I had to come down in jimmies, pay the cabby, and help him to disembark. When I looked him up this morning he was having his fourth Laager, and at the mere mention of ham he turned a rich yellow.'

'I gather, we're all dining at the 'Sphere' at 7.30,' I said, 'we shall be the old crew plus Verimisti (if he's well enough to come) and de Beresford. Is Fatty up?'

'No,' answered Freddy, 'Fatty's got a wealthy uncle in town who insisted on seeing the Bodleian and James' Gardens this afternoon; but he's going to shunt the old man at five, and coming up ready dressed by the 5.50.'

'I shall go back and unpack after tea,' I said, 'where are the others staying?'

'We're at the Knavesmire,' replied Squiff, 'but von Graussman, and the Pilot and Reggie are at the Haverstock, while de Beresford and Accrington are doing themselves proud at the Great Trafalgar.'

The Cabin was crowded, but after some time we got a table, but no chairs, so I leaned against the wall, while Freddy sat on Squiff's knee. This seemed to cause some surprise, until we found ourselves obliged to give our only seat to a lady who was standing, and as we couldn't sit on the floor we left hurriedly and tealess. Two shillings-worth all round at the American bar at the 'Cri' seemed to revive us wonderfully, and after this it was time to dress, so we hurried home to the Knavesmire. When we had finished we found Verimisti painfully dressing, assisted by the boots, and looking very yellow about the gills.

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'Oh! Freddy,' he cried when he saw us, 'I have my tongue so like sulphur, and have my twelfth laager just drunk, and still thirsty am I!'

We both laughed most unfeelingly, and after he had bathed his aching brow in cold water, led him gently downstairs, and, having packed ourselves into two hansoms, made for the Sphere, which we reached, according to our invariable custom, ten minutes late.

We found the rest of the party already assembled in the big hall, and made our way to a table for ten which had been reserved for us. The whole family, especially von Graussman, were in a highly excitable state, and the stirring selections of cake-walks and musical comedies that were played by the band caused some of the parties who were dining in the room to perform most extraordinary antics. A popular Sousa march was accompanied by clapping of hands, while 'Sammy' was sung by the entire company.

'Well! here's confusion to the Examiners,' said Freddy, as he drained his glass after the fish; and when Freddy begins drinking—confusion or otherwise—after the fish, I know what is likely to ensue. Freddy had also just been ploughed in Contracts.

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'To 'Ell mit dem,' added von Graussman, who had missed Law Prelim. again.

These sentiments having been duly honoured, we turned our attention to 'Ponichets de Volaille,' which Verimisti, who had got through a quart of moselle cup on his own, insisted on eating with a table-spoon.

'There'll be quite a clearance next term, I'm afraid,' remarked Squiff; 'such a number of the Unregenerate have failed in Law Prelim. or Mods., and they're sure to be sent down.'

'Yes, I was gone to drive mit a gountry vicar, next week,' remarked von Graussman pensively, 'and, oh! but the dullnesses vos 'orrible. Dere vos only von publig-house vour miles away, and dat they closes at ten hours. But,' he added triumphantly, 'I vos not a Brotestant, and I do not rise for der service at eight hours morning.'

'Well, anyhow, we'll make things hum in the summer,' said Freddy; 'it'll be my last term, and Squiff's and Reggie's and several others, so we must create an impression, and a good one if possible, before we leave the 'Varsity.'

'Don't try and make an impression on the pavement outside the Royal Leicester to-night,' said de Beresford mockingly, 'it's asphalt and very hard. I know,' he added feelingly, 'I've tried it.'

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'Anyhow, let's make this a record night,' said Accrington, who bubbled with excitement.

This sentiment met with a cordial reception. Verimisti rose carefully from the table and commenced a long and rambling speech which was ended by the arrival of what the Pilot somewhat coarsely calls 'The Settler.' Its real name is Ponche Romaine, and it acts as an appetiser, enabling one to begin again hungry on the second part of the dinner. This proceeded somewhat more rapidly, as we found it was getting late. We honoured several toasts, including 'Conspuez les dons' from Verimisti, 'Hoch der Kaiser!' from von Graussman, and 'The Unregenerate' from Freddy, and then rather unsteadily the party made its way to the cloak-room,

and got into its outer garments.

A slight sensation was caused by Squiff kissing the girl who sold buttonholes in the entrance hall, while Verimisti's attempt to embrace the stately official outside caused that personage both surprise and annoyance.

The arrival of the party at the Leicester was accompanied by much noise, and loud cheers on the part of several other parties who were also disembarking. As we went up the steps, somebody clutched my arm, and turning round I found it was Blandford of Barrabas'.

'Hullo,' I said, 'are you coming in?'

'That's the question,' he replied. It appeared that he had already been thrown out, but wanted to come in with our party again. 'If I cram my hat down on my nose, and button up my coat, I'm sure they'll pass me; I only want you to say I belong to you.'

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'I'll try,' I said dubiously, and we walked on to the barrier where I presented our ticket for Box 10 and our party passed in, accompanied by the audible comments of one of the officials on the size of the party. De Beresford, who came last, was stopped and had to take a five-bob ticket, for, as the man said, 'Hi've passed hin nine gents for that borx already, and hits only meant to 'old six or seving.'

The scene within, well, everybody must know it; the 'five-bob ring' was absolutely full, 'Varsity men and members of the tender sex being nearly equal in number.

As we passed along to our box a person with a purple nose and a battered top-hat was singing about the brokers, and this was about all we saw of the performance that evening. We left our hats and coats in the box and then sallied out in a body in search of spirits both kindred and otherwise.

Owing to the very crowded state of the promenade we were unable to hold together, and I soon found myself sandwiched between Verimisti and von Graussman bound for an adjacent bar. As we were turning into the desired haven the Italian observed a small notice saying 'No ladies served in this bar,' and immediately sheered off with a pained expression on his very expressive face.

'We are not ladies, but all the identical we cannot without female society be,' he remarked in an injured tone and hustled us rapidly on to the passage at the further end of the promenade, where a uniformed official gave us tickets outside the big bar.

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This was a scene of indescribable confusion, and as we entered two porters came forward leading between them a well-known member of the Cambridge team. He was very talkative, but his eloquence did not appear to move his captors in the least degree, possibly because none of his remarks were at all intelligible. After them there followed several more Cambridge blues and an elderly gentleman with a bucolic face who appeared to be very irate. The procession passed us with some speed, but we subsequently found the talkative Cantab singing a song on the floor of another bar, and discovered that this was due to the influence of the bucolic gentleman who was an old 'Varsity man and a legal luminary of very great brilliancy.

The front of the bar itself was hidden by two lines of 'Varsity men, nearly all asking for different things but all at the same time. However, I soon found a suitable inlet, and all was going well with us when one of the fair nymphs behind the bar unfortunately shot von Graussman in the nose with a lemonade or soda cork, producing an entirely unexpected effect.

The German fell into the lap of a lady sitting close behind exclaiming 'Ach? I vos mortified.' Her cloak covered his head for a moment, but extricating himself he tendered her his admission-ticket, and begged her in very broken English to let him out of the cloak-room. To his impassioned appeal she replied very volubly in German, and an affecting scene ensued when he fell upon her neck, and loudly claimed her as his long-lost mother. Within the space of two minutes a large and noisy crowd had gathered round, and were hoarsely cheering, so it was some time before Verimisti and I could push our way through. When we did get to the front, the lady was assuring von Graussman in a penetrating whisper, that though she was not his mother, she was willing to be his wife.

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Von Graussman, whose impressionable heart was once captured in Buda Pesth and only redeemed at considerable expense, sheered off immediately, and confidentially informed us afterwards that 'she vos a dam dangerous woman.'

Having made a vain attempt to approach the bar again, we fought our way back to the promenade, and discovered that 'Mephisto' was about to loop the loop. As everyone was anxious to see this, we regained our box, which we found crowded to suffocation, and by standing on chairs at the back got a view of the exciting item. Freddy, who having leant against the electric bell and ordered drinks round, had gone away and forgotten to pay, could not be found; so Verimisti shelled out, and after drinking his health, we moved out again. I may mention that this was the only item on the programme of which I have any recollection, as soon afterwards all became dim for a short time, and I only revived in the further bar with Freddy and Accrington beside me. In the meanwhile it appears that Squiff and de Beresford, both of whom were 'among the breakers,' had made a determined attempt to throw one of the chuckers-out downstairs, and were now repenting their mistake in the cool air of Leicester Square; but they subsequently returned in a very dishevelled condition 'by some secret way known to all but themselves.'

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I am told that I had begun to make skilful arrangements for looping the loop with the help of two round topped tables, when a stalwart official requested Squiff and de Beresford to calm me

down, which they had succeeded in doing with a handkerchief soaked in soda-water.

As soon as my sight was thoroughly restored we returned to the box, but did not feel well enough to take any interest in the performance.

Moreover, just at that moment we were alarmed by thunderous crashes on the door which Blandford hastily opened, and Verimisti rushed in followed by a heated and indignant official; he rushed to the front of the box and began to climb out, endeavouring to drop into the stalls, explaining meanwhile that he 'must escape dese awful mens in uneform who put themselves upon my nerve.'

He became very indignant when Accrington caught him by the collar, and, in his subsequent struggles to escape, his dress coat was ripped up astern from top to bottom and part of his braces gave way.

The functionary who had chased him demanded his immediate expulsion, but when Reggie explained that he belonged to our box he retired peacefully after accepting a gin-cocktail that had grown upon the floor by some mysterious means. [97]

As the door closed upon the officer, the voice of Fatty was heard from underneath a pile of coats in the corner.

'I don't know what is happening,' he remarked plaintively, 'but if somebody will fetch me an Angostura and ginger-beer and pay for it, I shall be quite happy for half-an-hour.'

'Don't be an ass,' said Freddy, who was steadying himself by a clothes peg, 'who is to fetch you anything; besides, if they did, do you suppose they'd get it here in safety?'

'Yes,' put in Blandford, 'the person in pink plush with white extremities lost seven drinks off his tray on the way to the next box just now.'

Here a lady, whose only known name was Girlie, and who had been dumped down in the box by some member of our party who had completely forgotten her, demanded a sherry and bitters.

'Who's that?' remarked Freddy unsteadily, as he let go one hat peg and caught another after two vain efforts. 'Whashedoinere?'

'Can't imagine,' replied Fatty; and then Freddy having incautiously lost his grip on his sole means of support and fallen against the bell, the conversation was terminated by the appearance of the waiter. [98]

'This lady,' said Accrington to the waiter, 'wants to stand us drinks all round.'

Girlie then rose and commenced a protest which was more forcible than polite; but Accrington waved her aside with a regal gesture.

'I daresay you didn't mean to say so m'dear,' he added, 'but there are somanyqueerpeoplereatnight.'

After the offended Girlie had left the box, Fatty was just proceeding to order the terrible mixture dear to his heart, when Freddy addressed the waiter as 'Puddle darling,' and enquired if he was going to Hardtopp-on-Sands for the mixed bathing.

The waiter's reply was to slam the door from the outside, and Fatty's ginger-beered Angostura vanished into the dim and distant future.

At this moment the last turn concluded, and the orchestra gave tongue to the National Anthem, which was caught up vigorously in all parts of the house.

It took us quite a quarter of an hour to collect our party, but when this had been done we made hastily for Jacques' to make sure of getting something to eat and drink before closing time. Blandford, who belongs to the New Lyric, invited the whole party to sup there, but I dissuaded him; and as we afterwards found that the Club was closed indefinitely, my wisdom was justified. Crossing the Circus we lost Reggie; who subsequently scandalised the habitués of the Great Trafalgar by reappearing about 11.30 next morning in evening dress with an improbable tale of a cousin from Peckham Rye, who had taken him in for the night. [99]

At the entrance to the Restaurant, Freddy sighted an awful looking object with an eye-glass, which subsequently caused him much perturbation. An appeal to the presiding genius of the lobster bar to have the offensive person removed proved unavailing, and so we made for the supper room endeavouring to forget his glassy eye and pinched waist. Since it was no longer as early as it had been, the room was nearly full, each table being occupied by one or more young gentlemen enjoying assorted confectionery. Before we had time to do anything a fight between two ladies, late of Hamburg, but now of Aphrodite Mansions, according to the waiter, engrossed our attention. The subject of dispute was a weak-looking little man with pince-nez who gazed helplessly at the combatants, evidently wondering if his fate would be that of the baby in the case adjudicated by the late Solomon of Jerusalem! The end came quite suddenly, for a herculean official unobtrusively removed the two ladies, leaving the poor little man to consume a double portion of rum omelette in solitude.

By running two tables together we managed to keep our party united, and an invaluable waiter who appeared to know our wants by instinct, dumped down several dishes of devilled kidneys and two magnums of the best, which were consumed as though none of us had had a meal for a week. We were doing very nicely, thank you, and Freddy and Fatty had already fallen into a comatose condition when the room was electrified by the appearance of Ironsides of Tydvil carrying the offensive eye-glass person upside down by one leg. Several waiters clung unheeded to his [100]

trousers, and the manager followed giving vent to frenzied ejaculations. The creature's disengaged leg had only just collided with the head waiter's face, and swept three glasses off a buffet when the lights went out, and simultaneously a piece of grilled haddock found a lodgement in my eye. Those in authority raised a melancholy chorus of 'time, gentlemen, please,' with a foreign accent, and Freddy, having tucked a magnum under each arm, led the procession to the door, supported by Accrington with the bill pinned on to his coat-tail.

The subsequent adventures of the party were too varied to be described in full, with the exception of Fatty, whom we sent straight back to the hotel in a hansom, and who was discovered by the charwoman at 6.30 asleep under the billiard table.

The party that breakfasted at the Great Trafalgar next morning about lunch-time was reduced in number and unusually thoughtful; the latter, partly because it is extremely difficult to raise money in London on Sunday, and partly owing to the frequent lubrication on the previous evening. Freddy had already left by the Holyhead express for Coffington Castle, Co. Down. In the brief message left with the night porter for Squiff, he explained that he had been to see the sunrise from Notting Hill, and had only just had time to fetch his luggage. Von Graussman and de Beresford, who had slept in an hotel in New Oxford Street, left by the Pullman train at 11.0 for Brighton to recruit, as they said they had both had too much pastry the night before. All traces had been entirely lost of Blandford; it is only known that he arrived home three days later with a broken bowler and a couple of ladies' cloak-room tickets, and went to bed for several days. The rest of us returned to Oxford to pack and go through Vivas. I think I endorse the opinion of Fatty, who afterwards remarked that 'The wicked flourish like a green bay tree, though they much prefer the dew of Glenlivet to that of Hermon.'

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VII.

HOW WE RAGGED THE SUBURBAN.

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Owing to the awful scenes on the last night of the 'Cannibal Girl,' musical comedies had become exceedingly unpopular with the authorities, and so we had to rely upon the Suburban for what Squiff calls 'an occasional divarsion.'

It all began with the Fresher's lunch in Wykeham's. The Fresher is exceedingly fresh for, well, for a fresher, and his lunch, like the Miller's daughter, 'was fresher still.' The party was a genial one, though, with the exception of Reggie and Accrington, most of the sportsmen present were recruited from circles outside that of the Elect. I regret to say that I arrived last of all, but then I generally do. I don't think any of the best people would know me now if I came in first to a public function; they'd think it was my double.

When I entered the Fresher's room I found Lord St. Ronots and another St. Union's man called Hawkes, Downey of Lichfield, and a certain Italian Count by the name of Imarisa. Reggie and Accrington had also come in, but as they were busily engaged playing different tunes upon the same piano, I do not include them among the respectable people. As we commenced operations upon the inevitable lobster salad, and the Fresher succeeded in inducing his scout, who had three other parties on the staircase, to attend to us for fully two consecutive minutes, St. Ronots remarked that the panto at the Suburban was not covered with dust to any appreciable extent, which for St. Ronots, and still more for the Suburban, is a great concession. Downey said that he intended going to see the show, and when Reggie in his usual charming way mentioned that I was going with him and several other people, I began to realise that most of the very best would patronise the Suburban that night. We decided to make a circular tour of the ancient and moth-eaten city after lunch for the purpose of beating up recruits, but meanwhile we were perforce constrained to turn our attention to the 'savoury viands'—as the late W. Shakespeare would probably have said.

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There was no lack of incident to vary the monotony of mere eating, for the Fresher persisted in consuming noxious Virginian cigarettes between each dish, while Reggie accompanied every entry of the scout by martial airs upon the piano. It may perhaps be as well to mention that this did not necessitate any exceptional exertion on Reggie's part, or he would certainly never have done it, but he merely leant back in his chair and played the piano with ease, the dimensions of the Fresher's apartment being somewhat restricted.

After lunch was over we all went round in a body to St. Union's and other Colleges in search of joyful souls to join us for the evening's jaunt, and while passing through the Corn on our way to Thomas', we met Elgar of King's and two titled foreigners, who informed us that they were 'looking for trouble.' This sounded promising, and so we enlisted their services immediately and invited them to coffee at our digs after dinner. We extended a like invitation to most of the other people we met that afternoon, and then hastened back to the Pilot-House—as Reggie now calls our establishment—to order a festive little dinner.

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Our dinner party was a small one. There were only de Beresford, Evelyn, and Farmborough, besides our three selves, but the real fun began when Elgar turned up about half-past seven with an old pair of pyjamas, which he proceeded to don, and then treated us to a wild breakdown, regardless of the surrounding crockery and the unfortunate Mary Ellen, who waited upon us in fear and trembling. As Mrs. McNab often says to the Pilot, 'It ain't you three gentlemen what makes all the rampagingses, but it's them there harum scarum friends of yours,' which only

shows how skilfully we conceal our little weaknesses from the powers below, who are in this case the Dig-Master and his wife. When we reached the coffee stage our little party increased very rapidly. Many of the gentlemen assembled appeared to find coffee insipid, and it was at this juncture that I discovered a bottle of Chartreuse in the cellarette, which I seized with the intention of serving out a few liqueurs, but there was no need for thimble glasses, as Stanhope and Freddy took their allowance in coffee, Squiff mixed his with champagne in equal proportions, while Elgar, who couldn't find anything smaller, lapped up a half tumbler of the fire-water with much pomp. Finding that the bottle was quite empty I went to the window to see if any more visitors were in sight, and beheld for the first time an enormous array of cabs stretching for quite a healthy distance up and down the High. As the liquid refreshment was completely exhausted and it was growing late, I suggested an adjournment to the Suburban, and we left for that festive old barn in a body, three men in each hansom. On our arrival we soon skipped out and arranged to owe our cab fares, but taking tickets was a slower affair. The ticket office at the Suburban is modelled exactly upon those at railway stations, that is to say, it is placed so as to present the minimum of accessibility with the maximum of draught, but by dint of a little perseverance we eventually obtained two dozen stalls and streamed along the passage to the door of the House. When we got inside we were astonished to find more than a hundred Undergrads, instead of the usual contingent of anything from five to half-a-dozen, and this crowding unfortunately compelled us to divide our party. We exchanged friendly greetings with the various people known to us, and placed Elgar in an unobtrusive seat where he would not readily catch the Manager's eye, and then prepared to watch the show itself. A most remarkable sort of Sister Anne person made his appearance upon the stage soon after our arrival, and some people who were outside the pale of the Elect assailed him with certain strange missiles, chiefly horticultural specimens, which must have stirred up Woodbine the manager, for immediately there descended upon us a shower of leaflets setting forth that 'nothing must be thrown upon the stage,' that 'bouquets left at the office would be handed on to their destination,' and that any one guilty of disorderly conduct 'Would be Instantly Ejected.' This unfortunate notice had exactly the contrary effect to what was intended, and two Gloucester men near me, who had brought a liberal supply of tangerines, immediately prepared for action. It was patent to the meanest intelligence that trouble was brewing, and Woodbine's myrmidons closed up their serried ranks adjacent to the door. I noticed that our little party was sadly scattered, but was glad to see that Elgar was surrounded by several most stalwart allies. At this moment Downey, who was sitting in front of me and close to the outside of the House, on the left, rose in his seat and proceeded to conduct the orchestra with a folded programme. Now, though this is a form of amusement by no means uncommon at the Suburban, and not altogether unknown even at the theatre, it is often allowed to pass unnoticed and never evokes anything more than a polite remonstrance, but on this particular occasion the melancholy Woodbine is evidently on the war-path.

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He advances to Downey, but instead of requesting him to leave off his peculiar amusement, snatches wildly at the programme itself, and in his anger falls over the men in front of him; then finding his own efforts unavailing, he summons the staff of porters who wear the livery of the establishment, and directs them to eject the self-appointed conductor. As this motley crew advances, and Woodbine himself very cautiously concentrates upon the rear, all the 'Varsity men in that part of the House rise in their places and make it impossible for the mercenaries to reach Downey, who is in the middle of a row, unless they first clear the intervening seats by force. Woodbine, foiled a second time, now summons O.P. 134, an enormous 'peeler,' who has been standing just outside the door on the other side of the House. The Bobby advances and endeavours to reach Downey, but is prevented by the men before him, who have resumed their seats, but make an impassable barrier by setting up their legs against the seats in front.

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The officer of the law does not attempt to force his way through, but enters the row behind, where the inhabitants are disinterested strangers, and seizes Downey; then meeting with no opposition from the occupants of that row, he grips his victim firmly by the collar, and, pulling him over the back and top of his seat, proceeds to remove him from the House.

But at this moment St. Ronots, who conceals a desperate character beneath a mild and almost saintly exterior, took two flying leaps and caught the Bobby round the neck while Hawkes jerked him neatly off his feet. The gentleman in blue, as I have mentioned before, was of colossal height, and also suitably proportioned, so that his sudden fall brought down and completely demolished two rows of stalls, while some dozen chairs were carried away by a sudden rush of the men behind, who feared the impact of such an Herculean mass.

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At this juncture I feared a really serious tumult, which would undoubtedly have ensued but for two reasons. In the first place Downey was seated quite close to the further exit, and, secondly, most of our mightiest men of valour were too far from the scene of action to take a hand. Though, as Accrington afterwards remarked, 'It's a cold deal that leaves me out.'

This was a very cold deal, for poor Downey was only a carcase in the grip of the monumental policeman, who soon regained the perpendicular and hustled him out of the auditorium with most creditable speed. The tumult, however, was not quelled in an instant, and Woodbine, who had incautiously anticipated the Bobby's victory, received a chair-back just amidships, and went down among the dead men, to the detriment of his pince-nez and eternal cigarette. Reggie, having nobly retained his grip on Downey's leg, was cut off by the sudden and quite unintentional fall of a respected greengrocer, who tumbled off his chair and bore poor Rex to the ground, while Hawkes, who had been endeavouring with Elgar and St. Ronots to release Downey from the grip of the law, was struck violently in the eye by something with the regulation number of features. After these casualties, O.P. 134 got his man out into the entrance, where he and No. 154

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mounted guard over him until the Proctor, for whom Woodbine had telegraphed, should arrive.

We could not induce the Bobbies, who were civil enough, to release their prisoner. I tried reasoning with Woodbine, but he perpetually shifted his ground, while his assessment of the probable amount of damage at over forty pounds was so unreasonable that it was useless to attempt to come to terms.

De Beresford, who had disappeared mysteriously, returned very soon with a brandy and soda which he bestowed upon Downey, and then finding all remonstrances with Woodbine quite unavailing, we resumed our seats, St. Ronots, Elgar and everybody who had taken an active part in the fracas, having executed a masterly retreat to their respective Colleges, directly they heard that the Manager had telephoned for the Proctor.

I found a resting place on the wreckage of some stalls beside de Beresford and Evelyn, with Reggie just in front of us, and we sat thus until the familiar face of the most genial of the Proctors, followed by a singularly funereal bull-dog, appeared in the doorway. At this juncture Freddy, Accrington and Stanhope, together with about a couple of score more 'Varsity men, whose faces we knew by sight but not to speak to, departed comfortably and without any undue haste by the extra exit. Most of us however who had perfectly clear consciences sat tight and gave our names to the Proctor, not with any idea of ultimately contributing to the University Chest, but merely as a guarantee of good faith. As soon as we had performed our own particular share of this little formality, Reggie and I with de Beresford left the house in search of our first liquid refreshment, picking up on our way Stanhope and Freddy who had been carefully concealed in the pit. We reached that admirable institution, the Cowley Bowling Club, of which most of us are members, and were enjoying a little well-earned refreshment, when to our amazement the ubiquitous Proctor with the iniquitous bull-dogs appeared in the entrance. Houseman advanced and was about to address Reggie, who was surveying him with no very friendly expression, when the excellent barman appeared suddenly from the back-room and asked the Proctor if he was a member of the Club, which honour he was compelled to disclaim, but expressed a desire to speak with some of the young gentlemen present. The wily barman however asked if Houseman had a warrant to enter the club, and on hearing that he had not, asked him most politely to withdraw at once. The Proctor complied with this request with the best grace possible under the circumstances, but I have seldom seen bull-dogs look more malevolent than Houseman's two attendants. No, not even when a pair of them tracked me four weary miles on foot only to find that the fair lady with whom I had been sharing a cab at midnight was indeed my second cousin.

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Having congratulated ourselves and the barman upon his presence of mind, we finished our drinks and returned to the Suburban, where the show seemed to be going on peacefully. Two bicyclists were chasing one another round and round upon a sloping circular track at a tremendous rate, and whenever they stopped for breath the showman filled in the interval with an explanatory speech.

Unfortunately this same showman was an extremely sour looking person and presented a most remarkable appearance. He had a brown bowler hat and trousers, green waistcoat, and black expression, which 'tout ensemble' constrained St. Ronots to cheer—though not very lustily—at the wrong moment, thereby greatly enraging the human kaleidoscope, who signalled to Woodbine to remove the Hereditary Legislator from the House. That individual advanced with some circumspection and requested St. Ronots peremptorily to 'go outside quietly,' but our friend who had really done nothing wrong, not unnaturally declined to comply with his request, and so the Manager was compelled to fall back upon his oleaginous smile and the Proctor. That gentleman came across to the Hereditary Legislator and exchanged a word or two with him and then appeared to metaphorically put Woodbine through the mangle, for he departed sadly to the Temperance Bar for another cigarette while the Proctor went quietly home. For the remaining hour or so, we really watched the performance, which was rather diverting, and leaving in a body at about eleven o'clock, finished the evening in our rooms.

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On Monday morning, in response to urgent notices from the Junior Proctor, a large party assembled at the leprous hour of nine in his rooms at James'. We noticed, as we entered the ante-room, the Assistant Manager of the Suburban Palace of Varieties clad in the usual check cycling-suit and bowler hat, besides several promising looking criminals who were obviously witnesses in various cases coming up for investigation. After exchanging greetings with Squiff and Accrington, Reggie and I selected the two most comfortable chairs and sat down to wait, while the party were passed in one by one to the torture-chamber. More and more people continued to arrive, including Bob Parclane, arrayed in the inevitable eye-glass and check-coat, who was conducting a party accused of throwing bottles out of a window at an elderly citizen. There were also two gentlemen of our acquaintance, who had been so indiscreet as to empty the contents of a syphon upon some wayfarer's head below their windows in Unity.

After waiting an interminable time, during which the crowd at the door never seemed to grow less, I was ushered in and questioned, but on disclaiming any share in the riot, was politely bowed out. Reggie, who followed me, could not truthfully say this, and was noted down for further reference, and a share in the damages. By this time it was ten o'clock, and we hurried off to join St. Ronots, who was waiting to breakfast with us at the O.U.D.S., and to take tickets for the next musical comedy, which was nothing less than the ever popular 'Cinq Demi-Vierges.' In the course of the day every one who had attended the Proctorial Levée received a notice regretting that the J.P. must ask us to pay a pound apiece by that evening, which we accordingly did. It was suggested that an indignation meeting of the shareholders in Bridgeley, Houseman & Co., Proctors and General Collectors, should be summoned to demand a statement of accounts,

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and Reggie, who had just paid four golden sovereigns into the concern, waxed most eloquent upon the subject, but nothing ever came of it. As the Pilot cheerfully remarked on his return from taking a pound share, 'It is indeed wonderful how we put up with our Pastors and Masters.'

VIII. AN EIGHTS' WEEK.

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'This,' said Freddy wearily, as he threw a cream coloured envelope upon the table, 'is too much of a good thing; here's an official announcement from Aunt Julia that she and her companion, a cheery young thing of sixty-five, are coming up for a fortnight to enjoy the 'boating-races;' she casually remarks that the girls have only one day vacant and that a Sunday, so that it will not be worth while their putting in an appearance.' 'Her postscript,' he added, with a look of the deepest disgust, 'runs as follows: "Dear Ophelia"—that's the old girl's satellite—"is very anxious to see something of real Oxford life, and hopes that you will arrange a visit with some nice young fellows to the Bodleian or the Martyrs' Memorial."'

'Pouff,' blew the Pilot expressively, 'what are our relations coming to; but, if it isn't rude, who is Aunt Julia?'

'Julia Claudia Letitia Fanny, Dowager Lady Blitherington,' recited Freddy, 'her husband was Sir Hophni Jenkins of the *Weekly Eraser*, who bought a peerage by settling a Minister's cab fares about forty years ago. But seriously, we must get the girls.'

'Oh yes, we must get the girls,' echoed Squiff. 'They're awful sportswomen, I met them last year at the Addison Ball.' [120]

'Oh yes, I remember them too,' said Reggie. 'They nearly ran me off my feet, and I finally settled with Maisie in the Senior Tutor's rooms, where we sat out a considerable portion of the programme, and incidentally consumed all the strawberries left on the Reverend gentleman's table.'

'I fancy,' said Freddy reflectively, 'that they go rather too fast for Aunt Julia, who, despite the decidedly *risqué* tone of the *Weekly Eraser*, is not as enlightened as she should be. I must write to Muriel myself, I expect they've only got some wretched country visit which they can easily put off. We couldn't stand Aunt Julia unadulterated.'

'Where did Miss Ophelia spring from?' put in the Pilot, whose curiosity is insatiable.

'Oh, she was one of the bathing attendants at Margate when Aunt Julia went down there in sixty-five, and she took such a fancy to her that she's kept her ever since.'

'We'd better arrange a joint picnic for all our relatives one day,' remarked Reggie, who often has these brilliant inspirations; 'it will save a lot of trouble, and they'll all be pleased.'

'They won't be pleased with Ophelia,' remarked Freddy unpleasantly, 'but have it your own way,' and he retired to write letters.

This conversation took place on the Sunday before Eights, after breakfast, and having settled nothing as usual, we went out on the river. On Tuesday afternoon at 6 o'clock Freddy, supported by Squiff and myself, fetched up at the station to meet Aunt Julia. The train had stopped fully two minutes before we saw a phenomenally unattractive female descend from a first-class carriage carrying several handbags and a diseased-looking spaniel. [121]

'That's the Bugg,' remarked Freddy dismally, as he slowly advanced to the carriage from which Miss Bugg and a porter were heaving out an inanimate mass clad in furs, lace and silk. Freddy placed his arms gingerly around this relic and kissed it twice somewhere near the top. By the time Squiff and I reached them, the object had begun to speak. 'My dear Frederick,' it was saying in feeble tones, 'such a terrible journey; poor Jacob was so ill, and Ophelia actually forgot the curative capsules.'

'The O'Rossa, Mr. Cochrane, Lady Blitherington,' murmured Freddy, but her Ladyship was busily engaged in administering to Jacob a capsule which the Bugg had just discovered.

'The O'Rossa, Mr. Cochrane, Miss Bugg,' screamed Freddy, glaring at Ophelia.

'I'm so felicitous to meet you,' replied the lady with a contortion intended for a friendly smile.

'I'm glad to see you've brought good weather with you,' remarked Squiff to Aunt Julia, 'at one time it looked rather like a bad week.' [122]

The Dowager was just about to reply when the arrival of her dutiful nephew, vicariously laden with luggage, put an end to conversation, and we helped the ladies into the Granville bus, accompanied by Freddy.

On our way back we spent a pleasant half-hour at the King's Restaurant, and so when we reached the Squifferies Freddy was already there.

He greeted us with unnecessary noise and stuffed a telegram into my hand, which said: 'Righto Thursday for a week be good Maisie,' and Squiff, having read the message over my shoulder, whistled softly 'there's a good time coming, boys,' which Freddy interrupted by saying to both of us,

'If you can stand any more of the menagerie to-night come to dinner with us at eight.'

We accepted, and arrived fairly punctually, to find Ophelia and Jacob in possession of the private sitting-room.

Freddy of course was late.

'O, Mr. O'Rossa,' she began as Squiff advanced towards her, 'do tell me all about your daily provocations at Oxford.'

'That's rather a large order, Miss Bugg,' said Squiff smilingly, 'where shall I begin?'

'At the very beginning, please,' she said, 'say at your early morning Church.'

'Well, Miss Bugg,' said Squiff, 'you give me an account of how you think we spend our day, and I'll correct you if you go wrong.' [123]

'Very well. I've read such a lot about Oxford you know, I always took such an interest in the dear Collegiates. I hear you rise at seven thirty, and then all those boys who have lodgings within the walls go to Church at eight, and afterwards a Parthian breakfast with your friends; now tell me,' she continued, 'I am so interested in all these things, do you perform your abductions at home or are there public baths? And then,' she went on, giving us no time to think what she meant, 'from 9 to 1 you attend the Professors, and the afternoon is spent in some form of aesthetics, or anthropological research. At seven you have dinner, and they tell me that the food is plentiful but bad;' 'hear! hear!' I remarked; she beamed and continued, 'I've looked in Verdant Green and the Student's guide to Oxford, but I can't get a clear idea of how you spend your evenings.'

'Chiefly in study,' began Squiff solemnly, when he was interrupted by a roar from Freddy, whose face appeared round the door.

'What ho, Ophelia!' he cried, as he came into the room; 'On the go again? Don't you believe all they tell you.'

'On the contrary,' I interrupted, as Ophelia began a protest. 'Miss Bugg was instructing us.'

'Your remark is somewhat exiguous, Mr. Cocklin,' began the Bugg, when the inner door opened gently and Lady Blitherington sailed in.

'Good evening, Frederick,' she said, and bowed to us, 'I am glad you're more punctual than usual; poor dear Hophni used to say that if your Uncle William had only been more punctual he might have risen to be a credit to the family.' [124]

'Rather an unlikely contingency,' remarked Freddy after we had put the ladies into the lift, 'considering that the old scoundrel drove his wife into an asylum and then eloped to New York with a milliner's assistant.'

'I suppose you've instructed Ophelia in all the Oxford customs,' remarked the dowager as she sat down.

'She doesn't need any instructions,' replied Squiff with a bow towards the Bugg, 'she's read all the best authorities, Lady Blitherington.'

'By the way, Aunt,' said Freddy suddenly, 'I've just had a wire from Maisie, she and Muriel are coming here on Thursday for a week, isn't it jolly?'

'Goodness gracious me, Frederick,' exclaimed the old lady, 'but never mind, I suppose if they think nothing of putting off their visit to the dear Archdeacon, I mustn't bother about it; still it is too bad of them.'

'O no, Aunt, it's very good of them,' said Freddy, 'think how they'll liven up the place.'

'I don't doubt that for a minute,' said Aunt Julia, and snapped her teeth with unusual decision.

'Are you out in Chambers or in the College, Mr. Cockerel?' enquired the Bugg with a pleasant smile.

'I'm sorry to say it's my last year, Miss Bugg,' I replied, 'and I'm out in digs, you must come and see them some day.' [125]

'I should love it,' replied the companion with a rapturous gaze at the electric light.

'My dear Ophelia,' interjected a warning voice from the top of the table, 'you can't go without a chaperon!'

At this remark I heard a suppressed gurgle beside me and turned in time to see Freddy hide his face in a napkin, while a soup spoon waved feebly in his nerveless fingers.

Squiff, however, who has marvellous self-control, relieved the situation by complimenting Lady Blitherington on the possession of Jacob.

'The smartest little King Charles I have ever seen,' he said with apparent sincerity.

'Ah! Mr. O'Rossa, Ophelia will be pleased to hear you say that,' said the old lady, 'she has tended that dog like a baby for the last ten years.'

'Do you care for dogs, Mr. O'Rossa?' queried the Bugg.

'I'm very fond of them, Miss Bugg,' he replied, 'I keep several at home.'

'How nice,' said the Bugg feelingly, 'then you must try White Rose soap with them, I'll give you a cake of it, there's nothing better.'

'I should be surprised,' said Squiff emphatically.

Ophelia, however, did not appear to be troubled by the inanity of his reply, but immediately passed on to discussing the 'rowing races' with Freddy, who gave her exceedingly novel explanations of those innocent affairs. [126]

'I suppose, Mr. Cochrane,' said Lady Blitherington to me with a kindly smile, 'I suppose you may stay out till ten o'clock?'

'Certainly, Lady Blitherington,' I assented, but forbore to mention how far she had undershot the mark.

'Very well, then I will order tea for you before you go. I suppose you like tea after dinner, Mr. O'Rossa?'

'Very much, indeed, my Lady,' said Squiff, courteously, 'I esteem it immensely;' and this answer appeared to agitate Freddy afresh, as he doubtless reflected that Squiff never touches anything milder than Green Chartreuse after dinner except on very rare occasions, when he condescends to a cup of thick Turkish coffee at the Trocadero.

Before Freddy had reappeared from the shelter of his napkin, Miss Bugg, who had been endeavouring to shew me a new way of preparing strawberries with a steel knife, cut herself, and left the dining room in great haste, but we soon followed, and found her seated in an arm-chair, with Jacob fast asleep in her lap and the promised cake of White Rose soap in their immediate neighbourhood.

Lady Blitherington ensconced herself in the other arm-chair, while Squiff, who has a fair baritone voice, sang us 'Father O'Flynn' with more vigour than accuracy.

Just before ten an English waiter—born in Hamburg—appeared with what Ophelia persisted in calling 'a dish of tea,' and that good soul disappeared in search of Jacob's own saucer in order that he too might enjoy a little light refreshment before retiring to the elaborately quilted basket awaiting him in her room. [127]

I parted from Freddy and Squiff at Carfax, and on entering our rooms found Reggie and the Pilot enveloped in a positive cloud of smoke, discussing everything in general and nothing in particular.

'Accrington's people are coming up on Thursday, Martha,' said Reggie, as I entered the room.

'Rot, Reggie,' said the Pilot, 'You mean Sybil Accrington is coming; I don't suppose you care whether her father and mother come here or remain in Liverchester.'

'It seems to me, Reggie,' I said, 'that what with Maisie and Sybil Accrington and others, your hands will be pretty full this week.'

'The pressing problem of the moment,' said the Pilot, gravely, as he spread himself in front of the fireplace, 'is, how many pounds of strawberries are required to feed five healthy English girls, three elderly ladies, two lapdogs, and last but not least, eight undergraduates. Freddy's arranged a picnic for Sunday, and left me to cater for it with his usual cheek.'

'Which is his usual cheek, Pilot?' asked Reggie in his most irritating manner.

'O the right if it's left, but if that isn't right the left,' said the Pilot gravely, as he heaved a book at Reggie and a sigh to himself, and drifted off to bed. [128]

When Reggie and I came down at 10.30 next morning we found the Pilot interrogating Mrs. McNab as to how she thought trifle and Charlotte Russe would go with cold lamb and salmon mayonnaise.

The worthy lady, whose brain already reeled at the thought of the entertainments to be given at our lodgings during the week, was standing in the doorway murmuring to herself 'hadd a piece of nutmeg an bile the 'ole in a pudden' clorth.'

Soon after she had gone, a large brake stopped at our door and the occupants in no mild terms requested Reggie and the Pilot to come out at once, if they did not wish to go where the refrigerator is of no avail.

They obeyed the call, but the Pilot in addition to his cricket bag carried several wine lists and Hooper's catalogue of 'cold dishes for picnic parties.'

In order to avoid a meeting with the Bugg, of whom I foresaw we should see a great deal, I motored over to Banbury for lunch with de Beresford. Thus it befell that I missed the most exciting scene of the day when Jacob fell into the river and was rescued by a Humane Society's man, while the Bugg who had fainted on the Barabbas' barge was revived by a drop of the bargeman's private store of brandy.

The crowd at the station, when we got there next day to receive Blitherington and the girls, was something terrific. Nearly every member of the University appeared to be expecting female relations, and most of them must have been satisfied, for the crowd by the 11.50 was simply colossal, though our cheery trio were conspicuous by their absence. After two or three minutes of unavailing search we secured a harassed official who was buzzing round the mouth of the guard's van, and he assured us that a relief train would arrive in ten minutes, so we possessed ourselves in patience and admired our friends' sisters. [129]

We were presented to Mrs. and Miss Accrington and had just caught sight of de Beresford escorting his mother and her niece, the Honourable Violet McNeill, who is generally admitted to

be the most charming débutante of the season, when the relief train steamed in and a second scene of confusion ensued. Freddy, who is very quick in all things, sorted out from a first-class carriage a faultlessly dressed young man with a monocle and a pink-and-white complexion and two extremely pretty girls, whom he introduced as my cousins Miss Coffington, Miss Muriel Coffington, and Lord Blitherington.

His lordship created the first sensation by enquiring, 'Is there a really good pawnshop down here?'

'Yes,' said Maisie, 'we picked him up in the Burlington Arcade yesterday, kept him till this morning, gave him sixpence for a shave and brought him down here, and now we're all three cleaned out; but he's brought his gold-mounted dressing case to stay with a local Hebrew, and so it'll be pay day for everybody to-morrow. Now let's get up to the village inn.'

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'Don't be in such a hurry, young woman,' said Blitherington slowly, 'always reconnoitre your country before advancing your main body; is Ophelia with our Lady Aunt?'

'Very much so,' said Freddy.

'Good-bye then, I'm going back to town,' said his lordship as he proceeded to climb back into the carriage: but on our pointing out that he had no money, he was persuaded to accompany us to the hotel.

'Only I warn you,' he said with a weary smile, 'if Ophelia commences telling me about Jacob I shall either take to drink or emigrate.'

We could not return to the Granville to lunch, as Freddy and I had promised to lunch with Cobson, and Reggie, who had been persuaded to speak at the Union that evening, had his speech to prepare; however we arranged to meet the girls and Blitherington in the gateway of Thomas' at four o'clock for the races. As we were walking down St. Aldate's in the afternoon, Freddy, who professes a great indifference to the charms of his fair cousins, announced his intention of walking with Blitherington, so that Reggie and I were allotted to Maisie and Muriel.

We had only been waiting about ten minutes when the trio hove in sight, Blitherington in a splendid flannel suit—he certainly does know how to dress—and the girls in exceedingly light fluffy chiffons, which always win my heart.

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Freddy was inclined to be sarcastic at their little lapse in punctuality, but Maisie at once said to him, 'Now run along you quaint old thing and try to make Blithers behave himself; can't you see Mr. Cochrane and I want to be alone?'

I had intended taking Muriel, who though very pretty is said to be quieter than her sister, and giving Reggie the pleasure of Maisie's decidedly effervescent conversation, but after this how could I resist taking her under my wing.

'We had a lot of difficulty in shunting Ophelia,' she said complacently as we started off for the river, 'the dear old thing is so keen on seeing the boating-races, as she calls them.'

'Yes,' chimed in Muriel who wasn't far behind, 'we had to send a note round to Charlie Hanbury at Barabbas', who had already got half a dozen maiden aunts encamped around him, and he promised to take her with them onto the Barabbas' barge at tea-time.'

'Well now, Mr. Cochrane,' began Maisie, 'we've heard a lot about you from Freddy; he says you'd make a cat laugh.'

'I hope you don't consider yourself a cat, Miss Coffington,' I put in quickly.

'O don't call me Miss Coffington,' said Maisie crossly, 'It's such a mouthful.'

At this moment Accrington and Cobson, who were rowing in our boat, ran past us, and Maisie, after a hasty glance at their attire, remarked simply, 'How terribly draughty.'

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'What do you mean, Miss—er—Maisie?' I asked.

'Why look at their poor dear knees. Oh, but perhaps Oxford men haven't got knees officially any more than we have legs.'

'You've got hold of a very good joke,' I said to Reggie, as peals of laughter came from behind.

'Yes, Miss Muriel says,' began Reggie; when Muriel held up a little gloved hand in front of him and said, 'Oh you horrid man, I shall never tell you anything again if you tell them that.'

'All right, then I won't,' said Reggie; and he didn't till we were back at home that night.

We went on to the Thomas' barge, which as everybody knows is next door to the Cecil's, and found it crowded with the usual assortment of Eights' week relations, some of them surpassingly beautiful, but some very much the reverse.

We could not find chairs for the girls, so Maisie sat upon a railing with her feet hanging over the edge, till Freddy's tutor came up from below and informed him that it was hardly decent. So we sat down upon the steps just as the minute gun went off.

'What an unpleasant old man,' said Maisie. 'He's obviously got no daughters of his own or he'd be in better training.'

'Oh yes he has,' said Freddy, 'but one's the Professor of Archæology at Girton and the other edits "Clippings for Careful Housewives."''

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'Oh yes, I know,' said Maisie, 'if I scrubbed my face till it shone and wore red flannel petticoats he'd have smiled upon me.'

At this juncture the starting gun boomed out, and very soon after the mingled noises of cheering, rattles, horns, and all kinds of unmusical instruments floated up the stream.

'Are they coming yet?' asked Muriel excitedly, as in her efforts to get a better view she trod upon the hat of a lady on a lower step who looked, as she subsequently said, 'like a ferret with lockjaw'; 'and what boat's that?' as the top of the division began to appear by the 'Varsity boat-house.

'Gloucester, I think,' Reggie said. 'Yes it must be, and there's our boat close behind.'

'I think you'll get them all right,' said Freddy who with Blitherington was suspended from the awning just above our heads.

'I lay you a dollar they don't,' said the other, 'why the beggars are as blown as glass.'

Conversation then ceased as the two leading boats of the division came closer into view. Gloucester were about a quarter of a length ahead and rowing fairly evenly, while the Cecil's crew appeared rather the worse for wear, but in spite of this the fact of being opposite their own barge and other people's sisters nerved them up to such an extent that they shot up level with the rudder of the Gloucester boat just as they passed us. I caught sight of the face of the Cecil's stroke, a little man who splendidly exemplifies the old adage that 'the best goods are done up in the smallest parcels,' and noticed that he at any rate did not appear to be completely exhausted as yet. Their little cox was rising up in his seat like a soufflé and edging the Gloucester man, who had very foolishly taken the inner berth, closer and closer into the bank. At last the oar of number two in the Gloucester boat grazed the rushes and their cox was obliged to pull out into the stream, so Cecil's gained their bump just opposite the Lichfield barge and hardly two lengths from the end of the course. The other boats all rowed over, that being the only bump in the division.

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When the Cecil's boat returned to their barge next door to us we all set up a tremendous cheer, and Reggie departed in great haste to congratulate Miss Accrington, who was clapping her little hands with the most sisterly devotion. I scrambled down below with Freddy to get some tea, but this was a very hazardous business and it was nearer twenty minutes than ten before I secured two cups for the girls, and we waited patiently for the first division.

About half-past five the Thomas' men came out on the raft just beneath us and stepped gingerly into their boat which was the eighth in the first division. Maisie fell violently in love with the cox, who though exceptionally diminutive was possessed of a megaphonic voice which as Freddy coarsely remarked, 'Fetches the girls every time.'

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The boat put off into mid stream, and when the cox repeated the usual formula of 'Forward, are you ready, paddle!' in stentorian tones, Maisie was so moved that I thought for a minute she was actually going to jump in after him.

Blitherington, who had been down below consuming something which was not tea, now reappeared and said, 'Can't we go down the river in a punt for this division, Freddy?'

'Oh, yes, certainly if you like,' he answered, 'I haven't got a punt, but we'll soon get one.'

We all trooped down the steps, and Freddy pirated the punt of some unknown scholar, while Reggie fetched the Pilot's cushions from the adjoining barge.

'Now who's going to pole?' said Maisie.

'O, Martha'll punt,' said Freddy, 'he rather likes it.'

'All right, I'll take her down,' I said, 'if you'll bring us back, Freddy.'

This struck me as rather a cute dodge, for the stream will take anybody down, whereas punting back up the river through about a hundred other boats is a serious task.

Freddy however assented immediately, and we got under weigh, leaving Reggie with Accrington's sister. After we had secured a place in the long line down the tow-path side we spent the time very pleasantly in consuming sponge rusks borrowed from a Barabbas' man next door who had a tea-party in full swing. This same party was amalgamated with that of Hanbury, and from the bottom of his punt the Bugg suddenly bobbed up and hailed us effusively. Blitherington wanted to move on at once, but we pointed out that we should not get such a good position anywhere else, and also that the Barabbas' rusks were very delectable.

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We had been there fully five minutes when Miss Bugg gave vent to a terrible screech, and we noticed that Jacob's back was blazing furiously with blue fire from the spirit lamp which the Bugg had upset over him. She took off her cloak and endeavoured to smother the flames, but Hanbury very unfeelingly threw Jacob into the water to the great distress of Ophelia, who screamed louder than ever. We might have had every canoe and punt in the river paddling up to ascertain who was being murdered, but Blitherington quietly drew a cushion from beneath Muriel's head and with a well directed shot caught Ophelia in the back of the neck. This treatment appeared to soothe Miss Bugg, though the aforementioned six maiden aunts made some remark about 'an unmannerly young cub,' and we had to persuade the Pilot, who passed at that moment in a Canader, to take his lordship with him.

Soon after this all the first division except Thomas' and Lichfield rowed by us, the former having bumped the latter just above the Gut. Immediately the last boat had gone by we pulled up our pole and started up stream under the energetic if erratic guidance of Freddy. When we came opposite the 'Varsity Boat-house we collided with a punt which contained three elderly ladies and a harassed-looking clergyman, punted by a meek individual who must have come from Park

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Temple.

Freddy, having bumped the Parson's elbow, sheered off in the opposite direction and ran into the stern of a canoe, the owner of which quietly ladled a few quarts of water over Maisie's dress.

'Drat the man,' she said, 'Why can't he—' And then as he lifted his hat and apologised profusely, 'O pray don't mention it, water can't possibly do any harm,' and we went on our way, though perhaps not rejoicing. The Thomas' barge was too full of people thumping their eightsmen upon the back, so we landed on the Cecil's raft and walked slowly back up the fine avenue, which was crowded with youth and beauty all going in one direction.

There was no great excitement that night, and as Muriel complained of being tired, the ladies retired early, while Blitherington kindly organized a poker party in my rooms after the Union debate, and carried off thirty shillings from our united funds. With the exception of one and twopence this had all disappeared by the following morning, for while I was in Freddy's digs at about sherry-and-bitter time, Blitherington came in to ask if he might put half-a-dozen collars and a silk handkerchief down to his account at Sampson's.

That afternoon we took the girls out in canoes for the Eights and Maisie fell to me, while Freddy sacrificed himself to the extent of taking Lady Blitherington and Ophelia out in a large and equably-balanced punt. Squiff disappeared with Muriel in another canoe; while Blitherington, to whom the sight of Ophelia is as a red rag to a bull, persuaded Reggie to take him out in a punt alone.

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'What are you going to do with me this afternoon?' said Maisie as she settled herself in my Canader, 'don't you think we ought to have brought Miss Bugg as chaperon?'

I suppose my face must have expressed my feelings, for she laughed and added, 'Well, we'll compromise by taking Jacob,' which we did.

'I'm a firm believer in laziness, aren't you, Mr. Cochrane,' she said as we turned up the Cher; 'let's get into some quiet nook and watch the people passing.'

'I like Oxford,' she added after a short pause, 'I can say what I like without everybody thinking I mean something else. That's sometimes so unpleasant. I wonder,' she remarked musingly, 'who I'm going to marry; what sort of person do you think would suit me, Mr. Cochrane?'

'I should put you down for a Sir William Shipton or something like that, Miss Maisie,' I answered.

'Oh! the money part of that is all right, but I want a respectable and presentable person, not an aitchless remnant with a squint and large feet.'

'Oh! I suppose a decent sort of Englishman who bathes daily and plays most games would do you,' I suggested.

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'Yes I think so, but he must be big and strong to satisfy me.'

'There are some of them to be found even in these hard times,' I assented.

'Thank the Lord,' said Maisie piously; and we changed the subject.

'Look,' she cried suddenly, as a punt containing a portly and painted dowager shot past, propelled by a weedy-looking youth with pince-nez, 'that's old Lady Dombonpoint, the widow of Sir Herbert of the celebrated 'Aurol for Aching Ears.' She's as rich as they make them, and yet she only allowed her son, that sickly-looking youth, half-a-crown a week for pocket money at Eton, and bought his clothes from a slop-shop in Tottenham Court Road. But you know,' she continued in a whisper, although no one was near,—and when Maisie whispers I know what to expect,—'she was awfully gone on Blitherington last season, and followed him all round the Park, not to speak of country-houses and restaurants; he had a wretched time till she finally proposed to him at Ascot on a coach. Of course he rejected her, and then she fainted. He told me he might have stood her for a year, but he was sure she was what he calls a "stayer," and would live to a hundred.' Before I had time to make any comment on this extraordinary episode in the life of the youthful peer, the Bugg's voice penetrated to our shelter and we caught the words, 'I told him he was an idiot to oppose the Plural Dean, and no wonder they call it the Church Irritant if he is a curate.' And the punt containing the inimitable Ophelia passed on. 'There!' said Maisie explosively, 'that's a nice thing to have tacked on to me, isn't it? She's Blithers' bête noir; why one day she told him that he oughtn't to smoke, as it produced a weakness in the pneumatic nerve!'

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'Yes,' I said, 'I'm sorry for you, but still you must admit she answers the description that a certain paper bestowed on itself not long ago, "Funny without being vulgar."'

'I don't know,' said Maisie doubtfully, 'why I could tell you some things she's said that—well perhaps I'd better not.'

'Oh! do,' I said, 'why not collect Buggisms.'

'Why not, indeed,' said Maisie, and thereafter a thoughtful silence ensued.

'I think it's about time we went back,' I said, having occupied the interval in gazing at Maisie's very shapely ankles; 'I should like to stay here for ever, but—'

'Of course you're bound to say that,' interrupted Maisie, as I began to rise ready to pole, 'but the question is, do you really mean it?'

I was in the act of pushing off when a fearful shock sent me flying into Maisie's lap, and her

parasol into the water. Maisie was just preparing to utter her favourite 'cuss-word,' as she calls it, when a cheerful and inane voice from the offending boat remarked languidly, 'Hullo! Maisie, what do you stick your old hearse in the light for?' [141]

'It's not a hearse,' retorted Maisie, angrily, 'and Mr. Cochrane has been very kind and attentive to me.'

'Oh! I'm sure of it,' chuckled Blitherington, for it was he and Reggie in another punt, though neither of them seemed to be punting, and their boat was drifting broadside on down stream. 'All the world,' he continued, solemnly, 'is attentive to its friends' sisters and cousins.'

'If we want to see the Eights we must move on,' I interrupted hastily, as I saw Reggie beginning to give utterance to some home-truth, and Reggie's home-truths are the most unpleasant that I know. Fortunately Blitherington assented, and so we all punted down to the barge together. The races were most exciting to all but Cecil's, who rowed over hopelessly, being behind the bump of James' and Llewellyn's. It was decided not to watch the first division, as Blithers had arranged to drive a large party out in a coach to sup at Woodstock and return by moonlight.

The supper in The Lion was an enormous success, and it is not wonderful that on the return journey there was a great scramble for the inside of the coach, the four places being eventually secured by Freddy, Muriel, Reggie, and Sybil Accrington. As to what occurred I am unable to make any definite statement, though Reggie insists that Freddy kissed him by mistake in the dark, and this Freddy denies, like Peter, 'with an oath'; however from the silence inside I gathered that they were all enjoying themselves. Outside Maisie and I, Blithers, Farmborough, the Pilot, Miss MacNeill and de Beresford sang comic songs with ever-increasing vigour, while the Bugg, who had come as general chaperon, rhapsodised into the unheeding ears of the Pilot, who had, as he afterwards admitted, fallen asleep through weariness. [142]

The next day was devoted to an inspection of the various colleges, monuments, and points of interest, with tea afterwards in different rooms, 'a regular field-day for the Bugg,' as Freddy aptly remarked. On being questioned later as to what she had seen, she mixed up the Martyrs' Memorial with St. Peter's-in-the-East, and stated at dinner that she considered the Sheldonian 'such an ornament to the Parks.' In the evening Freddy and I conveyed the Famille Blitherington to the O.U.D.S. performance in Gloucester Gardens, in which Fatty sustained a prominent part very creditably, and Cobson did wonderful quick changes as '2nd Lord, serving man, knight, soldier, citizen, and apprentice.' Blitherington afterwards remarked to him, 'My dear old native, if you went on at the Pav. in town as Ratsini, the quick-change man, you'd make your fortune, and probably marry some light of the variety stage into the bargain. Try it!'

This *al fresco* entertainment was over earlier than such affairs usually are, and so soon after ten o'clock we left the Dowager and her suite at the Granville and returned to our digs. As we ascended the stairs we heard peels of laughter coming from the room, and Reggie's raucous voice enquiring, 'Do you open?' [143]

'Lord, yes,' said a lady's voice, 'I'll let you in for twopence.'

A cheery poker party was gathered round the table, consisting of Reggie, the Pilot, de Beresford, Accrington, and a very smart little lady whose face was unknown to us.

'Hullo, you birds, I didn't expect you quite so early,' Reggie cried, 'let me introduce you to my friend Mrs. Jack Lomond, Lord Blitherington, Mr. Cochrane.'

The lady removed a jewelled cigarette tube from her mouth, and enquired with a smile, 'Won't you join the dance, as they say in "Alice in Wonderland."'

'Oh, don't let us spoil your game,' returned Blithers, 'five's the best number for poker.'

'That's all right,' said the Pilot, 'we were just finishing this when you came. Let's turn it into Bank, if Mrs. Lomond has no objection.'

'Oh, whatever you like,' the lady put in with a smile; 'you must be rather surprised at my appearance here,' she continued, addressing me, 'but Reggie asked me down for the picnic to-morrow, and I hadn't time to reply, so I came in person, which is perhaps better.'

As we settled down at the historical round table to play Bank, I observed that Blithers carefully commandeered the chair next to Mrs. Lomond, and she enquired of him at once, 'Are you any relation to Billy Jenkins of the 110th? I used to know him when I was in India.' [144]

'Oh yes,' returned Blithers cheerfully, 'he's my uncle, and a very good sort too, but,' he added with sudden apprehension, 'please don't mention him to my aunt to-morrow, he's the black sheep of the family.'

'Poor old Jenks,' Mrs. Lomond remarked reflectively, 'I used to tell him when we were at Jumbulpore that he'd never come to a good end. His affections were too shifting; he never stuck to one love for more than a month.'

'Not even his wife,' remarked Blithers solemnly, as play proceeded, accompanied by much frivolous conversation.

Soon after 11.30 Mrs. Lomond rose to go, remarking, 'It's very good of you all to have given me such a pleasant evening. See you in the morning, Reggie.'

'Half a mo, Mrs. Lomond,' said Blithers, as he skipped down the staircase after her, 'I'm going your way, may I see you home?' And they left together.

'Jolly little woman, isn't she?' said Reggie. 'And clever too; she's got all the diplomatic posts

attached to her petticoat, and Secretaries of State attend her like lap dogs. Her husband is, I believe, in Northern Nigeria,' he added reflectively as we moved up to bed, 'and the date of his return is quite uncertain.'

The next day, Sunday, was that fixed for the great picnic up at Marston, for which the unwilling Pilot had been appointed Caterer and General Manager. A regular fleet of punts had been chartered to convey the party, and cushions were piled in stacks, while Woodman's express toiled down soon after breakfast under an immense load of eat- and drinkables. It required our utmost efforts to arouse de Beresford, who had finished the previous day and commenced this by an all-night poker sitting lasting till daylight. By the time Freddy had got his aunt and Ophelia under weigh, and we had shepherded the girls from the Cathedral to the barge, it was very nearly mid-day. The stowing process took some time, though as I had already secured Muriel, Maisie and Reggie for my punt, I did not much mind what happened. We headed the procession, carrying, I fancy, most of the liquid refreshment, and punted up stream at a fearful rate under Reggie's guidance. We had scarcely passed the Thomas' ferry when a fearful yell announced that the Bugg's parasol had caught in the rope, and been carried down stream. It was rescued by a man in a Canader and brought back to Ophelia, who beamed on the canoeist and said, 'So kind of you to have reprieved my sunshade.' This remark was passed down to the other punts, and reduced Blithers to such a hopeless state that he declared himself unable to punt any longer, and retired in favour of Accrington, who continued to propel the boat for the rest of the day.

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The party progressed without incident for some time, during which Reggie, who had contrived that I should punt, engaged the girls in conversation, which appeared to afford them immense amusement, but which I could not catch; and though I repeatedly begged to share the joke, their only reply was to shout in chorus, 'Now do punt up, we're hardly moving.' Their unsympathetic treatment at length moved me to give up punting, and balance the pole carefully on Reggie, who after a while bestirred himself to work.

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'I wonder,' remarked Maisie contemplatively, as I seated myself beside her, 'whether anything liquid and cool is obtainable in this department.'

'I will see,' I said, as I foraged in the end and discovered a jar of Moselle Cup. 'How's that?'

'Great,' said Muriel and Maisie in chorus, as they each held out a glass.

'Ah!' continued Maisie, as she gulped it down and paused to think, 'I feel just like that mythological undraped person, who was always drinking and never satisfied.'

'There must have been lots of them, both the thirsty and the undraped,' I said, 'your description is rather vague.'

'Yes, perhaps it is,' she replied, 'but anyhow I wish we adhered to those ancient customs now, except perhaps that one about not being satisfied.'

'I think——,' I began, when it struck me that my thoughts had better be suppressed, and I relapsed into silence.

By this time we had pretty nearly reached the Rollers, so we waited for the other punts to come up, that containing Accrington, de Beresford and Ophelia being easily last.

'Hullo Ophelia!' cried Freddy as they came up, 'I didn't think it of you, waiting there under the bushes for such a time with de B. I suppose you felt rather out of it as gooseberry,' he continued addressing Accrington.

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'My dear Frederick,' called out Lady Blitherington from a punt propelled by the perspiring Pilot, 'pray do not suggest such awful things. I am surprised at you.'

'Well, Aunt, if Ophelia will be such a giddy old thing, what can you expect?' Freddy answered, as amid general confusion we disembarked at the Rollers.

The Bugg had got as far as 'You're that pernicious to annoy one—' when her boat hit the landing stage with a heavy thump, and her further remarks were lost. I noticed that in the general re-sorting which took place, the Pilot contrived that Accrington should have the honour of punting Lady Blitherington while he himself embarked with Miss MacNeill, who is sometimes described as 'amusing' and sometimes 'forward,' it all depends on the age and sex of the speaker. The Pilot, who is universally known as an old woman, says that a mean between the two would probably suit the case.

'O Reggie,' said Mrs. Lomond, as she stepped carefully out of Freddy's canoe, 'do come here for a minute, the bottom of that canoe was all wet.'

Reggie trotted gaily forward and marshalled her towards a disused bathing box following himself with a dish-cloth, but she gripped the door firmly and said 'Oh no, you must send me a girl, this isn't your innings, go and field outside.'

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Reg commandeered Muriel, and Mrs. Lomond soon reappeared smiling, and murmured to me as I helped her into a punt, 'I'll pay Reggie out for that dish-cloth afterwards.'

We paddled round to pick up the ladies, and I found myself in de Beresford's punt with Sybil Accrington and the Bugg, who positively declined to move into any other craft, though we all declared that the boat was dangerously full. Miss Accrington and I held pleasant converse amidships, while Ophelia, propped up by a four-gallon jar of claret cup and two hampers, chattered cheerfully to de Beresford, who was punting most skilfully. It is the one form of exercise that the dear old thing is addicted to, and so we are very careful never to deprive him of any opportunity to reduce his circumference. Among other things, I discovered, to my great

gratification, that Sybil would be at the same place with us in the Vac.—pretty name Sybil.

The sun was shining brightly, the birds were twittering, and everything was going beautifully, when the irresponsible Miss Bugg was nearly guilty of the manslaughter of all four of us.

'Mr. de Beresford,' she murmured with an ingratiating smile, 'do you know I never care to see a musical comedy.'

'Indeed, Miss Bugg, and how is that?' the Pharisee enquired politely, as he carefully wiped one sleeve and thereby allowed the water to trickle on to the other.

'Well, you see, I disapprove most strongly of all those ballet girls looking like Lady Saliva in the streets of Coventry.' [149]

De Beresford surveyed her solemnly for half a minute and then dropped the pole and collapsed heavily on to a heap of cushions, while Miss Bugg, who takes herself very seriously, prattled on about the elevating influence of Shakespeare.

We glided quietly and peacefully into the bank, and there we stuck till the Pilot came along and pulled us off, but the Pharisee was too exhausted to renew his labours, and I was obliged to take his place till we reached Marston. We arrived there first with the Pilot, and the others turned up at intervals, each punt bringing a goodly assortment of hampers and stone jars.

At last we had all assembled, the cloths were laid on a nice piece of level grass, and the Dowager was comfortably settled on an air pillow and a collection of punt cushions, when Ophelia emitted a melancholy gurgle and cried tearfully,

'I've forgotten Lady Blitherington's little flask.'

'Pas beaucoup, Ophelia,' chortled his lordship, as he produced a very diminutive silver bottle from the lining of his panama and gave it to the Bugg. 'I knew you'd lose it, old girl, so I just took the liberty of removing it from your pocket when we landed at the rollers.'

Ophelia heaved a sigh of satisfaction and settled down beside the Dowager, while we all bestowed ourselves conveniently around the cloth, each one as far as possible next to the lady of his choice. [150]

'A little of the pink fish with the yellow blanket, thank you, Mr. Cochrane,' said Maisie cheerfully as I offered her a variety of tasty dishes; the Pilot talked a lot about that picnic, but he certainly managed it very well all the same.

Blitherington, who was seated only a few feet off, in fact just the other side of Muriel, was what Maisie described as 'on the war-path,' and we heard him asking Miss MacNeill some most exciting riddles. He absolutely refused to share them with us, until Reggie handed him a dish of cold chicken and ham, and then after looking at it solemnly for half a minute he turned his anxious gaze on me and enquired 'Do you know, my ancient lord of creation, why hotel chickens are like ballet-girls?'

'No,' I answered feebly, I always seem to say 'no,' when I'm asked anything catchy, I don't think a fine frank open nature like mine is adapted to discovering puzzles.

The incorrigible Blithers just chirruped ungrammatically 'It's because they're all legs;' and by the time Lady Blitherington had turned her lorgnettes in his direction he was busily engaged carving a saddle of lamb for his fair neighbour.

'Don't encourage him, Mr. Cochrane,' Muriel whispered to me, 'If Blithers once gets loose he's apt to travel quite a distance, and he only begins where Auntie draws the line.' [151]

'What's that about drawing the line?' asked Miss MacNeill, leaning across towards Muriel with a bewitching smile.

'Oh, I only said Blitherington goes a long way before he thinks it necessary to draw it,' Muriel replied.

'It all depends what sort of a line you are talking about,' Blitherington put in, 'I know some ladies in evening dress who never seem to be going to draw a line at all.'

'Tut, Blithers,' said Muriel, 'you'd pervert an ecclesiastical synod.'

'Not much,' returned the incorrigible peer, 'I couldn't spare the time. Suffering Sosthenes,' he added after a pause, 'just listen to Ophelia, she mixes her metaphors like those Reading birds do their biscuits.'

At this moment Reggie, who had risen to search for the salt, created a sufficient diversion by sitting down in the remains of the salmon mayonnaise, and was accordingly compelled to take off his coat and wear Mr. Accrington's aquascutum for the rest of the day. Lady Blitherington, who was much exercised by the unfortunate contretemps, very kindly offered him her purple velvet cloak, but he declined the proffered honour with thanks. The general attention was distracted from the unfortunate Reggie by Blithers, who had discovered Accrington and Muriel seated behind a tree discussing rabbit-pie and other things.

The most amusing thing about Accrington is the changefulness of his affections; he has, as Reggie remarked not long ago, the most expansive and expensive heart in Oxford. Only a week ago two of his 'best girls' arrived together quite unexpectedly and held prolonged and wordy warfare in his rooms until they caught sight of some photos of a third 'best girl,' when they buried the hatchet and tore up the other girl's photos together. It may be added that when the third girl herself arrived a day or two later, her rage at finding none of her portraits on exhibition [152]

was only appeased by an even more costly gift than usual. These facts being well known among his friends, we were not a little amused to see that he had attached himself like a leech to Muriel for the last three days, weather and Reggie permitting.

'What about the Babes in the Wood?' yelled Blitherington with his most aggravating smile, as Muriel peered round the corner.

'Oh! they haven't arrived yet,' she replied, 'but what do you mean?'

Unfortunately this mystery was never cleared up, as Blithers returned to the family circle and was busily engaged in feeding Jacob on chocolate creams, which the faithful animal, to employ a euphemism, soon contrived to unswallow in a secluded portion of the meadow.

As I turned to help Mrs. Accrington, who was most usefully employed in showing an awkward squad how to wash dishes, a voice behind me murmured,

'Oh, Mr. Cochrane, please take me somewhere and give me a cigarette, I simply daren't smoke before the Dowager.' [153]

Personally I always affect a certain brand of leaf-covered invention known to the trade as cigarillos, but I obtained a supply of thin gold-tipped cigarettes from Reggie, who always keeps a selection of strange apparatus in his cigarette-case.

As we climbed over a gate and sat down behind the nearest hedge Mrs. Lomond remarked, 'Good boy, Reggie, I met him when I was out at Cannes for the Ladies golf matches; he did everything for me except sign my card.'

'He's a born organizer,' I said; 'the anti-dons campaign that he arranged in Cecil's prospered as no such enterprise has ever done before, and he doped the porter so successfully that the only name found on his black book next morning was that of an inoffensive Scholar who was visiting a sick aunt in Penzance.'

'I wish,' she said, 'that you and he would come up to town next week, and help me run our theatricals at the "Regality" in aid of the "Home for Helpless Hairdressers;" it's bound to be a great success, the Duke is coming at half-time, and I'll introduce you to some of the prettiest girls. If you like to wear an apron and carry a shaving brush in your hand you might even sell programmes,' she added with the air of one who makes a great concession.

'That's all right for me,' I put in, 'but don't you think that Reggie's heart is full enough already, and yet stay,' I added, 'there is still room for a few more in bin twenty-three.' [154]

'How much do you expect to clear,' I asked her after a short pause.

'O several thousand,' she said cheerfully. 'You see the Duchess of Dopingburgh is kissing all comers at half-a-crown a time, and Violet MacNeill is going to serve at the American bar. But I think we'd better be going back,' she added, 'if we don't want to be left here for the night.'

As we regained the scene of the orgy, Freddy gathered up all the remaining cloths and thrust them into a small trunk, while Mr. Accrington sat upon it and tried to turn the lock without much success.

'There they are,' cried Blithers as we appeared, 'now let's be going.'

'What punt are you going in, Ophelia?' Freddy enquired.

'Oh, I'll go in the most aggressive one,' Miss Bugg replied with a pleasant smile, 'I'm all for going fast.'

And so we embarked in a most amiable mood. The return journey was more or less uneventful, though my conversation with Violet MacNeill was quite the reverse. The unfortunate de Beresford who punted us down must have had a very poor time, for Blithers and Mrs. Lomond were much too busily engaged to pay any attention to him.

As we proceeded up the Broad Walk Mrs. Accrington sidled up to me and enquired with evident anxiety, 'How do you think Steve is getting on with his work? he writes us such cheering letters, but we saw Mr. Yelland to-day and he seemed most despondent.' [155]

'O the Yelper is always a Job's Comforter, Mrs. Accrington,' I said, 'besides poor old Stephen's quite a model worker.'

This seemed to satisfy the anxious parent, and I guided the conversation into less dangerous channels. Before the various families split up we made arrangements for a round of sight seeing on the following day, which was to finish with the James' Ball. On the morrow all my time was taken up with an old friend of the family who had come down for the day, and I had to undergo all the sufferings of a hired guide round Oxford who doesn't know his subject well. I contrived however to send her off soon after tea, and gained comparative rest by a couple of hours' bridge in Farmborough's rooms. We all dined with Mr. Accrington at the Hyde, and started about 9.0 for the ball, gathering the familie Blitherington as we passed their hotel. After introducing as many people as possible to all the girls, I completely lost track of the party till about supper-time, being mostly engaged with my No. 1. girl from Somerville who is a very cheery little body but suffers from worker's conscience, a most distressing weakness which prevents me seeing very much of her except at occasional dances. A ball at Oxford is a wonderfully pretty sight, and well calculated to impress anybody seeing one for the first time. All the men and the girls are young and fresh, and there is a complete absence of the doddering old men and young women of fifty who give a sad tone to big dances in London and elsewhere. The handsome quads of James' were most artistically lighted with myriads of fairy lights and Chinese lanterns, and the beautiful old-

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world gardens twinkled, though not too brightly, with wonderful devices in red and yellow. Supper was laid in the fine hall of the College and I secured two seats for Muriel and myself under a famous Archbishop who has been dead for over three hundred years, and beside Blithers and Mrs. Lomond, who were very much alive.

'Martha,' said Blitherington, as I sat down, 'try some of this fizz, it's quite innocuous.'

'What is it,' I said, 'Robinson pere et fils?'

'O no,' he replied, 'it's one of the non-poisonous varieties this time.'

However, Blitherington was apparently at fault, for I heard a warning voice behind me saying, 'I wouldn't try none o' that, if I was you, sir,' and I turned to see our old scout Webster who had apparently been imported for the evening, 'There's somethin' hin the Buttery as might suit you, sir,' he added. 'There's honly heighteen bottles been hordered an them for the Committee, but I dessay as 'ow I can get yer two.'

I clearly saw that this meant a Christmas-box to Webster, but readily assented as one always does on such occasions, and the two bottles were speedily forthcoming.

After supper I had a peaceful waltz with Miss Accrington; and subsequently conducted Miss MacNeill to a dark staircase in the second Quad. [157]

'It seems to me,' she remarked after we had mounted a flight and settled ourselves in someone's rooms, 'It seems to me that the world is about equally divided between the loved and the unloved, and the great thing is to avoid being in the second class.'

'Well, of course we know which lot you're in,' I replied quickly.

'That's very nice of you, Marth—, I mean Mr. Cochrane, but I was just thinking of the terrible number of girls who go through all this kind of thing and linger on to become sour old maids.'

Although at that particular moment I happened to be holding Miss MacNeill's hand in order to keep it warm, it is quite impossible that that could have been any reason for her squeezing it affectionately, and sighing softly; however, it was very stimulating, and I went on to say,

'I believe the proportion of men to women in the world is about two to three, even including black men, and I'm sure you wouldn't marry a Fijian or a Sandwichman.'

'Oh, why not,' she put in, 'I think a Pacific islander would make such a desirable husband. You'd know such a lot about him before your marriage.'

'Whatever do you mean, Violet?' I asked.

'On, no,' she said, 'I only mean that on a little coral island everybody would be sure to know all about their neighbours, so that you wouldn't be likely to get hold of a post-nuptial surprise packet, and anyhow, he'd be bound to be Pacific.' [158]

It was at this precise moment that Feltham, the owner of the rooms and a distant cousin of mine, arrived and remarked apologetically, 'I'm awfully sorry that there's only that one chair in the room, but the fact is they've commandeered all my best for the Ladies' Cloaker at the bottom of the staircase—', but here I noticed that Violet had departed with unusual shyness, and so I too withdrew hastily, leaving the owner surveying his apartment with a puzzled expression.

As I reached the Quad a soft little hand was linked in to my arm, and Violet enquired anxiously, 'Do you think he thought anything?'

'Oh no,' I replied, 'he couldn't have, besides he wouldn't say anything if he did.'

'Oh, all right, take me to get an ice, will you, Frank,' she said shyly, 'it was so awfully hot up there, wasn't it?'

I satisfied the fair lady with a marvellous icy rose with vanilla petals and strawberry leaves in a little white frilling of Japanese paper, and soon afterwards found myself dancing a most energetic set of lancers with Maisie.

As we were leaving the floor after it was over, Maisie said to me with a bewitching smile, 'Have you found my cosy corner?'

'I don't see how anybody could find one with so many people about,' I very naturally responded. [159]

'O yes you can,' she said, 'come along, I'll soon show it you.' And she guided me to a most beautiful arbour in the garden, where we watched the mysterious romantic world outside crawling in and out among the countless little red lights like a scene out of some worm and fire-fly carnival.

'Here it is,' she said as she settled herself carefully and with an eye to effect. I should always have thought that Maisie would have been rather a careless girl, but you ought never to attempt to judge women till you have seen a good deal of them; and even then you are apt to be a bit previous.

I enjoyed myself immensely, and Maisie's behaviour was most improper, in fact I don't know what her Aunt would have said, for she consumed three cigarettes.

However, all good things must come to an end, and after wasting two waltzes and a barn-dance on me, Maisie said that we really must return to the Ball-tent.

This was the first Quad, which had been entirely roofed over, and a beautifully swung floor put in, while all the passages and archways were carpeted and the grim old walls hung with flags and festooned draperies of the James' colours.

Lady Blitherington had enjoyed her evening, for the Bursar of James' was a former tutor in her family and had behaved like a hero to her and Ophelia throughout the dance; as the Bugg said to me on our way home: 'It was one of the most absorbent evenings I have ever spent.'

After Freddy and I had seen the old ladies back to the Granville we returned to James' for the photo, which was taken in the second Quad by three separate photographers, who spent about twenty minutes over preliminaries and only as many seconds over the actual operation.

It had long been daylight when I regained our digs and crept quietly into my room without awaking the Pilot or Reggie, not that either of them deserved any consideration, for the Pilot who sleeps next to me snores like a foghorn, while Reggie very frequently returns from town by the Dons' lubricator about two a.m. and makes enough noise to stampede a herd of wild bulls.

Tired as everyone must have been, we were all up by 12, and saw the Accringtons off for Manchester, being especially dismal on saying farewell to the charming Sybil.

There was a general move again in the afternoon, when the Dowager and her party left for town by the 4.20, only leaving behind Blitherington who, on hearing that Mrs. Lomond did not go till Wednesday, refused to budge. Miss Bugg's last remark to the effect that 'her head was going round like one of those aerated fans,' failed to raise even a smile from Reggie.

The Dowager extended a cordial invitation to all of us to visit her in town, which was seconded warmly in my case by Maisie, on whom I flatter myself—but no I won't say what I thought, lest I be accused of vanity, besides there is Sybil as well.

It seemed, as the Pilot remarked, very dull after they had all gone; and the horrible flirtation carried on by Mrs. Lomond and her admirer failed to arouse us from the depths of despondency, only partially lightened by Cecil's doing its fourth bump on Wednesday afternoon, and the prospect of what Reggie called a 'roaring old bump-supper.' Perhaps, as Squiff said, when I suddenly discovered my Finals to be only two weeks distant, 'If you have your fun you must expect to pay for it.' So I consider a drop from a possible second in Law to a certain third was not expensive.

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