"ENGLISH BY THE NATURE METHOD"

BY ARTHUR M. JENSEN

Selected Short Stories

THE NATURE METHOD INSTITUTES

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SELECTED SHORT STORIES

ENGLISH

BY THE NATURE METHOD

BY

ARTHUR M. JENSEN

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DET BERLINGSKE BOGTRYKKERI

PREFACE

The purpose behind the present collection of short stories is a double one. Firstly, it has been my intention to give to those who have gone through the main part of "English by the Nature Method" a chance to continue their studies in an easy and natural way by simply reading stories written in a language that they already command. Thus, at the beginning of this book, the stories make use only of the 2300 words contained in "English by the Nature Method". By degrees, new words are introduced, and these are explained by the help of the same 2300 words plus such new words as may have been taken into use in the stories already given. In this way the pupil's knowledge of words is increased little by little, until at the end of the book it includes 3700 words in all, carefully chosen among those most frequently used in the English language.

In the second place, I have had in mind to try to be of help to those who may in other ways have reached a certain amount of knowledge of English, but who feel that they cannot directly gain an entrance into the world of English writers without spending too much time and labour. The specially prepared short stories of this book make up a convenient bridge leading the reader by easy steps from the usual school knowledge of English to an understanding of the language normally used by English writers. Thus the story printed at the end of the book is given entirely in the writer's (W. W. Jacobs's) own language. As to the rest of the stories, the way in which they were written has been more or less changed, easier words and expressions having been used instead of more difficult ones, or, in some cases, the hard ones having simply been left out.

It is planned that seven book-length stories by well-known writers shall follow the present book, all of them prepared and explained in much the same way as here, until at last the reader commands at least 12,000 different words, and reads and un-

derstands English as readily as he does his native tongue. Together with each of these books will appear, under separate cover, a short account of some interesting side of the English language itself or of the different ways of using it.

I wish to express my thanks to the writers whose stories appear in the following pages for permission to print their stories in this form. Thanks are also offered to Messrs. Richard Steele & Son for agreeing to the use of *The Man of Mystery* and *Eliza* by Barry Pain; to Messrs. J. W. Arrowsmith (London) Ltd. for *Three Men in a Boat* by Jerome K. Jerome; to Messrs. Hughes Massie & Co. Ltd. for *The White Line* by John Ferguson and *Philomel Cottage* by Agatha Christie; to Mr. Adrian M. Conan Doyle and Messrs. John Murray for *The Red-Headed League* from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; and to The Society of Authors for *Family Cares* from *Deep Waters* by W. W. Jacobs.

In addition, I owe a debt of thanks to professors and teachers of English at the universities of Co-

penhagen, Helsingfors, Oslo, and Stockholm for many helpful suggestions in connection with preparing the material for this book. I also take pleasure in thanking Major R. L. Taylor for his never-tiring help in getting together the accounts and stories here made use of, and fitting them for the purpose held in mind.

By way of finishing, I may, perhaps, be allowed to point to the fact that this preface is written entirely within the limits of the 2300 words taught and explained in "English by the Nature Method".

ARTHUR M. JENSEN

Stockholm, January 1949.

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THE MYSTERY OF ROOM 342

The following story is said to have been taken from the secret archives of the Paris Police from the time of the Great Exhibition of 1889. Several writers have told the story. It seems to have gone round the world. Here it is given for the first time in the form of conversation.

The story opens in Bombay. Captain Day, who was stationed in India, has just died, leaving his wife and daughter of seventeen alone in India.

Bombay [bɔm'bei]

Mrs. Day: At last I have some good news for you, my dear. As you know, I was down at the officers' mess for lunch to-day, and the general told me that his new assistant is willing to take over the house and all the furniture as well.

Miss Day: I'm so delighted to hear it, mother. I never did think it was a good idea

help = keep from

to take any of our things back to England with us. I know you can't help thinking of daddy very often, but I'm glad we are leaving the things behind. You would be thinking of daddy, sitting there reading and writing, every time you looked at his desk.

Mrs. Day: Perhaps you are right, Joan, but you will understand that many of these things have a great sentimental value.

Miss Day: I understand, mother, but we have to begin life anew in England, and we shall do it ever so much better without all these things around you.

Mrs. Day: I'm sorry that, as soon as we get to England, it will be necessary to go across to Paris and sign certain papers in connection with your father's property. I should just like to go to England and stay there.

certain = some

Miss Day: I have a very good idea, mother. Many of the boats call at Marseilles. I suggest that we get off the boat at Marseilles and take the train from there to Paris. Then you could sign the papers, and we could continue our journey to England. In fact, it would be just as quick as going by boat the whole way.

call at = stop at

Marseilles [*ma:'seilz*]

Mrs. Day: That is an excellent suggestion, Joan, and I think I'll go down to the shipping company in the morning to find out when the first boat is leaving for Marseilles.

A few weeks later at Marseilles.

Mrs. Day: I feel rather nervous about the hotel in Paris, Joan. From the papers I have been reading, it seems as if the whole world has come to Paris for the Exhibition. I remember once, soon after we were married, your father and I stayed at the Crillon. I think we had better go along to the post-office and send a telegram for a double-room. It'll only be for one or two nights at the most. I'd like to stay longer so that you could see something of the Exhibition, but I have not been feeling very well for the last few days.

Crillon [*kri:jɔn*] (French name are here given with the pronunciation that an Englishman would naturally use)

Miss Day: In that case it is much more important for us to get back to England as soon as possible. I am sure that, after a few weeks in the beautiful English countryside, you will begin to feel much better. And, mother, there will be other chances for me of seeing Paris later on. I'm simply longing to

simply = only

see my own country, and to visit the places that you and daddy come from. England is the place for me at the moment, just as much as it is for you.

Twenty-four hours later.

Gare de Lyons [*ga: də li:ɔŋ*] = large main station in Paris

Mrs. Day: In a few minutes we shall be running into the Gare de Lyons. I do hope that the Crillon was able to find a room for us. I must say, Joan, that I have never been on a journey that has made me so tired. I have only one desire at the moment, and that is to lie down on my bed as soon as possible.

worn out = very tired

Miss Day: Poor mother, you do look tired and worn out. Still, if there is no room for us at the Crillon, we should be able to get a room elsewhere, for I understand that Paris is just full of hotels. We are running into the station now. *(A few seconds later.)* Oh, mother, we are lucky; I have just seen a man with the name of our shipping company on his cap. If we're not able to get in at the Crillon, he'll know where to send us. *(Calling to the man.)* Hallo, hallo there! Will you give us some help, please?

Shipping company man: Why certainly, mademoiselle. What can I do for you?

Miss Day: Mother and I left one of your boats at Marseilles and are proceeding via Paris to England. We sent a wire from Marseilles to the Crillon, ordering a double-room. If we find the hotel is full up, perhaps you could recommend another one to us.

full up = having no empty rooms

Shipping company man: Certainly, mademoiselle. I will come with you myself and explain to the driver that he is to take you to the Crillon first, and then I will give him the name of a hotel where you will certainly find an empty room, if there is no room for you at the Crillon.

Miss Day: That is very kind of you.

Shipping company man: The pleasure is all mine. Will you please show me your luggage, and then I will get a porter. Then perhaps you would follow me to the cab.

cab
[kæb]

A few minutes later at the Crillon.

Miss Day: I am Miss Day, and this is my mother, Mrs. Day. We sent you a wire from Marseilles, ordering a double-room.

Hotel clerk: Yes, mademoiselle, you are very lucky indeed. We were quite full up, but just before your telegram arrived, we received another from a client who was not able to come. It is only a single-room, but we have put in an extra bed for mademoiselle.

Miss Day: That is excellent. What is the number of the room?

Clerk: No. 342, mademoiselle. Here is the key, and I will get a porter to take your things up to your room.

In the hotel bedroom.

Miss Day: Well, here we are, mother. Everything has turned out well. It could hardly be better. To-morrow you can go and sign those papers, and then we can catch the first train for England. Now that we're getting so near to England, I'm getting quite excited. It won't be very long before we're living in our own little house in the beautiful English countryside. I suggest that we wash and then go down to the restaurant for dinner.

turn out well = go well

catch = take

Mrs. Day: I hope you will forgive me, Joan, if I don't come to dinner with you.

I feel far too tired to eat and could not face all the people in the restaurant.

Miss Day: I'm sorry that you won't have anything. I'll change and go down alone then.

The following morning.

Miss Day: Hallo, good morning, mother, I hope you've slept well.

Mrs. Day: Good morning, Joan. I'm afraid I didn't sleep very well. But that doesn't mean anything. When you get too tired, it is often very difficult to fall asleep.

Miss Day: I'm very sorry to hear it, mother, but now I'll ring for some breakfast.

A few minutes later a maid appears with a tray.

Miss Day: Here's a cup of tea, mother. It doesn't look quite so strong as the tea in India, but better than I expected French tea to be.

Mrs. Day: Thank you, my dear. It doesn't look too bad.

Miss Day: You must really try it. It'll do you good, and then we can start thinking about those papers that want signing. want = need

Mrs. Day: I don't feel very much like get-

ting up and going out just now. I should prefer to wait until this afternoon or to-morrow morning. It might be a good idea if you went round to see the man and asked him if it were possible for him to come here. That would be much easier still. I'll be all right again by to-morrow, and then we can start on the last stage of our journey.

easier still = still easier

Miss Day: All right, mother, I'll certainly go round and see him, but first of all I'm going straight down to see that the hotel doctor comes to see you without delay.

A little later. Mother and daughter are again talking in their room.

Miss Day: The manager was in his office all right, and he promised me to arrange for the doctor to come at once.

There is a knock at the door.

Miss Day: I expect that's the doctor. I'll go and open the door.

Doctor: Good morning, mademoiselle, my name is Doctor Dupont. The manager tells me that your mother is not well.

Dupont [*dju'pɔ:ŋ*]

Miss Day: Good morning, Doctor Dupont, will you please come in. It was very good of you to come so quickly. This is my mother, Doctor Dupont.

Doctor: Good morning, madam. I do not speak the English language so well. I'm sure you will forgive me. First of all I will take your temperature and pulse, and then I can ask you some questions.

A minute or two later.

Doctor: May I ask where you have come from?

Mrs. Day: My daughter and I left Bombay after the death of my husband, and as I have some business to do in Paris, we travelled overland from Marseilles, arriving here yesterday evening.

Doctor: I understand that you are feeling very tired, and that the appetite has gone – is it not so?

Mrs. Day: Yes, doctor. To be quite honest, I felt too tired to get up this morning, and now I seem to have lost my appetite altogether.

Doctor: Yes, madam. When people are

overtired, they do not feel like eating. I will send for some medicine for you that will help you. I will see you again, madam, but now I must say adieu. *(To Miss Day.)* Perhaps mademoiselle will come with me.

Downstairs.

Doctor: I am sorry to say that it is very serious, mademoiselle. You must not think of continuing your journey to England tomorrow. It might be better to move your mother to a hospital. Of course, I shall arrange everything for you. But, mademoiselle, it will be necessary for you to go at once to my house and fetch some medicine for your mother. I am very sorry, mademoiselle, that my house is at the other end of Paris. It is very unfortunate that I do not have a telephone in the house. The best and quickest way would be for mademoiselle to go to my house herself. I will give mademoiselle a note for my wife, telling her what to do.

serious = dangerous

move = take to another place

Miss Day: But, doctor, if you live so far away, wouldn't it be much quicker to get the medicine from a chemist's?

Doctor: Mademoiselle, this is a very special medicine of my own, and it will be much quicker for you to go to my house for it. You may trust me, mademoiselle, that I will do the very best for you. Now I must write a note to my wife, giving her instructions, and then I will get a cab that will take you to my house, and afterwards bring you back here with the medicine.

The doctor wrote a note, gave it to the girl, and having got a cab for her, gave the driver instructions. The girl was very impatient, especially as the cab seemed to crawl along as slowly as possible. She got the idea that the doctor's house was at the very end of the world. Several times she thought that the cab was going in the wrong direction, for when she looked out of the window, she was certain that they were going along streets that they had already been through once. At last, however, the cab stopped in front of a house. The girl got out and rang the bell. She had to ring the bell several times before the door was opened.

Miss Day: Good morning! I am Miss Day. I have a note from Mr. Dupont.

Mrs. Dupont: Good morning, mademoiselle, please come inside and sit down. I am Mrs. Dupont. I will see what my husband has to say. *(She reads the note.)* I will attend to it at once, mademoiselle, but it will take some time to prepare the medicine. Won't you sit down until it is ready.

feel like running = want to run

wait on = continue to wait

The wait seemed to have no end. Hundreds of times she got up from her chair and walked to the door of the room and then went back and sat down again. Sometimes, she felt like running back to her mother without the medicine, but having come so far for it, she waited on. She was surprised to hear the telephone ring, because she remembered the doctor's words, that he had not got one. The long wait brought tears to her eyes as she thought of her mother lying in bed at the hotel, waiting for her. At last, however, the medicine was ready, and she went out to the cab. The drive back to the hotel was even slower than the drive out, and when they got back

to the centre of the town, the cab driver stopped outside a hotel that was unknown to her. She now felt certain that something was wrong. A few yards away she noticed a young man, who to judge by his clothes could not be anything else but English, and although modest by nature, she jumped out of the cab and ran up to him.

Miss Day: Excuse me for addressing a perfect stranger, but you are English, aren't you?

Stranger (with cordiality): Oh yes, I'm English all right. You look worried. Can I help you in any way?

Miss Day: My name is Miss Day. My mother and I are staying at the Crillon. As she wasn't very well this morning, I got the hotel doctor to see her. He told me that it was serious, and sent me off to his house at the other end of Paris to fetch some medicine for her. I just don't understand things. The doctor gave the driver instructions, and he drove as slowly as possible, very often driving, I am sure, in the wrong direction, for we drove up several streets more than once. Then I had to wait for ages at the doctor's house,

for ages [*eidʒiz*] = for a very long time

while the medicine was prepared. The doctor said that he couldn't phone his wife as he had no phone, but while I was waiting, I heard the telephone ring in the next room. Then on the way back, the driver drove slower than ever, and now instead of taking me back to the Crillon, he has brought me here. I just can't understand it all.

Stranger: I'll introduce myself. My name is John Bates. I'm a junior secretary at the Embassy here. I'll come along with you as far as the Crillon, for it does all sound rather strange.

Bates [*beits*]

At the Crillon they find the door of No. 342 locked and go down to the clerk.

Miss Day: Can I have my key, please?

Clerk: Whom do you wish to see, mademoiselle?

Miss Day: I registered here last night with my mother, and we were given No. 342. Please give me my key.

Clerk: But surely you are wrong, mademoiselle. You could not have come here yesterday evening; it must have been some other

hotel. What did you say was the number of the room, mademoiselle?

Miss Day: No. 342.

Clerk: But I do not understand, mademoiselle, for No. 342 has been taken by Monsieur Ley. He often stays at the hotel. He is a very good friend of ours.

Monsieur Ley [*məsjə lei*]

Miss Day: But I did register here yesterday evening with my mother. I demand to see the registration papers which were filled in by people yesterday.

Clerk: As you wish, mademoiselle, but you will certainly find that you have not registered here.

She goes through the previous day's registration papers several times, but fails to find those filled in by her mother and herself.

previous [*pri:vjəs*]
day = day before

Clerk: Is mademoiselle satisfied now?

Miss Day: No, I am far from satisfied. As a matter of fact, you were the one that gave us the papers to fill in. I remember you quite distinctly on account of that ring you have on your finger with the blood-red stone in it.

as a matter of fact = in reality

Clerk: But I never saw mademoiselle be-

fore in my life. Perhaps mademoiselle is not well; it is very hot to-day.

Miss Day: My mother wasn't well this morning, so I made the manager arrange for the doctor to call and see her. Both the doctor and the manager will remember me. Will you please call the manager?

call = come

Clerk (speaking in a tone of resignation): If you think it will help, mademoiselle, I will call the manager.

The clerk returns with the manager, who does not seem to recognize her either.

Bates (to Miss Day): Don't you think the doctor who is in charge of your mother would recognize you? *(To the manager.)* Perhaps I had better introduce myself – John Bates, a secretary of the British Embassy here. I think that I must insist that you call the doctor.

be in charge of = look after

After a twenty minutes' wait the doctor appears.

Doctor: I understand that mademoiselle and monsieur wish to see me. In what way can I be of assistance to you?

Miss Day: Oh, doctor, I have now got the medicine for mother. Have you seen her again? Can you tell me how long it will be before we're able to continue our journey to England? I don't understand these people at the hotel. They say they have never seen me before. Tell them, doctor, that they are wrong. Tell them that you saw my mother in room 342 this morning, and then sent me to your house for some medicine for her.

Doctor: I think you must be suffering from the heat. Perhaps I could arrange to get something for you. You are looking extremely white and nervous.

Miss Day: But, doctor, what about my mother? Don't worry about me! How's my mother? Will it be necessary to send her to hospital?

Doctor: I am sorry, mademoiselle, but I have never seen your mother. Until a few minutes ago, I had never seen you either. But I should be pleased to help you.

Miss Day (turning to John Bates): Take me away from here, otherwise I'll go quite mad, just like these people here.

John Bates, who is quite sure that the girl is telling the truth – although he does not know why he should be so sure after hearing the clerk, the manager, and the doctor at the hotel – takes her to a small restaurant. Here, with much difficulty, he succeeds in getting her to eat a little, while at the same time she tells him the whole of the story from the time of the death of her father in India, until the happenings of the same morning.

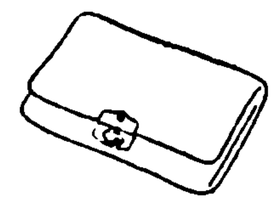
Bates: Now, Miss Day, I'll tell you at once that I believe every word of your story, and I'm prepared to do everything I can to help you. To be true, I'm only a junior secretary at the Embassy, but I'm sure that they'll help, too. Before I tell them the story, I think it would be a very good idea to be able to prove as much of it as possible. Now, what I suggest is this. You must stay somewhere while we're looking into things. I've got a room at a hotel; it is quite a small one, but it's clean and cheap. I'm sure I could get them to find a room for you there. As soon as you're fixed there, I suggest we go to see the shipping company by whose boat you travelled to

Marseilles. We can get them to confirm that you and your mother were passengers as far as Marseilles. We can also get hold of the man from the shipping company who helped you at the station. Through him it may be possible to get into touch with the cab driver who drove you to the Crillon. When we have this information, I can go to the people at the Embassy and get them to do something.

get hold of = get

get into touch with = get into connection with

Miss Day (gratefully): Oh, Mr. Bates, I don't know how to thank you. After listening to those people at the Crillon, I almost began to think that I was mad myself. It's so nice of you to trust me. I think your idea is excellent, but when I went to the doctor's this morning, I didn't take my purse with me, so that I'm now entirely without money. I hate to mention it to you – I've never before had to do such a thing in all my life.



purse [pə:s]

Bates: You needn't worry about the hotel bill, for I can get the people at the Embassy to look after that. And I'll be pleased to help you until you have time to see the man who has the papers which your mother was going to sign.

Miss Day: I think you are wonderful, Mr. Bates. I don't know how I'll ever repay you for your kindness.

Bates: I'm only too glad to be able to do a little for you. Since we are going to work together for a time, wouldn't it make matters easier if you drop the Mr. Bates and start calling me John right away?

drop = leave out

right away = at once

Miss Day: All right, you call me Joan then!

Bates spent the afternoon in talking to the shipping company, their representative who was at the Gare de Lyons, and the cab driver. All confirmed the story the girl had told him. He then placed the matter before a senior official of the Embassy. The same evening at the hotel.

Bates: Now, Joan, I want you to think hard and tell me exactly what furniture was in room 342 at the Crillon. The Embassy is going to arrange through the French Police to get permission to look at room 342, perhaps to-morrow.

Miss Day: I remember the curtains very

distinctly; they were cream-coloured. Then the chairs were covered with some red material. The wall-paper I can also remember, for I didn't like it – it was cream-coloured, too, and was covered with big red roses. The bed was just an ordinary wooden bed, nothing special about it. They are the most important things that I can remember.

Bates: That's quite enough.

The following afternoon Miss Day is waiting at the door of their hotel for the return of Bates. After a long wait, he appears.

Miss Day: Oh, John, do tell me if you were able to arrange the matter with the French Police!

Bates: Yes, Joan. The first secretary of the Embassy arranged everything. We went to the Crillon this afternoon, but found that everything in the room was quite different from the description given by you. The curtains were blue and white; the chairs were covered with grey material; and the wall-paper was white and had many small flowers. But now we come to a most surprising thing.

The wall-paper had only just been put up! I noticed one or two places where it was not yet quite dry.

Miss Day: Oh, John, what can it all mean? I wonder where poor mother is? I've got the idea that I shall never see her again.

Bates: Cheer up, Joan! We'll get to the bottom of this matter, even if it should take us weeks. When we had finished looking at room 342, I thought it might be a good idea to try and find the name and address of the man who does the paper-hanging for the hotel. It wasn't very easy, but, as usual, a little money helped. So I suggest that we go round to see him as soon as we've had some dinner.

Later in the evening at the paper-hanger's shop.

Paper-hanger: So you want to know if I papered a room at the Crillon yesterday? I can't understand why you should be interested in my work.

Bates: It's very important for this lady to know, and, if you did, which room it was.

Paper-hanger: So it's important for this young lady to know, is it? Well, like all good Frenchmen, I should be pleased to help a nice young lady. But these are hard times, and paper-hangers are not overpaid for their work.

Bates: I know that room 342 was papered yesterday. I was there this afternoon and saw that the paper was not yet quite dry. What I really want to know is whether you can give us any information. If the information were worth it, I should be ready to give twenty-five francs for it.

Paper-hanger: Well, for a nice young lady and –

Bates: You mean, that for twenty-five francs you might tell us something. All right, if you have anything to tell us, the money is yours.

Paper-hanger: Well, I was sent for suddenly yesterday morning. When I got to the Crillon, they were busy moving furniture out of a room – No. 342. I was told to put up fresh paper as quickly as possible. I tried to find out the reason for it, monsieur, for it is not only women who are curious in this world. No,

body could, or would, explain anything to me. That is all I can tell you.

Bates: Here is the money. I think you have earned it. Are you certain that another twenty-five francs would not help you to remember still more?

Paper-hanger: If I could tell you any more, I would do it for the sake of the young lady.

A fortnight later.

Bates: Well, my dear Joan, I have now tried all the servants at the Crillon who might be able to tell us what happened. I cannot get a word out of them. There are probably very few that know the truth, and they have been well paid to keep their mouths shut.

Miss Day: I've given up all hope of ever seeing mother again. You have been wonderful to me, John. Without you to help and comfort me, I don't know what I should have done.

Bates: Nothing has ever given me greater pleasure, Joan. I am not looking forward to the day when you go to your father's people

in England! I shall miss you, Joan. But I hope to make you stay a little longer. There is still one chance left of being able to find out what happened. The first secretary told me to-day that he is very friendly with one of the heads of the French Police. This man has been in America for some time, but he will be returning in four or five days. The first secretary thinks that he will be able to get the true story out of him. Won't you wait, Joan, until the two of them have had a chat about the affair?

be friendly with = be the friend of

Miss Day: Oh, John, although I know that I shall never see mother again, I should feel much happier if only I knew what had happened to her. It would seem strange to go back to England to daddy's people and tell them that I had just given up. Of course I'll wait.

A week later.

Bates (with a very serious face): The first secretary has talked to his friend in the police.

Miss Day: Oh, John, I can tell from your face that the news is not good. I will try to be brave. Tell me the whole story, just what really happened.

Bates: You are a very brave girl, Joan; the best I've ever met. I'm afraid you'll never see your mother again. Well, er – er –

Miss Day: Tell me, John! I will try to be brave.

Bates: Well, then I must tell you that the doctor who came to see your mother recognized at once that she was suffering from the black plague. He sent you off so that he would have time to remove your mother to hospital. Your poor mother died there that afternoon. The French did not want the news of your mother's death to get into the French papers. The Exhibition had started only a short time before, and they were afraid that the news of a visitor dying of the black plague would cause Paris to be emptied of visitors at once. It was agreed that the whole thing must be kept secret.

Miss Day: Poor mother – and yet I am glad that I now know the truth. I'll try to forget the troubles I've had in Paris. I shall be glad to get to England – that will help me to forget.

Bates: I hope you will not forget everything connected with Paris, Joan.

Miss Day: No, John, I'll never forget you.

Bates: I shan't give you the chance, Joan. In a month's time I'll be coming to England on leave.

shan't = shall not

AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF WATER

1588.

Cornwall
[*kɔ:nwəl*]

In the county of Cornwall in South-West England, the first Spanish ships had been sighted. A fire was immediately lit to let the nation know that the enemy was coming. Within a very short time, fires were burning all the way along the south coast of England.

People had been expecting this for some

Philip
[*filip*]

time. It was known that King Philip the Second of Spain had prepared a great number of ships for the invasion of England. King Philip was very angry with England. Firstly, the English were Protestants; they were not Catholics; they were not members of the 'true' church. Secondly, and perhaps more important from Philip's point of view, the English had now for many years attacked the rich Spanish ships sailing between the new world and the old. Much money that should have ended in Philip's own pocket, found its

point of view
= opinion

way into the pockets of these Englishmen instead.

When Philip's preparations were completed, 130 great ships-of-war left Spain. In addition to the large number of sailors necessary, they had on board 20,000 of the best soldiers that Philip had been able to get together for the invasion of England. The plan was to sail the Spanish ships-of-war up the English Channel to the Netherlands, and to take on board the army of the Duke of Parma which was waiting there.

Duke of Parma [*dju:k əv pa:mə*]

As soon as the English saw the fires burning along the coast, every man hurried to do what he knew to be his duty. Many were to remain on land in case it should be possible for the Spaniards to make a landing. Many others made their way to their ships; they were small ships, very small ships compared with those of the Spaniards.

make one's way = go

From every harbour on the south coast of England, the small English ships went out to meet the great Spanish ships-of-war. Every English sailor on board had a great belief in himself and his ship. For many of the men

had fought against the Spaniards before, and there was no doubt in their minds that they would win this battle as they had won in the past.

As the Spanish ships-of-war sailed up the Channel, the English ships came sailing out of their harbours to meet them. Then they started sailing round and round the heavy Spanish ships, firing their guns at them the whole time. The advantage was with the small English ships, for it was much easier for them than for the enemy to move about.

The battle lasted all the way up the Channel, and the Spanish ships-of-war suffered very much from one enemy attack after another. Now, the weather, which had not been good to start with, was growing worse and worse, and before long there was a terrible storm. Then fireships were sent against the Spaniards, setting many of their ships on fire.

grow = become

The Spaniards were driven northwards along the east coast of England by the high wind, and at last, after having sailed right round the North of Scotland, made their way

back to Spain. Out of the 130 great ships-of-war that had left Spain for the invasion of England, only 53 returned.

Thus ended the Spanish attempt at the invasion of England.

1793–1815.

The French Parliament, or the National Assembly as it chose to call itself, declared war against England in 1793. During the first few years the war was very slow. Other nations joined England in her fight against the French Republic. At first it seemed that it would be impossible for France to stand against the power of England, Prussia, Austria, Holland, and Spain. But the new French Republic was strong, and its armies were led by clever generals. Its enemies met with defeat after defeat, and one by one, Prussia, Austria, Holland, and Spain were conquered by France, until only England remained.

Prussia [*prʌʃə*]

Austria [*ɔ:striə*]

While France seemed to be able to conquer every nation on land, there was a different story to be told when French and Eng-

lish ships-of-war met. At sea the French were defeated again and again.

Then news was received in England that the French had made a proclamation: "ENGLAND AND THE FRENCH RE-PUBLIC CANNOT BOTH CONTINUE TO EXIST." And at the same time it was learned that General Napoleon Bonaparte had been sent to look after an army that was going to invade England. This was followed by the news that Napoleon's eyes were turned to Egypt instead of England, for he hoped that he would be able to attack the English in India from there. At first he overran Egypt, but the French ships-of-war were defeated by Nelson in 1798, and before long his army in Egypt was defeated, too.

Napoleon Bonaparte [*nə'pouljən bounəpa:t*]

Egypt [*i:dʒipt*]

When Napoleon became Emperor in 1804, he decided to invade England. In the French Channel ports everybody was very busy. They were working day and night to build flat-bottomed boats which were to carry the French army across the Channel.

On the north side of the Channel they realized that the danger was greater than ever

before. After the war broke out, and especially after the French proclamation, great numbers of Englishmen spent every day in military exercises. It was more than seven hundred years since Englishmen had had to fight for their own country in England itself. This Frenchman Bonaparte would find that an invasion of England was different from conquering countries on the Continent of Europe. Bonaparte was sure that if he could get his troops to England, he could conquer it in the same way as he had conquered Prussia, Holland, Austria, and Spain, but before he could even start to fight the English, he must cross that narrow piece of water between England and France. How was it possible for him to cross the water, with English ships-of-war in control of the Channel? "If I could only get control of the Channel for a few hours, I could do it," he told his generals.

break out = start

Those few hours never came, and after waiting for many months with his army ready to set out at any moment, he began to withdraw his troops.

set out = begin to move

In the years that followed, even until the

Waterloo
[*wɔ:tə'lu:*]

year 1815, when Napoleon was finally defeated at Waterloo, there was often the possibility of a French invasion, but the Channel continued to prevent Napoleon from conquering England. He was not the first to dream of conquering the Channel – and he was not to be the last.

May 1940.

Once again there were dark clouds over Europe. This time there was no danger from France or Spain, but from a Germany that was dreaming of conquering the whole world.

Poland
[*pouland*]

Poland had been attacked the previous year, and within a month the Germans were masters of that country. Norway and Denmark had been overrun a few weeks before. Holland and Belgium had been attacked a few days before, but nobody was in doubt as to the result. The Germans had been preparing for this for seven years. British troops were in Belgium, but they were too few in number, and Britain had not prepared for war.

Belgium
[*beldʒəm*]

as to = about

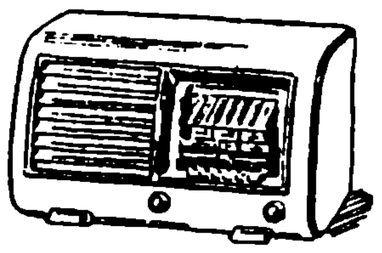
Maginot
[*mædʒinou*]

Then came that sad day for all Frenchmen when the Maginot Line was passed and the

Germans commenced their march on Paris. The English hoped that they would be able to remain on the Continent of Europe until fresh troops arrived to help them, and that it would be possible to stop the Germans. In the past it had often been said that the British hoped for the best, but did not do very much to help themselves.

The voice of Mr. Winston Churchill, however, speaking to the men of Britain on the wireless of the danger of invasion, prepared them for the worst and called for the establishment of a great home-front army. The men were asked to go to the nearest police station, and within five minutes of the end of his appeal, queues were waiting outside nearly every police station throughout the length and breadth of Britain. At one police station alone, within half an hour, more than three thousand men were waiting to become members of and bear the uniform of the new home-front army.

Winston Churchill [*winstən tʃə:tʃil*]



wireless [*waiəlis*]

It was a good thing that Britain was prepared for the worst, for the time was to come very shortly when the British Army was

pushed out of the Continent and France was overrun by the Germans.

With Holland, Belgium, and France in their hands, the Germans could now begin to think about their next move, which was, of course, the invasion of England. France and Spain had tried without success, but the Germans would show the world how to do it. There was but one thing to be done first:

move = step

but = only

Before the German boats could sail from the ports of northern France, it would be necessary to gain control of the air. In days past it had been necessary to gain control of the Channel itself, but in the days of modern warfare, if control could be obtained of the air, it would be impossible for British warships to prevent an invasion.

In August 1940 the Germans commenced the attempt. For about two months they tried their best every day. It was the greatest air battle that the world had ever seen. Hundreds upon hundreds of Germany's best aircraft were sent out to take part in it. They were far greater in number than the British aircraft which fought against them.

In September and October Germany made her greatest efforts to make an invasion possible. Every machine that could be sent, was sent to England. Every day the air over southern England was filled with the sound of battle. When the battle was over and the number of German machines that had been shot down was counted up, it was found that so many German aircraft had been destroyed that the danger for England was over.

machine = aircraft

over = finished

This great battle is now known as "The Battle of Britain". The Germans failed entirely to gain that control of the air that was so necessary to them, so they never tried an invasion.

History thus shows that this piece of water between England and France, which is only 22 miles across at the narrowest point, has played a great part in the history of Europe, and indeed in the history of the whole world.

play a great part = be very important

THE MAN OF MYSTERY

By BARRY PAIN

I.

Barry Pain [*bæri pein*]

Harvey [*ha:vi*]

Jobson [*dʒɔbsn*]

"One of the reasons," said Mrs. Harvey, the cook, to Mr. Jobson, the butler, as they sat together after supper, "one of the reasons why I should never marry you, Mr. Jobson, is –"

"One of the reasons," said Mr. Jobson thoughtfully, "might be that you have never been asked, not that I know of."

put = say, express

"Well," said Mrs. Harvey, "we'll put it this way, then. One of the reasons why I should never marry the kind of man you are is that I could never feel I had his confidence."

"I see," said Mr. Jobson.

"You're what I should call a man of mystery. Evening after evening I sit here talking to you. You know nearly as much of my private affairs as I know myself. And what do you ever tell me about yourself?"

"Not a lot," said Mr. Jobson.

"Well, I came upon a piece of news to-day that concerns me and you, too. And I have decided to say nothing about it."

"Ah," said Mr. Jobson, picking up the paper.

"I don't see why I should tell you anything about it. In my opinion, life should be a matter of give and take. If I had your confidence you would have mine."

Mr. Jobson looked up from his newspaper, but said nothing.

"Well, I'll tell you this time, but it'll be the very last until you make some change in your ways. I was talking to the old lady this morning when she was giving the orders for the day, and she remembered that I'd been in her service just fifteen years to-day. And she told me that both of us were mentioned in her will if we were in her service at the time of her death."

"Ah," said the man of mystery.

"You make me impatient. Do put that newspaper down! When I tell you an im-

portant thing like that, have you got nothing to say about it?"

"You see," said Mr. Jobson, "it's not really news to me. The old lady told me the same thing three weeks ago."

"And you never mentioned it! Really, I don't call it right. It doesn't seem honest to me. What do you suppose the sum would be?"

"Can't say," said Mr. Jobson.

"I know this," said Mrs. Harvey. "If you were to offer me a hundred pounds for my place to-day, I wouldn't take it. I've known cases where as much as five hundred pounds has been left to a cook. Of course, we hope that the old lady will live for many years yet, but she must be well over seventy, and the years of a man are three score and ten, as the Bible states. I wish I knew exactly what her age is. I've given her a chance to refer to it more than once, but she never seemed to care to say anything about it."

Jardine [*dʒa:di:n*]

"Well," said Mr. Jobson, "if that's all you want to know, I can tell you that. Mrs. Jardine is seventy-eight."

"And I wouldn't have thought her a day over seventy-five. How did you find out? Did she tell you?"

"She didn't, so to speak, tell me. Speaking of the wine that came to her from her brother when he died, she mentioned that he was ten years younger than she was. He lived in Exeter, and I have got a cousin there. My cousin saw the gravestone."

Exeter [*eksətə*]

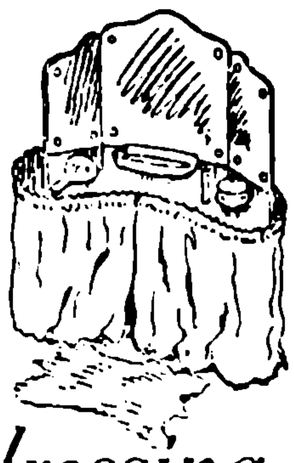
"You are just like Sherlock Holmes! I expect you could find out how much we shall get, if you wanted to."

"I might – and I might not. Her solicitors live in the town; and solicitors have clerks; and sometimes clerks are thirsty."

"Well, if it was only a question of giving a man a few drinks, I wouldn't mind paying half of the expenses. Ever since the old lady told me this morning, I have been feeling so nervous."

"What are you so nervous about?"

"Why, that I might do something to lose my place. The money depends upon my being with her at the time of her death. A kinder lady one would never wish to see. But if she



dressing-table
[*dresiŋteibl*]

thinks there is anything wrong, she doesn't take long in acting. I remember, more than ten years ago, before you came here, she'd left some money on her dressing-table, and the housemaid took some of it. Fifteen minutes was all the time that silly girl was given to pack and get out of the house, and she was told that if she wasn't gone in fifteen minutes, she'd be handed over to the police."

"Well, you don't have to take the old lady's money, do you?"

"Of course not. As if I would think of such a thing! But I might break some of the old lady's best cups and saucers, or forget an order, or something might go wrong with the dinner on some occasion when we had visitors. There are lots of accidents that might happen."

saucer
[*sɔ.sə*]

"I shouldn't let it worry me, if I were you," said Mr. Jobson. "You know your work, and I know mine. Still, I've been thinking –"

still = yet

He paused.

"Thinking what?" said Mrs. Harvey eagerly.

"Well, you say I never give any confidence.

I've been thinking whether it wouldn't pay me to leave."

"What! With that money coming to you? You must be mad. Besides, a more comfortable place you'll never find. And you can't say that you have too much to do."

"No, that was not what I had in my mind. Of course, life here is not at all interesting. It's all routine, and I'm sick of it. But as I told you, I have a cousin in Exeter, and –"

sick = tired

An electric bell rang twice, sharply.

"Evening prayers," said Mrs. Harvey, "and just as you were beginning to open out a little."

open out = tell about oneself

"Yes," said Mr. Jobson, as he took off his light jacket and put on his evening coat, "just one thing after another, isn't it? All routine!"

Mrs. Jardine, a slight figure, much too a row of chairs at one end of the dining-room. Mr. Jobson, looking very solemn, placed a large Bible on the dining-room table, opened at the appointed place.

Mrs. Jardine, a slight figure, much too small for the large chair in which she sat, read without the aid of glasses, in the voice

glasses
|gla:siz|

which she only used when reading from the Bible.

When prayers were over, Mrs. Jardine said good-night to the servants, and then remembered something.

"Jobson," she said, "I'd forgotten. The Fonseca '96 for to-morrow night, please."

Fonseca [*fɔn'sekə*] = kind of wine

"Very good, madam," said Jobson.

2.

Mrs. Jardine loved system and method. If anybody had been rude enough to tell her that she was old-fashioned, she would not have become angry. On the contrary she would have taken it as a compliment. She had a very low opinion of the present generation. Her nearest neighbour, Lady Sinden, who was young, pretty, and far from serious, came to her one Sunday afternoon.

"I wonder if you could help me," said Lady Sinden. "Could you possibly let me have three stamps? Nobody in my house has got a stamp."

Sinden [*sindən*]

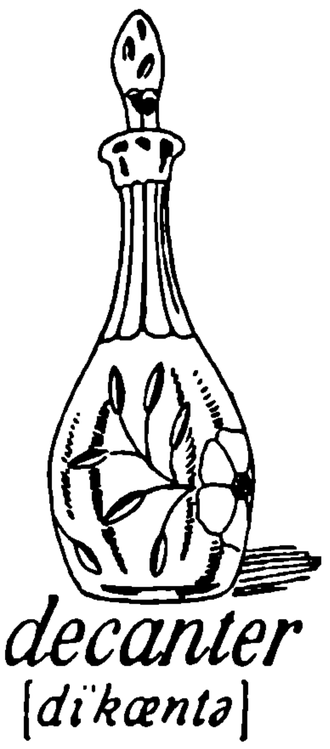
Mrs. Jardine smiled pleasantly, and sup-

plied the visitor with tea and stamps, and her opinion of the clergyman's sermon that morning. Later she wrote in her diary: "Lady S. called. Feather-headed fool."

Mrs. Jardine was never without stamps or anything else that she was likely to require, and she always had the time-table for the month, and the clocks in her house never stopped. But she could tell that she was not able to remember things as well as she had been. It was her age, of course. She could still remember perfectly the events of her young days, but she sometimes forgot the events of yesterday.

tell = feel, notice

She had nearly forgotten to tell Jobson which port he was to decant. Mrs. Jardine, like most people who have a knowledge of wine and a good taste, did not drink very much. She drank a little port after dinner every night, and when she was alone, one bottle lasted one week. The wine was decanted in the cellar after breakfast, and a piece of paper was laid over the mouth of the decanter to keep out dust.



decanter
[di'kæntə]

In many ways Mrs. Jardine knew how to

live. She was interested in her cellar. It contained far more wine than she would ever drink, and she was still adding to it from time to time. Her family believed in good wine. She had inherited wine from her father and her brother, and she intended that others should inherit from her. She bought wine for her grandchildren to drink, that so she might not be forgotten by them.

Mrs. Jardine arose early and read family prayers at eight in the morning. She had a dislike for old ladies who breakfasted in bed. After breakfast came a very careful talk with the cook, for Mrs. Jardine was an epicure. And then there was always something in the garden or the house which required her attention. This morning she decided that it was time she examined the cellar.

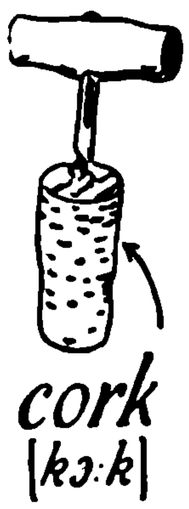
alone = only

Mrs. Jardine and her butler alone had keys to the cellar, and the door locked automatically when one closed it. Mrs. Jardine opened the door with her own key, and turned on the light.

On a shelf was everything necessary for the tasting and decanting of the wine. On the

table stood a decanter of port with a piece of paper over the mouth of it. Mrs. Jardine took the decanter and held it up to the light. Yes, a beautiful colour and perfectly clear. Everything was quite correct. Jobson, as he himself had said, knew his work. Mrs. Jardine now went to examine the cellar itself. There she remained for about twenty minutes. Here, too, she found everything correct. The Chambertin would probably have to have new corks. Even if it did not require them immediately, it was better to be on the safe side. She would speak to Jobson about it. Returning to the table she took off her rings and washed the dust from her fingers in the wash-basin. She then went upstairs again to write an order to her wine-merchant, which her visit to the wine cellar had suggested to her.

Chambertin
[ʃa:mbə'tæŋ]



As she was writing, she got the idea that there was something wrong. She felt uncomfortable, almost as if she had forgotten some duty. And then her eyes glanced at her hands, and she realized what was wrong. She had left her rings downstairs on the table in the cellar.

She rose to ring the bell, and then paused.

She could, of course, send Jobson to fetch the rings for her, but she did not want to admit to him that she had shown so little care. Not once, but many times had she said very seriously to her servants: "To forget a thing is not an excuse. You can remember if you wish to remember." It would, no doubt, be wiser if she fetched the rings herself, and said nothing about it.

She had worn five rings that day. She found four of them on the table by the decanter. The fifth she could not find at all.

The missing ring, containing a single diamond, was probably the least valuable of the five. It had been poor Aunt Agatha's. Mrs. Jardine had put it on that morning for sentimental reasons, this being the day on which Aunt Agatha died many years before. Mrs. Jardine began to make a careful search of every inch of the cellar.

Agatha [*ægəþə*]

Mrs. Jardine's servants took coffee and bread-and-cheese at eleven in the morning. Mr. Jobson took his 'coffee' from a bottle which was labelled 'Stout'. Mrs. Harvey, the cook, found him busy with it.

"There you are," she said. "All the morning I've been wanting to get a word with you. You remember what you told me last night – some nonsense about your going to leave?"

"That's right," said Jobson. "I am. I shall be in Exeter to-night."

"Now, do take a word of advice," said Mrs. Harvey, "and don't be so foolish. Think what you're giving up. Even if it's not very exciting here, it can't be very much longer that you will have to stay. Besides, what excuse can you make to the old lady? You've not even given notice yet."

give notice = say that you will no longer work for a person

"Shan't have to. I'm going to get the sack, I am."

"Not you," said Mrs. Harvey. "She'd never let you go. What are you going to get the sack for?"

"Oh, for not being honest – for being a thief."

"You're trying to have a bit of fun with me, I suppose. What have you stolen?"

"Nothing," said the man of mystery; "but I'm going to get the sack for it all the same,

all the same = however

and I'm going to do it because it suits me. And that's all you need to know about it at present. Ah, there's my bell."

at present = now

Mrs. Jardine had remembered a fact, which could only have one meaning. On her first visit to the cellar not only had she forgotten her ring, she had also forgotten to replace the piece of paper on the mouth of the decanter. Of this she felt perfectly certain. Yet, on her second visit to the cellar she had found the piece of paper replaced. Jobson must have been in the cellar in the meantime.

He did not deny. Asked if he had started betting, he said that he sometimes had a bet on a horse. He suggested that the ring might possibly have been caught in some part of Mrs. Jardine's dress, and she said that she would not have sent for him till she had made absolutely sure that this was not the case. She expressed surprise that a man who had been for ten years in her service, and knew that it would pay him to remain in it, should give up all this in such a foolish way.

"I do not suppose," said Mrs. Jardine, "that the ring is worth more than ten or

twelve pounds. I fail to understand how you could have been such a fool."

"I did not take the ring, and I have not got it," said Jobson.

"Then perhaps you can offer some explanation as to where it is."

It was evident that Jobson could not. He said very little, only repeating now and then that he had not got the ring. At last Mrs. Jardine said that on account of his previous good service she should not give the matter to the police, but that he must pack up his things and go at once.

Mr. Jobson said as he left that he felt absolutely certain that some day the truth would come out, and that she would find that her opinion of him had been wrong. It had been his experience that truth always prevailed in the end.

In view of what had happened, Mrs. Jardine allowed herself no less than one and a half glasses of Fonseca '96 after dinner. She had decided with regret not to have a manservant again. A maid would probably never in her life become as expert and useful as Job-

in view of = because of

son was, but men were all the same. Sooner or later they could not restrain themselves and gave way to something or other. If it was not betting, it would be something else. They only thought of themselves, not of their duties towards society.

give way = give up the fight

But she had doubts. She felt that Jobson's bags should have been searched before he left, but she could not possibly have brought the police in to do it. However, nothing else seemed to be missing, except the ring.

hand = side

Then, on the other hand, she was not perfectly satisfied about her theory of Jobson. She supposed that he had had to pay some debt in connection with his betting, and had given way at the sight of the ring. But really it looked to her more as if the man were mad. And what would the poor man do? Would he ever get another place? As she drank the last half-glass of port, she was filled with pathetic thoughts of the man who had decanted it.

However, Jobson was not a betting man. One Christmas, Lady Sinden had given him a tip, and had laughingly told him to put the

money on a certain horse. Now Jobson's opinion of Lady Sinden was exactly the same as Mrs. Jardine's, but he knew that Sir Charles Sinden was an owner of racehorses, and might know something. He put the money on the horse, won, and never made a bet again.

3.

Mr. Herbert Holt received a telegram that afternoon to say that his cousin, Mr. George Jobson, might be expected in the evening. Mr. Holt went upstairs to the sitting-room over the shop to tell Mrs. Holt the news.

"And," said Herbert, "perhaps you'd better get busy. Supper, you know. George is used to good living, and –"

"You don't need to tell me anything about that. What I want to know is, what does it mean?"

"Well, my dear, it probably means that he is coming into the business with us, or, if not, that he is seriously thinking about it."

"You won't make the terms too easy for him, will you? Look how well the business

has done these last three years. Why, he ought to jump at the chance."

jump at = accept at once

"Well," said Herbert, "I know what I'm doing. You can leave it to me. George doesn't do much jumping. I've got the figures worked out all right, and if he can't see his own advantage, I shall find somebody else who can. But I'd rather have George."

George was well received by his cousin, and conversation was limited to general subjects until after supper. Mrs. Holt retired early, having first seen that a decanter was placed upon the table. Herbert Holt lit his pipe, and began cheerfully to lead up to the subject of business.

"Well, George," said Herbert, "I'm very glad you've managed to get away for a day."

"Yes," said Mr. Jobson, "I managed to get away."

"Mrs. Jardine well, I hope? You left her all right?"

"Yes, I left her all right. I may possibly stop here a few days, if you can find room for me."

"Well, there's the spare room, and we shall

be glad to have you. I suppose this means that you have decided at last to come in with us."

"No, Herbert, not at the moment," said Mr. Jobson. "I may be able to let you know in a week. First, there'll be the telegram."

"What telegram?" asked Herbert.

"The one I'm expecting," said the man of mystery; "and after that there must be time for letters to come and go."

Herbert stopped himself from asking what letters. He knew his cousin well.

"But," Mr. Jobson continued, "the consequent delay will not mean time wasted. I can begin to-morrow to go through the books."

"Well," said Herbert, "you can do that if you like. I sent you the figures for the last three years, and I should have thought that would have been enough. Besides, do you understand book-keeping?"

"If I didn't, I shouldn't want to see the books."

Mrs. Holt was awake when her husband came up to bed. "Well," she said eagerly, "landed him?"

"No, and shan't do for a week. I don't see

land = get, catch

any reason for the delay, and he doesn't seem to want to explain it. But he's interested – there's no doubt about that."

Four evenings afterwards Mrs. Jardine thought, after she had finished her first glass of port, that possibly another half-glass might be allowed. She reached out her hand to the decanter, and as it passed under the light Mrs. Jardine saw something. She rose from her place and examined it carefully by a better light. Then she put down the decanter, and sat back in her chair, astonished. For at the bottom of the decanter, in a beautiful bath of Fonseca '96, was a gold ring with a single diamond.

reach out = put out

She thought carefully. The ring had always been a little too large for her. It might have slipped in when she first examined the decanter, or afterwards when she was removing her rings. She could not say which. She rang the bell and told the maid to send Mrs. Harvey at once.

Mrs. Harvey was not accustomed to being called at such a time. The least she expected to hear was that the old lady was not going to

leave her any money after all, or, perhaps, that she had no further need of her services. She entered the dining-room looking guilty of all the crimes she had never committed. look = seem

"I have made a mistake," said Mrs. Jardine quietly. "I find that Jobson was not guilty of taking the ring for which I sent him away. I wish him to be cleared at once. You will inform the other servants of this, please. That is all, thank you."

"Very good, madam," said Mrs. Harvey. As she passed through the door, she was not quite sure whether she was more surprised at the news or pleased that she had not lost her situation.

With the help of a long needle Mrs. Jardine got the ring out of the decanter, dried it carefully, and placed it on her finger. There was no doubt about it at all. It was certainly too loose. She should have had it altered before.

She never had that extra half-glass. She had dismissed a butler for taking a ring which now sat quite safely on her finger. She had told the servants at family prayers that the butler had been dismissed as a thief. He would probably

go to law about it. She was so troubled about it that, at evening prayers that night, instead of beginning at verse eight and ending at verse forty-one, she began in a grave voice at verse one and ended at verse eight, which was the cause of much pleasure to the maids.

As soon as the telegraph office was open next morning, Mrs. Jardine herself wrote out and sent the following message to Jobson:

"Ring found. Very deepest regrets for my mistake. Am writing you to-day."

Later in the morning she drove to her solicitor's office and had a long talk with the senior member of the firm. It was evident that he intended to comfort her as much as possible, but in reality, he filled her with apprehension. He admitted the possibility that Jobson might now give her trouble.

"And if he does," said the solicitor, "then I think you'd better leave him to me. You would probably not wish to have the matter taken to law."

"Most certainly not," said Mrs. Jardine.

"Well, I shall go into it with him, and try to arrange the matter as cheaply as I can."

"I'm not sure," said Mrs. Jardine, "that I want you to arrange it as cheaply as possible. People who do things too quickly, and as a result make mistakes, should be punished for it and make good any harm they may have done. That is my opinion."

On her return home Mrs. Jardine wrote a letter to Jobson. It was a letter which her solicitor would never have agreed to sending.

In that letter she admitted quite simply that she had been altogether in the wrong. She told where the ring had been found, and gave her own theory of the way in which it had got there. If Jobson cared to return to his situation, it would, of course, be open to him. Or, if he were seeking a situation elsewhere, he should have the highest possible recommendation and all the assistance she could give. In any case, she had decided she would not be happy until she had done something to make good the wrong she had done. Jobson would remember that she had mentioned to him that if he were in her service at the time of her death, he would receive an amount of money. This amount was to have been £ 250. What

she proposed was to double this sum and to pay it to him immediately, if he would accept it in full payment of any claim he might have against her.

To this letter Mr. Jobson sent the following not quite truthful reply:

Madam,

I was most surprised and glad to hear that the ring had been found. Truth, as I said to you, has prevailed in the end. I should never have thought that the ring could have been in the decanter.

On leaving your house I went to stay with my cousin, Herbert Holt, who had been asking me to join him in business. I found it necessary to tell him that I had been dismissed from your service as a thief. He was kind enough to believe that I was not guilty, but insisted that I should take the matter to law in order to clear my character. He said he could not afford to go into business with a man who had been dismissed in this way.

join = take part with

To this I replied that things had looked very black against me; that for ten years I

had received nothing but kindness from you; and that nothing on earth would make me take the matter to law. I would prefer to leave for Australia, and start life again on the small sum I have been able to save from my wages.

However, I have shown my cousin your telegram and the very kind letter which followed it, and although he still wished me to take the matter to law, I have managed to make him see that this is no longer necessary. Your offer will help me to buy my share in the business, which I think to be a very good one. I do not feel that I could return to service at your house, because I should always think that my presence might perhaps trouble you. Nor, having once been in service with you, should I ever care to take a place elsewhere.

I, therefore, accept with thanks your very kind offer in full payment of any claim that I may have against you.

I am, Madam, your respectful servant,

George Jobson.

4.

"So he's agreed at last!" said Mrs. Holt happily.

"To be honest, my dear, I didn't have much to do with it. He took a look at my books, and said nothing. He went all over the new buildings, and said nothing about them either. He's been firing questions at me ever since his arrival, and he never put a question that a fool would have put. But if ever I put a question to him, he seemed to be thinking about something else. When the telegram came, I said I hoped it was not bad news. He just put it in his pocket and said, 'Not particularly.'

"To-day he suddenly said, when we were talking about something else, that he would join me if we could arrange terms. I'd asked him a little more than I expected to get, but he only offered what I thought he would. Then he took off another five pounds, which he said he would have to pay Mrs. Jardine for leaving without notice. We're just back from my solicitor's, and the whole thing will be signed to-morrow."

In business Mr. Jobson had no secrets from his cousin and discussed everything connected with the business openly and freely. He never said a word about his private life.

A year later, during which time the business had been very successful, Mr. Jobson and his cousin spent the afternoon with an excellent bottle of Fonseca '96. They were talking about luck, and the high prices received for goods and services given.

"I'll tell you a thing," said Herbert Holt, "that I wouldn't tell everybody. I once got five pounds for a bottle of whisky. It was nine o'clock on a Sunday night, during the war. The chap rang, and I came down to the door myself. I knew him pretty well, or I wouldn't have taken the risk. He'd got a small bag in his hand, and he opened it. There was a five-pound note in it, and nothing more. 'Mr. Holt,' he says, 'I want to give you a present.' And he handed me the five-pound note. 'And,' he says, 'if you care to give me a present, the thing I want most on earth, at the present moment, is a bottle of whisky, and I may tell you that I can keep my mouth shut.'

pretty = rather

"'Give me that bag,' I said, and I brought it back to him with the bottle of whisky inside. But that was a risk I'd never take again."

"Ah," said George Jobson, "I have done better than that in my time – a lot better."

"What was it?" asked Mr. Holt.

"If I told you, you wouldn't believe it."

"Give me your word that it's true, and I'll certainly believe it."

"Yes, but you would worry me with a lot of questions about it afterwards."

not a single = not one

"I'll not ask you a single question."

"Very well," said George. "I once got five hundred pounds for dropping a ring in a decanter of port."

"A very smart piece of work," said Herbert. "If you had not given me your word, I should find it rather difficult to believe."

THE CARDS

By BARRY PAIN

About a year ago Eliza and myself had a little difference of opinion. I had mentioned to her that we had no visiting cards.

Eliza [*i'laizə*]

"Of course not," she said. "I should not dream of such a thing!" She spoke a little angrily.

"Why do you say 'of course not'?" I replied quietly. "Visiting cards are, I believe, in common use among ladies and gentlemen."

She said she did not see what that had to do with it.

"It has just this much to do with it," I answered, "that I do not intend to go without visiting cards another day!"

"What's the use?" she asked. "We never call on anybody, and nobody ever calls on us."

call on = visit

"Is Miss Sakers nobody?"

Sakers [*seikəz*]

"Well, she's never left a card here, and

she really is a lady by birth, and can prove it. When she doesn't find me in, she just asks the girl to say she's been here. If she does not need cards, we don't. You'd better do the same as she does."

girl = maid

"Thank you, I have my own ideas of what is respectable, and I do not take them from Miss Sakers. I shall order fifty of each sort from Amrod's this morning."

Amrod [*æmrɔd*]

"Then that makes a hundred cards wasted."

"Either you cannot count," I said, "or you have yet to learn that there are three sorts of cards used by married people – the husband's card, the wife's card, and the card with both names on it."

go it! = continue as long as you like!

"Go it!" said Eliza. "Get a card for the cat as well. She knows a lot more cats than we know people!"

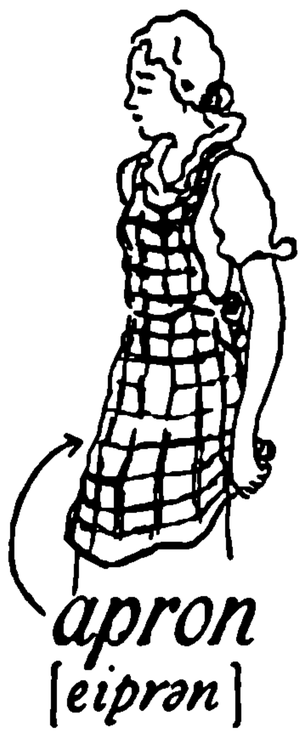
I could have given a sharp reply, but I preferred to remain absolutely quiet. I thought it might show Eliza that she was becoming rather vulgar. However, Eliza went on:

"Mother would hate it, I know that. To talk about cards, with the last ton of coals not paid for – I call it absolutely wrong."

I just walked straight out of the house, went down to Amrod's and ordered those cards. When the time comes for me to put my foot down, I can generally put it down as well as most people. No one could be easier to live with than I am, and I am sure Eliza has found it so; but what I say is, if a man is not master in his own house, then where is he?

Amrod printed the cards while I waited. I suggested some little decoration – a leaf in the corner, or a curved line under the name – but Amrod was against this. He seemed to think that it was quite unnecessary, and it would have cost extra, and also he had nothing of the kind in stock. So I let that pass. The cards looked very well as they were, a little plain and formal, perhaps, but very clean (except in the case of a few where the ink was not quite dry), and very satisfying to one's natural self-respect.

That evening I took a small box, and packed in it very carefully some of the nicest flowers from the garden, and one of our cards. On the card I wrote, "With kindest love



apron
[*eiprən*]

from," just above the names, and posted it to Eliza's mother.

So far was Eliza's mother from thinking that the money for the cards had been spent unnecessarily, that she sent Eliza a present of five shillings, and a parcel with three pounds of beef and a nice apron.

I only mention this little happening to show whether, in this case, Eliza or I was right.

I put a few of the cards in my pocket, and the rest were packed away in a drawer. A few weeks afterwards I was not at all pleased when I found Eliza using some of her cards for winding silk. She said that it did not prevent them from being used again, if they were ever wanted.

"Pardon me," I said, "but cards we find it necessary to leave with people can hardly be too clean. Please don't do it again!"

No. = number

That evening Eliza told me that No. 14 in our road had been let to some people called

Popworth
[*pɔpwə:þ*]

Popworth.

"That must be young Popworth, who used

to be in our office," I said. "I heard that he was going to be married this year. You must certainly call and leave cards."

"Which sort, and how many?"

"Without looking it up in a book, I am unable to say precisely. These things are very much a matter of taste. Leave enough – say one of each sort for each person in the house."

say = let us say

"How am I to know how many persons there are?"

"See if they get their meat from the same shop as ourselves, and, if so, ask the butcher."

On the following day I said that I thought that Popworth must have come in for some money, to be taking so large a house, and I hoped she had left the cards.

come in for money = get money (usually after another person's death)

"I asked the butcher, and he said there was Popworth, his wife, two sisters, a German friend, and eleven children. That means sixteen persons, and forty-eight cards altogether. You see, I still remember your rule."

"My dear Eliza," I said, "I told you plainly that it was a matter of taste. You ought not to have left forty-eight at once."

keep = continue

"Oh, do you expect me to keep running

backwards and forwards leaving a few at a time? I've got something else to do. There are three pairs of your socks in the basket waiting to be darned, as it is."

"But, good heavens! That Popworth can't be my Popworth. If he's only married this year, he can't in the nature of things have got eleven children. And a house like this can't call on a house like that unless there is some reason for it."

"That's what I thought."

"Then, why in the world did you call?"

"I didn't. Who said I did?"

I began to feel a little happier. Later in the evening, when Eliza took a card, tore a bit out of each side, and began winding silk on it, I thought it wiser to say nothing. It is better sometimes to give the idea that you have not seen things.

THE PLEASANT SURPRISE

By BARRY PAIN

I had got the money by work done at home, out of office hours. It came to four pounds altogether. At first I thought I would use it to pay back part of our debt to Eliza's mother. But it was very possible that she would send it back again, in which case the money spent in sending it would be wasted, and I am not a man that wastes pennies. Also, it was not absolutely certain that she would send it back. I sent her a long letter instead – my long letters are almost her only intellectual pleasure. Of the four pounds, I reserved two for myself, and resolved to give two to Eliza. I did not mean simply to hand them to her, but to think of something in the way of a pleasant surprise.

in the way of = as, in the nature of

I had tried something of the same kind before. Eliza once asked me for six shillings

for a new tea-tray that she had seen. I went and stood behind her chair, and said, "No, dear, I couldn't think of it," at the same time dropping the six shillings down the back of her neck. Eliza wanted to know why I couldn't give her six shillings for a tea-tray without forcing her to go upstairs and undress at nine o'clock in the morning. It was not a success.

However, I have more than one idea in my head. This time I thought I would find out first if there was anything she wanted.

So on Sunday at tea-time I said, not as if I were meaning anything special, "Is there anything you want, Eliza?"

"Yes," she said; "I want a servant who'll go to bed at half past nine and get up at half past five. If they'd only do that, that's all I ask."

"You will pardon me, Eliza," I said, "but your statement is not quite correct. You said that was ALL that you asked. What you meant –"

"Do you know what I meant?"

"I think that I know precisely –"

"Then if you know precisely what I meant, I must have spoken correctly."

But as we went to church, I discovered that she wanted a new jacket.

as = while, when

Next morning I wrote on a piece of note-paper, "To buy a new jacket. With your husband's love." I folded the two sovereigns up in this, and dropped the packet into the pocket of Eliza's old jacket, as it hung in the wardrobe in the bedroom, not telling her what I had done. My idea was that she would put on the jacket to go out shopping in the morning, and putting her hand in the pocket, get a pleasant surprise. As I was leaving for town, she asked me why I continued to smile so mysteriously. I replied, "Perhaps you, too, will smile before the day is over."

On my return I found Eliza at the front door. "Come and look," she said happily. "I have got a pleasant surprise for you." She threw open the drawing-room door, and pointed. In the middle of the table stood a beautiful plant. It stood in one of the best saucers, with some coloured paper round the

pot, and the general effect was good. I at once guessed that she had bought it with the money she had got back after buying my present to her, and thought it showed very good feeling in her.

"I hope you have not given too much for this," I said.

"I didn't give any money for it."

"I don't understand."

"Well, you must know I had a present this morning."

"Of course I know."

"Did mother tell you? Yes, she has sent me a beautiful new jacket. Then a man came round with some plants, and he said that he didn't want money if I had any old clothes I didn't want. So I gave him my old worn-out jacket for this beautiful plant, and –"

I remembered that I had seen the man with the plants farther down the street.

"Excuse me for one moment, Eliza," I said, and rushed out after him.

He was a big, red-faced man, and he made no difficulty about it at all.

"Yes," he said, "I bought that jacket all right. There it is at the bottom of my box, and I haven't even looked at it since. I am not going to look there now either. You say there were two sovereigns in the pocket. A gent like you doesn't want to take money from a man like me. If you say the two sovereigns were there, then they're there now, and I can return you two pounds out of my own pocket, in the certainty of getting them back out of the jacket-pocket. I trust you – I know an honest man when I see one."

gent = gentleman

With these words he drew the money from his own waistcoat pocket, and handed it to me. I took it somewhat thoughtfully.

"Hadn't you better make quite certain –"

"Not a bit," says he. "If those sovereigns were there when the jacket was handed to me, they are there now. I could see that you were a man that could be trusted, otherwise I'd have looked in the pocket long before this."

not a bit = not at all

"What have you been doing?" said Eliza, on my return.

Changing the subject, I said, "Your mother

has given you a new jacket. Let me have the pleasure of giving you a new hat." I pressed the two coins into her hand.

She looked at them, and said, "You can't get a hat for two farthings, you know, dear. What did you rush out for just now? And where did you get these two farthings covered with gold? You'll be taking them for sovereigns, if you're not careful. Were you trying to take me in?"

take in = lead to believe something wrong

I did not quite see what to say for the moment, and so I took her suggestion. I tried to persuade her that I was just having a bit of fun with her.

"You don't look as if you were having a bit of fun."

"But I was. I suppose I ought to know, if any man does. However, Eliza, if you want a new hat, anything up to half a sovereign, you've only to say it."

She said it, thanked me, and asked me to come and help her water the plant.

"It's such a beautiful plant," she said.

"Yes," I answered sadly, "it looks very expensive."

THE TONIC PORT

By BARRY PAIN

We do a large export trade (that is, the firm does), and there are often sample bottles lying in the office. There was a bottle of tonic port, which had been there for some time, and the manager told the head clerk that he could have it if he liked. Later in the day the head clerk said that if a bottle of tonic port was any use to me, I might take it home. He said he had just opened it and tasted it, because he did not like to give anything away until he knew if it was all right.

I thanked him. "Tastes," I said, "just like any ordinary port, I suppose?"

"Well," he said, "it's more a tonic port than an ordinary port. But that's only what you'd expect from the label on the bottle."

"Quite so," I said – "quite so." I looked at the label, and saw that it said that the port

label
[*leibl*]

was extremely rich in phosphates. I put the bottle in my bag that night and took it home.

"Eliza," I said, "I have brought you a little present. It is a bottle of port." Eliza very seldom takes anything at all, but if she does, it is a glass of port. I must say that, on this point, I admire her taste. Port, as I have sometimes said to her, is the king of wines. We decided that we would have a glass after supper. That is really the best time to take anything of the kind; the wine is good for the nerves, and you do not suffer from sleeplessness afterwards.

on this point = in this matter

Eliza picked the bottle up and looked at the label. "Why," she said, "you told me it was port!"

why! = what!

"So it is."

"It says tonic port on the label."

"Well, tonic port practically speaking is port. That is to say it is port with the addition of phosphates."

"What are phosphates?"

"Oh, there are many of them, you know. There is quinine, of course, and magnesia, and – and so on. Let me fill your glass."

She took one little sip. "It isn't what I should call a pleasant wine," she said. "It burns so."

"Ah!" I said, "that's the phosphates. They are a little like that. But that's not the way to judge a port. What you should do is to take a large mouthful and roll it round the tongue – then you get the aroma. Look! this is the way."

I took a large mouthful.

When I had stopped coughing, I said that I didn't know that there was anything absolutely wrong with the wine, but you needed to be ready for it.

Eliza said that was probably the case, and she asked me if I would care to finish my glass now that I knew what it was like.

I said that it was not quite fair to try a port just after it had been shaken about. I would let the bottle stand for a day or two. Then I took what was left in Eliza's glass and my own, and emptied it into the garden. I did this because I did not want our servant to try it when she put the things away.

Next morning I found that two of our best

plants had died during the night. I said that I could not understand it. Eliza said nothing.

A few nights afterwards, Eliza asked me if I thought that the tonic port had stood long enough.

"Yes," I said; "I will pour it out for you, and then if Miss Sakers calls, you might say that you were just going to have a glass of port, and would be glad if she would join you."

"No, thank you," she said; "I don't want to treat Miss Sakers like that."

"You could mention that it was rich in phosphates. There is no question of treating her badly."

"Well, then, I don't want to lose the few friends we've got."

"As you like, Eliza. It seems a shame to waste more than half a bottle of good wine."

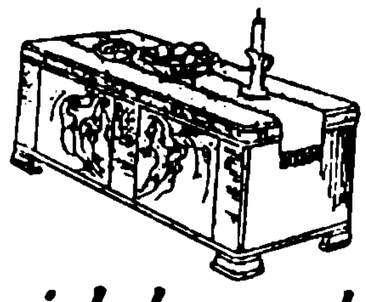
"Bottle of what?"

"You heard what I said."

"Well, drink it yourself, if you like it."

Some weeks afterwards I found the bottle

of tonic port still standing in the sideboard in the dining-room. I gave it to our servant, explaining to her that it would be best mixed with water. I could think of no one else to give it to. That night Eliza found the girl crying in the kitchen. When Eliza asked her what was the matter, she said that she would rather say nothing, but that she wished to leave at the end of the month.



sideboard
[saidbɔ:d]

Of course, Eliza said that I had been wrong, but I had told the girl as distinctly as I could speak that it was a wine which required mixing with water. However, Eliza talked to her and she agreed to stay on. The following day the girl decided never to touch drink again, and seemed changed in many ways. She put the bottle back in the sideboard; there was still more than half of it left.

drink = strong drink

After that nothing happened in connection with the tonic port, until one day I noticed that our cat seemed to be in poor health. I gave it some of the tonic port in a little milk. It drank the mixture quickly, somewhat to my surprise. I had one or two little things to do

in the garden after that, and when I came back Eliza said that the cat had become so very strange in its manner that she had thought it best to lock it up in the coal-cellar.

I went to look at it, and found it lying on its back, dead. It had an extremely happy expression on its face. Both Eliza and myself were very sorry to lose it.

I judged it best to say nothing about the port. But the bottle had gone from the side-board. Eliza said that she had taken it away to prevent further accidents.

I told the head clerk about it, but he only laughed in a foolish way. He is a man of bad taste, in my opinion.

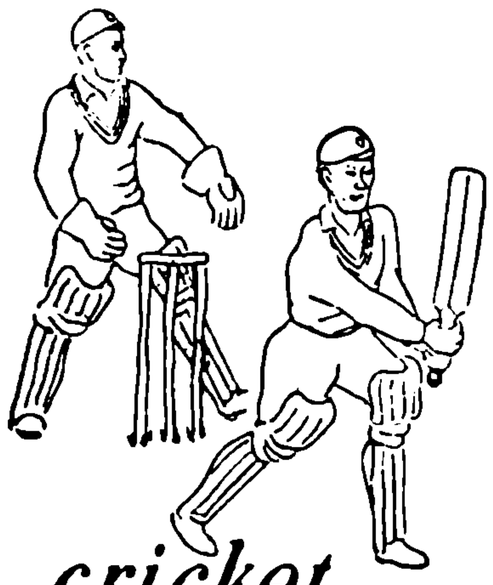
THE ENGLISHMAN AND HIS COUNTRY

Some nations, perhaps most, talk much about themselves, but the Englishman at home in his own country seldom talks about Britain. When he does talk about his own country, it is generally to express his opinion of all the things that might be, and should be, better in Britain. In fact, it is not until the Englishman finds himself in foreign countries, that he is prepared to admit to himself that he loves Britain, but he will hardly mention it to foreigners.

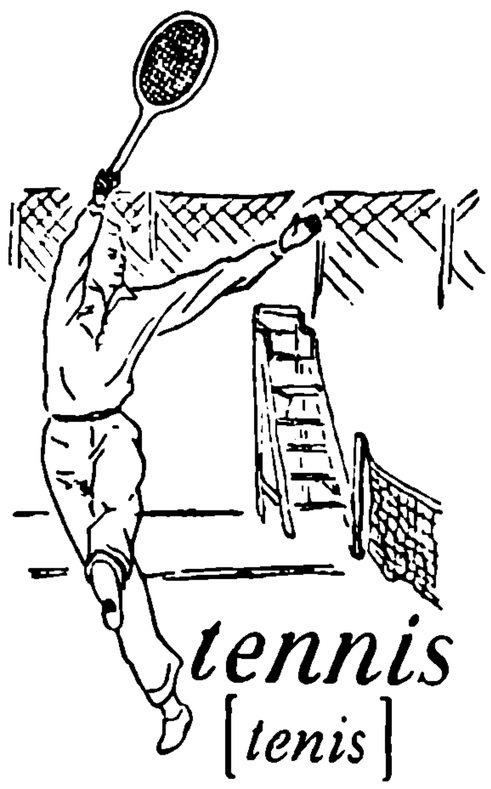
We may learn something of the English if we have a look at them abroad. They behave differently from people from most other countries. If Germans met in the past outside their own country, they would talk of their political system. If the Russians of to-day meet, they will soon commence talking of what the new Russia has done for the people. The Dutch

will talk to each other of trade and their empire in the East. The French will, in a very short time, get to the question of internal politics. The Americans will very quickly get to the subject of money.

What do Englishmen talk about when they meet abroad? Generally speaking, none of the things already mentioned. Instead, they will talk of the fun they had in playing cricket, football, tennis, or some other kind of sport. They will talk of famous football and cricket games they have been to watch. They will talk of the wonderful times they spent out in the country or at the seaside; of the land of small houses, each with its own garden; of trips they made to the mountains of Wales and Scotland, or to the lakes of North-West England; of days of peace and brilliant sunshine spent in fishing; of the many famous old inns all over the country and the quality of the beer drunk in them. They will talk of hundreds of small things that go to make up British life.



cricket
[*krikit*]



tennis
[*tenis*]

For hundreds of years foreigners have tried to find the good and bad points of the English,

and to understand them as a nation. In speaking to foreign students from different countries, an Irish professor, P. C. Buck, once expressed his opinion of the English as follows:

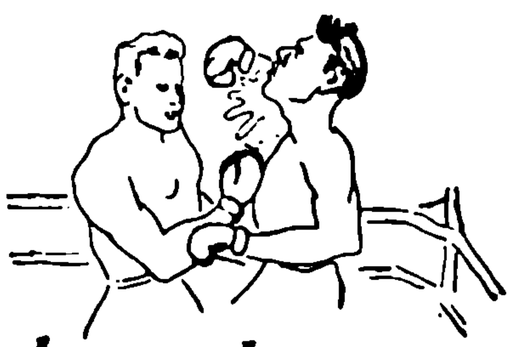
Buck [*bʌk*]

"I am not an Englishman, so I can tell you quite frankly that the English people are extremely difficult to understand. I have got to understand them now, because I have had the advantage of being brought up in England; but I must give you a warning not to allow the things that you notice to take very much part in forming your opinion of them. The English are not at all the people they seem to be. Whether they are angry, unhappy, hurt or anything else, they will not show it. You may watch Englishmen receiving telegrams containing news of some terrible happening or of a piece of extremely good luck; but from his behaviour and the expression of his face you will not be able to say which it is.

get = learn

terrible = very unpleasant

"The English are the strangest people. Although they have invented most of the good games the world plays to-day, I believe

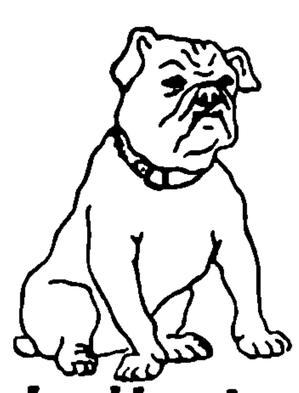


knock out
[*nɔk aut*]

they are the only people who play them just because they love them and not because they want to win. I really believe that when French tennis players or German runners come over here and beat them, they are quite pleased, whereas I, as an Irishman, want to knock out any man who beats me. In fact, you never know why an Englishman does anything in the world."

André Maurois
[*a:ŋdrei mɔr'wa:*]

André Maurois, a French writer, understands the English better than most foreigners. He says that the first thing the Frenchman thinks of the Englishman, is that he is like



bull-dog
[*buldɔg*]

a bull-dog, who will hold on to a thing without being shaken off. Then he says that the Frenchman finds that the English are difficult to understand. A Frenchman likes to make for himself an exact picture of the future, whereas an Englishman is very much against any such thing. The Englishman does not like anything that is too definitely explained. He prefers the matter not to be too clear, and likes to decide at the last moment. It is only when it is time to take action that he discovers what he wants to do. Mr. Maurois

thinks that one of the reasons why England is so strong is the fact that political party differences in England go far less deep than they do in France. Thus, when necessary, it is easy for the whole nation to work together in time of danger. Then there is the fact that the English seem so happy. Mr. Maurois says that when the Frenchman sees the Englishman's dislike of too much work, and the large place given to sport in his education, he gets the impression of a people always on holiday. A Frenchman will be surprised to see how the Englishman always looks on the bright side of things.

Sometimes, he will even be astonished at instances of the famous English good humour. An example of this was to be seen during the great strike of 1926. A one-day cricket match was arranged between strikers and the police. In what other country of the world would such a thing be possible?

The English love their homes, and the old saying "My house is my castle" is very true; they love children; and it would be difficult to find a people who have a greater respect

for the law of their country. They love all sorts of sport. 'Fair play' is one of the most important things in the world to an Englishman, not only in sport, but also in his daily life. The average Englishman always tries to be fair, or, to use his own words, 'to play the game'.

The Englishman's home is private. He hates any questions about his home-life and private affairs. He regards his home in the same way as the members of a Legation would regard the Legation and all its affairs.

Fisher [*fiʃə*]

H. A. L. Fisher, President of the English Board of Education from 1916 to 1927, who was a famous student of European conditions, once said that it may seem curious that a damp island in the north-west of Europe should have played so great a part in the history of the world. Mr. Fisher tries to find the true reasons for the greatness of England. Although he mentions the importance of England's central position, he thinks that one of the main reasons is 'a good climate'. The English may say much about not liking their climate, but it has served them well in industry

serve = be of use

and self-defence. The damp climate of England, which seems very cold in winter, has been of great benefit to them. One might almost say that the English have been forced to work to keep themselves warm!

Secondly, he says that the Englishman is more a man of action than a great thinker. The history of the last few hundred years gives many proofs of this. Everybody will know the great part played by England in the world of trade; and many will, no doubt, have heard the famous French description of the English: 'A nation of shopkeepers'.

The size of the British Empire is another proof of the fact that the Englishman is a man of action. English sailors and soldiers are famous in history. Drake, who was one of the first to sail round the world, broke the power of Spain. Wolfe conquered Canada, and Clive took India from the French. Nelson and Wellington broke the power of Napoleon.

Drake [*dreik*]

Wolfe [*wulf*]

Canada [*kænədə*]

Many of the most famous engineers have been Englishmen. An outstanding example is Stephenson who built the first railway engine.

Wellington [*welintən*]

Stephenson [*sti:vnsn*]

The war of 1939–1945 showed the Eng-

lish to be unchanged. During the war numerous things were invented, more than 3000 of which were given to America by Britain.

So, throughout history, it is evident that the English are not a nation of philosophers, but that they believe very firmly in their own saying: 'Actions speak louder than words'.

From "THREE MEN IN A BOAT"

By JEROME K. JEROME

(1)

It is a most extraordinary thing, but I never read an advertisement for a new medicine without coming to the belief that I am suffering from the disease that the medicine will cure.

Jerome [*dʒə'roum*]

One day I was not feeling very well, I had been reading about a medicine for stomach-trouble, so I went to the British Museum to read up what I should do for myself. I got down a medical book and read all I had come to read about stomach-trouble, and then I started reading about all the other diseases in the book. I went very thoroughly through the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and realized that I had got all the diseases described; the only one I had not got was housemaid's knee.

read up = study

I sat and thought. I thought what an interesting case I must be from a medical point

point of view = way of thinking

of view. If medical students had me, it would no longer be necessary to 'walk the hospitals'. I was a hospital in myself. All they need do would be to walk round me, and, after that, take their diploma.

walk the hospitals = study at hospitals

Then I wondered how long I had to live. I tried to examine myself. I felt my pulse. I could not at first feel any pulse at all. Then, all of a sudden, it seemed to start off. I pulled out my watch to see what it was. It was a hundred and forty-seven to the minute. I tried to feel my heart. I could not feel it. It had stopped beating. I tried to look at my tongue. I put it out as far as ever it would go, and I shut one eye, and tried to examine it with the other. I could only see the tip, and from what I could see of that I felt only all the more certain that I had fever.

all of a sudden = suddenly

start off = start

I had walked into that reading-room a happy, healthy man. I left it, feeling that I had one foot in the grave.

I went to see my doctor. He is an old friend of mine, and feels my pulse, looks at my tongue, and talks about the weather, all for nothing, when I fancy I'm ill; so I thought I

for nothing = without charge

would do him a good turn by going to see him now. "What a doctor wants," I said to myself, "is practice. He shall have me. He will get more practice out of me than out of seventeen hundred of your ordinary patients, with only one or two diseases each." So I went straight up and saw him, and he said:

"Well, what's the matter with you?"

I said:

"I will not take up your time, dear boy, with telling you what is the matter with me. Life is short and you might pass away before I had finished. But I will tell you what is *not* the matter with me. I have not got housemaid's knee. Why I have not got housemaid's knee, I cannot tell you; but the fact remains that I have not got it. Everything else, however, I *have* got."

pass away = die

And I told him how I came to discover it all.

Then I took off my clothes and he looked at me. After that, he sat down and wrote out a prescription, and folded it up and gave it to me, and I put it in my pocket and went out.

I did not open it. I took it to the nearest

chemist's, and handed it to a shop-assistant. The man read it, and then handed it back.

He said he hadn't got it.

I said:

"You are a chemist?"

He said:

"I am a chemist. If I was a big store and family hotel combined, I might be able to help you. Being only a chemist makes it somewhat difficult."

He handed back the prescription. I read it. It ran:

it ran = it was as follows

"1 lb. beefsteak, with
1 pint bitter beer every six hours.
1 ten-mile walk every morning.
1 bed at 11 sharp every night.

11 sharp = not later than 11, exactly at 11

And don't fill your head with things you don't understand."

I did as I was told, with the happy result – speaking for myself – that my life was saved and is still going on.

go on = continue

(2)

You never saw so much running backwards and forwards in a house, in all your life, as

when my Uncle Podger agreed to do a job. A new picture would have come, and be standing in the dining-room, waiting to be put up; and Aunt Podger would ask what was to be done with it, and Uncle Podger would say:

Podger [*pɔdʒə*]

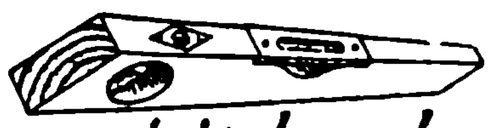
rule [*ru:l*]

"Oh, you leave that to *me*. Don't you, any of you, worry yourselves about that. *I'll* do all that."

step-ladder [*steplædə*]

And then he would take off his coat, and begin. He would send the maid out for sixpennyworth of nails, and then one of the boys after her to tell her what size to get; and from that, he would gradually work down, and start the whole house.

"Now you go and get me my hammer, Will," he would shout; "and you bring me the rule, Tom; and I shall want the step-ladder, and I had better have a kitchen-chair, too; and, Jim, you run round to Mr. Goggles, and tell him, 'Daddy's best wishes, and hopes his leg is better; and will he let him have his spirit-level for the evening?' And don't you go, Maria, because I shall want somebody to hold the light; and when the maid comes back, she must go out again for a bit of picture-



spirit-level [*spiritlevl*]

Will [*wil*]

Tom [*tɔm*]

Jim [*dʒim*]

Goggles [*gɔglz*]

Maria [*mə'raiə*]

cord; and, Tom, – where's Tom? – Tom, you come here; I shall want you to hand me up the picture."

And then he would lift up the picture, and drop it, and it would come out of the frame, and he would try to save the glass, and cut himself; and then he would jump round the room, looking for his handkerchief. He could not find his handkerchief, because it was in the pocket of the coat he had taken off, and he did not know where he had put the coat, and all the house had to stop looking for all the other things he had asked for, and start looking for his coat, while he would dance round and get in their way.

frame
[freim]

"Doesn't anybody in the whole house know where my coat is? I never came across such people in all my life – upon my word I didn't. Six of you! – And you can't find a coat that I put down not five minutes ago! Well, of all the –"

come across = meet

Then he'd get up, and find that he had been sitting on it, and would call out:

"Oh, you can give it up! I've found it myself now. I might just as well ask the cat to

give up = stop

find anything as expect you people to find it." And, when half an hour had been spent in tying something round his finger, and a new glass had been got, and the step-ladder, and the chair, and the light had been brought, he would try again, the whole family, including the maid and the charwoman, standing round in a semi-circle, ready to help. Two people would have to hold the chair, and a third would help him to get up on it and hold him there, and a fourth would hand him a nail, and a fifth would give him the hammer, and he would take the nail in his hand and drop it.

"There!" he would say, in an angry voice, "now the nail's gone."

there! = too bad!

And we would all have to go down on our knees and look for it, while he would stand on the chair, and want to know if he was to be kept there all the evening.

The nail would be found at last, but by that time he would have lost the hammer.

"Where's the hammer? What did I do with the hammer? Seven of you, standing all round me, and you don't know what I did with the hammer!"

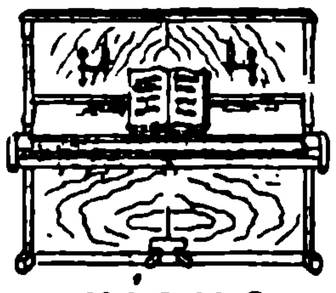
We would find the hammer for him, and then he would have lost sight of the mark he had made on the wall, where the nail was to go in, and each of us had to get up on the chair, beside him, and see if we could find it; and we would each discover it in a different place, and he would call us all fools, one after another, and tell us to get down. And he would take the rule and measure again, and find that he wanted half of thirty-one and three-eighths inches from the corner, and would try to do it in his head, and go mad.

do = find out how much it is

go = become

result = answer

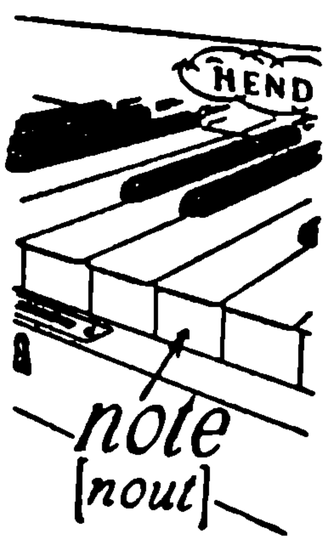
And we would all try to do it in our heads, and all get different results. And in the noise that was being made by everybody, the original number would be forgotten, and Uncle Podger would have to measure it again.



piano
[pjænou]

produce = make

He would use a bit of string this time, and at the critical moment, when the old fool was trying to reach a spot three inches beyond what was possible for him to reach, the string would slip, and down he would fall on to the piano, a really fine musical effect being produced when his head and body suddenly struck all the notes at the same time.



note
[nout]

And Aunt Maria would say that she would not allow the children to stand round and hear such language.

At last, Uncle Podger would find the spot again, and put the point of the nail on it with his left hand, and take the hammer in his right hand. And at the first attempt, he would strike his thumb, and drop the hammer, with a loud cry, on somebody's toes.

Aunt Maria would say quietly that, next time Uncle Podger was going to hammer a nail into the wall, she hoped he'd let her know in time, so that she could make arrangements to go and spend a week with her mother while it was being done.

"Oh! you women, you make so much trouble about everything," Uncle Podger would reply, picking himself up. "I *like* doing a little job of this sort."

pick oneself up = get up, rise

And then he would have another try, and, at the second attempt, the nail would go right through the plaster, and half the hammer after it, and Uncle Podger would be thrown against the wall with force nearly sufficient to flatten his nose.

Then we had to find the rule and the string again, and a new hole was made; and, about midnight, the picture would be up – looking neither straight nor safe, and everybody tired and worn out – except Uncle Podger.

"There you are," he would say, getting off the chair on to the charwoman's toes. "Some people would have sent for a man to do a little thing like that!"

THE WHITE LINE

By JOHN FERGUSON

Before McNab had sat down on his chair at the dinner-table in the *Magnificent* – he heard a woman's voice speaking to him.

"So we meet again, Mr. McNab."

Mrs. Westmacott looked up at him with a smile on her clever face. She was an acquaintance he had made on the journey from Washington. McNab expressed his pleasure.

"You are lucky," she said.

"So I see," he answered with a bow.

"It's not because they place you next to *me*. You didn't think I meant that!"

McNab looked around as he picked up his spoon.

"Well, it's the luckiest thing I can see at the moment. Quite enough to content me," he added.

"Why, man, they've given you a front seat for the comedy, and you don't know it. What

Ferguson [*fə:gəsn*]

McNab [*mək'næb*]

Magnificent [*mæg'nifisnt*] = name of a large ship sailing between America and England

Westmacott [*westməkɔt*]

Washington [*wɔʃintən*]

a waste! There are people on board who'd give a thousand dollars in cash to change places with you."

"I wouldn't accept," said McNab, "unless you changed also."

"Ah! And in the train you denied that you were Irish!"

(The Irish are said to pay too many compliments)

McNab did not utter a word. He only gave a smile that might have meant anything. People at the tables were a little unusually quiet. But that was quite common on the first night at sea. Later, when they got to know each other, there would be plenty of talk and laughter. But the sight that met his eyes was gay enough with the women's coloured frocks and their many jewels.

"Do you never ask questions, Mr. McNab?"

As he turned to her, Mrs. Westmacott was clearly very eager to give him the information that his look around had failed to discover. He laughed – to himself – at the idea that he was not a curious person. His head still ached with investigations which had kept his mind busy for weeks.

"I was looking for the comedy you spoke of," he said.

Mrs. Westmacott turned to him, some fish on the end of her fork.

"And found it?"

He shook his head.

"To the right – opposite – the rather youthful girl in black – between the two young men," said Mrs. Westmacott. "You must recognize her."

"I'm not an expert in American beauty," he added. "Still, I seem to –"

"I should think so, indeed. Her picture is in every paper. That is Sally Silver."

Sally Silver [*sæli silvə*]

"Really? Sally Silver? Now where have I heard that name before?"

Mrs. Westmacott laughed.

"How wonderful you are! Oh, how I wish she could hear you!"

"My mind can be very slow," McNab said. "The times I haven't seen things under my very nose – you'd never believe. Tell me about her."

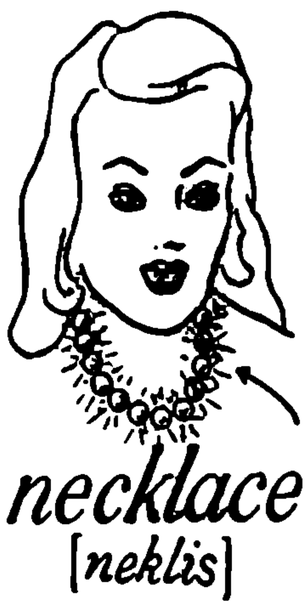
"She's Henry Silver's only child – and you won't say you haven't heard of *him!* She's

Henry [*henri*]

Chicago
[ʃi'ka:gou]

just twenty, and the biggest catch that ever came out of Chicago. But no man's caught her yet."

McNab was regarding the girl with interest. He had wondered already why her presence there had drawn all eyes in her direction. Without doubt, the girl was pretty, but hardly beautiful. Her face had not enough composure for real beauty. The eager search for new pleasures was to be seen on her face. He felt a little sorry for her.



necklace
[neklis]

"The other women would like to be in her place," said Mrs. Westmacott. "Her diamonds alone make the women hate her."

"She is wearing none."

"No. The little cat knows very well that all the women on board are wanting to see the famous Vernese necklace her father has just bought for her. That's why she has left it in her cabin."

Vernese
[və:'ni:z]

"And they hate her still more for that?"

"Naturally."

McNab resumed his dinner.

"The men don't seem to miss the diamonds," he said.

"No. She has a fine neck, and her shoulders are – well, brave."

McNab again looked over at the two men and the girl. With both elbows resting on the table, and with her chin on her hands, she was listening to the young man on her right, while the young man on her left, who had seen nothing but her shoulder all through the meal, sat sadly.

"The two favourites in the race," Mrs. Westmacott explained.

"Not much doubt which is doing best."

Mrs. Westmacott looked at him in great surprise.

"You men!" she said. "You think because at the moment she's only giving attention to Jefferson Melhuish, she has quite finished with Hilary Harben."

Jefferson Melhuish [*dʒefəsn meliʃ*]

Hilary Harben [*hiləri ha:bən*]

"Well, by the look on his face young Hilary Harben seems to think the same."

"Probably he does, being a man. But any woman could tell him it mightn't be the case. She knows that most people have been betting on Harben."

has finished with = will have nothing more to do with

McNab was surprised.

"What!" he cried. "You don't mean to say that people are betting on it. I don't think that fitting and proper."

"You don't? Of course it's quite decent! You English who flog horses to make them run races for you to bet on – you call this not fitting and proper! Why, Sally Silver is proud to know America is betting on this, and both men must know it. As for Hilary's chances, I'm not sorry my money is on him."

as for = regarding

"*You* have a bet on this?"

"I have. I have the chance of winning what will pay for my six months' trip to Europe twice over. You are surprised? You think I should have backed Melhuish, who is good-looking and rich, while Harben is almost poor, and still has the stiff leg he got in the war?" She took McNab by the arm and spoke into his ear: "That stiff leg is no handicap in a woman's eyes. You put something on him, too. No? Well, you'll see, in two days there won't be a person on board who hasn't made a bet on it."

twice over = twice

And Mrs. Westmacott was right. McNab wondered at it. They were all like children, he thought. There was nothing to show – so far as he could see – that Miss Silver must necessarily choose either of the young men, much less choose one of them before they reached port. It was just a chance. One night in the smoking-room he pointed out how foolish the thing was, and half a dozen voices immediately offered to bet him on that very chance. McNab went away in astonishment. They could not really know. Of course, life on board a liner was so quick, that minutes were as hours on land, and hours as days. So many things happened quickly, things that would hardly happen at all, to the same people anyway, on land. That must be why they were all so certain that something would happen in the matter of Sally Silver.

point out = show, explain

bet = have a bet with

Now, McNab was an eager student of human nature. His work brought him into touch with the darker side, but his connection with New Scotland Yard had not made him a narrow specialist; he remained interested in human beings, in all the different

types and kinds, which fact was probably the reason for his great success at his work. Therefore, McNab turned an eye on Miss Silver, on her two favourites, and on the betting over their chances with all the interest that he generally gave to the study of human nature. The men, he found, all betted on Melhuish, who seemed to know the fact. He had a way of smiling that the women did not like. But the men backed him, while the women without exception backed Harben.

turn an eye on = look at

For three long days the good-looking, well-dressed Melhuish received all Miss Silver's smiles, while young Harben with his stiff leg made his way along the deck to his lonely chair, followed by the sympathetic looks of the ladies.

Then on the fourth day a change came. It came just at the moment when Melhuish's success seemed complete, when the men, quite sure that their bets were safe, had stopped laughing among themselves, and the women almost began to doubt. That is to say, just when interest was dying down, Miss Sally Silver decided to change things. Very early

on the fourth morning one of Melhuish's backers, coming on deck, found her and Harben, their deck chairs side by side, holding each other's hands! The news went round very quickly. At breakfast the men exchanged ideas with each other. By lunch-time they were whispering together about it in corners. And all through the long afternoon there was a silence on the ship that reminded McNab of a Sunday afternoon he once had to pass in Tunbridge Wells. For all that afternoon Miss Silver and young Harben sat together, and Melhuish walked round the deck alone. To the men who carefully watched the pair on deck the afternoon seemed to have no end. What it seemed to Melhuish none but Melhuish knew, and he did not tell.

Tunbridge Wells [*tʌnbridʒ welz*] = town in South-East England

but = except

At tea Mrs. Westmacott crossed to the corner in which McNab sat with Captain Baylis.

Baylis [*beilis*]

"Well?" she said with a smile.

The captain looked angry.

"It won't last!" he grumbled somewhat sharply.

"I hear some of you men are already trying to bet on both sides. Now *we* never did that!"

finished = not able to do any more

"Our man's not finished yet."

She turned to McNab.

"Is that your view?"

"Well, I don't know. He's of the type that takes what he wants."

"It won't last, you'll see," the captain repeated as Mrs. Westmacott returned with the sugar. "That monkey is only showing interest in Harben to give the women a bigger drop. She knows that the cats don't love her much."

He began to stir his tea irritably. Mrs. Westmacott held out the sugar to him.

"An extra piece to-day?" she suggested sweetly.

But after dinner that night the affair took a new turn, one which brought McNab into the business as an official of New Scotland Yard.

It was a fine moonlit night, and McNab had gone up to the long deck to finish his cigar while taking a little walk. It was still

early, but most of the men were down below in the smoking-rooms, while the ladies were in the music saloon. McNab therefore had the deck almost to himself as he walked backwards and forwards, first up one side and then down the other, with the long row of cabins in the centre. So quiet was it that above the noise of the engines, as the boat cut her way across the smooth sea, McNab could hear somebody playing the piano in the distance. But the deck, with its row of white cabins, was quite empty. He was watching the black smoke from the boat, till it grew thinner and the moonlight came through it, when he heard a sharp sound behind him. It was like the opening of a door which has just been painted. His surprise at hearing the sound on the quiet deck held his attention for a moment. Then he resumed his walk without thinking any more about the happening. When he reached the end of the deck, however, he found something that amused him – Miss Sally Silver was sitting there *alone*.

Several times that evening in the course of his walk he had come close enough to see

rug
[rʌg]

Harben seated by her side and hear the sound of their voices. Not ten minutes earlier Harben had been there; but now his chair was vacant, and a rug lying on the deck looked as if it had been thrown on one side. The girl, her elbow on the arm of the chair, and her chin on her hand, seemed to be looking sadly at the moonlight on the water. If there had been a quarrel, and everything pointed to it, McNab smiled to think how it would excite the ship from end to end. Who would have dreamed that the affair would end, not with Sally Silver leaving Harben, but with Harben leaving Sally Silver!

Now, McNab was an observer, not a talker. So he simply turned round and continued his walk. Afterwards he remembered quite clearly that he had turned round. That is to say, instead of crossing over the deck and continuing down the other side as he had been doing for

best = greater

the best part of an hour, he for the first time went back the way he had come.

He had gone half the length of the deck when he saw a man come out of a cabin a short distance away, close the door quietly and

come quickly towards him. Then the man stopped suddenly, as if at sight of McNab, held back for a moment, and came on again. McNab, though the man passed him with his head down, recognized him from his stiff leg as young Harben. He was probably on his way to the girl again, McNab thought with a smile, noticing that the cabin had the number 13. Looking back, he saw Harben now in the full moonlight, walking with his stiff leg. McNab, throwing the end of his cigar overboard, took out his watch. It was thirteen minutes to nine; his exercise was over. So he went to the lower deck.

hold back = stop where one is

come on = continue to walk

He had been in the smoking-room for nearly an hour, watching a group playing cards for rather high money, when a man entered in such a hurry and with so much noise as to cause nearly everybody to look at him immediately.

"Heard the latest?" he asked out of breath.

out of breath = taking breath with difficulty

There was so much meaning in his voice that even those who had not looked up at his entrance now looked up from their game. Indeed, everyone present looked up hopefully.

Men reading put their books and papers on their knees, even the man dealing out the cards stopped his arm in mid-air to regard the speaker. For it was plain there was something new in the Silver-Melhuish-Harben affair – or, at least, they hoped so. McNab thought he knew what it was, and that he could have told them as much when he entered an hour ago. He was rather amused by this man's seizing at a piece of news which made him seem a man of importance – for the moment.

as much = that

"No!" cried a number of impatient voices, the fellow enjoying the interest he had caused.

"Sally's necklace has gone!"

"Gone?"

"Stolen from her cabin to-night."

"Is that all? I'm not the least bit sorry for her!" someone said with a feeling of dislike. Many others agreed.

The man continued to deal his cards again, and the old gentlemen lifted their books and papers.

make love = talk love

"What else could she expect – making love up there to *that* fellow?"

This seemed hardly fair to McNab. Had the thing happened when Melhuish was the girl's favourite, their opinions would have been expressed otherwise, and Melhuish would not have been '*that* fellow'.

"She'll never get it back. The thieves on liners are clever."

"But on a ship – after all – they can't run away."

after all = in any case

"You'll see. You can be quite certain they had a good place where they could hide it before it was taken."

"This comes of her choosing cabin 13."

comes of = happens because of

"I remember once –"

McNab heard no more. He left the saloon. He wanted to think.

Cabin 13! He was quite sure that was the one out of which he had seen Harben come. Harben, of course, might have been sent there for some purpose by Miss Silver herself. There was against that idea – it could easily be decided by Miss Silver – the fact that he had stopped on seeing somebody coming towards him and had walked past with his head down. But, again, Harben must have known

give away = show who a person is

that his stiff leg would give him away. If he had nothing to hide, why had he acted like that?

Harben was no professional thief, of course, for the expert would not have been taken by surprise, and besides, he was, like Melhuish, an old friend of the Silver family. But why had Harben been so surprised to see him? It was to this question McNab returned most. Harben must have known that he had been walking the deck all the time. Then why the surprise? He had stopped a moment at sight of him. Why?

taken by surprise = discovered while not prepared

Suddenly the detective struck his hands together as the explanation came to him. Of course!

"I'd been walking round and round the deck houses until I saw the girl and the empty chair," he said to himself. "Just like a policeman! But that last time I *turned back*. And when he came out of the cabin, he thought that I'd be on the other side. But what a fool the man was not to put the thing back once he *knew* he had been observed!"

houses (here) = cabins and other rooms

turn back = turn round

McNab lighted another cigar. Perhaps, he thought, Harben had no chance to go back. Perhaps, as was quite common, he supposed his stiff leg was less easily noticed than it really was, and believed he had not been recognized. The way he had walked past with his head down suggested he had that belief.

The detective, in his dark corner, grinned to himself. Harben would probably keep the diamonds. He did not know whom he had passed up there in the moonlight! There was little danger of such an amateur in crime as Harben becoming afraid and dropping the things overboard. He must need them very badly indeed. Had he come away without sufficient money for the trip? He could not ask Miss Silver for money, and he could tell himself that it was really for her sake and that in the end she would be happy. Later he would tell her all, perhaps; and she would cry out: "You poor boy! Why didn't you ask me for the money?" So the young fool would picture the happy ending!

badly = much

McNab did not wish to force himself on the others – indeed, he did not suppose that

his help would be required – but knowing his duty in such matters he went to see Miss Silver. The maid told him that Miss Silver did not wish to see anybody. Well, his knowledge of Harben's actions would keep till morning. McNab himself went to his cabin.

keep = wait

Next morning he was much later at breakfast than usual. He had slept badly. He had not, for some reason, been able to forget this case so easily. He had lain awake, thinking it out. He had been through all the facts repeatedly, and there were some things that left him in doubt. He was, however, hardly seated before he saw that something new had happened. People stood in little groups with their heads together. They were nodding and whispering. Mrs. Westmacott, seeing him, came across and took a place beside him.

thinking it out = thinking it over thoroughly

"Well," she said, "you've heard what they're saying?"

"No. What is it?"

"They say the thief is a man with a stiff leg. He was seen coming out of her cabin."

McNab almost jumped out of his chair.

"What?" he cried. "What's that you say?"

"Ah, you know what that means. There aren't many men on board with a stiff leg, are there?"

"I've only seen one."

"Well, that seems to point to him all right. Do *you* think he did it?"

McNab was once more able to control himself. He looked hard at her.

hard = long and carefully

"I did," he said, "till you told me others are saying he did it."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It sounds strange, but the explanation is simple: *I* was the only person who saw him come out of her cabin."

"And you have not mentioned it to anyone?"

"Not unless I've been talking in my sleep."

"And do you?" she inquired.

"No," he replied with a grin. "Moreover, that is one of the things forbidden us at Scotland Yard."

Her astonishment was to be seen in her face.

"Scotland Yard! Are you –"

"Not a word! Just tell me who you think did it?"

"Melhuish," she answered quickly. "He is your man."

McNab shook his head.

"In a case of crime the first question to ask is, *who benefits?*"

"Well, *he* does. Sally will certainly – –"

He put a hand on her arm to stop her.

supply = give

"Yes, but this Vernese necklace supplies a sufficient motive to a few hundreds of us, perhaps. Melhuish would have *one* motive

no one else but = no other

which no one else but Harben had, that is Sally Silver herself. But the motive of Sally

person except

Silver's diamonds would be equally strong for a far larger number."

"Still, I feel *sure* it was Melhuish. Something tells me."

"Yes, your dislike of him. And if I were to put the case before any of these men, they would, for the same reason, be equally sure it was Harben."

"And you?" she asked.

"I think it might be anyone but you. That is why I ask your help."

"Me!" she said in surprise. "Women are said to talk."

"They do. So do men. Look at them!"

As he put out his hand for the marmalade, he nodded towards a group of men talking eagerly together.

"You mean to take up this case?"

"Yes. You see this thief has brought me into it. He *used* me. That's what it means. For it was someone who imitated Harben's stiff leg and stopped at the sight of me; he expects me to say I had seen Harben coming out of the cabin. He used *me*; that's what I don't like, you know. If it was Harben himself –"

McNab stopped thoughtfully.

"You need my help because the thief knows you know and will be very careful?" Mrs. Westmacott asked.

"Especially when he finds I shall say nothing. You see," he continued, "we have not only to find the thief but to stop him, if he becomes afraid, from dropping the necklace over the side."

Mrs. Westmacott sighed.

"To think I should find myself trying to save *her* necklace! I shouldn't dream of doing it if I wasn't *sure* Hilary Harben hadn't taken it. You can't be certain that someone else wasn't hiding up there, watching both you and him."

someone else = some other person

"I don't deny it. Anything is possible. And if we can prove that Harben didn't do it, so much the better for your bet. Will you help me?"

"What do you wish me to do?"

that little = that small thing

"Very little – and that little easy. I am not going to report what I saw to Miss Silver or to the captain. I am not going to ask any questions. I am going to sit out on the deck entirely lost = entirely lost in a book. All I want you to do is to come and give me news of what happens from hour to hour."

extremely interested

"It sounds just a man's idea of a woman's job. But what if nothing happens?"

"Then come and tell me!"

At eleven she came to him with her first report. Harben had tried to see Miss Silver, but she had refused to talk to him. A notice

had been put up asking anyone who had been on the deck between the hours of eight and ten to report it to the captain.

At half past eleven she reported having seen Miss Silver and Melhuish together on the upper deck.

At noon she returned with the news that Harben's cabin was then being searched. There was a crowd outside the door. McNab sent her off to join the crowd, while he sat on interested in his book.

sit on = continue to sit

She was back in half an hour. Nothing had been found, of course. She laughed:

"The amusing thing is that Harben finds that he himself has been robbed. Oh, it's nothing of importance – just a leather collar-box missing."

"Ah!" he said with a start.

So much meaning was conveyed by the word that she was surprised.

meaning = importance

"Did Harben mention it?"

"No, the steward who looks after his cabin did."

"A leather collar-box? It would just hold the necklace, I suppose."

McNab lay back again in his chair and shut his eyes, while Mrs. Westmacott waited.

She waited a long time, or so it seemed to her. She began to think McNab must have fallen asleep, so still was he. Then he surprised her again.

"What is the colour of Harben's door, red or green?" he asked.

neither = not one and not the other

"Neither; it is white," she replied, wondering if he was mad.

"Good! Do you think you could get me a ball of wool?"

ball of wool
[bɔ:l əv wul]

"A ball of wool?" she cried. "What for?"

"To catch the thief. If any lady friend can supply us with a ball of wool, we have him."

struck with surprise = very much surprised

"Heaven above us!" she said, struck with surprise.

"Let me see," he went on, "there is to be some music to-night, isn't there?"

She was pleased to see that he was normal once more.

"Yes – in the music saloon. There will be some piano music and –"

"Well," he interrupted, "we shall be able

to do something, too – if you can find me that ball of wool."

Mrs. Westmacott was very nervous in the music saloon – extremely worried about McNab. Of course, the events of the last twenty-four hours had had their effect upon everyone; but the soothing effect of classical music is well known, and perhaps that is the reason why practically every passenger in the ship was present. Even Miss Silver came in on Melhuish's arm, looking very pale and tired. Melhuish, after finding her a seat, left the saloon, returning some time later with something to put round her shoulders. McNab, Mrs. Westmacott saw, was very nervous. He kept looking at his watch. When the interval came, most of the men seemed ready for a drink. She saw Captain Baylis come up to McNab with an invitation on his face; and she heard the brief 'no' he received. The men began to move towards the door. The captain now rose and tapped the table.

kept = continued

"Gentlemen," he said, addressing those who were moving towards the door, "I regret very much that for the moment it will be impos-

sible for anyone to leave this saloon. You know that a necklace, a valuable necklace, has disappeared from the cabin of one of our lady passengers. A search for it, which I am sure no honest person will mind, is now taking place. There are, unfortunately, black sheep in most ships of –"

unfortunately = I am sorry to say

Mrs. Westmacott saw McNab rise to his feet.

"Excuse me," he said in a level voice. "There is no need to keep these gentlemen, nor to go through their luggage. The necklace is in a leather collar-box in Mr. Hilary Harben's cabin."

nor = and not

For a moment there was complete silence, and then Harben, pushing through the men in his way, came towards the captain with a very white face.

"That is a lie!" he called out. "I'll make you eat those words. How do you know what is, or what is not, in my cabin? Who are you?"

"I am the person who saw the man with the stiff leg come out of Miss Silver's cabin last night."

An "Ah!" of astonishment ran round the saloon like a wave, and Mrs. Westmacott, looking at Miss Silver, saw the girl in her chair with both hands covering her face. Melhuish, standing beside the captain, was, like most, eagerly interested in McNab.

covering = over

"I was not that man!" Harben cried out, but in such a way as if he did not expect them to believe him. And certainly nobody seemed to. Mrs. Westmacott saw Melhuish's gold-filled teeth as he smiled. In the silence that followed, one of the ship's officers entered and handed up to the captain the little leather collar-box. As he opened the thing and took out the necklace, the man whispered something to him, and it was evident to all from the way in which he stared at McNab, who was still on his feet, that it had been found where McNab had said.

"I had no hand in this – I never took it!" Harben cried out again.

I had no hand in = I had nothing to do with

"I know you didn't," assented McNab.

Melhuish, who had gone forward to receive the necklace from the captain, turned sharply.

"Since you know so much perhaps you know who did it?" said the captain in a hard tone.

"I do," the reply came quietly, to the astonishment of the whole saloon. "You see, at first I did think the thing had been done by this young gentleman. The man who passed me outside cabin 13 I took for Mr. Harben. But in the morning, when I heard that a man with a stiff leg had been seen coming out of the cabin, I knew it was someone else. I knew it must be someone else because I was alone on that deck, and had not spoken to anyone of what I saw. Anyone might have imitated his walk. Later in the day, when I heard of the missing collar-box, it was clear that the guilty person, through fear of discovery or for some other reason, was going to make people believe that Mr. Harben was the guilty person. That little box which was missing in the morning would be found when a search of all the cabins was made. People would believe that it had been hidden till the earlier search was over, and when it was discovered later in his cabin with

walk = way of walking

make = cause, force

over = finished

the necklace inside, the matter would seem clear to all."

McNab paused while everyone hung on his words.

hung on his words = waited eagerly for him to continue

"All that was easy. The real difficulty was in finding the guilty man. It was, of course, useless to watch Mr. Harben's cabin all day. The real thief would not go in so long as anyone was in sight. Well, the road was left open, and the thief did exactly what I thought he would do, about half an hour ago, and nobody saw him do it."

in sight = near enough to see

Mrs. Westmacott saw Melhuish's face grow brighter on hearing McNab's last remark.

"Then you cannot prove who this black sheep is?" said the captain. "I suppose we must be content with –"

McNab held up his hand. "Pardon me, but that is exactly the task I set myself. I have marked the black sheep."

set = arranged for

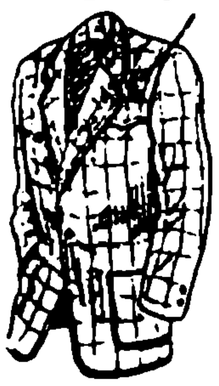
"How?"

Half a dozen cried out the question, and did not know they had spoken.

"The door of Mr. Harben's cabin is white. With the help of two small nails I placed a piece of wool from one side to the other five feet five inches high. I put chalk on the wool so that it could not be seen against the door. The two broken ends will be found hanging there now, and the man who entered the cabin ought to have a chalk line across the lapels of his coat exactly five feet five inches from the floor."

broken = torn to pieces

lapel
[lə'pel]



Automatically Melhuish had looked down. He saw what all saw, a thin white line across the lapels of his coat.

broken = ended

The silence was broken suddenly by a girl's voice.

"Hilary, oh Hilary, I am so glad! *So glad!*"

The words in themselves were no promise, but they were said in such a way that every man who heard them realized that he had lost his bet.

WILD WALES

For several hundred years Wales has been joined to England for purposes of administration. If, however, you look at a map of the part of Great Britain which is south of Scotland, you will find that it is always called England and Wales. The people of Wales regard themselves as a separate nation.

Wales is an extremely beautiful mountain country. In many places the only living things to be seen are flocks of sheep with the shepherds who look after them. There are many fruitful valleys with grey stone houses, small farms, and funny old-world villages with unpronounceable names.

living = alive

In South Wales, however, the valleys are no longer green, but black and dirty with the smoke of thousands of factories and coal mines. On the coast of South Wales are the great harbours of Swansea and Cardiff, from which the best coal in the world is exported.

Swansea [*swɔnzi*]
Cardiff [*ka:dif*]

In the years between the two world wars, other countries were able to sell coal at a much cheaper price than South Wales. The result was that there were many people without work in the mining valleys of South Wales, and that part of the country was, without doubt, the poorest in Great Britain.

The war, however, made a great difference, and many of the almost dead mining valleys came back to life again. In the fight against Germany much coal was required for the war factories of Great Britain. Throughout the war South Wales was very busy, and is, indeed, still busy, for the motto of the British after the war is "export or die", and one of the most important things for producing articles for export is coal.

In Wales there are 2½ million people, of whom nearly 1 million prefer to speak their own language. It is quite possible for an Englishman to meet a farmer in Wales, who in reply to his question about the way to the next village, will answer, "DYM SAESNEG" – "I do not speak Saxon"! 80,000 people in this strange land neither speak nor under-

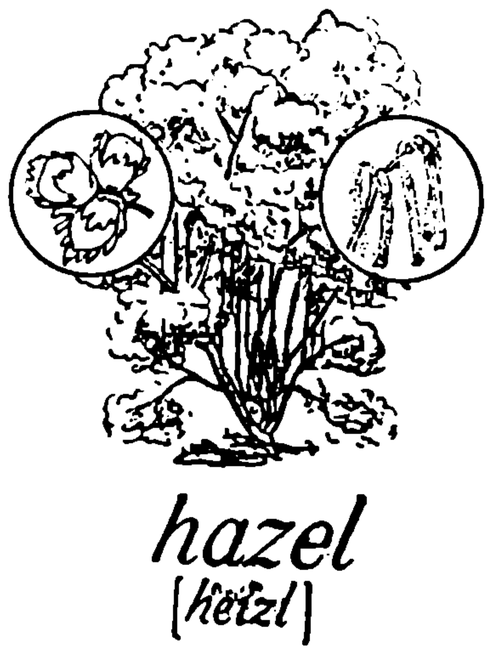
stand English, and there are many who "can", but "will" not.

With the exception of such large towns as Swansea and Cardiff, and the districts of Wales that are close to England, children under the age of five are not generally able to speak English. They do not learn English until they commence school, when, of course, they must learn it.

Welsh is quite a rich language, consisting of more than 80,000 words. It looks very difficult to a foreigner and seems to consist mostly of consonants, among which many double l's and w's. What would the reader do if he lived in the following village?

LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGE-
RYCHWYRNDROBWLLLLANTYSIL-
IOGOGOGOCH.

St. Mary
[*snt'mɛəri*]



hazel
[*heizl*]

This name means in reality: "the church of St. Mary in the valley by the white hazel bush near the whirlpool by St. Tysilio's red cave". There is a railway station at this village, but when the train stops and the guard gets out, it is hardly necessary to explain that he does not call out the whole of the name,

LLANFAIR P. G. is sufficient for him. The British Railways (Western Region), which are owned by the state, do not allow their personnel to speak Welsh, even if they are Welsh, but until shortly before 1939 the railway personnel were allowed to speak which language they pleased.

Although English is the official language, Welsh is not dying out in any sense of the word. There are more people who speak Welsh and regard Welsh as their mother tongue at the present day than ever before in the history of the country. Newspapers and new books appear quite regularly in Welsh.

sense = meaning

appear = be made public

The Welsh would like to see the Welsh language recognized as the official language of the country. It is easy to see why the English fight against this idea, for if Welsh was the official language, it would mean that all English functionaries and officials in Wales would have to give up their positions.

In this connection there is an amusing story told about an English tax collector who came to a house and asked a small boy who opened the door if his father was at home.

"No, he is at work at RHOSANERCH-RUGOG," answered the boy.

"Well, perhaps your mother is at home?" asked the tax collector.

"No, she has gone to LLANFAIRMA-THAFARNEITHAF. I am quite alone at home. My sister is away, too. She is at LLANFAIRPWLLGWYNGYLLGOGE-RYCHWYRNDROBWLLLLANTYSIL-IOGOGOGOCH."

After which the tax collector had nothing more to say!

Welshmen have played a very important part in the history of England. It would be difficult to forget the name of Lloyd George, who led Britain in the most critical years of the first world war.

Lloyd George
[*lɔid dʒɔ:dʒ*]

Wales has even supplied England with the most famous of her royal families, the Tudor family. The names of Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth are probably known all over the world. Under their rule England began to grow really great. The reign of Queen Elizabeth is often described by historians as "the golden age" of English history.

Tudor
[*tju:də*]

Henry VIII
[*henri ði eitþ*]

Elizabeth
[*i'lizəbəþ*]

A MODERN DON JUAN

By MAJOR R. L. TAYLOR

Don Juan [*dɔn'dʒu:ən*]

Taylor [*teilə*]

Snooks [*snu:ks*]

Bill [*bil*]

Alfred [*ælfrid*]

Alf [*ælf*]

Liverpool [*livəpu:l*]

The following story is taken from the collection 'Privates Snooks and Smith at War'. Private William (Bill) Smith is a Londoner, while Private Alfred (Alf) Snooks is from Liverpool. In this story we have Private Smith representing the South, London in this case, and Private Snooks and three other North-countrymen representing the North.

(1)

The canteen of an Army training establishment during the early part of 1942.

Snooks (to three friends, all of whom are North-countrymen): What's he got that we haven't got? That's what I'd like to know. There must be some explanation! Now we've been up here in the North for nearly three months. We are, so to speak, on our own doorstep. Then along comes this Londoner, Smith, and what happens? Like all good troops,

what's = what has

on our own doorstep = in our own part of the country

since we arrived here, we've done our best to brighten life for the civvies – especially civvies in skirts, with nice faces, and between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. Everything runs very smoothly until they set eyes on Private Smith of London. After that, however, they've only got time for us when this chap from the South can't take 'em out.

skirt [*skə:t*]

set eyes on = look at, see

'em [*əm*] = them

Wills: I think you've almost given the explanation in your last few words, Alf. Now, Bill Smith comes from the South, and doesn't he let you know it! You'd think sometimes that London was Great Britain when you hear him talking of his native town. Now, fair's fair – Bill Smith is *not* a bad-looking chap, and he does know how to talk, and sometimes he's even funny.

Wills [*wilz*]

fair's fair = fair is fair = we must be fair

These girls up here've never been to London. It's so far away that many of 'em are never likely to go. As a result of the German Blitz in 1940, many people've got the idea that the Londoners are the most wonderful people in Great Britain – well, they are wonderful. You can't imagine anybody being braver. I'll take off my hat to 'em any time,

here've [*hiərəv*] = here have

people've [*pi:pləv*] = people have

but now comes the point – they weren't any more wonderful than the people of Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, and dozens of other towns in the North. What's in the distance always seems better than what's near. Now, in peace-time, when a chap wants to climb some mountains, he nearly always goes off to Switzerland, or Austria p'raps. At any rate, off he goes to some place on the Continent, forgetting that Wales and Scotland're almost nothing else but mountains.

Switzerland [*switsələnd*]

p'raps [*præps*] = perhaps

Scotland're [*skɔtləndə*] = Scotland are

Now, these girls up here are something like that. They've got plenty of good things on the doorstep *(looking round at the party)* – us for instance – but all their thoughts're on something much farther away.

Willy [*wili*]

Bates (thoughtfully): I think, Willy, that you've got something there. It's very much the same with the Canadian troops, or with the Poles, the French, the Dutch, the Norwegians, the Belgians. Many of the girls, if it comes to a question of choosing as to whether they'll go out with a British Tommy or one of these foreigners, nearly always choose a foreigner.

as to whether = if

Now in a way, you could compare these chaps from the South with the foreign troops. They're as good as foreigners anyway in our part of the country!

as good as = almost the same as

Wadham: That's all true enough. In one way, you can't blame the girls for wanting a bit of a change. They like going out with these Southerners and foreigners, having a good time with 'em. But you'll find when it comes to the more serious things, such as getting married, for instance, that most of 'em'd never dream of taking anybody else but a good steady chap from the North.

Wadham [*wɔdəm*]

'em'd [*əmәd*] = them would

Snooks: P'raps you're right, Waddy, but the serious things'll have to wait until after the war as far as I'm concerned. I believe in taking troubles as they come, not in anticipating 'em. I want to have a good time now. No doubt, what you've been saying is the explanation, but it's a poor comfort. I think, myself, that we ought to teach Private Don Juan Bill Smith a lesson.

Waddy [*wɔdi*]

as far as I'm concerned = in my case

Bates: I think we're all agreed on that point. We *must* teach him a lesson, but I can't see at the moment how we're going to do it.

(2)

The sergeant-major, who entered the canteen a minute or two before and has now procured himself a glass of beer, walks across to the table where the four North-country-men are seated.

S. M. (with astonishment shown both in his face and in his voice): What's the matter with you boys this evening? You've all got full glasses of beer in front of you. I've never seen that happen before. Is there anything wrong with you – or with the beer?

Snooks: Well, sergeant-major, we were talking over a little private problem.

S. M.: I don't want to poke my nose into your private affairs, boys, but is it anything where I could help you out?

Snooks (to his three friends): Shall we consult the sergeant-major, boys? More than once in the past he's been able to give good advice. It's all part of a sergeant-major's job to be able to give good advice, speaking from his past experience, as it were. The sergeant-major's been a soldier for about fifteen years, so he should be able to advise us what to do.

(All agree with Snooks.)

Well, sergeant-major, it's like this. Tonight, Private Smith is out with my girl. She'll only go out with me when Private Smith is otherwise engaged. By otherwise engaged, I mean, when he's taking out Waddy's girl, or Willy's girl, or Bates's girl. We're all feeling pretty browned-off about it, sergeant-major. To these girls up here, he seems to be a kind of Don Juan and London Blitz hero combined. Before you came across, we'd just agreed that he ought to be taught a lesson.

S. M.: Well, boys, it's not the first time that this kind of thing's happened in the Army – certainly won't be the last. It's happening off and on, most of the time. Now if you can find a way of teaching him a lesson and getting a good laugh out of it at the same time, I'll be prepared to give you any assistance. But I'm afraid, however, that you'll have to wait a bit. In fact, Snooks, Smith is out with your girl for the last time this evening. Orders have just come through that, within forty-eight hours, we're to proceed to

off and on = from time to time

wait a bit = wait for a short time

some place in the Western Highlands for a month's special training.

Snooks: I was talking to a chap the other day who'd just come back from special training in the Highlands. I can understand from what he said that we've got something to look forward to.

S. M. (his interest aroused): What did he tell you?

Snooks: Well, sergeant-major, half of the time they seemed to spend in climbing up mountains and then climbing down again. This chap said he didn't know which was worst. Then they spent a lot of time in landing on a rocky coast, with full pack, from small boats. This fellow said that he wasn't dry the whole time he was there. Then they used to send 'em out on something they call 'endurance tests'. They give you enough food for one square meal to take with you, and then on a nice rainy day – they always choose rainy days for it – they take you up to some place in the mountains, and there you have to live for three days. And then if they don't kill you in this way, it seems that there

pack
[pæk]

are plenty of other ways they try to do it. This chap said that what he needed most at the moment was two or three months in a rest home.

S. M.: Sounds pretty bad. But you know what it means, boys? – that now you get your opportunity of having a bit of fun with Smith.

Snooks: That's all very well, sergeant-major; but what are *we* going to do up there?

S. M.: Well, as you were saying just now, I've been in the Army for fifteen years, and, if I may say so, have learnt a thing or two about how the War Office works. Now, if they send you out where you have to practise landing on a rocky coast from small boats, it can only mean one thing.

Snooks: What's that, sergeant-major?

S. M.: It means that when we invade the Continent, you'll be landed from big boats on a nice, flat, sandy beach. This climbing of mountains means the same thing – it means that we're going to invade a flat country.

It was just the same thing in 1940. The fellows who were issued with tropical kit,

knew – or should've known – that they were being sent to Norway. If, when we go off, we're issued with arctic kit, then we'll know for a certainty that we're being sent to the Mediterranean or to the Far East. From my experience, that's the way the War Office works.

Well, I'll have to be going now, boys. Don't forget that I'm prepared to give you a hand in having a bit of fun with Smith!

(3)

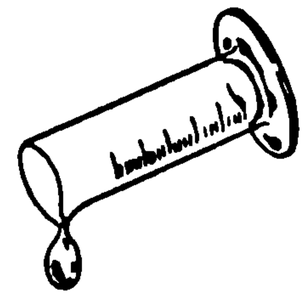
Three weeks later, the same four North-countrymen are seated together in the canteen of the training establishment in the Highlands.

Bates: Well, Alf, we've only got another week to go up here. If we're going to have a bit of fun with Bill Smith, we'll have to do it soon.

Snooks: Agreed, Bates, and this afternoon, while we were up to our necks in that river, an idea came to me. Just one of those sudden ideas! As you've all discovered to your cost, girls are very scarce up here. They're just

like a drop of water in the Sahara Desert. As far as I know, I'm the only one of us who's been lucky enough to find a nice girl. Even that's been hard work, for her place is over two hours' walk across the mountains. Every time I see her, it means between four and five hours' walk in the mountains. Still, she's worth it – she's a nice little bit.

Sahara
[sə'ha:rə]



drop of water
[drɔp əv wɔ:tə]

Now, I expect you've all noticed that Don Juan's not been feeling particularly happy up here. He admitted to me himself that he misses the good times he had in the North of England – taking our girls out, although he didn't say that!

place = house

a nice little bit = a nice girl

Now, in two days' time I'm going to see my girl again. I can tell Don Juan that I'm very sorry to see that he's so lonely up here in the Highlands, and then say that my girl has quite a nice sister, and that if he comes along with me next time I go, I'm sure she'll be delighted to see him.

Wills (breaking in): I don't see how that's going to teach him a lesson. If your girl hasn't got a sister, then the same thing may happen as before, and before you know where you

break in = interrupt

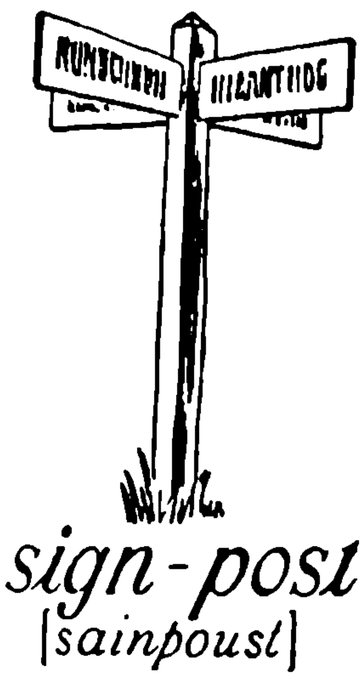
are, you'll find that Don Juan's taken her off into the mountains for a walk. And where will you be?

Snooks: I'm not quite so foolish as all that, Willy. Just hear me out! I'm not taking any risks, don't you worry! Now, the evening Don Juan and I're going off together, after the evening meal I tell him that I'm not feeling very well as a result of spending much of my time in rivers, and that I'm going to turn in early, in the hope of a good night's sleep putting me right. Of course, Don Juan'll be disappointed, but like a good pal, I tell him how to get to the place. It's not easy to find your way there, but if I give him minute instructions as to how to get there, he could do it all right.

hear me out! = listen to the rest of what I have to say!

turn in = go to bed

putting me right = making me well again



sign-post [sainpoust]

Now, boys, we come to the best part of my plan. Up here, it's exactly the same as all over the rest of the country – all sign-posts've been taken down. In the directions I give to Don Juan, I tell him about three sign-posts that'll help him to find his way, saying, of course, that it's been very careless of the local people to have left 'em standing.

Now, we've got two days in which to make those sign-posts and arrange to have 'em put up at the wrong places. One or two of us may need a half day off, but I'm sure the sergeant-major'll be willing to play. He did promise to give us a hand, and I think the idea'll appeal to his sense of humour.

play = help

sense = understanding

(4)

The following morning Private Snooks goes to see the sergeant-major.

S. M.: Well, what is it, Snooks?

Snooks: Do you remember our conversation in the North of England, sergeant-major, about having a bit of fun with Smith?

S. M.: I remember quite well, but I thought you must've forgotten all about it. I don't see how you're going to do it in this god-forsaken hole!

Snooks: We have a plan, sergeant-major, but we'll need your help.

S. M.: Let me hear it! Anything to make life a bit brighter up here.

Snooks: Well, it's like this, sergeant-major. There aren't many girls in these parts,

in these parts = in this part of the country

and I'm one of the lucky few who've found a really nice girl.

S. M.: You needn't tell me, Snooks. I know they're scarce. I've kept my eyes open without any luck. About all I've seen are mountain goats! I'd noticed, however, that you were very often missing from the canteen in the evening. I guessed that you must've found some one. But what's the plan?

about all = almost all

Snooks: Smith's also been one of the unlucky ones. That's why he walks about like a man who's lost a tenner and found a tanner. To-night I'm going to tell him that my girl has a very pretty, attractive sister, and then offer to take him with me when I go to see her to-morrow evening. When to-morrow evening comes, I go sick, but I tell him how to get to the girl's place, which is over two hours' walk across the mountains. The boys and myself are going to make some sign-posts this evening, which we want to put up to-morrow in the wrong places. Then with any luck, Smith'll not only never get to the girl's place, but will also get completely lost in the mountains.

go sick = say that you are ill

Where we want your help, sergeant-major, is to see that two or three of us get a few hours off to-morrow, so that we can go and plant the sign-posts.

S. M. (roaring with laughter): A wonderful idea, Snooks! An absolute gem! Don't know how you ever thought of it. I'll have to be careful in future that I don't start taking your girl out. – I'll arrange that two or three of you have half a day off. What are their names?

Snooks: There's Wills and Bates and myself, sergeant-major.

S. M.: Good! I'll see the Company Commander and tell him that I've got a special job for you to do for me to-morrow.

(5)

The same evening Smith and Snooks are having a drink in the canteen.

Smith: I'm jolly glad that we've only got another five days in this hole.

Snooks: Well, Bill, we don't know yet where we're being sent to. The next place may be still worse.

shut up = shut your mouth

feel badly = suffer much

what about = what do you say about

Smith: Shut up, Alf! There couldn't be a worse place in the British Isles. I don't believe it.

Snooks: As you're feeling so badly about it, Bill, I was wondering if you'd like to come along with me to-morrow evening. My girl has a sister – a really good-looking one, and a jolly good sport I'd say. What about coming along with me to-morrow evening? You certainly don't deserve it after all the tricks you played us in the North of England with our girls, but that story is forgotten now.

Smith: Well, Alf, I can understand in one way that you feel a bit sore about it, but I can't do much about it if the girls prefer to go out with me. It's very decent of you, Alf, to offer to take me along to-morrow evening. Of course, I'll come. It's a pity you didn't think of it before! What it really means is that I've wasted three valuable weeks. Still, better late than never!

(6)

The sign-posts are made, and placed in carefully chosen spots.

Snooks and Smith, having finished work for the day, are on their way to the mess for supper.

Snooks: I'm not feeling very much like eating, Bill. I think this constant wet weather's got into my bones. I find it quite hard work to drag my feet along.

Smith: A nice mug of tea'll soon put you right, Alf. You mustn't go sick – this evening of all evenings! I tell you what we'll do, Alf. I've got a bottle of really good Scotch in my room. I managed to pick it up! It's been the only bright spot in our stay here. When we go in to supper, we'll pour a double into your mug of tea. Hot tea and whisky is a good mixture when you're feeling under the weather. It's helped to put many a man on his feet again.

mug
[mʌg]

pick up = get in some way or other

spot = thing, point

feeling under the weather = feeling ill

Smith fetches the whisky from his room and, when they are seated at supper, pours a liberal portion into Snooks's tea.

Smith: How d'you feel now, Alf?

Snooks: It's warmed my inside up a bit, but I've still got that tired feeling in the legs.

d'you [*dju:*] = do you

Smith: The whisky'll soon work its way

down to the legs. By the time we've finished supper, you'll be feeling quite well enough to start on that two hours' walk.

for my own sake [*seik*] = on account of myself

Snooks: I hope so for my own sake, and for your sake, too, Bill. I shouldn't like to have to give up at the last moment.

Smith: I see there's still another double left in the bottle. I think we should be on the safe side, Alf, so when you get your next mug of tea, you'd better finish off the bottle.

finish off = drink what is left

Snooks (not very hopefully): We can try at any rate, Bill. But I've got the feeling that this cold or influenza, or whatever it is, has come to stay for a few days. I had exactly the same feeling once before when we were training in the North of England, and I finished up with a week in bed.

finish up with = end with

Smith: You chaps from the North are always so pessimistic. I'd say that two liberal double whiskies should be enough to put any man on his feet again. That's our experience down South anyway.

(At the end of the meal):

Well, how are you feeling now, Alf? As soon as we start walking, you'll find that the

whisky'll work down into your legs. In half an hour you'll be feeling as fit as a fiddle.

Snooks: I'm terribly sorry to disappoint you, Bill, but I'm certain I shan't be able to make it this evening. And I don't think you'd ever find your own way there. You chaps from the South, especially from big towns like London, aren't very good at finding your way about in the mountains. It's not to be expected! I'm sorry to upset our plans, but we'll have to give it up, Bill.

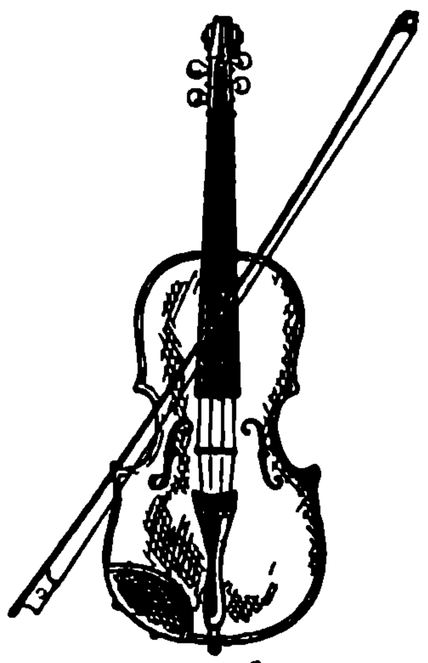
Smith: Perhaps what you say is right about some people in the South, Alf. For myself, if I want very badly to get to a place, I've always found up till now that I've got there all right, especially if there's a nice girl at the other end.

Snooks: You might easily get lost in the mountains, Bill. That wouldn't be so pleasant.

Smith: I'd be prepared to risk that! If you really can't come, Alf, you can tell me how to get there. I'm beginning to think you must be really ill, if you give up the chance of seeing a nice girl!

as fit as a fiddle = very well

fiddle = old word for violin



violin
[vaiə'lin]

Snooks: I'll tell you the way, Bill, and I've just remembered that the first time I went, I saw three sign-posts on the way. I'd almost forgotten all about 'em. I only used 'em the first time. With the help of these sign-posts, I think you'd be able to find it all right, even though you're a Londoner.

even though = even if

Now, Bill, when you leave the building, you must turn to the right and follow the footpath for about half an hour. Then you'll come to a place where two or three paths meet. Here you'll find the first sign-post. I can never remember how the name of the place is spelt. It's full of g's, y's, and l's. But that doesn't matter very much, for there's only one sign-post and only one name on it. I can't understand why these sign-posts weren't taken down in 1940. Either they thought there was no danger of the Germans ever coming here, or they just forgot.

Well, at the first sign-post you go off to the left and follow the path for about half an hour. Then you'll get to another place where two or three paths meet, but if you just follow the sign-post, you can't go wrong.

You'll have to keep on for about three quarters of an hour, until you get to the last sign-post. It points across a brook. Jump that, and follow your nose till you reach a river running right down to the sea. The only house near the beach in this place is the one you want.

Smith: Sounds very simple to me, Alf. If there are only three sign-posts, and they've only got one name on 'em, how can I possibly go wrong? Well, Alf, if you don't mind, I think I'll be getting along.

be getting along = go

(7)

Three hours later finds Smith down by the sea, but there is no house to be seen anywhere. He decides to make his way along the coast in the hope of finding the house. He does not know whether to go north or south, but decides to go north as the mountains seem somewhat less difficult there. It is very hard work, not without danger, for in many places the mountain slope ends suddenly with a drop of hundreds of feet into the water. After climbing up and down for more than an hour,

he decides to give up his search as hopeless and to return to the footpath leading down to the sea. Night, however, has overtaken him, and after a long and unsuccessful search he realizes that he will never be able to find the footpath in the dark. Common sense tells him that the only thing to do is to wait for the first sign of daylight. To add to his discomfort it is raining, and he does his best to find a spot where he can wait out of the rain. He finds a rock not very far from the water's edge, that gives him a certain amount of cover.

add to = make greater

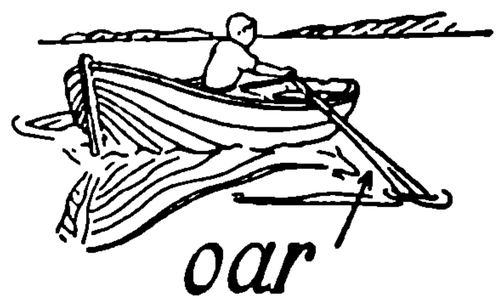
a certain amount of = some

It seems to him that time passes all too slowly, although it is helped somewhat by the smoking of one cigarette after another. He is just about to light his last cigarette, when he sees a light out at sea. It shows up very clearly in the blackness of the night. The light is blinking, and understanding suddenly comes to him – a signal is being sent. Smith recognizes the letters BF which are flashed again and again. He smiles sorrowfully as he says to himself, "Yes, I'm a Bloody Fool all right."

about = going

shows up = can be seen

Then the light stops blinking, and while Smith is still wondering what it may mean, he hears the sound of oars. The darkness is so great that although he looks hard in the direction of the sound, there is at first nothing to be seen but the blackness of the water. The sounds, however, get closer and closer, and at last he is able to see a small boat a few yards from the water's edge. He hears the boat run on to the sand of the beach, and, almost at the same time, sees a figure rise slightly and then land on the beach.


oar

[2]

Smith cannot suppress his excitement. All the stories he has ever read of German agents landing on the coast of North-West Scotland return to him. Perhaps this is the real thing. Perhaps, after all, the Germans do do this kind of thing. In the past he has always laughed at these stories. They were good stories – nothing more. But what does this mean anyway? He must watch very carefully and keep his head clear.

do do = really do

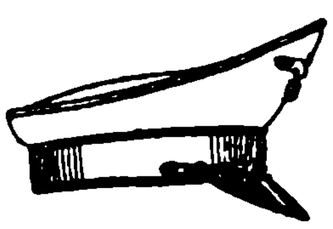
The boat is rowed out to sea again and almost immediately disappears from view. The man who has been landed commences to

view = sight

walk up and down the beach. At one place he passes quite close to the rock behind which Smith is taking cover from the rain. As he walks past the first time, Smith sees that the man, who is well-built, is in uniform, although the uniform looks somewhat strange. He decides to take a closer look when the man passes the rock on the return trip.

return trip = trip back

When the man approaches the rock again, Smith waits until he is just opposite him, and then a second later, when the man is not much more than a yard away, puts his head round the corner to get as good a view as possible. This time Smith is left in no doubt – the man is wearing the cap of a German naval officer. Those stories must be true after all! This German officer has been rowed in to the beach, where he must have a rendezvous with somebody.



cap
[*kæp*]

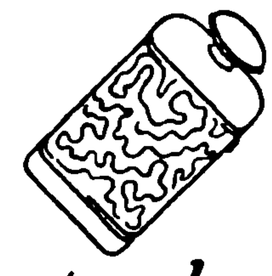
Smith is torn by two feelings; the first thing he wants to do after discovering that the man is a German is to jump upon him and make him prisoner, but common sense tells him not to act too hastily. For five minutes the German officer walks backwards and

forwards along the beach, and then, when he is about twenty yards away, Smith sees that he has come to a stop. His eyes are now becoming more used to the darkness, and he is able to see another figure beside that of the German.

come to a stop = stop

For a few minutes the two figures talk together in hushed voices, and although Smith does his best to pick up bits of the conversation, he is too far away to hear what they are saying. The only thing he knows for a certainty is that the conversation is in English. He would have given many months' pay to have been near enough to follow the conversation. Then just as quickly as the other man has come, he disappears again, while the German officer continues to walk up and down the beach. Smith regrets that he cannot follow the German agent who has talked with the officer, but he has disappeared into the darkness, and it will be hopeless to try and find him. The German officer now takes a torch from his pocket, and Smith sees him flash it in the direction taken by the boat. Before long the boat will be back to take him

pick up = hear



torch
[tɔ:tʃ]

off. In the meantime Smith must do something – but what? he asks himself.

The thought has come to him many times throughout the last two or three hours that the present circumstances are hardly favourable – that the C. O. will be far from pleased when he gets back, and the thought of long periods of C. B. have passed through his mind. These thoughts are, however, quickly followed by another thought. If when he arrives back, he has the German naval officer as his prisoner, then he feels certain that the C. O. will be prepared to forget everything else. He may be able to tell the story to the C. O. in such a way, that he will believe the delay in returning to the training establishment has been caused by this meeting with an enemy officer.

take action = do something

No sooner has the idea begun to take shape in his mind, than he decides to take action, for the boat may be back at any moment to fetch the officer. Smith has had practice enough in attacking enemy soldiers from behind, while taking part in training. This is the first time he has had a chance of trying

out the method on a German. The next time the officer passes his rock, he jumps upon his back, and a second later the man is helpless on the beach. Smith is excited and in high spirits; this is much better than trying it out on his friends.

He remembers what he has been taught: To make certain that the officer will not be able to say anything for the next hour or two, Smith gives him a hard blow at the back of the neck.

make certain = be certain

give a blow = strike

The next thing is to move the officer to a safer spot, a bit farther inland. The men in the boat that come to fetch the officer are certain to do their best to try and find him. With great difficulty Smith gets the man on his shoulder and then begins to make his way inland. When he thinks he has placed sufficient distance between himself and the beach, he lays the officer on the ground.

In the distance he can hear the sound of the oars as the boat is rowed in to the beach. How he would like to see their faces when they find no sign of the man they have come to pick up. Then for half an hour, he can

pick up = fetch

hear the sound of voices, and sometimes see the flash of a torch.

At last they must have given it up as hopeless, for he can hear the boat being rowed out to sea again. He breathes more easily and decides to search the German's pockets. He finds a pistol which he immediately puts in his own pocket, but there is nothing else that interests him.

pistol [*pistl*]

period of waiting = time during which one waits

Now follows a long and weary period of waiting, but at last day begins to break. With the coming of daylight, the officer lifts his head and looks around. He finds his own pistol being pointed at him, while at the other end of it is a rather wet, dirty, khaki-clad figure who tells him not to try any tricks, or it will be all the worse for him.

is lost = does not know where he is

As Smith is completely lost, he decides to walk until they reach the nearest farmhouse, where he will be able to get somebody to show him the way back to the training establishment.

have got to = must

"You've got to start walking," Smith says to the German. And now they walk for what seems to be hours, until they reach a farm-

house. Smith does not go inside, but gives a loud call which results in the appearance of the farmer. After a short conversation all three set off together.

set off = begin to move

(8)

The troops have finished work and are on their way to the mess for ten o'clock tea.

Snooks: It's not very often you have visitors in this part of the world, but I can see three chaps coming along the path in our direction.

Wills (looking up the path): You're right, Alf, and if I'm not greatly mistaken, one of our visitors is Private Bill Smith of London town.

Snooks: You're right, I think, Willy. So Don Juan's found his way back at last. But I don't understand who the others can be. It seems to me that one of 'em is in uniform. He looks like a naval officer, although there's something strange about him. He doesn't look like one of our naval fellows.

Wills: If I'm not greatly mistaken, Alf, that chap is a German naval officer. What on

earth can Bill Smith be doing with a German officer.

(9)

A quarter of an hour later in the C. O.'s office.

C. O.: So I understand, Smith, that when you were coming home from this girl's place last night, you were lucky enough to pick up this German officer?

pick up = get

Smith: Yes, sir.

C. O.: Well, you have done very well, Smith. You are to be praised for showing such common sense and initiative. You'll hear from me again later. You may go now, Smith.

(Turning to the sergeant-major):

Will you show the prisoner in, sergeant-major. I know that when we send him in to the nearest town, the Intelligence fellows will worry him with thousands of questions. They must have plenty of fun in that way, but I don't see why I shouldn't have a bit of fun with this fellow myself. Let's have him in!

Intelligence [*in'telidʒəns*]

fellow = member of Intelligence Corps [*kɔ:*]

(The door opens and the prisoner is marched in between two guards.)

You may go, too, sergeant-major, but wait outside with the two guards.

(Looking at the prisoner for the first time):

What on earth does this mean? It's Jimmy Marshall, isn't it? What are you doing in that uniform?

Jimmy [*dʒimi*]

Marshall: Good Lord – Tommy James! Fancy running into you up here! It must be five or six years since we met last.

run into = meet

C. O.: Quite that, Jimmy! But what's the story?

quite = at least

Marshall: We were having some night training, and I was supposed to be the captain of a German U-boat. It was part of my job to land on the coast by night and meet one of my Company Commanders who was supposed to be a German agent. Everything went off as planned until I received that blow on the back of the head that your fellow gave me. It was all pretty foolish, but as it was arranged by one of the chaps in the Intelligence Corps – what can you expect?

go off = happen

(10)

It is just before lunch and the troops are standing about talking together.

Snooks: Well, I'm sorry, Bill, that you lost your way. You remember what I said about you chaps from the South as soon as you get into the mountains.

Smith: That's all right, Alf. It's a very good thing that I did lose my way, otherwise I'd never have picked up this German officer. The C. O. seemed to be very pleased about it. He said I'd be hearing from him again.

Wills: You're a lucky chap, Bill. Down in the North of England you had all the luck with the girls. Now we come to a god-forsaken place like this, and out you go and bring in a German officer.

Bates: Born lucky! That's what you are, Bill. I don't know how you chaps from the South nearly always manage to find any bit of luck that's going.

that's going = that there is

Snooks: There comes the C. O. with the German officer. I wonder where the guards are? They seem to be talking together as if they were old friends.

Smith: Can't quite make it out myself. I always thought that the C. O. hated the sight of all Germans. I suppose he's going to take him in to the nearest town and hand him over.

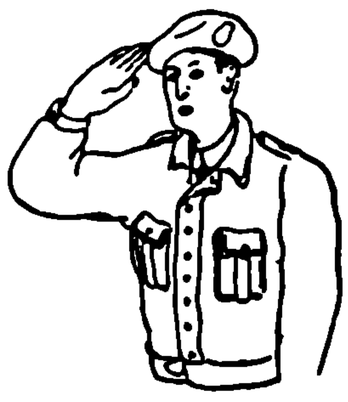
Wills: Now, that's really funny. They're getting into the C. O.'s own car, and it looks as if the C. O. is going to drive himself. What's come over the C. O.?

come over = happen to

(11)

The C. O. returns later in the afternoon, and Smith waits patiently. The day passes, and he receives no word from him. His friends assure him that it must be a good sign – it must mean that the German officer was a very important prisoner. Of course, if he is important, it will take some time to get a story out of him. At length, on the following afternoon, a message is received by Smith to report in the C. O.'s office at once. With hopes high he makes his way to the office door.

C. O. (calling loudly in reply to a knock at the door): If that's you, Smith, come in!



salute
[sə'lu:t]

(Smith enters, giving a very smart salute.)

I want to introduce you to a very good friend of mine, Smith. This is Major Marshall.

Smith (looking at the officer seated behind the C. O., and recognizing him as his prisoner of the night before last): Er – er – I'm sorry, sir, but – er – I don't quite understand.

er [ə:] = sound often used when a person does not know what to say

Marshall (stepping forward and holding out his hand to Smith): That's all right, Smith. That was a nice blow on the head you gave me. I can still feel it! Now, I suppose it's a bit of a disappointment to you, but I'd like to congratulate you. All I can say is that I wish all my men were like you. We were doing some night training – it was pretty poor – made up by the Intelligence people. The only successful thing about it was your capture of me!

nice = good, hard

made up = put together

Intelligence people = the Intelligence Corps

C. O.: All right, Smith, you may go. A final word: I shan't forget you for your work the night before last.

Smith: Thank you, sir!

VILLAGE LIFE IN INDIA

India is still an agricultural country. Ninety per cent of all its inhabitants are farmers.

By Indian law land is held by the sons of the family, among whom it is divided equally. In a country of large families, this means that there is now very little land for each son. Thus in the great farming district known as the Punjab, the average size of a farm is only five acres (two hectares).

Punjab [*pʌn'dʒa:b*]

acre [*eikə*]

hectare [*hekta:*]

Nearly all farmers work hard on their farms to be able to live. No doubt much more could be got from the soil, but their methods of farming are old and very poor. In many parts of the country special farms and agricultural institutions have been started to help the farmers, but their work is made extremely difficult, because most farmers cannot even read or write.

poor = not good

Down through history, the farmers have

depended upon the rainy season. If the monsoon did not come when expected, it meant catastrophe and untold suffering to the farmer. Very early in the history of India it was necessary for the farmers to make arrangements to get the necessary water. They were never very successful, until during the last 50 years when many large dams have been built to improve the conditions of the farmers.

make arrangements = make plans or preparations

There are enormous numbers of cattle. It is said that in all India there are more than 152 million. Compared with European cows they give very little milk, only about four pints a day (= $2^1/_2$ litres).

pint [*paint*]

litre [*li:tə*]

Throughout India there are some 700,000 villages, and each village more or less looks after its own affairs. Every village has its families of farmers whose only work is to look after their soil.

Each village has its own headman and its own watchman. As the most important man in the village, the headman is responsible for the collection of land taxes, out of which he receives 5 per cent. The headman chooses his own watchman, who is a sort of policeman.

The watchman is the link between the government and the headman. He, too, is paid by the villagers at the rate of fourpence per family per annum, which he has to collect himself.

There are also other people in the villages, who are not farmers. There is the blacksmith for sharpening the plough, making the locks, and repairing the articles used in the kitchen; there is the carpenter to make any wooden articles necessary; there is the potter who makes pots for the kitchen; and then there is the washerman. The washerman, however, does not do much washing. His chief job is to dye the cloth, generally made in the village itself, from which the women make their wedding clothes, covers for their beds, etc.

do washing = wash

Each village has its own minstrel. The duty of a minstrel in the old days was to sing and play for his master, some rich landowner. The duty of an Indian minstrel is now to sing at marriages and other important events in the life of the village, and to remember by heart everything connected with the past life of the leading families of the village. He also

remember by heart = know from memory

takes all invitations to marriages and news of births and deaths to relatives in other villages.

All these positions are hereditary, and go from father to son. The carpenter's son will be a carpenter, the minstrel's son a minstrel. Here we see how little the life of India changes.

In each village there is yet another person who must be mentioned and who is perhaps more important than any other. He is the Bania, the man to whom the villagers go to borrow money. He is the man who makes it possible for the life of the village to continue. He is usually the shopkeeper as well. The whole existence of Indian agriculture depends upon him. From the money-lender the farmer borrows money to buy cattle and seeds for his fields. In most cases, all that the farmer produces finds its way into the money-lender's shop. For the rest of the year he will have to depend upon the money he has borrowed to buy everything he needs, even salt for his food and oil for his lamps. Marriages and deaths cost money, too. People who come from distant villages often stay the night and have

Bania
[*bænjə*]

to be fed. All this is paid for with money borrowed from the money-lender.

The money-lender wants a very high rate of interest. The farmers pay more to the money-lender in interest than they pay to the government in taxes. If it happens that a farmer's bullock dies or, as is often the case, that it is stolen from him during the time when the ploughing is being done, he is sure to lose the whole year's crop of wheat, cotton, etc., unless the money-lender will let him have money to buy another.

Most of the Provinces have now started special banks for lending money to farmers. The rate of interest charged by them is only 12 per cent, but they have not yet succeeded in taking the place of the money-lender.

Coins are not in common use in the villages. Even when the women go shopping, they take with them wheat and cotton for their payments.

Before the days of British administration in India, the Land Tax could be paid with wheat, cotton, etc., but the British arranged

for it to be paid in cash on dates fixed beforehand. This has meant that the farmer has very often had to go to the money-lender to get the cash. The amount of the Land Tax is arranged every forty years, and the farmer knows exactly what he will have to pay for the whole of that time. With farmers who cannot read or write, the European system of income tax would be almost impossible.

The people in the villages eat very simple food, consisting of grain of different kinds and vegetables, with milk and butter, too, if they have cows. Milk is not usually sold in the villages. There is a saying in India that the farmer will sell neither his son nor the milk of his cow. As there are many families without a cow, they have to go without milk and whatever may be made from milk.

The standard of life in India is very low compared with life in England, for example. The ordinary Englishman earns twenty times as much as an Indian. Most villagers, however, are happy and satisfied; they are peaceful, and do not often break the law.

The general good behaviour of Indian

villagers is possibly a result of the deep religious feeling that is such an important part of Indian life. Each village has its own particular house of worship. The Mohammedans have their mosques, and the Hindus their temples. The priests are usually poor and depend upon what the villagers may give them, but they give the people some knowledge of the simple things connected with their religion. There is a world of difference between the two religions, Mohammedan and Hindu. In the big cities of India there is frequently trouble between the Mohammedans and the Hindus, with shedding of blood and loss of life, but in the villages people are usually more peaceful.

Mohammedan [*mou'hæmidən*]

Hindu ['*hin'du:*]

The village women remain at home except when they go to fetch water, bread, or grain. But the men come together in the evenings in the village meeting places to smoke and exchange news. The only time the women of a village meet for a definite purpose is when a marriage takes place. Then all the young girls of the village and the country around get together in the house of the bride singing

and making beautiful music until the late hours of the evening.

Marriages usually take place in spring or summer, for the guests have to remain two nights, and in winter, when it is too cold, they would have to be given beds and bedclothes, which the villagers cannot afford. Rich people travel with their own bedclothes.

The villagers nearly all live in houses made of mud with hardly any windows or doors, so that the air inside them is very bad. The villagers cook, eat, and sleep in the same room. The average village consists of a group of mud houses separated by dusty narrow streets. Every morning and every evening the villages are filled with dust from the cattle as they move in and out.

separated [*sepəreitid*] by narrow streets = with narrow streets between

In some ways nature has been very kind to India. There is much sunshine, and for six months in the year people can sleep out-of-doors and need very few clothes.

With the increasing use of new methods in agriculture, there is every hope that the life of the Indian villager can be made much better in the years that are to come.

COURAGE

On the day before D-Day – 24 hours before the invasion of France – James Grant, one of the men who were chosen for specially dangerous jobs, was dropped into Normandy by aeroplane. When he reached the ground, he understood very quickly that he had been dropped at the wrong place, for when he looked about, he could find none of the farmhouses, roads, and woods that had been described to him beforehand. None of his fellow-soldiers was in sight. He began to blow the police whistle that was to bring the various groups of men together. No other police whistle sounded in reply. He listened. Several minutes passed. He blew again. No answer came. He knew then that the aeroplane had gone wrong, that he was alone and completely on his own in a country held by the enemy.

Grant [*gra:nt*]

Normandy [*nɔ:məndi*]

on his own = alone and without help

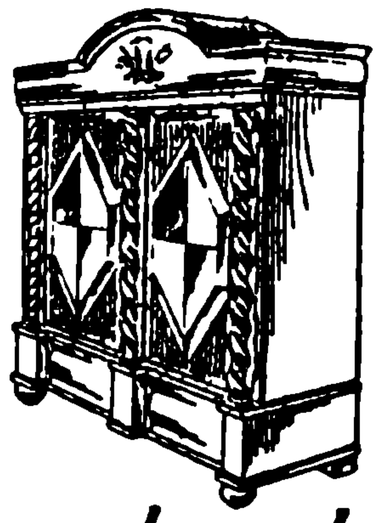
He realized that he must find cover at once, or he would be taken prisoner. He had landed near a stone wall in a beautiful orchard. All around him he could see the apple trees and the pear trees. Not far away he saw a small farmhouse with a red roof. He did not know whether the people who lived there were friendly to the English or to the Germans, but it was a chance he had to take. He ran towards the house, saying over and over again the few French sentences he had been taught for a case like this during the last few weeks of training. A Frenchwoman of about 30 years of age – neither pretty nor smiling, but with kind eyes – opened the door. She had just come from the big kitchen fireplace where the morning meal was cooking. Her husband and her three small children – the baby in a high chair – stared in wonder and surprise from the breakfast table.

"I am a British soldier," said James Grant. "Will you hide me?"

"Yes, of course," said the Frenchwoman decidedly and drew him inside.

"Hurry! You must hurry!" said the hus-

band. He pushed the Englishman into a large wooden cupboard beside the fireplace and shut the door of it. A few minutes later six men of the German SS arrived. They had seen the soldier coming down from the aeroplane, and as this was the only house near the spot where he came down, they were pretty sure that he would try to hide here. They searched it quickly and carefully. The soldier was found very soon and pulled from the cupboard. The French farmer had only given him cover. But in times of war lives are cheap, and there is little justice. There were no good-byes. The farmer tried to call to his wife as he was dragged from the kitchen, but one of the SS soldiers struck him in the mouth, and his words were lost. The Germans stood him against the wall of the farm and shot him. His wife cried, while the children looked on, hardly understanding what had happened.



cupboard [kʌbəd]

German SS [*es es*] = German police troops

stand = place, make stand

look on = watch

There was some argument as to what they should do with their prisoner, the British soldier. They put him inside a small outhouse near the farm and locked the door. There

was a small window at the back of this building. Near the farm there were woods. Grant heard the German soldiers going back to the farmhouse. He got through the window and ran for the woods. The Germans heard him go. They rushed round the building and after him. They started firing at him, but as they were running fast, they did not hit him. He looked round and saw that the distance between himself and the Germans was no greater. Now the attempt to get away seemed quite hopeless. Grant had hardly got into the woods when he heard the soldiers who were running after him all around, shouting to one another. They did not keep together, but each man went off by himself. Their voices came from all directions as they searched the wood carefully. It would not be long before they found him. There was no chance. – Yes, there was one last chance. James Grant collected all his strength. He went back the way he had come, going from tree to tree. He left the woods and ran into the open again. He ran back past the building. He passed the body of the Frenchman

which still lay close to the wall. Once again the Englishman stood at the door of the farmhouse, knocking at the kitchen door. The woman came quickly. Her face was pale, her eyes filled with tears. For perhaps a second they looked at each other. She did not look towards the body of her husband which she had not dared to touch. She looked straight into the eyes of the young Englishman whose coming had made her a widow and made her children fatherless.

"Will you hide me?" he said.

"Yes, of course. Be quick!"

In a moment she had put him in the cupboard beside the fireplace. He stayed there until that part of Normandy was made free three days later, and he was able to join his division. The SS men never came back to the farmhouse. They did not think of searching that house again, for that was the last place they would expect him to hide; nor would they understand that a French farmer's wife could possess such wonderful courage as to repeat the action that had just caused the death of her husband.

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Arthur Conan Doyle [*a:þə kɔnən dɔil*]

Sherlock Holmes [*ʃə:lɔk houmz*]

I had called upon my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes one day in the autumn of last year, and found him in deep conversation with a very stout, red-faced gentleman, with fiery red hair. Having excused myself, I was going to withdraw, when Holmes pulled me into the room, and closed the door behind me.

call upon = visit

"You could not possibly have come at a better time, my dear Watson," he said in his most cordial manner.

Watson [*wɔtsn*]

"I was afraid that you were busy."

"I am. Very much indeed."

"Then I can wait in the next room."

not at all = certainly not

"Not at all. – Mr. Wilson, this gentleman has been my helper in many of my most successful cases, and I have no doubt that he will be of the greatest use to me in yours also."

Wilson [*wilsn*]

The stout gentleman half rose from his

chair, and nodded to me, with a quick little questioning glance from his small eyes.

"Try the sofa," said Holmes, sitting down in his armchair, and putting his finger-tips together. "I know, my dear Watson, that you have my love of all that is strange and outside the usual course of everyday life. You have shown your liking for it by the enthusiasm which has caused you to record so many of my little experiences."

"Your cases have indeed been of the greatest interest to me," I said.

"You will remember that I said the other day, just before we went into Miss Mary Sutherland's simple problem, that for strange effects we must go to life itself."

Mary Sutherland [*mɛəri sʌðələnd*]

"A thing which I doubted."

doubted = had doubts of

"You did, Doctor, but, however, you must come round to my way of thinking, for otherwise I shall keep giving you fact upon fact, until you have to admit that I am right. Now, Mr. Jabez Wilson here has been good enough to call upon me this morning, and to begin a story which promises to be one of the strangest which I have listened to for some

Jabez [*dʒeibez*]

time. You have heard me say that the strangest things are very often connected not with the larger but with the smaller crimes, and sometimes, indeed, where there is room for doubt whether there has been any real crime. As far as I have heard, it is impossible for me to say whether the present case is an instance of crime or not, but the course of events is certainly among the strangest that I have ever listened to. Perhaps, Mr. Wilson, you would have the kindness to recommence your story. I ask you not only because my friend Dr. Watson has not heard the opening part, but also because the strange nature of the story makes me anxious to have every possible detail from your lips. As a rule, when I have received some idea of the course of events, I am able to guide myself by the thousands of other similar cases which come to my memory. In the present instance I am forced to admit that the facts are, to the best of my belief, unique."

to the best of my belief = as far as I know

The stout client seemed proud at hearing this description of his case, and pulled a dirty newspaper from the inside pocket of his coat.

As he looked down at the paper on his knee, I took a good look at the man, and tried in the same way as my friend to read the signs which might be given by his clothes or looks.

I did not gain very much, however, by my examination. Our visitor seemed to be an average British tradesman, stout, self-important, and slow. Look as much as I would, there was nothing unusual about the man except his fiery red hair, and the expression of discontent upon his face.

about = in connection with

Sherlock Holmes's quick eye saw what I was doing, and he shook his head with a smile as he noticed my questioning look. "He has at some time worked with his hands; he takes snuff; he is a Freemason; he has been in China; and has done a lot of writing lately," said Sherlock Holmes. "I can see nothing else."

China [*tʃainə*]

Mr. Jabez Wilson sat up suddenly in his chair, with his finger upon the paper, but his eyes upon my friend.

"How did you know all that, Mr. Holmes?" he asked. "How did you know, for example, that I worked with my hands? It's

absolutely true, and I began as a ship's carpenter."

"Your hands, my dear sir. Your right hand is quite a size larger than your left. You have worked with it, and the muscles are more developed."

"Well, the snuff, then, and the fact that I'm a Freemason?"

"I hardly need to tell you that against the strict rules of the Freemasons, you wear a special pin in your tie."

ah [*a:*]

"Ah, of course, I forgot that. But the writing?"

"What else can be shown by the right arm of your coat, the bottom part of which is shiny for five inches, and the left one which is quite smooth in the middle where you rest it upon the desk."

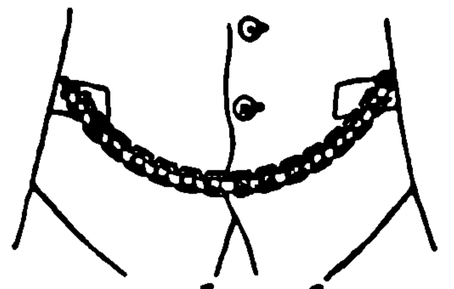
smooth = well worn

"Well, but China?"

tattoo mark
[*tə'tu: ma:k*]

"The fish which has been tattooed on your arm could only have been done in China. I have made a small study of tattoo marks, and have even written on the subject. That pale red colour is only to be found in China. When, in addition, I see a Chinese coin

hanging from your watch-chain, the matter becomes even more simple."



watch-chain [wɔtʃʃein]

Mr. Jabez Wilson laughed heavily. "Well," he said, "I thought at first you had done something clever, but now I see that there was nothing in it after all."

"I begin to think, Watson," said Holmes, "that I make a mistake in explaining. Can you not find the advertisement, Mr. Wilson?"

"Yes, I have got it now," he answered, with his thick, red finger half-way down the page. "Here it is. That is what began it all. You just read it for yourself, sir."

I took the paper from him and read as follows:

"TO THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE.

On account of the bequest of the late Ezekiah Hopkins, of Lebanon, Penn., U. S. A., there is now another position open to a member of the league at four pounds a week for quite simple work. All red-headed men who are sound in body and mind, and above the age of twenty-one, may apply. Apply in person on Monday, at eleven o'clock, to Dun-

Ezekiah Hopkins [*ezi'kaiə hɔpkinz*]

Lebanon [*lebənən*]

Penn. = Pennsylvania [*pensil'veinjə*]

Duncan Ross [*dʌŋkən rɔs*]

Pope's Court [*poups kɔ:t*]

Fleet [*fli:t*]

can Ross, at the office of the League, Pope's Court, Fleet Street."

"What on earth does this mean?" I exclaimed, after I had twice read through the extraordinary advertisement.

Holmes laughed to himself, and moved about in his chair, as he did when he was pleased. "It is a little unusual, isn't it?" said he. "And now, Mr. Wilson, start again, and tell us all about yourself, your home, and the effect which this advertisement had upon you. You will first remember, Doctor, the name of the paper and the date."

"It is *The Morning Chronicle*, of April 27, 1890. Just two months ago."

"Very good. Now, Mr. Wilson?"

forehead [*fɔrid*]

"Well, it is just as I have been telling you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," said Jabez Wilson, wiping his forehead. "I have a small pawnbroker's business at Coburg Square, near the City. It's not a very large affair, and of late years it has not done more than just give me enough to live on. I used to be able to keep two assistants, but now I only keep one; and it would be hard to pay him if he wasn't

Coburg [*koubə:g*]

of late years = in the last few years

willing to come for half wages, so as to learn the business."

"What is the name of this helpful young man?" asked Sherlock Holmes.

"His name is Vincent Spaulding, and he's not so young either. It's hard to say his age. I should not wish a better assistant, Mr. Holmes; and I know very well that he could do better for himself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But after all, if he is satisfied, why should I put ideas in his head?"

Vincent Spaulding [*vinsənt spɔ:ldiŋ*]

"Why, indeed? You seem most fortunate in having an assistant who comes under the full market price. It is not a common experience among business people in this age. I don't know that your assistant is not as strange as your advertisement."

"Oh, he has his faults, too," said Mr. Wilson. "There was never a fellow who was so fond of photography. Working away with a camera when he ought to be doing something for the good of his mind, and then going down into the cellar to work on his pictures. On the whole, however, he's a good worker. There's nothing really bad about him."

working away = busy working

"He is still with you, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. He and a girl of fourteen, who does a bit of simple cooking, and keeps the place clean – that's all I have in the house, for my wife's dead, and I never had any family. We live very quietly, sir, the three of us; and we keep a roof over our heads, and pay our debts, if we do nothing more.

"The first thing that changed my simple life was that advertisement. Spaulding, he came down into the office just this day eight weeks with this very paper in his hand, and he says:

this day eight weeks = eight weeks ago to-day

"'I wish to the Lord, Mr. Wilson, that I was a red-headed man.'

I wish to the Lord = I wish very much

"'Why that?' I asked.

"'Why,' says he, 'here's another position in the League of the Red-headed Men. It's worth quite a lot of money to any man who gets it, and I understand that there are more positions than there are men, so that they don't know what to do with the money. If my hair would only change colour, here's a nice job all ready for me.'

"'Why, what is it, then?' I asked. You see,

Mr. Holmes, I am a very stay-at-home man, and, as my business came to me instead of my having to go to it, I was often weeks on end without putting my foot over the door-mat. In that way I didn't know much of what was taking place outside, and I was always glad of a bit of news.

"'Have you never heard of the League of the Red-headed Men?' he asked, with his eyes open.

"'Never.'

"'Why, I wonder at that, for you could apply for one of the positions.'

"'And what are they worth?' I asked.

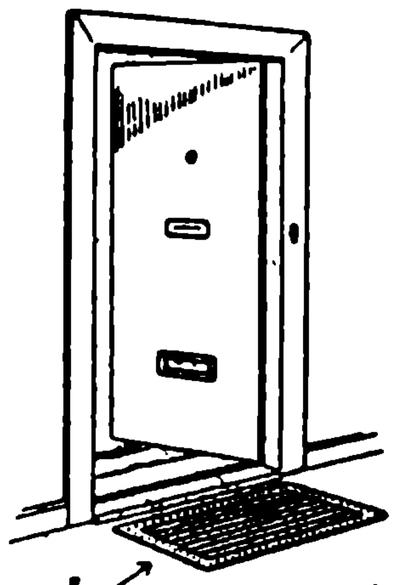
"'Oh, only a couple of hundred a year, but the work is simple, and it need not interrupt your other work much.'

"Well, you can easily think that that made me listen, for the business has not been very good for some years, and an extra couple of hundred would have been very useful.

"'Tell me all about it,' said I.

"'Well,' said he, showing me the advertisement, 'you can see for yourself that the League has a vacancy, and there is the address where

weeks on end = one week after another



door-mat
[dɔ:mæt]

you should apply for information. As far as I remember, the League was established by an American millionaire, Ezekiah Hopkins, who was very strange in his ways. He was himself red-headed, and he had a great sympathy for all red-headed men; so, when he died, it was found that he had left all his money in the hands of trustees, with instructions that the interest should be used to find easy jobs for men whose hair is of that colour. From all I hear it is excellent pay, and very little to do.'

"'But,' said I, 'there would be millions of red-headed men who would apply.'

"'Not so many as you might think,' he answered. 'You see it is really limited to Londoners, and to grown men. This American had started from London when he was young, and he wanted to do something good for the old town. Then, again, I have heard it is no use applying if your hair is light red, or dark red, or anything but real, bright, fiery red. Now, if you cared to apply, Mr. Wilson, you would just walk in and get the vacancy; but perhaps it would hardly be worth it to put

yourself to so much trouble for the sake of a few hundred pounds.'

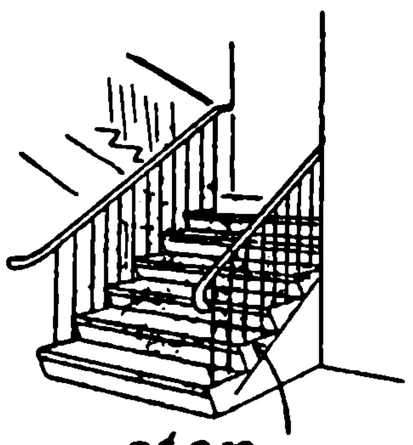
"Now, it is a fact, gentlemen, as you may see for yourselves, that my hair is of a very fiery red colour, so that it seemed to me that, if there was to be any competition in the matter, I stood as good a chance as any man that I had ever met. Vincent Spaulding seemed to know so much about it that I thought he might be useful, so I just told him to close up the shop for the day, and to come right away with me. He was very willing to have a holiday, so we shut the business up, and set out for the address that was given us in the advertisement.

stand a chance = have a chance

set out = leave

"I never hope to see such a sight as that again, Mr. Holmes. From north, south, east, and west every man who had the least bit of red in his hair had come to the City to answer the advertisement. Fleet Street was filled with red-headed folk, and Pope's Court looked like a shop-window full of oranges. I should not have thought there were so many in the whole country as were brought together by that single advertisement. Every kind

of red was there – lemon, orange, brick, light, dark; but, as Spaulding said, there were not many who had the real flame-coloured red. When I saw how many were waiting, I would have given it up in despair; but Spaulding would not hear of it. How he did it, I don't know, but he pushed and pulled until he got me through the crowd, and right up to the steps which led to the office. There was a double row of men upon the stairs, some going up in hope, and some coming back unhappy; but we pushed ourselves as well as we could, and soon found ourselves in the office."



step
[*step*]

"Your experience has been a most interesting one," said Holmes, as his client paused for a moment to take some snuff. "Please continue your very interesting account."

"There was nothing in the office but a couple of wooden chairs and a table, behind which sat a small man, with a head that was even redder than mine. He said a few words to each applicant as he came up, and then he always succeeded in finding something wrong with their hair. Getting a vacancy did not seem to be such an easy matter after all.

However, when he came to us, the little man was more interested in me than in any of the others, and he closed the door as we entered, so that he might have a private word with us.

"'This is Mr. Jabez Wilson,' said my assistant, 'and he is willing to fill a vacancy in the League.'

"'And he is extremely well suited for it,' the other answered. 'He has everything needed. I cannot remember when I have seen anything so fine.' He took a step backward, turned his head to one side, and gazed at my hair. Then suddenly he took a step forward, shook my hand, and expressed his pleasure at my success.

be suited = have the qualities necessary

"'It would be wrong to hesitate,' said he. 'You will, however, I am sure, excuse me for being careful.' With that he seized my hair in both his hands, and pulled until I called out in pain. 'There is water in your eyes,' said he, as he let me go. 'I see that all is as it should be. But we have to be careful, for twice we have accepted men with wigs.' He went over to the window, and shouted through it at the top of his voice that the

vacancy was filled. The folk then went away, until there was not a red head to be seen except my own and that of the manager.

"'My name,' said he, 'is Mr. Duncan Ross, and I myself have a position with the League. Are you a married man, Mr. Wilson? Have you a family?'

"I answered that I had not.

"His face changed immediately.

"'What a shame!' he said seriously, 'that is very unfortunate indeed! I am sorry to hear you say that. The money was, of course, for the spreading of the red-heads as well as for their assistance. It is extremely unfortunate that you should be a bachelor.'

grew long = became sad

"My face grew long at this, Mr. Holmes, for I thought that I was not to have the vacancy after all; but after thinking it over for a few minutes, he said it would be all right.

"'In the case of another,' said he, 'we should not be able to offer him the vacancy, but we must do so in the case of a man with such a head of hair as yours. When will you be able to start upon your new duties?'

"'Well, I don't quite know what to do, for I have a business already,' said I.

"'Oh, don't worry about that, Mr. Wilson!' said Vincent Spaulding. 'I shall be able to look after that for you.'

"'What would be the hours?' I asked.

"'Ten to two.'

"Now a pawnbroker's business is mostly done in the evenings, Mr. Holmes, especially Thursday and Friday evening, which is just before pay-day; so it would suit me very well to earn a little in the mornings. Besides, I knew that my assistant was a good man, and that he would attend to anything that happened.

suit = be convenient to

"'That would suit me very well,' said I. 'And the pay?'

"'Is four pounds a week.'

"'And the work?'

"'Is quite simple.'

"'What do you call quite simple?'

"'Well, you have to be in the office, or at least in the building, the whole time. If you leave, you lose your whole position for ever. Mr. Ezekiah Hopkins made that point

quite clear. It is a very necessary condition that you do not move from the office during that time.'

"'It's only four hours a day, and I should not think of leaving,' said I.

"'No excuse will help,' said Mr. Duncan Ross, 'neither sickness, nor anything else. There you must stay, or you lose your position.'

"'And the work?'

"'Is to copy out the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The first volume is over there. You must bring your own pen and ink, but you may use this table and chair. Will you be ready to-morrow?'

Encyclopædia Britannica [*ensaiklo'pi:diə bri'tæenikə*] = a number of books giving information on all branches of knowledge

"'Certainly,' I answered.

"'Then, good-bye, Mr. Jabez Wilson, and let me congratulate you once more on the important position you have been fortunate enough to gain.' He bowed me out of the room, and I went home with my assistant, hardly knowing what to say or do, I was so pleased at being so fortunate.

"Well, I thought over the matter all day, and by evening I was feeling unhappy again;

for I told myself that the whole affair must be a trick. It seemed absolutely impossible that anyone could make such a bequest, or that they would pay such a sum for doing anything so simple as copying out the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vincent Spaulding did what he could to cheer me up, but by bedtime I had decided that the whole thing was impossible. However, in the morning I determined to have a look at it, so I bought a penny bottle of ink, and with a pen, and seven sheets of paper, I set out for Pope's Court.

"Well, to my surprise and delight everything was as right as possible. The first volume lay on the table ready for me, and Mr. Duncan Ross was there to see me start work. I began with the letter A, and then he left me; but he would come in from time to time to see that all was right with me. At two o'clock he wished me good-day, expressed pleasure at the amount I had written, and locked the door of the office after me.

"This went on day after day, Mr. Holmes, and on Saturday the manager came in and put down four gold sovereigns for my week's

work. It was the same next week, and the same the week after. Every morning I was there at ten, and every afternoon I left at two. After a time Mr. Duncan Ross only came in once during the morning, and then, later on, he did not come in at all. Still, of course, I never dared to leave the room for a second, for I was not sure when he might come, and the position was such a good one, and suited me so well, that I would not risk the loss of it.

pass away = go

"Eight weeks passed away like this, and I had written about Abbeys, and American Indians, and Anglo-Saxons, and the Atlantic, and hoped that if I worked hard, I might get on to the B's before very long. It cost me something in paper, and I had nearly filled a shelf with my writings. And then suddenly the whole business came to an end."

get on to = start on

business = thing

"To an end?"

"Yes, sir. And no later than this morning. I went to my work as usual at ten o'clock, but the door was shut and locked, and there was a piece of paper nailed to the middle of the door. Here it is, and you can read it for yourself."

He held up a piece of paper. It read as follows:

"THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE IS DISSOLVED.

Oct. 9, 1890."

it read as follows = the following words were to be read on it

Sherlock Holmes and I looked at the piece of paper and the unhappy face behind it, until the funny side of the matter forced us to laugh loud.

"I cannot see that there is anything very funny," cried our client, his face becoming very red. "If you can do nothing better than laugh at me, I can go elsewhere."

"No, no," cried Holmes, pushing him back into the chair from which he had half risen. "I really wouldn't miss your case for the world. It is most unusual. But there is, if you will excuse my saying so, something just a little funny about it. Please tell me what you did when you found this piece of paper on the door?"

my saying so = that I say so

"I was astonished, sir. I did not know what to do. Then I called at the offices round, but

round = around the place

none of them seemed to know anything about it. Finally, I went to the owner of the house, who lives on the ground floor, and I asked if he could tell me what had become of the Red-headed League. He said that he had never heard of any such body. Then I asked him who Mr. Duncan Ross was. He answered that the name was new to him.

"'Well,' said I, 'the gentleman at No. 4.'

"'What, the red-headed man?'

"'Yes.'

"'Oh,' said he, 'his name was William Morris. He was a solicitor, and he was using my room until his new rooms were ready. He moved out yesterday.'

"'Where could I find him?'

"'Oh, at his new offices. He did tell me the address. Yes, 17 King Edward Street, near St. Paul's.'

"I started off, Mr. Holmes, but when I got to that address, it was a factory of some kind, and no one in it had ever heard of either Mr. William Morris or Mr. Duncan Ross."

"And what did you do then?" asked Holmes.

Morris [*mɔris*]

Edward [*edwəd*]

St. Paul's [*snt'pɔ:lz*]

start off = start on a walk, trip, journey, etc.

"I went home to Saxe-Coburg Square, and I took the advice of my assistant. But he could not help me in any way. He could only say that if I waited, I should hear by post. But that was not quite good enough, Mr. Holmes. I did not wish to lose such a place without a struggle, so, as I had heard that you were good enough to give advice to poor folk who were in need of it, I came right away to you."

"And you did very wisely," said Holmes. "Your case is an extremely strange one, and I shall be happy to look into it. From what you have told me, I think that it is possible that it is much more serious than might appear at first sight."

"Serious enough!" said Mr. Jabez Wilson. "Why, I have lost four pounds a week."

"I do not see that you have any reason to be angry with this extraordinary league. You are, as I understand, richer by some thirty pounds, to say nothing of the knowledge you have gained on every subject which comes under the letter A. You have lost nothing by them."

"No, sir. But I want to find out about

Saxe-Coburg ['sæks'koubə:g]

be in need of = need

look into = examine

appear = seem, look

them, and who they are, and what their object was in playing this trick – if it was a trick – upon me. It was a pretty expensive trick, for it cost them two-and-thirty pounds."

"We shall try to clear up these points for you. And, first, one or two questions, Mr. Wilson. This assistant of yours who first called your attention to the advertisement – how long had he been with you?"

call = draw

"About a month then."

"How did he come?"

"In response to an advertisement."

"Was he the only applicant?"

"No, I had a dozen."

"Why did you choose him?"

"Because he was useful, and would come cheap."

"At half wages, in fact."

"Yes."

"What is he like, this Vincent Spaulding?"

"Small, stout-built, very quick in his ways, no hair on his head, though he's only about thirty. Has a white mark on his forehead."

Holmes sat up in his chair greatly excited.

"I thought as much," said he. "Have you

ever noticed that his ears are pierced for ear-rings?"

"Yes, sir. He told me that it had been done for him when he was a boy."

"Hum!" said Holmes, sitting back in deep thought. "He is still with you?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I have only just left him."

"And has your business been attended to in your absence?"

"Yes, sir. There's never very much to do in the mornings."

"That will do, Mr. Wilson. I shall be happy to give you an opinion on the subject in the course of a day or two. To-day is Saturday, and I hope that by Monday we may have something to tell you."

"Well, Watson," said Holmes, when our visitor had left us, "what do you think of it all?"

"I don't understand it at all," I answered, frankly. "It is a most mysterious business."

business = affair

"As a rule," said Holmes, "the stranger a thing is the less mysterious it is. It is your ordinary crimes which are really a problem, just as a very ordinary face is the most dif-

ficult to recognize. But I must be prompt over this matter."

"But what are you going to do then?" I asked.

"To smoke," he answered. "It is quite a three-pipe problem, and I must ask you not to speak to me for fifty minutes." He sank into his chair, with his thin knees drawn up to his nose, and his eyes closed. I thought that he had fallen asleep, and indeed was nodding myself, when he suddenly jumped out of his chair as if he had made up his mind, and put his pipe down.

three-pipe = lasting as long as it would take to smoke three pipes of tobacco

make up one's mind = decide

Sarasate [*særə'sa:ti*]

St. James's [*snt'dʒeimziz*]

"Sarasate plays at the St. James's Hall this afternoon," he said. "What do you think, Watson? Will your patients need you for the next few hours?"

"I have nothing to do to-day. My patients are never very interesting."

"Then put on your hat, and come. I am going through the City first, and we can have some lunch on the way. I see there is a good deal of German music on the programme, which is more to my taste than Italian or French. It makes you examine your

a good deal = much, a lot

own thoughts and feelings, and I want to do that. Come along!"

come along = come with me

We travelled by the Underground as far as Aldersgate; and a short walk took us to Saxe-Coburg Square, of which we had heard that morning. There were four rows of two-storied brick houses that looked out into a small garden with a lawn. Three gilt balls and a brown board with "JABEZ WILSON" in white letters showed the place where our red-headed client did his business. Sherlock Holmes stopped in front of it with his head on one side and looked it all over, his eyes shining brightly. Then he walked slowly up the street and then down again to the corner, still looking sharply at the houses. Finally, he returned to the pawnbroker's, and, having struck the ground two or three times with his stick, he went up to the door and knocked. It was opened immediately by a bright-looking young man, who asked him to come inside.

Aldersgate [*ɔ:ldəzgit*]

"Thank you," said Holmes, "I only wished to ask you how you would go from here to the Strand."

Strand [*strænd*] = a street in London

"Third right, fourth left," answered the assistant quickly, closing the door.

"Sharp fellow, that," said Holmes as we walked away. He is, in my opinion, the fourth sharpest man in London, and for daring I am not sure that he is not third. I have known something of him before."

"Evidently," said I, "Mr. Wilson's assistant counts for something in this mystery of the Red-headed League. I am sure that you only asked your way so that you might see him."

count for something = be of importance

"Not him."

"What then?"

"The knees of his trousers."

"And what did you see?"

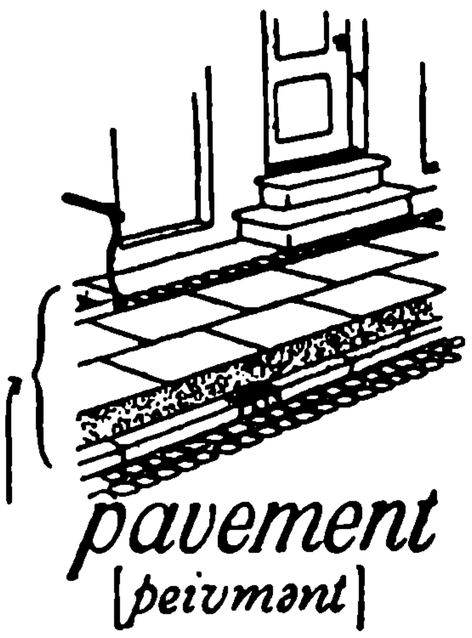
"What I expected to see."

"Why did you strike the ground with your stick?"

"My dear Doctor, this is a time for observation, not for talk. We are spies in an enemy's country. We know something of Saxe-Coburg Square. Let us now see what lies behind it."

The road in which we found ourselves as

we turned round the corner from Saxe-Coburg Square was as different from it as the front of a picture is from the back. It was one of the main streets of the City which take traffic to the north and west. The road was filled with traffic travelling in both directions while the pavements were black with people. It was difficult to realize as we looked at the row of fine shops that they were so close to the quiet square which we had just left.



"Let me see," said Holmes, standing at the corner, and glancing along the row, "I should like just to remember the order of the houses here. It is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London. There is Mortimer's, the tobacconist, the little newspaper shop, the Coburg branch of the City and Suburban Bank, and the restaurant. And now, Doctor, we've done our work, so it's time we had some play. A sandwich, and a cup of coffee, and then off to the land of music, where there are no red-headed clients to come and worry us with their problems."

Mortimer's
[mɔ:timəz]

Later in the afternoon when we left St.

James's Hall, he turned to me. "You want to go home, no doubt, Doctor," he said.

"Yes, it would be best."

"And I have some business to do which will take some hours. This business at Coburg Square is serious."

"Why serious?"

"An important crime is being planned. I have every reason to believe that we shall be in time to stop it. But to-day being Saturday makes matters more difficult for us. I shall want your help to-night."

"At what time?"

"Ten will be early enough."

Baker [*beikə*]

"I shall be at Baker Street at ten."

kindly [*kaindli*] = be kind enough to, please

"Very well. And, I say, Doctor! there may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket." He waved his hand, turned round, and disappeared in a moment among the crowd.

I hope that I am not more stupid than my neighbours, but I always felt stupid when working with Sherlock Holmes. Here I had heard what he had heard. I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was

evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened, but what was going to happen, while to me the whole business was dark and unexplainable. As I drove home to my house in Kensington, I thought over it all, from the extraordinary story of the red-headed copier of the *Encyclopædia* down to the visit to Saxe-Coburg Square, and the words with which he had left me. What was this night journey, and why should I take my revolver with me? Where were we going, and what were we to do? I had the hint from Holmes that this pawnbroker's assistant was an extremely clever man – a man who might play a deep game. I tried to find an explanation, but gave it up, and set the matter on one side until night should bring the explanation.

Kensington [*kenzɪŋtən*]

play a deep game = work for some purpose that is kept hidden

It was a quarter past nine when I started from home and made my way across the Park, and so through Oxford Street to Baker Street. Two cabs were standing at the door, and, as I walked upstairs, I heard the sound of voices from above. On entering his room, I found Holmes deep in conversation with two men, one of whom I recognized as Peter Jones, the

the Park = Hyde Park

Peter Jones [*pi:tə dʒounz*]

official police agent, while the other was a long, thin, sad-faced man.

ha [*ha:*]

"Ha! our party is complete," said Holmes, buttoning up his coat, and taking down his heavy stick. "Watson, I think you know Mr. Jones, of Scotland Yard? Let me introduce you to Mr. Merryweather, who is to be our companion to-night."

Merryweather [*meriweðə*]

"We're hunting in couples again, Doctor, you see," said Jones in his self-important way. "Our friend here is a wonderful man for starting a hunt. All he wants is an old dog to help him to do the running down."

run down = run after and catch

"I hope there will be something to run down," said Mr. Merryweather.

"You may depend upon Mr. Holmes, sir," said the policeman. "He has his own little methods, which are, if he won't mind my saying so, a little too theoretical, but he would make a good detective. It is not too much to say that once or twice, as in that Sholto business and the Agra affair, he has been more correct than the police."

Sholto [*ʃɔltou*]

Agra [*a:grə*]

"Oh, if you say so, Mr. Jones, it is all

right!" said the stranger. "Still, I must say that I miss my game of cards. It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my game of cards."

"I think you will find," said Sherlock Holmes, "that you will play for something much higher to-night than you have ever done yet, and that the play will be more exciting. For you, Mr. Merryweather, it will be a matter of some thirty thousand pounds; and for you, Jones, it will be the man upon whom you wish to lay your hands."

"John Clay, the murderer and thief. He's a young man, Mr. Merryweather, but he is at the top of the list, and I would rather catch him than any other criminal in London. He's an unusual man, is young John Clay. His grandfather was a Royal Duke, and he himself has been to Eton and Oxford. His brain is as clever as his fingers, and though we meet signs of him everywhere, we never know where to find the man himself. One week he'll break into a house in Scotland, and be raising money to build a home for orphans in Cornwall the next. I've been trying to catch

Clay [*klei*]

Eton [*i:tn*] = a famous school

him for years, and have never set eyes on him yet."

"I hope that I may have the pleasure of introducing you to-night. I've had one or two experiences of Mr. John Clay, and I agree with you that he is at the top of the list. It is past ten, however, and quite time that we started. If you two will take the first cab, Watson and I will follow in the second."

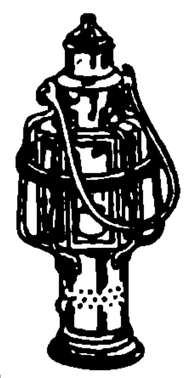
Sherlock Holmes had very little to say during the long drive, and lay back in the cab going over the tunes which he had heard in the afternoon. We drove through one gas-lit street after another until we came out into Farringdon Street.

Farringdon [*færiŋdən*]

"We are close there now," my friend said. "This fellow Merryweather is a bank director and personally interested in the matter. I thought it a good thing to have Jones with us also. He is not a bad fellow, though useless at his job. He has one good quality. He is as brave as a bulldog, and will not let anyone go once he has seized him. Here we are, and they are waiting for us."

We had reached the same crowded street in which we had found ourselves in the morning. Having alighted, we paid off our cabs, and, following Mr. Merryweather, we passed through a side door, which he opened for us. Then we walked until we reached a very heavy iron gate. This also was opened, and we followed him down some stone steps, which brought us to another heavy gate. Mr. Merryweather stopped to light a lantern, and then took us down a dark, earth-smelling passage, and so, after opening a third door, into a large cellar, which was filled with large boxes.

pay off = pay for



lantern [*lænt*ən]

"Nobody could get in from above," Holmes said, as he held up the lantern and looked about him.

get in = come in, enter

"Nor from below," said Mr. Merryweather, striking his stick upon the stones on the floor. "Why, it sounds quite hollow!" he said, looking up in surprise.

"I must really ask you to be a little more quiet," said Holmes seriously. "The success of our work has already been put into danger. Might I ask if you would be good enough to

sit down on one of those boxes, and not to interrupt me in my work."

The sad-faced Mr. Merryweather sat down on a box, with a very hurt look upon his face, while Holmes fell upon his knees upon the floor, and, with the lantern and his magnifying glass, began to examine the stones very carefully. A few seconds were sufficient to satisfy him, for he jumped to his feet again, and put his glass in his pocket.

"We have at least an hour before us," he said, "for they can hardly do anything until the pawnbroker is in bed. Then they will not lose a minute, for the sooner they do their work the longer time they will have for their escape. We are at present, Doctor – as you no doubt have guessed – in the cellar of one of the most important London banks. Mr. Merryweather is the chief director, and he will explain to you that there are reasons why the more daring criminals of London should take a great interest in this cellar at present."

an attempt might be made upon it = an attempt might be made to take it

"It is our French gold," whispered the director. "We have had several warnings that an attempt might be made upon it."

"Your French gold?"

"Yes. It was necessary some months ago to get some more gold, and we borrowed thirty thousand napoleons from the Bank of France. It has become known that we have not had to use the money, and that it is still lying in our cellar. The box upon which I sit contains two thousand napoleons. The amount of gold is much larger at present than is usually kept in a single branch office, and the directors have not been very happy about it."

"Which is to be understood," said Holmes. "And now it is time that we arranged our little plans. I expect that within an hour matters will come to a head. In the meantime, Mr. Merryweather, we must put the cover over that lantern."

come to a head = come to a decision

"And sit in the dark?"

"I am afraid so. I had brought some cards in my pocket, and I thought that, as we were four, you might have your usual game of cards after all. But I see that the enemy's preparations have gone so far that we cannot

risk a light. And, first of all, we must choose our positions. These are daring men, and, though we shall take them by surprise, they may do us some harm, unless we are careful. I shall stand behind this box, and you had better hide yourself behind those. Then, when I flash a light upon them, close them in quickly. If they fire, Watson, you need have no second thought about shooting them down."

I placed my revolver upon the top of the box behind which I was hidden. Holmes put the cover over his lantern, and left us in complete darkness – such a darkness as I have never before experienced. But we could smell the hot metal of the lantern which was still there, ready to flash out as soon as it was needed.

"There is only one way for them to go back," whispered Holmes. "That is back through the house into Saxe-Coburg Square. I hope you have done what I asked you, Jones?"

"I have three men waiting at the front door."

"Then we have closed all the holes. And now we must be silent and wait."

What a time it seemed! Afterwards I found that it was but an hour and a quarter, yet it seemed to me that the night must have almost gone, and the dawn be breaking above us. My limbs were tired and stiff, for I feared to change my position, from which I could look over the box in the direction of the floor. Suddenly my eyes caught the flash of a light.

change position = move

catch = see

At first it was only a spark upon the stones. Then it became longer and longer until it was a yellow line, and then, without any warning or sound, the yellow line seemed to open and a hand appeared, a white hand, almost like a woman's, which felt about in the centre of the light. For a minute or more the hand, with its moving fingers, remained there. Then it was withdrawn as suddenly as it appeared, and all was dark again except the single spark.

moving = not quiet

Then with a loud sound, one of the broad, white stones turned over on its side, and left a square hole, through which came the light

chisel
[*tʃizl*]

of a lantern. Over the edge there peeped a face, which looked round carefully, and then, with a hand on either side of the hole, drew itself shoulder high, until one knee rested on the edge. In another second he stood at the side of the hole, and was pulling a companion after him, small like himself, with a pale face and very red hair.

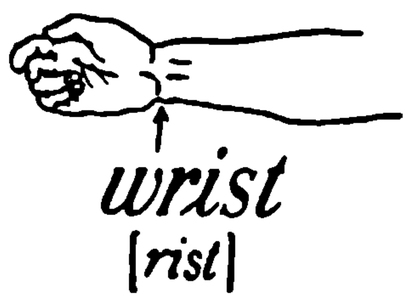
"It's all right," he whispered. "Have you the chisel, and the bags? Good heavens! Jump, Archie, jump!"

good heavens! = an expression showing great surprise

Archie [*a:tʃi*]

Sherlock Holmes had jumped out and seized the man by the collar. The other jumped down the hole, and I heard the sound of clothes tearing as Jones seized them. The light flashed upon a revolver, but Holmes's stick came down on the man's wrist, and the pistol fell upon the stone floor.

flash upon = shine upon



wrist
[*rist*]

"It's no use, John Clay," said Holmes softly; "you have no chance at all."

"So I see," the other answered. "I think my pal is all right, though I see you have got his coat-tails."

coat-tail
[*koutteil*]

"There are three men waiting for him at the door," said Holmes.

"Oh, indeed. You seem to have done the thing very completely. I must compliment you."

"And I you," Holmes answered. "Your red-headed league was a very good idea."

"You'll see your pal again in a moment," said Jones. "He's quicker at climbing down holes than I am. Just hold out your hands while I put on the handcuffs."

"I must ask you not to touch me with your dirty hands," said our prisoner, as the handcuffs were placed upon his wrists. "You may not know that I have royal blood in me. When you address me, be good enough always to say 'sir' and 'please'."

handcuff
[hændkʌf]

"All right," said Jones with a laugh. "Well, would you please, sir, march upstairs, where we can get a cab to carry Your Highness to the police station."

"That is better," said John Clay quietly. He made a low bow to the three of us, and walked quietly off with the detective.

"Really, Mr. Holmes," said Mr. Merryweather, as we followed them from the cellar, "I do not know how the bank can thank you

or repay you. There is no doubt that you have discovered and defeated in the most complete manner one of the cleverest attempts at robbing a bank that has ever come within my experience."

defeat = bring to nothing

"I have had experience of Mr. John Clay before, and I have been wanting to lay my hands upon him," said Holmes. "I have had some small expense over this matter, which I shall expect the bank to repay, but I am well repaid by having had an experience which is in many ways so unusual, and by hearing the strange story of the Red-headed League."

"You see, Watson," he explained in the early hours of the morning, as we sat over a glass of whisky in Baker Street, "it was perfectly clear from the first that the only possible purpose of this rather unusual business of the advertisement of the League, and the copying of the *Encyclopædia*, must be to get this pawnbroker out of the way for a number of hours every day. It was a curious way of doing it, but really it would be difficult to suggest a better. The method was no doubt

suggested to Clay's mind by the colour of his friend's hair. The four pounds a week was something which must draw the pawnbroker, and what was it to them, who were playing for thousands? They put in the advertisement; one of them has the temporary office, the other gets the man to apply for it, and together they manage to make certain of his absence every morning in the week. From the time that I heard of the assistant having come for half wages, it was plain to me that he had some strong motive for getting the situation."

"But how could you guess what the motive was?"

"Had there been women in the house, I should probably have thought it was a vulgar affair with one of them. That, however, was out of the question. The man's business was a small one, and there was nothing in his house which could explain such preparations and expense. It must be something out of the house. What could it be? I thought of the assistant's interest in photography, and of the time he spent in the cellar. The cellar! For the moment I could do nothing more with

this information. Then I asked questions about this mysterious assistant, and found that I had to deal with one of the most daring criminals in London. He was doing something in the cellar – something which took many hours a day for months on end. What could it be, once more? The only thing I could think he might be making was a tunnel to some other building.

months on end = one month after another

"I had got so far when we went to visit Saxe-Coburg Square. I surprised you by striking the ground with my stick. I was finding out whether the cellar was in front of or behind the house. It was not in front. Then I rang the bell, and, as I hoped, the assistant answered it. We have had one or two little fights before, but we had never set eyes on each other. I hardly looked at his face. His knees were what I wished to see. You must have seen yourself how worn and stained they were. They showed clearly those hours of working underground. The only remaining thing was to see what they were making a tunnel for. I walked round the corner, saw that the City and Suburban Bank was opposite

worn = much used

remaining = left

the back of our friend's house, and felt that I had the answer to my problem. When you drove home from St. James's Hall, I called upon Scotland Yard, and upon the chief director of the bank, with the result that you have seen."

"And how could you tell that they would make their attempt to-night?" I asked.

tell = know

"Well, when they closed their League offices, that was a sign that they were no longer interested in Mr. Jabez Wilson's presence; in other words, that they had completed their tunnel. But it was important that they should use it soon, as it might be discovered, or the gold might be removed. Saturday would suit them better than any other day, as it would give them two days for their escape. For all these reasons I expected them to come to-night."

"You thought it out beautifully," I exclaimed admiringly. "It is so long a chain, but every part of it fits."

beautifully = extremely well

"It gave my mind a little work. I spend most of my life in trying to find something

for my mind to work upon. These little problems help me to do so."

"And the nation benefits from it," said I.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, perhaps, after all, it is of some little use," he said. "'L'homme c'est rien – l'œuvre c'est tout,' as Gustave Flaubert wrote to George Sand."

L'homme c'est rien – l'œuvre c'est tout = the French for 'The man is nothing – the work is everything'

Gustave Flaubert [*gusˈta:v flouˈbɛə*]

PHILOMEL COTTAGE

By AGATHA CHRISTIE

"Good-bye, darling."

"Good-bye, sweetheart."

Alix Martin stood at the small garden gate, watching her husband as he walked down the road in the direction of the village.

Presently he turned a bend and was lost to sight, but Alix still stayed in the same position, smoothing her brown hair which had blown across her face, her eyes far away and dreamy.

Alix Martin was not beautiful, nor even, strictly speaking, pretty. But her face, the face of a woman no longer in her first youth, was so bright and soft that her former fellow workers of the old office days would hardly have recognized her. Miss Alix King had been a business-like young woman, rather short in her manner.

Alix had been educated in a hard school.

Agatha Christie [*ægəpə kristi*]

Philomel [*filomel*]

Alix Martin [*æliks ma:tin*]

turn a bend = go round a bend

short = so short as almost to be rude

For fifteen years, from the age of eighteen until she was thirty-three, she had looked after herself (and for seven years of the time after an invalid mother). It was the fight for existence which had made her face hard.

Dick Windyford [*dik windifəd*]

True, there had been romance – of a kind – Dick Windyford, a fellow clerk. Very much of a woman at heart, Alix had always known, without showing that she knew, of his interest in her. Outwardly they had been friends, nothing more. Out of his small salary it had been difficult for him to pay for the education of his younger brother. For the moment he could not think of marriage.

And then suddenly deliverance from her daily work had come to the girl in the most unexpected manner. A cousin had died, leaving her money to Alix – a few thousand pounds, enough to bring her a couple of hundred a year. Now she and Dick need wait no longer.

But Dick did not act as expected. He had never directly spoken of his love to Alix; now he seemed less inclined to do so than ever. He kept out of her way and became

kept out of her way = kept away from her

sad and gloomy. Alix was quick to realize the truth. She was now a woman with money. Dick was too proud to ask her to be his wife.

She did not like him any worse for this, and was considering whether she herself might not take the first step, when for the second time something unexpected happened.

take a step = act

She met Gerald Martin at a friend's house. He fell very much in love with her, and within a week they were engaged.

Gerald [*dʒerəld*]

fall in love = begin to love

At last Dick Windyford decided to speak. He came to her very angrily.

"The man's a perfect stranger to you! You know nothing about him!"

"I know that I love him."

"How can you know – in a week?"

"It doesn't take everyone eleven years to find out that they're in love with a girl," cried Alix angrily.

be in love with = love

His face went white.

"I've cared for you ever since I met you. I thought that you cared also."

care for = like, love

Alix told him the truth.

"I thought so, too," she admitted. "But that was because I didn't know what love was."

Then Dick had broken out again more angry than ever. She was astonished to hear the man whom she had thought she knew so well.

As she stood at the gate of the cottage, her thoughts went back to her last conversation with him. She had been married a month, and she was extremely happy. Yet there was one thing that had been a cause of trouble to her.

Three times since she had married, she had dreamed the same dream. *She saw her husband lying dead and Dick Windyford standing over him, and she knew clearly that it was his work.*

But although that was terrible, there was something more terrible still. *She, Alix Martin, was glad that her husband was dead.* She gave her hands to the man that had killed her husband and thanked him. The dream always ended in the same way, with herself lying in Dick Windyford's arms.

She had said nothing of this dream to her husband, but it had troubled her more than

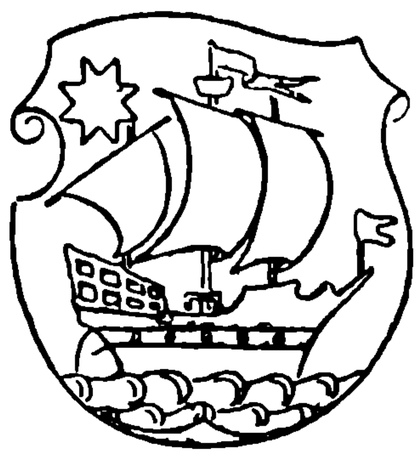
she liked to admit. Was it a warning – a warning against Dick Windyford?

Suddenly the telephone bell rang inside the house. She entered the cottage and picked up the telephone. She was so surprised that she had to put a hand against the wall to support herself.

"Who did you say was speaking?"

"Why, Alix, what's the matter with your voice? I wouldn't have recognized it. It's Dick."

"Oh!" said Alix. "Oh! Where – where are you?"



arms
[a:mz]

"At the Traveller's Arms – that's the right name, isn't it? Or don't you even know of the existence of your village pub? I'm on my holiday – doing a bit of fishing here. Might I call in and see you two good people this evening after dinner?"

a bit of = some, a little

call in = come

"No," said Alix sharply. "You mustn't come."

There was a pause, and then Dick's voice spoke again.

"Excuse me," he said formally. "Of course, I won't trouble you –"

Alix interrupted him. He must think her behaviour too extraordinary. It *was* extraordinary.

"I only meant that we were engaged tonight," she explained hurriedly, trying to make her voice sound as natural as possible. "Won't you – won't you come to dinner tomorrow night?"

But Dick noticed that she did not speak in her usual friendly way.

"Thanks very much," he said in the same formal voice, "but I may be moving from here at any time. It depends upon whether a friend of mine comes here or not. Good-bye, Alix." He paused, and then continued quickly, in his usual voice: "Best of luck to you, my dear."

"He mustn't come here," she repeated to herself as she put down the telephone.

She picked up her hat from the table and went out into the garden again, pausing to look up at the name of the cottage.

It was Gerald who had found Philomel Cottage. He had come to Alix one day exulting. He had found the very spot for them

– the chance of a lifetime. And when Alix had seen it, she too was delighted. It was true that the cottage was two miles from the nearest village, but it was so beautiful and so comfortable with its bathrooms, electric light, and telephone, that she liked it immediately. And then it had seemed that they would not be able to take it after all. The owner, who was a rich man, would only agree to sell it.

Gerald Martin had quite a good income, but at the time could not get more than a thousand pounds together. The owner was asking three. But Alix who had made up her mind to have the place came to her husband's help. She offered him half of her money so that they would be able to buy the house. So Philomel Cottage had become their own, and Alix had never regretted it. It was true that it was difficult to get servants to work at a house so far from the village – indeed, at the moment they had none at all – but Alix, who had had so little of home life, very much enjoyed cooking meals and looking after the house.

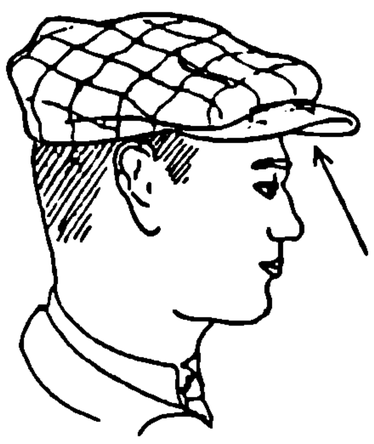
ask = demand

none at all = absolutely none

The garden, which was full of beautiful

flowers, was attended to by an old man from the village who came twice a week.

As she turned round the corner of the house, Alix was surprised to see the old gardener busy with the flowers. She was surprised, because his days for work were Mondays and Fridays, and to-day was Wednesday.



cap
[*kæp*]

"Why, George, what are you doing here?" she asked, as she came towards him.

The old man stood up with a smile, touching the edge of his cap.

"I thought you'd be surprised, ma'am. But it's like this. There's to be a party in the village on Friday, and I said to myself, neither Mr. Martin nor his good lady will mind if I come on Wednesday instead of Friday."

it's like this = I will explain

"That's quite all right," said Alix. "I hope you enjoy yourself at the party."

"I shall," said George simply. "It's a fine thing to be able to eat as much as you like and know all the time that it's not you who is paying for it. Then I thought too, ma'am, that I had better see you about the new flowers before you went away. You don't

know when you'll be back, ma'am, I suppose."

"But I'm not going away."

George stared at her.

"Aren't you going to London to-morrow?"

"No. What put such an idea into your head?"

"I met the master in the village yesterday. He told me you were both going away to London to-morrow, and it was not certain when you'd be back again."

"Nonsense," said Alix, laughing. "You must have misunderstood him."

She wondered what it could have been that Gerald had said that had given the old man this strange idea. Going to London? She never wanted to go to London again.

"I hate London," she said suddenly and sharply.

"Ah!" said George quietly. "I must have misunderstood, and yet he said it plainly enough, it seemed to me. I'm glad you're staying on here. I don't like all this running about, and I don't like London. *I've* never needed to go there. Too many motor-cars —

running about = travelling

that's the trouble nowadays. Once people have got a motor-car, they can't stay quiet anywhere. Mr. Ames, who used to have this house – nice, quiet gentleman he was until he bought one of those things. He hadn't had it for a month before he wanted to sell the cottage. He had spent a lot of money on it, too, with hot water in all the bedrooms, and the electric light, and all that. 'You'll never get what it cost you,' I said to him. 'But,' he said to me, 'I'll get two thousand pounds for this house.' And sure enough, he did."

Ames [*eimz*]

"He got three thousand," said Alix, smiling.

"Two thousand," repeated George. "He mentioned the amount at the time."

"It really was three thousand," said Alix.

"Ladies never understand figures," said George. "You'll not tell me that Mr. Ames asked for three thousand?"

"He didn't say it to me," said Alix; "he said it to my husband."

George began to work with his flowers again.

"The price was two thousand," he said.

Alix did not argue with him. She moved to another part of the garden to get some flowers for the house.

As she moved towards the house with her flowers, Alix noticed a small dark-green object on the ground, almost covered by the leaves of the plants. She stopped and picked it up, recognizing it as her husband's pocket diary.

She opened it, reading what was written with interest. Almost from the beginning of their married life, she had realized that Gerald was a lover of system and method. He was extremely interested in meals being punctual, and always planned his day very carefully.

Looking through the diary, she smiled when she got to the fourteenth of May. There Gerald had written: 'Marry Alix St. Peter's 2.30.'

St. Peter's [*snt'pi:təz*] = church in London

Alix was turning the pages when suddenly she stopped.

"'Wednesday, June 18th' – why, that's to-day," she said to herself.

In the space for that day Gerald had

p. m. = between 12 noon and 12 in the night

written: '9 p. m.' Nothing else. What had Gerald planned to do at 9 p. m. Alix wondered. She smiled to herself as she realized that if this had been a story, like those she had so often read, she would certainly have found the name of another woman. She turned the pages back, but there was only one woman's name – her own.

Yet as she put the book in her pocket and went with the flowers to the house, she remembered Dick Windyford's words, almost as if he had been standing by her repeating them: 'The man's a perfect stranger to you. You know nothing about him.'

It was true. What did she know about him? After all, Gerald was forty. In forty years there must have been women in his life.

She must not allow her mind to be filled with such thoughts. She had something more important to decide. Should she, or should she not, tell her husband that Dick Windyford had rung up?

It was possible that Gerald might have already met him in the village. But in that case he would be sure to mention it to her

as soon as he returned. Otherwise – what? Alix realized that she did not wish to say anything about it.

If she told him, he was sure to suggest asking Dick Windyford to Philomel Cottage. Then she would have to explain that Dick himself had proposed coming, and that she had made an excuse to prevent his coming. And when he asked her why she had done so, what could she say? Tell him her dream? But he would only laugh – or, worse, see that she thought it important.

ask = invite

In the end Alix decided to say nothing. It was the first secret she had ever kept from her husband, and it made her feel uncomfortable.

When she heard Gerald returning from the village shortly before lunch, she hurried into the kitchen.

It was evident at once that Gerald had seen nothing of Dick Windyford. Alix felt much happier.

It was not until after their simple evening meal that Alix remembered the pocket diary.

"Here's something you've been watering the flowers with," she said, giving him the diary.

"Dropped it among the flowers, did I?"

"Yes; I know all your secrets now. Whom are you meeting at nine o'clock to-night?"

"Oh! that –" He seemed surprised for a moment, and then he smiled as though something amused him very much. "I'm meeting a particularly nice girl, Alix. She's got brown hair and blue eyes, and she's very much like you."

as though = as if

"I don't understand," said Alix, trying to be serious. "You haven't answered me."

"No, I haven't. In reality, I'm going to work with some photographs to-night, and I want you to help me."

"And it must be done punctually at nine o'clock," said Alix.

Gerald looked a little annoyed.

"My dear girl," he said, "one should always plan a thing for a definite time. Then one gets through one's work properly."

There was a lull in the conversation. Alix sat watching her husband as he lay in his

chair smoking. And suddenly, before she could stop herself, she had cried out: "Oh, Gerald, I wish I knew more about you!"

Her husband looked at her in amazement.

"But, my dear Alix, you do know all about me. I've told you of my years as a boy in Northumberland, of my life in South Africa, and these last ten years in Canada which have brought me success."

Northumberland [*nɔ:ˈþʌmbələnd*]

"Oh! business!" said Alix.

Gerald laughed suddenly.

"I know what you mean – love affairs. You women are all the same."

Alix felt her throat go dry, as she said:

"Well, but there must have been – love affairs. I mean – if I only knew –"

Neither spoke again for a minute or two. When Gerald spoke, it was very seriously.

"Do you think it wise, Alix, to ask such questions? There have been women in my life; yes, I don't deny it. You wouldn't believe me if I did deny it. But I can tell you that not one of them meant anything to me."

The words were said in such a way that they comforted the listening wife.

"Satisfied, Alix?" he asked with a smile. "What has made you think about these unpleasant subjects to-night of all nights?"

Alix got up and began to walk about the room.

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "I've been feeling nervous all day."

"That's strange," said Gerald in a low voice, as though speaking to himself. "That's very strange."

"Why is it strange?"

"Oh, my dear girl, don't be so sharp with me. I only said it was strange, because you're usually so sweet and quiet."

Alix smiled weakly.

"Everything seems to have annoyed me to-day," she explained. "Even old George had got some foolish idea into his head that we were going away to London. He said you had told him so."

"Where did you see him?" asked Gerald sharply.

"He came to work to-day instead of Friday."

"The old fool," said Gerald angrily.

Alix started. Her husband's face was filled with rage. She had never seen him so angry. Seeing her astonishment, Gerald made an effort to regain control of himself.

"Well, he is an old fool," he said.

"What can you have said to make him think that?"

"I? I never said anything. At least – oh, yes, I remember; I made some joke about being 'off to London in the morning,' and I suppose he took it seriously. Or else he didn't hear properly. You told him the truth, of course?"

He waited anxiously for her reply.

"Of course, but he's the sort of old man who if once he gets an idea in his head – well, it isn't easy to get it out again."

Then she told him what George had said about the price of the cottage.

Gerald was silent for a minute or two, then he said slowly:

"Ames was willing to accept two thousand in cash and to wait for the last thousand. That's the origin of that mistake, I fancy."

"Very likely," agreed Alix.

Then she looked up at the clock, and pointed to it, laughing.

"We ought to be starting, Gerald. We are five minutes late already."

A very peculiar smile came over Gerald Martin's face.

change one's mind = decide not to do what one has planned

"I've changed my mind," he said quietly; "I shan't do any photography to-night."

A woman's mind is a curious thing. When she went to bed that Wednesday night, Alix's mind was contented and at rest.

But by the evening of the following day she began to feel unhappy again. Dick Windyford had not rung up. Again and again those words of his recurred to her: 'The man's a perfect stranger. You know nothing about him.' She remembered, too, the look on her husband's face as he said, 'Do you think it wise, Alix, to ask such questions?' Why had he said that?

in effect [*i'fekt*] = in reality

There had been a warning in his words. It was as though he had said in effect, 'You had better not be too curious about my life, Alix. You may get a nasty surprise if you are.'

By Friday morning Alix was convinced that there *had* been a woman in Gerald's life. Her jealousy, which was slow to awaken, was now great.

Was it a woman he had been going to meet that night at 9 p. m.? Did he just tell her the story of the photographs to satisfy her?

Three days ago she was certain that she knew her husband through and through. Now it seemed to her that he was a stranger of whom she knew nothing. She remembered his great anger against old George, so different from his usual friendly manner. A small thing, perhaps, but it showed her that she did not really know the man who was her husband.

through and through = all the way through

There were several little things required on Friday from the village. In the afternoon Alix suggested that she should go for them whilst Gerald remained in the garden; but somewhat to her surprise he opposed this plan strongly, and declared that he would go himself whilst she remained at home. Alix was forced to agree to his wishes, but the fact that he had insisted so strongly surprised and

alarmed her. Why was he so anxious to prevent her going to the village?

Suddenly an explanation came to her which made the whole thing clear. Was it not possible that, whilst saying nothing to her, Gerald had come across Dick Windyford? Her own jealousy, entirely dormant at the time of their marriage, had only developed afterwards. Might it not be the same with Gerald? Might he not be anxious to prevent her seeing Dick Windyford again? This explanation seemed so clear and obvious, that she felt much comforted.

Yet when teatime had come and passed, she was restless again. She was filled with a thought that had first come to her after Gerald had departed. Finally, telling herself that the room did need tidying, she went upstairs to her husband's dressing-room.

"If I was only sure," she repeated to herself. "If I could only be *sure*."

ages = a long time

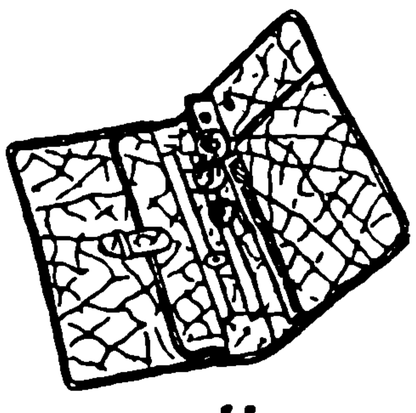
In vain she told herself that anything connected with her husband's past life would have been destroyed ages ago. Then she

thought that men *were* foolish and often kept some small remembrance of the past.

Her cheeks burning with the shame of her action, she searched breathlessly through letters and documents, examined the contents of the drawers, and even went through the pockets of her husband's clothes. However, the lower drawer of the chest of drawers and the small right-hand drawer of the writing desk were both locked. But by this time Alix had no shame. In one of those drawers she was convinced that she would find something about the other women in his life.

writing desk = writing table

She remembered that Gerald had left his keys lying carelessly on the sideboard downstairs. She fetched them and tried them one by one. The third key fitted the writing-table drawer. Alix pulled it open eagerly. There was a cheque-book and a wallet filled with notes, and at the back of the drawer some letters tied together.



wallet [wɔlɪt]

When Alix untied them, her face blushed, and she dropped the letters back into the drawer, closing it and relocking it. For the

letters were her own, written to Gerald Martin before she married him.

She turned now to the chest of drawers, more with a wish to feel that she had done everything possible than from any expectation of finding anything.

None of Gerald's keys fitted the drawer in question. Alix then went into the other rooms and brought back with her a number of keys. To her satisfaction the key of the spare bedroom wardrobe also fitted the chest of drawers. She unlocked the drawer and pulled it open. But there was nothing in it but a number of newspaper clippings already dirty and discoloured with age.

Alix sighed with relief. Nevertheless, she glanced at the clippings, curious to know what subject had interested Gerald so much that he had taken the trouble to keep them. They were nearly all American papers of some seven years ago, dealing with the notorious bigamist, Charles Lemaitre. It was believed that Lemaitre had done away with his women victims. The skeleton of a woman had been found beneath the floor of one of

Charles Lemaitre [*tʃa:lz ləˈmeitrə*]

do away with = kill

his houses, and most of the women he had 'married' had never been heard of again.

There was no definite proof that he was guilty of the crime of murder, but he was sent to prison for several years for other crimes.

Alix remembered the excitement caused by the case at the time, and also the sensation aroused by the escape of Lemaitre some three years later. His extraordinary power over women had been discussed in all the English papers at the time.

There was a picture of him in one of the clippings Alix held, and she studied it with some interest – a scholarly-looking gentleman with a long beard.

Who was it the face reminded her of? Suddenly, with a shock, she realized that it was Gerald himself. The eyes and the forehead were just like his. Perhaps he had kept the clipping for that reason. Then she read what was written beside the picture. It seemed that certain dates had been marked in his diary, and it was believed that these were dates when he had done away with victims. Then

a woman had identified him by the fact that he had a mole on his left wrist.

Alix dropped the papers. *On his left wrist, her husband had a small mark on the skin ...*

Alix was dazed. The room seemed to go round and round her. Gerald Martin was Charles Lemaitre! She knew it and accepted it immediately. Many things passed quickly through her brain.

The money paid for the house – her money – her money only; the rest of her money Gerald was looking after for her. Now she understood the true meaning of her dream. Deep down inside her, she had always feared Gerald Martin and wished to escape from him. Deep down inside her, she had looked to Dick Windyford for help. That, too, was why she was able to accept the truth so easily, without doubt or hesitation. She was to have been another of Lemaitre's victims. Very soon, perhaps ...

She almost cried out as she remembered something. *Wednesday 9 p. m.* The cellar, with the stones that were so easily raised!

Once before he had buried one of his victims in a cellar. It had been all planned for Wednesday night. But to write it down beforehand in that methodical way – he must be mad! No, it was what might be expected of Gerald. He always wrote down very carefully details of any business engagements: murder was to him a business engagement like any other.

But what had saved her? What could possibly have saved her? Had he decided not to do it at the last minute? No! The answer came to her suddenly – *old George*.

She understood now her husband's great anger. Doubtless he had told everyone he met that they were going to London the next day. Then George had come to work unexpectedly, had mentioned London to her, and she had contradicted the story. It would be too risky to do away with her that night, with old George repeating that conversation. But what an escape! If she had not mentioned that conversation with George – Alix trembled with terror.

But there was no time to be lost. She must

get away at once – before he came back. She put the clippings back in the drawer, shut it, and locked it.

Then suddenly she heard the sound of the gate being opened. *Her husband had re-turned.*

turn into = change to, become

For a moment Alix stood as though turned into stone, then she crept on tip-toe to the window, looking out from behind the shelter of the curtain.

spade [speid]

Yes, it was her husband. He was smiling to himself. In his hand he held an object which almost made the terrified girl's heart stop beating. It was a brand-new spade.

Alix understood immediately. *It was to be to-night* ...

But there was still a chance. Gerald went round to the back of the house.

Without hesitating a moment, she ran down the stairs and out of the cottage. But just as she came out of the door, her husband came round the other side of the house.

"Where are you running off to in such a hurry?" he asked.

Alix tried hard to appear as calm as usual.

Her chance was gone for the moment, but if she was careful not to show him what she knew, it would come again later.

"I was going to walk to the end of the lane and back," she said in a voice that sounded weak and uncertain to her own ears.

"Right," said Gerald. "I'll come with you."

"No – please, Gerald. I've got a headache – I'd rather go alone."

He looked at her very carefully. She fancied she saw a look of doubt in his eye.

"What's the matter with you, Alix? You're pale – trembling."

"Nothing." She forced herself to smile. "I've got a headache, that's all. A walk will do me good."

"Well, it's no good your saying you don't want me," declared Gerald, with a laugh. "I'm coming, whether you want me or not."

no good = no use

She dared not say any more. He must not get the idea that she *knew* ...

With an effort she tried to behave in the usual way. Yet she had an uncomfortable feeling that he looked at her sideways now and then, as though not quite satisfied.

now and then = from time to time

When they returned to the house, he insisted on her lying down. Alix felt herself as helpless as though bound hand and foot.

Not for a minute would he leave her alone. He went with her into the kitchen and helped her to bring in the simple cold dishes she had already prepared. She had the greatest difficulty with the food, yet she forced herself to eat, and even to appear gay and natural. She knew now that she was fighting for her life. She was alone with this man, miles from help. Her only chance was to get him to leave her alone for a few moments – long enough for her to get to the telephone in the hall and call for assistance.

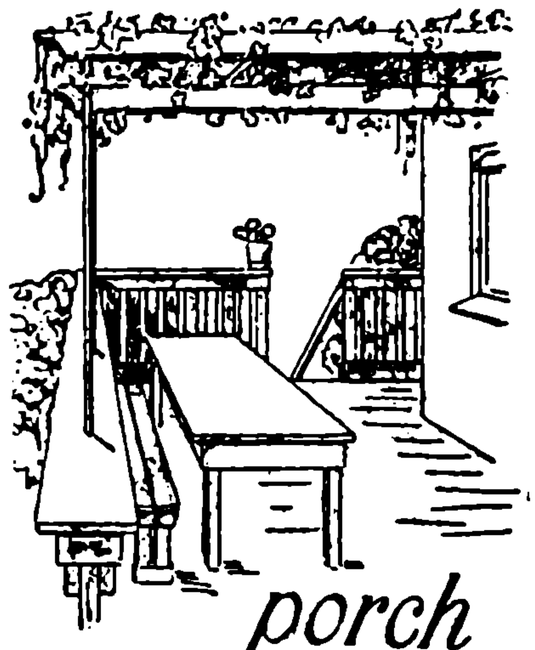
Hope came to her for a moment when she remembered how he had given up his plan on Wednesday. Suppose she told him that Dick Windyford was coming up to see them that evening?

The words were on her lips – then she thought that this man would not give up his plan a second time. She would only make him act sooner than he had intended. He would murder her there and then, and calmly ring

there and then = at once

up Dick Windyford with a tale of having been suddenly called away. Oh! if only Dick Windyford was coming to the house this evening! If Dick ...

A sudden flash of hope came to her. She looked quickly at her husband as though she feared that he might read her mind. Now she had formed a plan, her courage grew stronger. Her behaviour became so completely natural that she was amazed at herself.


porch
[pɔ:tʃ]

She made the coffee and took it out to the porch where they often sat on fine evenings.

"We'll do those photographs later," Gerald said suddenly.

Alix trembled slightly, but replied quietly, "Can't you manage alone? I'm rather tired to-night."

"It won't take long." He smiled to himself. "And I can promise you you won't be tired afterwards."

The words seemed to amuse him. Alix trembled. Now or never was the time to carry out her plan.

She rose to her feet.

"I'm just going to telephone to the butcher," she said. "Don't you bother to move."

"To the butcher? At this time of night?"

"His shop's shut, of course, but he's in his house all right. And to-morrow's Saturday, and I want him to bring me the meat early, before somebody else gets the best piece. He will do anything for me."

She went into the house quickly, closing the door behind her. She heard Gerald say, "Don't shut the door," and was quick with her reply, "It keeps the insects out. I hate insects. Are you afraid I'm going to make love to the butcher?"

As soon as she got inside, she seized the telephone and gave the number of the Traveller's Arms.

"Mr. Windyford? Is he still there? Can I speak to him?"

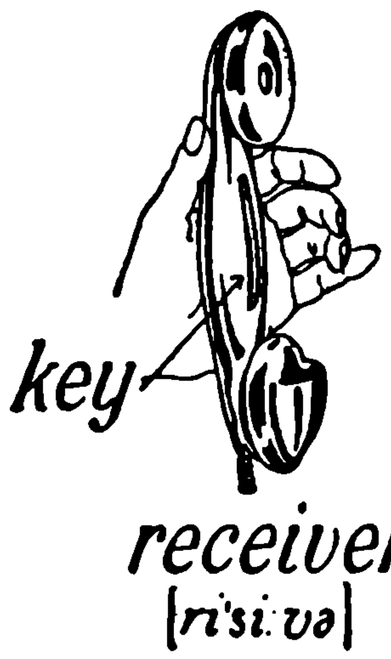
Then her husband pushed the door open and came into the hall.

"Do go away, Gerald," she said. "I hate anyone listening when I'm telephoning."

He merely laughed and sat down in a chair.

"Are you really sure it is the butcher you're telephoning to?" he said in fun.

Alix was in despair. Her plan had failed. In a minute Dick Windyford would come to the phone. Should she risk all and cry out for help?



key

receiver
[ri'si:və]

like a flash
= suddenly

And then, as she stood there with the receiver in her hand, another plan came into her head like a flash. In the receiver she was holding there was a key. Her voice could only be heard at the other end when she pressed this key.

"It will be difficult," she thought to herself. "I shall have to keep my head clear and think of the right words, but I believe I could do it. I *must* do it."

And at that minute she heard Dick Windyford's voice at the other end of the phone.

Alix then pressed the key and spoke.

"*Mrs. Martin speaking – from Philomel Cottage. Please come* (she took her fingers from the key) to-morrow morning with a nice piece of meat for Sunday (she pressed the key again). *It's very important* (she took her fingers from the key). Thank you so much,

Hexworthy
[*hekswə:ði*]

Mr. Hexworthy; you don't mind my ringing you up so late, I hope, but that meat is really a matter of (she pressed the key again) *life or death* (she took her fingers from it). All right – to-morrow morning (she pressed it) *as soon as possible.*"

She put back the receiver and turned to face her husband.

"So that's how you talk to your butcher, is it?" said Gerald.

"It's a woman's way of doing business," Alix replied.

She was filled with excitement. He had not thought there was anything strange. Dick, even if he didn't understand, would come.

She went into the sitting-room and switched on the electric light. Gerald followed her.

"You seem well again now?" he said, watching her curiously.

"Yes," said Alix. "My headache's gone."

She sat down in her usual seat and smiled amiably at her husband as he sat down in his own chair opposite her. She was saved. It was only five-and-twenty past eight. Long before nine o'clock Dick would have arrived.

"I didn't like that coffee you gave me," complained Gerald. "It had a strange taste."

"It's a new kind I was trying. We won't have it again if you don't like it, dear."

Alix began sewing, while Gerald read a few pages of his book. Then he glanced up at the clock and threw his book on one side.

"Half-past eight. Time to go down to the cellar and start work."

The sewing slipped from Alix's fingers.

"Oh, not yet. Let us wait until nine o'clock."

"No, my girl – half-past eight. That's the time I fixed. You'll be able to get to bed all the earlier."

all the earlier = so much earlier

"But I'd rather wait until nine."

"You know when I fix a time, I will not change it. Come along, Alix. I'm not going to wait a minute longer."

Alix looked up at him, and what she saw filled her with a great fear. Gerald's hands were moving nervously, his eyes were shining with excitement, he was continually passing his tongue over his dry lips. He no longer tried to hide his excitement.

Alix thought, "It's true – *he can't wait* – he's like a madman."

He went across the room to her, and pulled her on to her feet with a hand on her shoulder.

"Come, my girl – or I'll carry you there."

His voice was gay, but it filled her with a terrible fear. With a great effort she got away from his hands and stood against the wall. She was powerless. She couldn't get away – she couldn't do anything – and he was coming towards her again.

"Now, Alix –"

"No – no."

She screamed, her hands held out to keep him off.

"Gerald – stop – I've got something to tell you, something to confess –"

He did stop.

"To confess?" he said curiously.

"Yes, to confess," she said, doing her best to make him give attention to her words.

"A former lover, I suppose," he answered.

"No," said Alix. "Something else. You'd call it, I expect – yes, you'd call it a crime."

And at once she saw that she had chosen the right words. He paused. Seeing that, her courage came back to her. She felt that she was in control of the situation once more.

"You had better sit down again," she said quietly.

She herself crossed the room to her chair and sat down. She even picked up her sewing. But behind her calmness she was thinking and inventing; for the story she invented must interest him until help arrived.

"I told you," she said slowly, "that I had been a typist for fifteen years. That was not entirely true. There were two intervals. The first when I was twenty-two. I came across a man, an elderly man with a little property. He fell in love with me and asked me to marry him. I accepted. We were married." She paused. "I got him to insure his life in my favour."

She saw a sudden interest come into her husband's face, and continued her story:

"During the war I worked for a time in a hospital. There I handled all kinds of rare drugs."

She paused as if thinking. He was very much interested now, not a doubt of it. The murderer is sure to be interested in murder. She glanced at the clock. It was five-and-twenty to nine.

"There is one poison – it is a little white powder. A pinch of it means death. You know something about poisons perhaps?"

She was nervous about asking the question. If he did, she would have to be careful.

"No," said Gerald; "I know very little about them."

She felt more certain of herself now.

"You have heard of hyoscine, of course? A small pinch of it is sufficient. Any doctor would give a certificate that death was due to heart failure. I stole a small quantity of this drug and kept it."

She paused once more.

"Go on," said Gerald.

"No. I'm afraid. I can't tell you. Another time."

"Now," he said impatiently. "I want to hear all about the life you led before I came to know you."

"We had been married a month. I was very good to my elderly husband. He spoke in praise of me to all the neighbours. Everyone knew what a good wife I was. I always made his coffee myself every evening. One evening, when we were alone together, I put a pinch of the drug in his cup –"

Alix paused, and carefully re-threaded her needle.

"It was very peaceful. I sat watching him. Once he asked for air. I opened the window. Then he said he could not move from his chair. *Presently* he died."

She stopped, smiling. It was a quarter to nine. Surely they would soon come.

"How much," said Gerald, "was the insurance money?"

"About two thousand pounds. I spent it quickly and had to go back to my office work. But I never meant to remain there long. Then I met another man. I had used my maiden name at the office. He didn't know I had been married before. He was a younger man, rather good-looking, and with a bit of money. We were married quietly in Sussex. He didn't

Sussex [*sʌsiks*]

want to insure his life, but, of course, he made a will in my favour. He liked me to make his coffee myself, just as my first husband had done."

Alix smiled thoughtfully, and added, "I make very good coffee."

Then she continued:

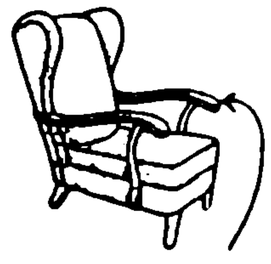
"I had several friends in the village where we were living. They were sorry for me, with my husband dying suddenly of heart failure one evening after dinner. I didn't like the doctor. I don't think he suspected me, but he was certainly very surprised at my husband's sudden death. I don't quite know why I went back to the office again. My second husband left me about four thousand pounds. This time, however, I didn't spend it. Then, you see –"

But she was interrupted. Gerald Martin pointed a shaking finger at her.

"The coffee – my God! the coffee!"

She stared at him.

"I understand now why it had a strange taste. You devil! You've put poison in my coffee."


arm
[a:m]

His hands gripped the arms of his chair. He was ready to spring upon her.

"You've poisoned me."

Alix had moved away from him to the fireplace. She opened her lips to deny – and then paused. In another minute he would spring upon her. Then she gazed steadily upon him.

"Yes," she said. "I poisoned you. Already the poison is working. At this minute you can't move from your chair – you can't move –"

If she could keep him there – even a few minutes...

Ah! what was that? Somebody in the road outside. The sound of the gate. Somebody on the path outside. The front door opening.

"*You can't move*," she said again.

Then she ran past him and fell into Dick Windyford's arms.

"My God, Alix!" he cried.

Then he turned to the man with him, a tall figure in policeman's uniform.

"Go and see what's been happening in that room."

He laid Alix carefully down on a sofa.

"My little girl," he said. "My poor little girl. What has been happening to you?"

Her eyes moved a little, and he heard her whisper his name.

Dick was interrupted by the policeman's touching him on the arm.

"There's nothing in that room, sir, but a man sitting in a chair. Looks as though he'd had some kind of bad fright, and –"

bad = great

"Yes?"

"Well, sir, he's – dead."

They were surprised by hearing Alix's voice. She spoke as though in some kind of dream, her eyes still closed.

"*And presently*," she said, as though she were quoting from something, "*he died –*"

FAMILY CARES

By W. W. JACOBS

Mr. Jernshaw, who was taking the opportunity of a lull in business to weigh out pound packets of sugar, knocked his hands together and stood waiting for the order of the tall bronzed man who had just entered the shop – a well-built man of about forty – who was regarding him with blue eyes set in quizzical wrinkles.

"What, Harry!" exclaimed Mr. Jernshaw, in response to the wrinkles. "Harry Barrett!"

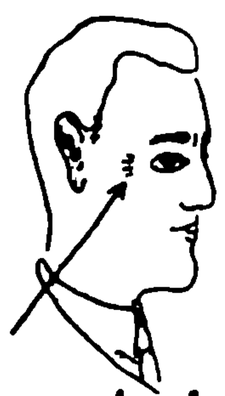
"That's me," said the other, extending his hand. "The rolling stone come home covered with moss."

Mr. Jernshaw, somewhat excited, shook hands, and led the way into the little parlour behind the shop.

"Fifteen years," said Mr. Barrett, sinking into a chair, "and the old place hasn't altered a bit."

Jacobs
[*dʒeikəbz*]

Jernshaw
[*dʒə:nʃɔ:*]



wrinkle
[*riŋkl*]

set in = surrounded by

Harry Barrett
[*hæri bærət*]

"A rolling stone gathers no moss" is an old saying = he who moves about much does not become rich

Smithson [*smiþsn*]

Webb [*web*]

do well = be successful

"Smithson told me he had let that house in Webb Street to a Barrett," said the grocer, regarding him, "but I never thought of you. I suppose you've done well, then?"

Mr. Barrett nodded. "Can't grumble," he said, modestly. "I've got enough to live on. Melbourne's all right, but I thought I'd come home for the evening of my life."

Melbourne [*melbən*]

"Evening!" repeated his friend.

"Forty-three," said Mr. Barrett, gravely. "I'm getting on."

getting on = becoming old

"You haven't changed much," said the grocer, passing his hand through his spare grey whiskers. "Wait till you have a wife and seven youngsters. Why, boots alone –"

pass through = put through

Mr. Barrett uttered a groan intended for sympathy. "Perhaps you could help me with the furnishing," he said slowly. "I've never had a place of my own before, and I don't know much about it."

"Anything I can do," said his friend. "Better not get much yet; you might marry, and my taste mightn't be hers."

Mr. Barrett laughed. "I'm not marrying," he said, with conviction.

"Seen anything of Miss Prentice yet?" inquired Mr. Jernshaw.

Prentice [*prentis*]

"No," said the other, with a slight flush. "Why?"

"She's still single," said the grocer.

"What of it?" demanded Mr. Barrett, with warmth. "What of it?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Jernshaw. "Nothing; only I –"

"Well?" said the other, as he paused.

"I – there was an idea that you went to Australia to – to better your condition," murmured the grocer. "That – that you were not in a position to marry – that –"

be in a position = be able

"Boy and girl nonsense," said Mr. Barrett, sharply. "Why, it's fifteen years ago. I don't suppose I should know her if I saw her. Is her mother alive?"

"Rather!" said Mr. Jernshaw, with emphasis. "Louisa is something like what her mother was when you went away."

rather! = yes, indeed!

Louisa [*lu:'i:zə*]

Mr. Barrett shivered.

"But you'll have to go and see them. They'll wonder you haven't been before."

"Let 'em wonder," said the embarrassed Mr. Barrett. "I shall go and see all my old friends in their turn, casual-like. You might let 'em hear that I've been to see you before seeing them, and then, if they're thinking any nonsense, it'll be a hint. I'm stopping in town while the house is being decorated; next time I come down I'll call and see somebody else."

call and see = visit

"That'll be another hint," assented Mr. Jernshaw. "Not that hints are much good to Mrs. Prentice."

"We'll see," said Mr. Barrett.

butterfly
[*bʌtəflai*]

In accordance with his plan his return to his native town was heralded by a few short visits at respectable intervals. A sort of human butterfly, he streaked rapidly across one or two streets, alighted for half an hour to resume an old friendship, and then disappeared again. Having given at least half-a-dozen hints of this kind, he made a final return to Ramsbury and entered into occupation of his new house.

Ramsbury
[*ræmzbəri*]

"It really does you credit, Jernshaw," he said, gratefully. "I should have made a rare mess of it without your help."

"It looks very nice," admitted his friend. "Too nice."

"That's all nonsense," said the owner, irritably.

"All right," said Mr. Jernshaw. "I don't know the sex, then, that's all. If you think that you're going to keep a nice house like this all to yourself, you're mistaken. It's a *home;* and where there's a home a woman comes in, somehow."

sex = the weaker sex

comes in = has her place

Mr. Barrett grunted his disbelief.

"I give you four days," said Mr. Jernshaw.

As a matter of fact, Mrs. Prentice and her daughter came on the fifth. Mr. Barrett, who was in an easy-chair, wooing slumber with a handkerchief over his head, heard their voices at the front door and the cordial invitation of his housekeeper. They entered the room as he sat hastily smoothing his rumpled hair.

as a matter of fact = in reality

"Good afternoon," he said, shaking hands.

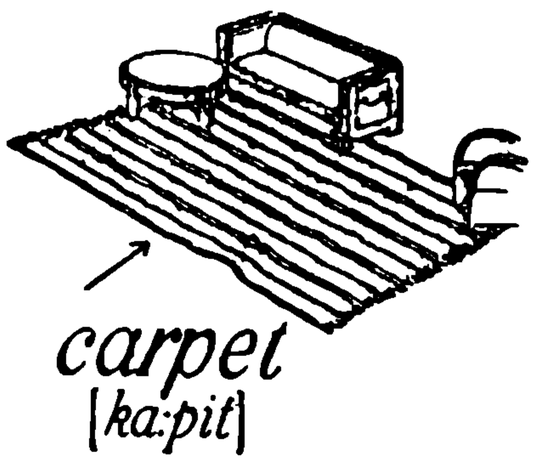
Mrs. Prentice returned the greeting in a level voice, and accepting a chair, gazed around the room.

"Nice weather," said Mr. Barrett.

"Very," said Mrs. Prentice.

"It's – it's quite a pleasure to see you again," said Mr. Barrett.

"We thought we should have seen you before," said Mrs. Prentice, "but I told Louisa that no doubt you were busy, and wanted to surprise her. I like the carpet; don't you, Louisa?"



Miss Prentice said she did.

"The room is nice and airy," said Mrs. Prentice, "but it's a pity you didn't come to me before deciding. I could have told you of a better house for the same money."

"I'm very well satisfied with this," said Mr. Barrett. "It's all *I* want."

"It's well enough," conceded Mrs. Prentice, amiably. "And how have you been all these years?"

Mr. Barrett, with some haste, replied that his health and spirits had been excellent.

"You look well," said Mrs. Prentice. "Neither of you seem to have changed much," she added, looking from him to her daughter. "And I think you did quite well not to write. I think it was much the best."

Mr. Barrett sought for a question: a nat-

ural, artless question, that would neutralize the hideous suggestion conveyed by this remark, but it eluded him. He sat and gazed in growing fear at Mrs. Prentice.

"I – I couldn't write," he said at last, in desperation; "my wife –"

"Your *what?*" exclaimed Mrs. Prentice, loudly.

"Wife," said Mr. Barrett, suddenly calm now that he had taken the plunge. "She wouldn't have liked it."

Mrs. Prentice tried to control her voice. "I never heard you were married!" she gasped. "Why isn't she here?"

"We couldn't agree," said the veracious Mr. Barrett. "She was very difficult; so I left the children with her and –"

"Chil –" said Mrs. Prentice, and paused, unable to complete the word.

"Five," said Mr. Barrett, in tones of resignation. "It was rather a wrench, parting with them, especially the baby. He got his first tooth the day I left."

part with = leave

The information fell on deaf ears. Mrs. Prentice, for once in her life thoroughly at a

at a loss = not sure about what to do or say

loss, sat trying to collect her scattered faculties. She had come out prepared for a hard job, but not an impossible one. All things considered, she took her defeat with admirable composure.

"I have no doubt it is much the best thing for the children to remain with their mother," she said, rising.

"Much the best," agreed Mr. Barrett.

"Whatever she is like," continued the old lady. "Are you ready, Louisa?"

Mr. Barrett followed them to the door, and then, returning to the room, watched, with glad eyes, their progress up the street.

"Wonder whether she'll keep it to herself?" he muttered.

set at rest = settle

His doubts were set at rest next day. All Ramsbury knew by then of his matrimonial complications and seemed anxious to talk about them; complications which tended to increase until Mr. Barrett wrote out a list of

learn by heart = learn so as to know from memory

his children's names and ages and learnt it off by heart.

Relieved of the attentions of the Prentice

family, he walked the streets a free man; and it was counted to him for righteousness that he never said a hard word about his wife. She had her faults, he said, but they were many thousand miles away, and he preferred to forget them. And he added, with some truth, that he owed her a good deal.

For a few months he had no reason to alter his opinion. Thanks to his presence of mind, the Prentice family had no terrors for him. Heart-whole and fancy-free, he led the easy life of a man of leisure, a condition of things suddenly upset by the arrival of Miss Grace Lindsay to take up a post at the elementary school. Mr. Barrett succumbed almost at once, and, after a few encounters in the street and meetings at mutual friends', went to unbosom himself to Mr. Jernshaw.

man of leisure = one who has nothing else to do but enjoy himself

Lindsay [*lindzi*]

"What has she got to do with you?" demanded that gentleman.

"I – I am rather struck with her," said Mr. Barrett.

be struck with = like, be in love with

"Struck with her?" repeated his friend, sharply. "I'm surprised at you. You've no business to think of such things."

you have no business = you are not allowed

"Why not?" demanded Mr. Barrett, in tones that were sharper still.

"Why not?" repeated the other. "Have you forgotten your wife and children?"

Mr. Barrett, who, to do him justice, *had* forgotten, fell back in his chair and sat gazing at him, open-mouthed.

"You're in a false position – in a way," said Mr. Jernshaw, sternly.

"False is no name for it," said Mr. Barrett, huskily. "What am I to do?"

"*Do?*" repeated the other, staring at him. "Nothing! Unless, perhaps, you send for your wife and children. I suppose, in any case, you would have to have the little one if anything happened to her?"

Mr. Barrett grinned ruefully.

"Think it over," said Mr. Jernshaw.

"I will," said the other, heartily.

He walked home deep in thought. He was a kindly man, and he spent some time thinking out the easiest death for Mrs. Barrett. He decided at last upon heart-disease, and a fortnight later all Ramsbury knew of the letter from Australia conveying the mournful in-

decide upon = choose

telligence. It was generally agreed that the mourning and the general behaviour of the widower left nothing to be desired.

"She's at peace at last," he said solemnly, to Jernshaw.

"I believe you killed her," said his friend.

Mr. Barrett started violently.

"I mean your leaving broke her heart," explained the other.

Mr. Barrett breathed easily again.

"It's your duty to look after the children," said Jernshaw, firmly. "And I'm not the only one that thinks so."

"They are with their grandfather and grandmother," said Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Jernshaw sniffed.

"And four uncles and five aunts," added Mr. Barrett triumphantly.

"Think how they would brighten up your house," said Mr. Jernshaw.

His friend shook his head. "It wouldn't be fair to their grandmother," he said, decidedly. "Besides, Australia wants population."

He found to his annoyance that Mr. Jernshaw's statement that he was not alone in his

views was correct. Public opinion seemed to expect the arrival of the children, and one citizen even went so far as to recommend a girl he knew as nurse.

nurse
[*nə:s*]

Ramsbury understood at last that his decision was final, and, observing his attentions to the new schoolmistress, flattered itself that it had discovered the reason. It is possible that Miss Lindsay shared their views, but if so she made no sign, and on the many occasions on which she met Mr. Barrett on her way to and from school greeted him with frank cordiality. Even when he referred to his loneliness, which he did frequently, she made no comment.

share a view = have the same opinion

make no comment [*kɔment*] = say nothing

He went into half-mourning at the end of two months, and a month later bore no outward signs of his loss. Added to that his step was springy and his manner youthful. Miss Lindsay was twenty-eight, and he persuaded himself that, sexes considered, there was no disparity worth mentioning.

added to = in addition to

science = subject

He was only restrained from proposing by a question of etiquette. Even a shilling book on the science failed to state the interval that

fail to = do not

should elapse between the death of one wife and the negotiations for another. It preferred instead to give minute instructions with regard to the eating of asparagus. In this dilemma he consulted Jernshaw.

asparagus
|əsˈpærəgəs|

"Don't know, I'm sure," said that gentleman; "besides, it doesn't matter."

"Doesn't matter?" repeated Mr. Barrett. "Why not?"

"Because I think Tillett is paying her attentions," was the reply. "He's ten years younger than you are, and a bachelor. A girl would naturally prefer him to a middle-aged widower with five children."

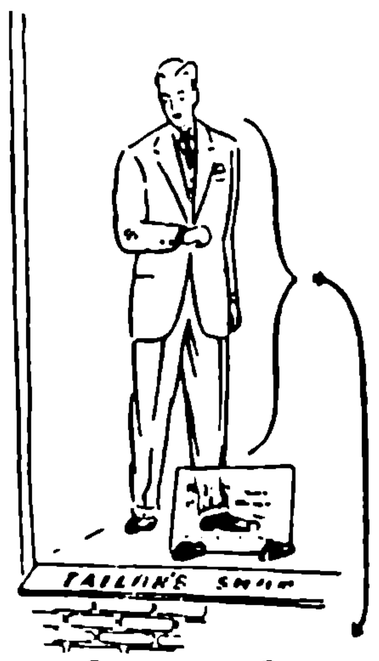
Tillett [*tilit*]

pay = give

"In Australia," the other reminded him.

"Man for man, bachelor for bachelor," said Mr. Jernshaw, regarding him, "she might prefer you, as things are –"

"I shall ask her," said Mr. Barrett doggedly. "I was going to wait a bit longer, but if there's any chance of her wrecking her prospects for life by marrying that tailor's dummy it's my duty to risk it – for her sake. I've seen him talking to her twice myself, but I never thought he'd dream of such a thing."



tailor's dummy
|teiləz dʌmi|

Apprehension and indignation kept him awake half the night, but when he arose next morning it was with the firm resolve to put his fortune to the test that day. At four o'clock he changed his neck-tie for the third time, and at ten past sallied out in the direction of the school. He met Miss Lindsay just coming out, and, after a well-deserved compliment to the weather, turned and walked with her.

"I was hoping to meet you," he said, slowly.

"Yes?" said the girl.

"I – I have been feeling rather lonely today," he continued.

"You often do," said Miss Lindsay, guardedly.

"It gets worse and worse," said Mr. Barrett, sadly.

"I think I know what is the matter with you," said the girl, in a soft voice; "you have got nothing to do all day, and you live alone, except for your housekeeper."

Mr. Barrett assented with some eagerness, and stole a hopeful glance at her.

"You – you miss something," continued Miss Lindsay, in a faltering voice.

"I do," said Mr. Barrett, with ardour.

"You miss" – the girl made an effort – "you miss the footsteps and voices of your little children."

Mr. Barrett stopped suddenly in the street, and then, with a jerk, went blindly on.

"I've never spoken of it before because it's your business, not mine," continued the girl. "I wouldn't have spoken now, but when you referred to your loneliness I thought perhaps you didn't realize the cause of it."

Mr. Barrett walked on in silent misery.

"Poor little motherless things!" said Miss Lindsay, softly. "Motherless and – fatherless."

"Better for them," said Mr. Barrett, finding his voice at last.

"It almost looks like it," said Miss Lindsay, with a sigh.

Mr. Barrett tried to think clearly, but the circumstances were hardly favourable. "Suppose," he said, speaking very slowly, "suppose I wanted to get married?"

Miss Lindsay started. "What, again?" she said, with an air of surprise.

"How could I ask a girl to come and take over five children?"

"No woman that was worth having would let little children be sacrificed for her sake," said Miss Lindsay, decidedly.

"Do you think anybody would marry me with five children?" demanded Mr. Barrett.

"She might," said the girl, edging away from him a little. "It all depends on the woman."

"Would – you, for instance?" said Mr. Barrett, desperately.

Miss Lindsay shrank still farther away. "I don't know; it would depend upon circumstances," she murmured.

"I will write and send for them," said Mr. Barrett, significantly.

Miss Lindsay made no reply. They had arrived at her gate by this time, and, with a hurried handshake, she disappeared indoors. Mr. Barrett, somewhat troubled in mind, went home to tea.

He resolved, after a little natural hesitation, to drown the children, and reproached himself bitterly for not having disposed of them at the same time as their mother. Now he would have to go through another period of mourning and the consequent delay in pressing his suit. Moreover, he would have to allow a decent interval between his conversation with Miss Lindsay and their untimely end.

bitterly = very much

press his suit = ask her to marry him

The news of the catastrophe arrived two or three days before the return of the girl from her summer-holidays. She learnt it in the first half-hour from her landlady, and sat in a dazed condition listening to a description of the grief-stricken father and the sympathy extended to him by his fellow-citizens. It appeared that nothing had passed his lips for two days.

"Shocking!" said Miss Lindsay, briefly. "Shocking!"

nurse one's grief [*gri:f*]

An instinctive feeling that the right and proper thing to do was to nurse his grief in solitude kept Mr. Barrett out of her way for nearly a week. When she did meet him, she

in solitude [*sɔlitju:d*] = keep one's troubles to oneself

received a limp handshake and a greeting in a voice from which all hope seemed to have departed.

"I am very sorry," she said, with a sort of measured gentleness.

Mr. Barrett, in his hushed voice, thanked her.

"I am all alone now," he said pathetically. "There is nobody now to care whether I live or die."

Miss Lindsay did not contradict him.

"How did it happen?" she inquired, after they had gone some distance in silence.

"They were out in a sailing-boat," said Mr. Barrett; "the boat capsized in a puff of wind, and they were all drowned."

"Who was in charge of them?" inquired the girl, after a decent interval.

"Boatman," replied the other.

"How did you hear?"

"I had a letter from one of my sisters-in-law, Charlotte," said Mr. Barrett. "A most affecting letter. Poor Charlotte was like a second mother to them. She'll never be the same woman again. Never!"

Charlotte [ʃa:lət]

"I should like to see the letter," said Miss Lindsay, musingly.

Mr. Barrett suppressed a start. "I should like to show it to you," he said, "but I'm afraid I have destroyed it. It made me shudder every time I looked at it."

"It's a pity," said the girl, dryly. "I should have liked to see it. I've got my own ideas about the matter. Are you sure she was fond of them?"

"She lived only for them," said Mr. Barrett, in a rapt voice.

"Exactly. I don't believe they are drowned at all," said Miss Lindsay, suddenly. "I believe you have had all this terrible anguish for nothing. It's too cruel."

Mr. Barrett stared at her in anxious amazement.

"I see it all now," continued the girl. "Their Aunt Charlotte was devoted to them. She always had the fear that some day you would return and claim them, and to prevent that she invented the story of their death."

"Charlotte is the most truthful woman

that ever breathed," said the distressed Mr. Barrett.

Miss Lindsay shook her head. "You are like all other honourable, truthful people," she said, looking at him gravely. "You can't imagine anybody else telling a falsehood. I don't believe you could tell one if you tried."

Mr. Barrett gazed about him with the despairing look of a drowning mariner.

"I'm certain I'm right," continued the girl. "I can see Charlotte exulting in her wickedness. *Why!*"

"What's the matter?" inquired Mr. Barrett, greatly worried.

"I've just thought of it," said Miss Lindsay. "She's told you that your children are drowned, and she has probably told them you are dead. A woman like that would stick at nothing to gain her ends."

end = purpose

"You don't know Charlotte," said Mr. Barrett, feebly.

"I think I do," was the reply. "However, we'll make sure. I suppose you've got friends in Melbourne?"

"A few," said Mr. Barrett, guardedly.

"Come down to the post-office and cable to one of them."

Mr. Barrett hesitated. "I'll write," he said.

"It's an awkward thing to cable, and there's no hurry. I'll write to Jack Adams, I think."

Jack Adams [*dʒæk ædəmz*]

"It's no good writing," said Miss Lindsay, firmly. "You ought to know that."

"Why not?" demanded the other.

"Because, you foolish man," said the girl, calmly, "before your letter got there, there would be one from Melbourne saying that he had been choked by a fish-bone, or died of measles, or something of that sort."

Mr. Barrett, hardly able to believe his ears, stopped short and looked at her. The girl's eyes were moist with mirth and her lips were trembling. He put out his hand and took her wrist in a strong grip.

short = suddenly

"That's all right," he said, with a great gasp of relief. "*Phew!* At one time I thought I had lost you."

phew! [*fju:*] = expression of relief

"By heart-disease, or drowning?" inquired Miss Lindsay, softly.

DET BERLINGSKE BOGTRYKKERI