

SIMPLE STORIES
from "PUNCH"

BY
ARCHIBALD MARSHALL



ILLUSTRATED BY
GEORGE MORROW

J. M. DENT & SONS
LONDON

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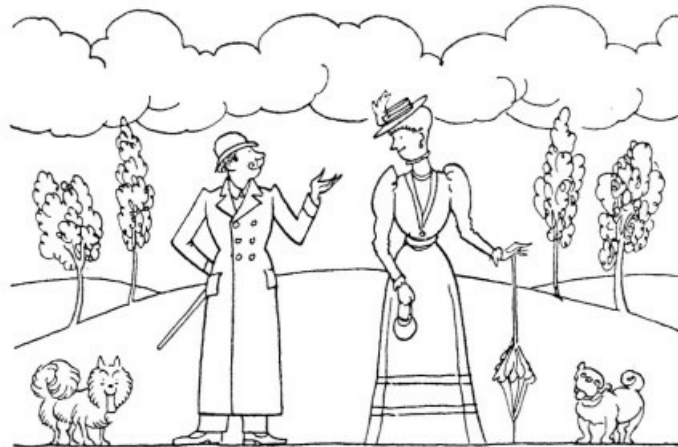
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All the cannibals wanted to play cricket too.
(See p. 16.)

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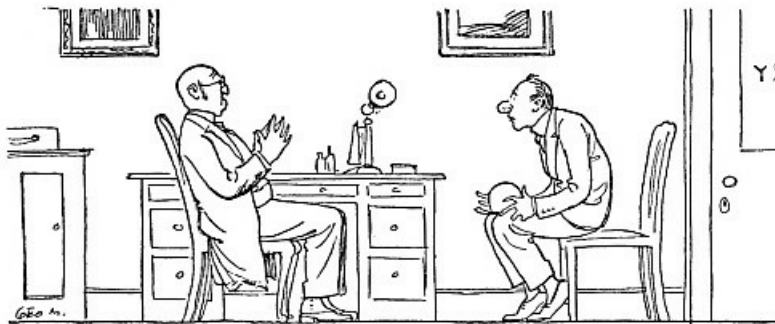
To

NANCY AND MAUREEN

THANKS are due to the Proprietors of *Punch* for their courtesy in allowing these stories to be published in this volume.

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THE STRAWBERRY NOSE

Once there was a married couple called Mr. and Mrs. Bundaby, and Mr. Bundaby was quite nice-looking when they were first married but after about ten years he began to grow a strawberry nose.

Well Mrs. Bundaby didn't think much of it at first and thought he had only been bitten by some gnats or fleas or something like that, but when it got worse she said you had better go and see a doctor about it.

So Mr. Bundaby did that, and the doctor said oh yes it is a strawberry nose all right there is no getting over that, you must have eaten something that disagreed with you and I don't think it will get any better, in fact I should think it would get worse if anything.

Well Mr. Bundaby didn't like that much and he said can't you do anything for it?

And the doctor said well I might cut it off and make you another nose of wax or plaster of Paris, but I couldn't promise that you would smell as well with it because doctors haven't learnt to do that yet. Still they are so clever that I dare say it will come in time.

And Mr. Bundaby said well when do you think it will come, next week?

And the doctor said oh no, I should think not for fifty years about, and then you will be so old that you won't mind whether you have a strawberry nose or not, if I were you I shouldn't bother about it, nobody will notice it after a time.

So Mr. Bundaby went home and told his wife what the doctor had said and she cried, and Mr. Bundaby felt rather inclined to cry too but he couldn't do that because he was a man. And he said to his wife I suppose you can't possibly go on loving me when my strawberry nose gets worse can you? I should think the best thing I can do is to go and live by myself on a desert island.

And Mrs. Bundaby cried some more at that and kissed him, and she said of course I shall go on loving you as much as ever and if you go and live on a desert island I shall come with you, but I would much rather go on living at Ealing because of the shops and all our friends.

Well then Mr. Bundaby didn't mind so much and he said oh well we can try it for a bit anyhow, and I don't suppose anybody will be really rude about it because people are very kind-hearted at Ealing and they wouldn't want to hurt our feelings.

So they went on living at Ealing, but Mr. Bundaby's nose only grew worse till at last he was quite ashamed to go out of doors because of rude boys calling out things after him. But none of his friends ever said anything to him about it, and Mrs. Bundaby was so sorry for him because she knew how much he felt it that he loved her more than ever and was never cross to her as he had been sometimes before when he was worried about something in his business.

So he was beginning to get used to it and not to mind so much, and then one day his youngest child said something to him about his strawberry nose when he was building a house of cards for her, and he was so upset by this that he walked straight out of the house and went to Switzerland.

Well the reason why he went to Switzerland was because he had heard about a doctor there who knew more about strawberry noses than any other doctor and had cured some of them. So he went to him, and the doctor said well I wish you had come to see me before because strawberry noses are stubborn things and if they get a thorough hold over you you can't do much with them. But I will do what I can for you and if I cure you I suppose you won't mind it going in the newspapers so that I shall get more customers.

And Mr. Bundaby said oh no, anything to get cured.

Well the doctor did cure him, but it took a long time because it was a very stubborn case, and all the time Mr.

Bundaby was in Switzerland he didn't write to his wife once but thought of his nose all the time. And she didn't know what had become of him and was upset about it and cried, and the children cried too because they missed him, and none of them had really minded about his strawberry nose because they had got quite used to it. And Mrs. Bundaby put advertisements in the newspapers, because she thought he might be drowned or run over or anything might have happened to him, and when he saw one of the advertisements he was annoyed and sent her a telegram telling her not to fuss.

Well at last Mr. Bundaby's nose was cured and he was just like he had been before. And by this time he was tired of living in Switzerland and was glad that he could go back home and look after his business and see his wife and children again.

So he sent a telegram to say he was coming, but he didn't say anything about his nose being cured because he wanted that to be a surprise for them.

Well the first thing Mrs. Bundaby did when she saw him was to burst out crying, and Mr. Bundaby was irritated at that and he said you are always crying, there was some reason for it when I had a strawberry nose but now I am cured there is no sense in it.

And Mrs. Bundaby said well I think you were much nicer when you had a strawberry nose, I didn't mind that at all, but I do mind it when you go away for six months and never write to me, still I am glad your nose is cured and I suppose you would like to go up and see the children now.

So they went up to see the children, but the youngest one didn't know him any more because she had got used to him with his strawberry nose, and she wouldn't even let him kiss her until Mrs. Bundaby said she was to.

Well the next morning there was a long piece in the newspapers about the doctor curing Mr. Bundaby's strawberry nose in Switzerland, and it had two photographs of him, one with a strawberry nose and one without, and it gave his name and address and said that anybody who didn't believe it could write and ask him.



Mr. Bundaby was irritated at that.

Well Mr. Bundaby was perfectly furious about this, and what made it worse was that all his friends would keep on talking to him about his strawberry nose, because they weren't afraid of hurting his feelings now he had got rid of it, and presently he said well if you can't talk about anything but that I shan't talk to you at all. And he was so cross that most of them didn't want to have anything more to do with him, and Mrs. Bundaby said if she had known he was going to turn out

like that she wouldn't have married him.

Well that went on for a long time, and then one evening Mr. Bundaby ate something that disagreed with him and the next day there was a strawberry mark on his nose, and soon after that it began to be covered with them. And then he was more furious than ever and he said I do believe my strawberry nose is growing again.

And Mrs. Bundaby clapped her hands and said I do believe it is, and this time I hope you won't have it cured.

Well that made Mr. Bundaby think, because he had really been quite happy with a strawberry nose before, except for the rude boys, but since he had been cured he seemed to have been cross all the time. So this time he didn't go to Switzerland, and he wrote and told the doctor that he was to stop putting his photographs in the newspapers. And as his nose grew worse all his friends at Ealing began to be nice to him again because they were sorry for him, and his wife and children loved him more than ever.

So presently he didn't mind a bit, and his nose didn't get so very much worse this time and he was quite happy.



II

THE ARTIST

Once there was an artist called Brown Jukes who painted very pretty pictures especially of ladies, and when anybody wanted to have their wives or their daughters painted and could afford it they generally asked him if he would mind doing it, because he made them look prettier than they really were, but they said he was the only artist who could make them look natural.

Well one day a friend of Brown Jukes called Carnaby Boot who wrote about pictures in the newspapers said to him well Brown Jukes you may make plenty of money but you are not much of an artist, and he said why not?

And he said why because your pictures are too pretty, I am sure I should be ashamed to paint pictures like that.

And Brown Jukes said well you couldn't, could you?

And he said well perhaps not, but I know all about pictures and write about them in the newspapers, and of course really good artists only paint ugly pictures now.

Well Brown Jukes knew a lot of artists who did that, though he didn't really care for their pictures, so he thought there was something in it, and when an Earl asked him if he would mind painting his wife he thought he would paint her ugly for a change just to show everybody he was really a good artist.

So he did that, and the Earl's wife was fairly old and fat, and she had never been pretty even when she was young, but the Earl had married her because she had plenty of money and he had spent all his own, and it was really she who was paying to have the picture done before she got too fat and old altogether.

Well Brown Jukes quite enjoyed painting her and not having to make her pretty which he was rather tired of doing except with ladies who really were, it was such a strain on him, and he painted her as ugly as he could but he wouldn't let her see the picture until it was finished. And he wouldn't let the Earl see it either, and the Earl was rather annoyed but he knew that Brown Jukes had plenty of money so he didn't say much.



Brown Jukes quite enjoyed painting her.

And the only person that Brown Jukes showed the picture to was Carnaby Boot, and when he saw it he said well Brown Jukes it is a masterpiece and I didn't think you could do it. And he promised to write about it in the newspapers, and Brown Jukes was very pleased and he said now people will see what a great artist I am really, and they will leave off saying that my pictures are like the lids of chocolate boxes.

Well the Royal Academy was quite pleased to have the picture in their exhibition because they had become rather tired of having only pretty pictures and people saying they were behindhand, and they had been having quite a lot of ugly ones lately. And Carnaby Boot wrote in the newspapers and said it was the best picture in the Academy and it was a good deal owing to him that Brown Jukes had painted it. And a lot of people who didn't know any better laughed at the picture but they said oh well if she is like that I suppose he couldn't help it but I shouldn't like to be married to her myself.

But when the Earl saw the picture he didn't laugh and his wife didn't either, and they wrote to Brown Jukes and said if he didn't give them back the money they had paid him for the picture they would have a trial about it and the judge would make him.

Well Brown Jukes wouldn't give back the money so they had a trial about it. And by that time the Academy was shut for the year so they could have the picture there to look at. And when the Judge saw it he laughed, and he said it is really rather funny, did you say it was in *Punch*? and they said no it was in the Academy.

And he said do you mean the Edinburgh Academy, because that is where I was at school? and they said no the Royal Academy.

And the Judge said oh I don't know anything about that and I have never been there, well we must get on with this trial, tell the Earl's wife to stand up beside the picture, and if she is really like several balloons stuck together and has hands like two hams I shall tell the jury that Mr. Brown Jukes needn't give back the money, but if she isn't like that he will have to.

Well the Earl objected to that because he said he didn't want his wife made fun of, it was quite bad enough as it was. And the Judge said well I think there is something in that you mustn't think you can have it all your own way here just because you are an Earl, judges are much more important than Earls, but I don't believe in making ladies uncomfortable even when they are ugly. I will tell you what we will do. I suppose your wife won't mind showing us her hands will she? She can stand behind a screen and stick out her hands, and then we shall see whether Mr. Brown Jukes has painted them properly or not.

So the Earl's wife did that, and her hands were rather fat but they were well manicured and had plenty of rings on them, and the Judge had them measured and the hands in the picture too and they weren't the same size at all, besides one hand in the picture being several sizes larger than the other, and the Earl's wife hadn't got a single wart on her knuckles but all the knuckles in the picture had one at least. So that settled it, but just to make sure they asked a gentleman called Mr. Slumber to give evidence, and he said he had been making gloves all his life but if he had had to make gloves for a lady like the one in the picture it would have taken the skin of a whole reindeer.

So then the Judge was very much down on Brown Jukes, and he said he had a good mind to send him to prison to teach him that he couldn't go on like that. He said he had never heard of him before but he had been told that up till now he had painted quite pretty pictures, so he would deal leniently with him. He would have to give back the money he had had for the picture and pay the Earl a hundred pounds for hurting his wife's feelings, and he hoped it would be a lesson to him.

Well Brown Jukes didn't mind that at all, because a rich American bought the picture for much more than the Earl had paid him for it, and Carnaby Boot wrote an article to say that Brown Jukes was quite as good an artist as SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS and he wasn't sure he wasn't even better, and it was time that pictures like that were stopped from leaving the country.

And soon after that Carnaby Boot came to Brown Jukes and he said I am rather tired of praising ugly pictures and I am going to make pretty ones the fashion again, so if you would like to go back to painting them you can.

So Brown Jukes did that, and by this time he was so famous that he could charge twice as much for his pictures as he had done before, and he made them prettier than ever and pleased everybody.



III

THE CANNIBALS

Once when Mr. Jimble was in Africa where he used to go sometimes to shoot lions and tigers and hippopotamuses he came across some cannibals which he hadn't expected.

And the black boys who had been carrying him in a hammock ran away and all the others too so he was left alone with the cannibals, and they wrapped him up in the hammock so that he could breathe all right but couldn't use his arms or his legs, and the chief of them said now that is very lucky because we haven't had a white man to eat for a long time and it will be a treat and a change of diet.

And Mr. Jimble said yes that's all right but I suppose you will feed me up first won't you? because I am rather thin through taking so much exercise lately in this heat and I am afraid you would find me rather stringy.

Well the chief was surprised at hearing him talk in his own language and asked him how he had learnt it. And he said oh well I have always been interested in languages and I learnt it at Oxford, I wish you would tell somebody to untie me, I will promise not to run away.

So the chief told them to untie him and he said come into my kraal and we can have a nice talk.

So they went into the kraal and it was rather smelly, but Mr. Jimble was glad to get out of the sun. And there was a little boy there and he said to the chief I suppose that is your little boy, where does he go to school?

And the chief said well he doesn't go anywhere, but I should like him to go to school and learn English, where would you recommend?

And Mr. Jimble said well I was at Eton myself and it is a very good school, if you like I will give you a letter to the headmaster.

And the chief said oh thank you, I will remind you of that before we eat you. I suppose they would let him have his own diet at Eton, I could send over some people I don't want out of my tribe for him to eat if they didn't care about providing white people for him.

Mr. Jimble said well you would have to make your own arrangements about that, and now what about eating me? If you like I will tell you exactly how to feed me so that I shall taste nice when I am cooked, and if you will take my advice you will have me boiled and not roasted because I shall be more of a delicacy like that.

And the chief said oh yes we can easily manage that, there is a river not far off and we can dig a hole here and bring water for it in gourds.

And Mr. Jimble said dig the hole at once and fill it with hot water every evening and I can get into it before having dinner, then I shall be easier to boil when the time comes.

So the chief did that, and Mr. Jimble showed them how to dig a hole the shape of a bath and every evening he had a nice hot bath in it. And he made them bring him all sorts of nice things to eat and told them how to cook them, because he said he wanted to taste as nice as possible when they ate him and this was the best way. And he had several bottles of wine in his luggage so he drank that, and he always gave the chief a glass of port when he had finished his dinner, but he said he didn't advise him to have more than one because he wasn't used to it.

Well the chief grew quite friendly with him and he said I am sure I am very much obliged for all the trouble you are taking, the last white man we caught made such a fuss that it was quite unpleasant.

And Mr. Jimble said oh I don't believe in making a fuss about anything, and I am very pleased to oblige you.

And the chief said I am sure you will taste delicious, when do you think you will be ready?

Mr. Jimble said well I have been thinking about that, have you ever heard about Escoffier sauce? and the chief said no.

And he said well if you like I will buy you some to go with me, and the chief said oh thank you, where can you get it?

And he said I will send a letter to a friend of mine in Cape Town with some money in it, and one of your cannibals must run as fast as he can with the letter and bring back the sauce, and when he comes back you can serve me up as soon as you like.

So the chief did that, and when the cannibal had gone with the letter he often used to talk about the treat they were going to have, and he said I wish you were going to be there because I have quite come to like you, but I don't see how it can be managed.

Well the cannibal was a long time away and the chief began to get rather impatient, but Mr. Jimble said I will tell you what I will do to pass the time, I will prepare your little boy for Eton, because he will have to pass an examination to get in and he must know some English as well as Latin and arithmetic and other things, and I could teach him to play cricket too.

So he did that, and the chief's little boy soon learnt to talk English, and they made some balls out of some light wood, and some cricket-bats and wickets and bails, and all the cannibals wanted to play cricket too when they saw it. So Mr. Jimble taught them, and he made up two quite good elevens and gave them different colours, and they used to play matches together. And that went on for nearly two months.

And then one morning a cannibal came running up and said there were a lot of white soldiers all round them with guns, and what had they better do?

Well the chief saw it was no good trying to run away and he was very frightened, but Mr. Jimble said he would talk to the soldiers and they wouldn't do anything if the chief and all the cannibals kept quiet.

So he went out and said to the Captain of the soldiers, well you got my letter, I am glad you came, I don't think you need kill any of these people unless you particularly want to, they are quite decent really except that they are cannibals.

And the Captain said well they have got to leave off being cannibals or I shall take them all prisoners and I shall have the chief shot.

So Mr. Jimble told the chief that and he was quite surprised and said it was the first he had heard of there being anything wrong in being a cannibal and why hadn't Mr. Jimble told him before? And he said well for one thing I didn't want to hurt your feelings, and besides you might have thought I was only telling you that to save myself being eaten.

So it all ended happily and Mr. Jimble went back to England. And he was glad he had not been eaten by the cannibals but he had had to tell a good many lies to prevent himself from being and he didn't feel quite comfortable about that. So he added up all he could remember of the lies he had told and gave half-a-crown for each one to a hospital.

And before long the chief died from indigestion and his little boy became chief instead. It had fallen through about his going to Eton but he could decline *mensa* and add up pounds shillings and pence and he was the best cover-point in the tribe, so he made quite a good chief.





IV

THE JUMBLE SALE

Mr. and Mrs. Woddy hadn't been married very long and they sometimes quarrelled, they hadn't got tired of each other yet but they hadn't got quite used to not having their own way in everything, and of course husbands and wives can't both have their own way and one has to give in to the other sometimes, and Mrs. Woddy didn't see why she should, because after all he had promised to endow her with all his worldly goods and did he mean it or didn't he?

Well the Vicar of the place where they lived wanted some money for repairing the organ, the bellows had become very wheezy and one of the high notes *would* go on sounding all the time the organist was playing and two of them had got stuck together with a jujube and there were several other things wrong with it, and it would cost about twenty pounds to have it put right. So he thought the best thing was to have a jumble sale because it was hardly worth a bazaar and besides people would go on having raffles in bazaars and he didn't believe in that when it was for a sacred object.

Well everybody was asked to turn out all the rubbish they didn't want which was only collecting dust and send it to the Vicarage, and Mrs. Woddy hadn't got any old clothes of her own because she had had everything new when she was married, but Mr. Woddy had kept a lot of clothes that he had had when he was a bachelor and she went through his wardrobe and found several things that she thought he could spare, and she sent two perfectly hideous vases that an aunt of hers had given her for a wedding present, and she could always say they had been broken by mistake if she came to see her and asked where they were, it was quite likely that they might have been broken by that time and anyhow she didn't mind telling a white lie so as not to hurt her aunt's feelings.

Well when Mr. Woddy came home from his business that evening he was rather low in his spirits, because he was a fur merchant and he had bought some astrakhan from Russia and they had sent him clipped poodle instead. And he told Mrs. Woddy about it and he said it all comes from trusting Russians and I can't do anything because of the OGPU, it is a great relief to come home and forget all about it, what is there for dinner?

And she said you will see when the time comes, but you haven't asked me what I have been doing to-day. And he said well what *have* you been doing, washing the cat? because he was still feeling depressed in his spirits and he thought she wasn't very sympathetic.

And she was rather annoyed with him and said no, have you been brushing the poodle?

Well that made him angry because he didn't want to hear anything more about poodles for a long time, and when she told him about the jumble sale and said she had sent six of his shirts to it and an old ulster and several of his ties he was simply furious. And that made her angry too, and she said well I never did like those shirts with red and blue anchors on them and Charles would never think of wearing shirts like that, when I married you I thought I had married a gentleman.

Well Charles was her brother who was a Captain in the army and she was always holding him up to Mr. Woddy which he couldn't stand, especially as Charles was always asking him to lend him some money which he hadn't told her of but it rankled, and he said you don't mean to say you have given away that brown ulster of mine, why I have had it for nearly twenty years.

And she said well then it is quite time you got rid of it, and I am sure Charles would be ashamed to go about in a thing like that, he is always well dressed and doesn't care what he owes for his clothes. And he said damn Charles, what did you price the ulster at? and she said three-and-sixpence.

Well then he was almost mad with fury and he said well you shall see. And what he did was to rush upstairs and take one of her very best hats and come down and flourish it in her face and then go straight off to the Vicarage with it.



She said for shame Hubert.

Well the Vicar was pleased to see Mr. Woddy and he said oh what a beautiful hat, is it for the jumble sale, what do you price it at? And he said one and threepence, but there has been a mistake about a brown ulster and I should like to buy it back if you don't mind. And the Vicar said oh no, you can have it for seven shillings, quite a lot of husbands have bought back things that their wives sent us and we are making more money like that than we shall by selling things cheap, are you sure you wouldn't like to buy back your shirts and ties? the shirts were only priced at fourpence each and I would let you have them at a shilling, and you could have the ties at sixpence each instead of a penny, you would have to pay much more at a shop. So he bought back some of his ties but he left the shirts because of Charles.

Well when he got home he found that Mrs. Woddy had gone to bed in a temper and had sent for her mother Mrs. Surmise. And he said to himself oh all right, we can have it out now and we will see who is master. And he enjoyed his dinner and had some champagne with it, and by the time Mrs. Surmise came round he was quite ready for her. And she went straight up to her daughter, but he said she is sure to come down soon and start in on me, so he put on his old ulster and sat down to wait for her, not because he was cold but because he wanted to show who was master.

Well Mrs. Surmise soon came down and she was a very presumptuous woman and directly she came into the room she said for shame Hubert get up out of that chair at once and go upstairs and say you wish to be forgiven or I won't answer for the consequences.

And he said nobody asked you to Mrs. Surmise, when it comes to selling a man's favourite ulster behind his back it is not the business of the mother of the wife of that man to interfere and she does it at her peril.

And she glared at him and said you are a brute, and he said well I may be but it is not for you to say so Mrs. Surmise.

And she said you are drunk and walked straight out of the house.

So then Mr. Woddy felt better and he went upstairs and found Mrs. Woddy crying, because she did love him really and she was all right when she wasn't under the influence of Charles or her awful old mother. And she said she was sorry for selling his ulster and he said he was sorry for selling her hat and he would go and buy it back again.

So they made it up, and the jumble sale was a great success and Mr. Woddy let the Vicar have his ulster after all because he never wore it and it was only collecting dust.



HENRY THE EIGHTH

When Henry the Eighth was young he was going to be a clergyman, but when his brother Arthur died his father who was Henry the Seventh said well you can't be a clergyman now because you will have to be King of England after me.

And he said oh I don't mind because now I shall be able to marry, I have always liked the idea of that.

So soon after he became King his Council came to him, and they said what do you think about marrying Katharine of Aragon?

And he said well I think I won't if you don't mind, and they said why not?

And he said because she is a little old for me and I have never cared much about the shape of her face.

But they said they thought it would be a good thing, and Henry the Eighth said oh very well I don't really mind and I suppose I shall get used to her in time.

So he married Katharine of Aragon and they had a little girl called Mary who was afterwards Queen of England, and they got on fairly well together because Henry the Eighth was busy suppressing monasteries and making arrangements for having battles and charging taxes and all those things with his great friend Cardinal Wolsey, so he didn't see too much of her.

Well that went on for some time and then Henry the Eighth thought he would marry Anne Boleyn because Cardinal Wolsey told him he ought not to have married Katharine of Aragon, it was a mistake, and anyhow he liked Anne Boleyn better.

But he thought he had better ask the Pope first, and the Pope sent Cardinal Campeggio to England to see about it, and he told Henry the Eighth that he wasn't to.

Well Henry the Eighth was angry at that and he said it was all Cardinal Wolsey's fault, and he would have cut off his head if he hadn't died before he could do it.

And he said I can't have the Pope interfering with me like this, it won't do at all, I shall be a Protestant and suppress all the rest of the monasteries.

So he did that, and then he married Anne Boleyn. And he got Thomas Cromwell to help him to do what he wanted instead of Cardinal Wolsey.

Well Anne Boleyn had a little girl called Elizabeth, and she was Queen of England too afterwards, but Henry the Eighth found he didn't like Anne Boleyn as much as he thought he would, and she didn't behave very nicely, so he had her head cut off and next week he married Jane Seymour.

And he liked her very much and she had a little boy called Edward, who was King of England afterwards, but Jane Seymour died, and he was very sorry because she was nicer than the other two.

So then he married Anne of Cleves, but she was very ugly like a horse, so he got rid of her at once. He didn't have her head cut off but he said it was all Thomas Cromwell's fault and he had his head cut off instead.

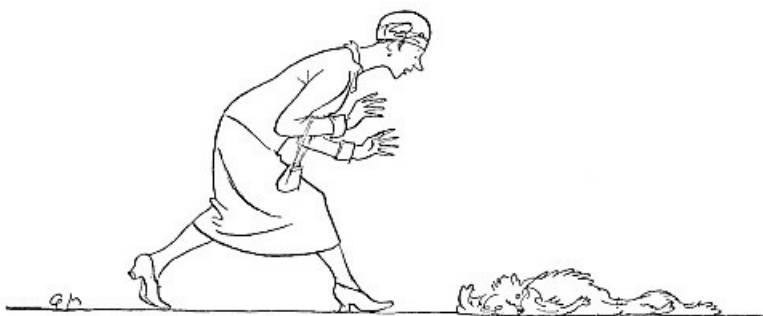
And then he married Katharine Howard, but she didn't behave well either, or at least he said she didn't, so he had her head cut off.

And then Henry the Eighth said well I am getting rather old and I have got to marry somebody, but it is becoming a little awkward because ladies don't seem to like me as much as they used to but I dare say I can find somebody suitable.

And he found Katharine Parr, and she had been married before so she knew how to treat him so as not to have her head cut off. And she was kind to his children though she didn't have any of her own, and soon after Henry the Eighth died himself and then she felt more comfortable.

Henry the Eighth was rather fat with little squiggly eyes and he liked dressing-up, you can see what he looked like from his photographs by Holbein. People who write histories used to say he wasn't very nice, but now they think he wasn't so bad after all and more religious than you would think. They say he did a lot of good really though some of it was by mistake. Perhaps he did have too many people's heads cut off but that was more the fashion then than it is now, and it isn't quite fair to blame him for having six wives because he never had more than one at a time, he would have been ashamed to, and he didn't cut off the heads of more than two of them.

And his people were fond of him, those whose heads he left on, and when he died they said oh well it might have been worse.



VI

THE FUR BOA

One morning when Miss Punshon was hurrying to catch her bus she saw a very expensive boa made of silver fox which somebody had dropped on the pavement, and she picked it up so as to prevent it being trodden on, but she didn't mean to keep it because that would have been stealing and her father was a clergyman and she was particular about that sort of thing.

Well when she came out into the street where the buses ran there was a policeman there directing the traffic, so she thought she would ask him what she had better do about it. And she ran across the road to where he was standing and told him about the fur boa, and he pulled out his note-book and began to write down what she said. But she hadn't time to wait for all that because she could see her bus coming along, so she said well I can't wait for you to write your exercises, you must take care of the fur boa and find the lady who dropped it. And he was quite shocked at that and said she must take the fur boa to the police-station herself and tell them all about it, and if they were satisfied with her story they would let her go and she wouldn't hear any more about it.

Well by this time the bus had stopped and was just ready to go on again and there was just time for her to jump on to it, so she threw the fur boa round the policeman's neck and said well you arrange it for me, my name is Miss Punshon, and she jumped on to the bus and was carried away.

Well the policeman wasn't very quick in his movements and he had his note-book and pencil in his hand, and by the time he had put them back in his pocket the bus was a long way off and he couldn't do anything to stop it. And just then a lady called Mrs. Firefly came running across the road to him and said what do you mean by wearing my fur boa, I shall report you to Lord BYNG, give it to me at once. And she snatched it off his neck and said I shall send it to the cleaners and you will have to pay for it being cleaned, I am not going to wear it after it has been round the neck of a dirty policeman.

Well the policeman was very angry at being called dirty, and he said to Mrs. Firefly you come along with me to the police-station and I shall give you in charge for insulting an officer on point duty. But Mrs. Firefly was just as angry as he was and she said yes I will come to the police-station and I shall give you in charge for stealing a fur boa made of silver fox and wearing it round your neck, I don't know what the police force is coming to, they will be using lipsticks next.

Well there was quite a crowd by that time, and they were all laughing at seeing a policeman with a fur boa round his neck and at what Mrs. Firefly had said to him. So he got more angry still and took out a pair of handcuffs, and he would have put them on Mrs. Firefly but she said you dare. And the crowd was quite in her favour and said it would be a shame if he put handcuffs on a lady who was as well dressed as she was and could afford to buy fur boas made of silver fox. So he put the handcuffs back in his pocket and said if you come quiet I shan't use them. And she went quiet except that she was telling him all the time what she thought of him, and a good many of the crowd who hadn't anything particular to do that morning went with them and were very interested in what Mrs. Firefly said.

So they came to the police-station and gave each other in charge, and the head policeman didn't quite know what to do about it because he wasn't used to having policemen on point duty given in charge for stealing, but he went out and asked the most respectable people in the crowd about it and they all said they had seen the policeman wearing the fur boa, so he couldn't very well help himself. But he said to Mrs. Firefly I suppose you know it is a very serious offence calling a policeman on point duty dirty. I happen to know that this man has a hot bath every Saturday night because my wife knows his wife and she told me so, and if that is proved in court the judge might come down heavy on you, I should advise you to apologise and withdraw the charge. And Mrs. Firefly said I shall do nothing of the sort, and if you are not careful I shall give you in charge for tampering with justice.



I shall report you to Lord Byng.

So he said oh very well have it your own way, the judge is sitting in the court now and we may as well have this case tried at once, he is not in a very good temper this morning because he had dinner last night with some other judges and I happen to know that he drank too much port which his liver can't stand, so don't say I didn't warn you.

Well the judge wasn't feeling at all well, and he had hoped that there wouldn't be any cases to try that morning and he would have a pair of white kid gloves given him and be able to go home. But there had been two or three drunks and disorderlies, and now there was this case to attend to, and he was annoyed and said to his clerk I shall make short work of it.

But he found he couldn't make short work of it, because directly Mrs. Firefly came into court she said to him it's no good your being livery with me, if I don't get full satisfaction from this court I shall complain to the Lord Chancellor. And he would have liked to commit her for contempt of court but he knew she would make a disturbance and he really didn't feel well enough for that. So he went into the case thoroughly, and when he heard that the policeman had been seen directing the traffic with Mrs. Firefly's fur boa round his neck he said it was the most disgraceful thing he had ever heard of, and it was no good him saying that he had a hot bath every Saturday night because he should have said just the same if he had been told that he had one on Wednesday night as well. And he said he should believe his story about Miss Punshon throwing the fur boa round his neck when he produced Miss Punshon in that court.

Well, just at that very moment Miss Punshon burst into the court and began telling her story in a very excited way. And what had happened was that her conscience had pricked her about throwing the fur boa round the policeman's neck and then jumping on to the bus, and she had gone back to the place where he had been directing the traffic and found out from the other policeman there where he was. And she had come just in time to save him from being sent to prison for stealing the fur boa.

Well the judge had such a splitting headache by this time that all he wanted was not to hear any more females talking. So he said he thought the case would be met by Mrs. Firefly giving Miss Punshon the fur boa and the policeman apologising about the handcuffs. And Mrs. Firefly was quite pleased to do that because it turned out that she was a member of Miss Punshon's father's congregation and she had seen Miss Punshon in church and taken a fancy to her. And each of them gave the policeman a shilling, so he was quite satisfied. And the judge gave a wan smile and said all's well that ends well and went home to lie down.



VII

THE FANCY-DRESS DANCE

They were going to have a fancy-dress dance at the Hedgeside Tennis Club, and Mrs. Boomer said she would go as Katharine of Aragon. She wasn't at all like her and was much too fat but she thought she looked regal, so Mr. Boomer said oh all right have it your own way, I shall go as Jack Point.

Well Mr. Boomer was good at private theatricals, and when they had done *The Yeoman of the Guard* at the Hedgeside Dramatic Club he had been Jack Point and he had the dress, so he thought Mrs. Boomer would be pleased at saving money for a new one especially as hers was going to be rather expensive with all the pearls.

But she only said the idea of such a thing! you will come as my husband Henry VIII, but if I catch you playing the fool with any Anne Boleyns you will hear of it.

Well anybody might have known that a man as little as Mr. Boomer was would look simply silly dressed up as Henry VIII, but as long as Mrs. Boomer thought she didn't look silly herself she didn't mind that, so Mr. Boomer had to give way, which he generally did when Mrs. Boomer put her foot down so as to save trouble. And he found a costume of Henry VIII and had it cut down for him, and he really didn't look half bad though not like Henry VIII except for the hat and whiskers.

And when Mr. and Mrs. Boomer went into the hall everybody started clapping and then laughing because they looked so silly, one very large and one very small, and Mr. Boomer pretended to be sillier than he was because he was used to doing that on the stage, but Mrs. Boomer looked very offended.

Well Mr. Boomer's silliness didn't last long because something had been coming over him ever since he had put on the costume. And directly he came into the hall and saw the Vicar dressed up as Cardinal Wolsey it came over him altogether, and he thought he was really Henry VIII and Mrs. Boomer was Katharine of Aragon.

So he stuck his legs out and said as loud as he could what is this woman doing here? take her away to the Tower and cut off her head.

Well everybody thought he was just trying to be funny but was carrying it a little too far and would catch it afterwards from Mrs. Boomer. And the Vicar said to him I think that is enough Boomer, a joke can go too far.

But Mr. Boomer struck another attitude and said how now Sir Priest! By my halidome I shall call on you to-morrow evening on my way from the station for a divorce from this woman. See that you have it ready or you go to the block.

Well Mrs. Boomer was so furious with him that she very nearly took him by the scruff of the neck and shook him, but she thought it wouldn't be like Katharine of Aragon to do that so she put on an expression of frozen grief instead and kept that up when anybody came up to ask her to dance, which she wasn't good at and didn't care about, but when somebody asked her to go down to supper she thawed and went.

And in the meantime Mr. Boomer was the life and soul of the dance because everybody wanted to hear what he would say next, and by this time they didn't mind how far he went, and they said really if he was as clever as that he ought to go on the regular stage. And there was a young lady there called Anne Patry the daughter of the confectioner of Hedgeside who *was* on the regular stage, and she was merry in her nature and didn't care much what she did as long as people would notice her. So she said she was Anne Boleyn although she was dressed as a Pierette, and she got Mr. Boomer to make love to her before everybody.

Well most of the younger people enjoyed this, and some of the young men wished that Anne Patry would treat them like that instead of Mr. Boomer. But the older ladies said it was a perfect scandal, and Mrs. Crow who lived in the largest house in Hedgeside said she should certainly not buy any more cakes at Patry's shop. And she said it was time Mr. Boomer was spoken to and she would do it herself. So she sent her husband to fetch him.

Well, Mr. Crow didn't much like doing that but he went up to Mr. Boomer and said look here old man it is very funny but give it a rest for a bit, my wife would like to have a word with you.



How now Sir Priest!

But Mr. Boomer was just going to ask Anne Patry to come out and sit on the stairs with him, so he frowned and said how now sirrah! your wife dares to send for me! which is she?

And Mr. Crow said oh come now Boomer you know perfectly well, there she is sitting at the top of the room.

And Mr. Boomer said what that woman with a face like a horse! take her into the stable and give her a feed of hay, she looks hungry.

Well Mrs. Crow *was* hungry because nobody had asked her to go in to supper yet, and Mr. Boomer generally did that because he was very kind-hearted and he used to say that if he had put up with twenty years of Mrs. Boomer he could stand half-an-hour of Mrs. Crow. And if he had been behaving like himself he would never have said that about her being like a horse which she was and everybody knew it. But because he thought he was Henry VIII he was thinking of Anne of Cleves and of course she was like a horse and Henry VIII said so, so Mr. Boomer didn't see why he shouldn't say it about Mrs. Crow.

But it made Mr. Crow angry especially as Anne Patry laughed at it, and Mr. Crow thought she ought not to have done that as he lived in the biggest house in the place and her father was only a confectioner. But directly she laughed Mr. Boomer frowned at her too, and he said how now wench would you cackle at my trusty Thomas Crow? Take her to the Tower. I will now turn my attention to Jane Seymour.

So some of the young men took off Anne Patry, and she was rather tired of Mr. Boomer by this time and was glad to go with them.

And Mr. Boomer went up to Jane Sort who was the Vicar's daughter just as a foxtrot was beginning, and he said how now wench, wilt tread a measure?

Well she looked rather frightened because she was only eighteen, and the Vicar happened to be standing there and he said that's enough of it now Boomer, leave the girls alone.

Well Mr. Boomer was just going to order somebody to cut off the Vicar's head when Mrs. Boomer came up, and she had pulled herself together and she smiled and said my liege it is time we wended homewards.

Well that seemed to bring Mr. Boomer to his senses. So he said let us wend, and Mrs. Boomer took him by the arm above the elbow so as to have no mistake about it and marched him out of the room.

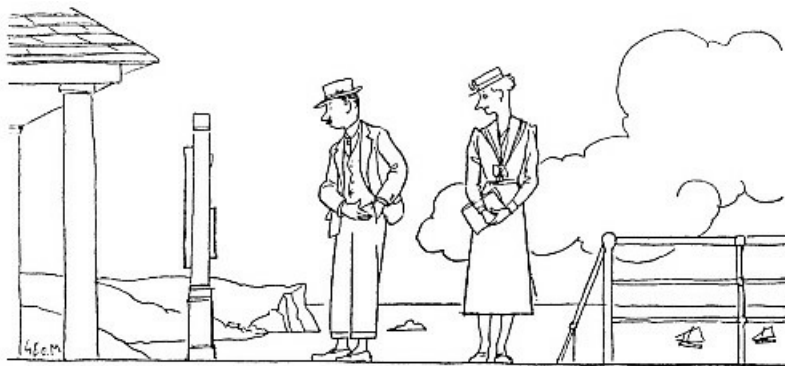
And everybody laughed at that and they said now he will catch it and I wouldn't be in his shoes, but he has really been very amusing though perhaps he has gone a little too far.

Well Mr. Boomer didn't catch it so much as people expected because Mrs. Boomer was rather proud of him for what he had done especially for saying that about Mrs. Crow, because she didn't like Mrs. Crow and thought she gave herself airs. And she knew there was really nothing in the way Mr. Boomer had gone on with Anne Patry but it was only fun, and besides she had never let them out of her sight.

So as they were going home in the taxi she said well I think you looked very nice as Henry VIII considering you are almost a dwarf, but I knew that when I married you so I suppose I can't grumble.

And Mr. Boomer had come to himself by this time, and he said well I don't think you looked so bad as Katharine of Aragon though of course you are much too fat for it. And I really didn't mean that about a divorce, I don't want one.

And Mrs. Boomer said well you wouldn't get it if you did, mind you lock up everything before you go to bed.



VIII

THE BREACH OF PROMISE CASE

When Mr. Carnabas was staying at the seaside for his summer holiday he made friends with Miss Pewrent who was in the same boarding house as he was and they used to go about together and weigh themselves on the pier, and sometimes they sat on the beach and threw stones into the water, and they enjoyed themselves very much.

Well, one morning they were sitting on the beach and Mr. Carnabas said these stones are rather hard for sitting on, I think I will hire two chairs one for you and one for me, it will only cost fourpence and we can go on sitting on them until dinner time so as to make it worth while.

And Miss Pewrent said oh no, the way to get rich is not to spend money like that, when the stones get too hard we can shift our position and then we shan't notice it.

Well Mr. Carnabas thought to himself if only I had married somebody like that I should be much richer than I am, and he said to Miss Pewrent have you ever thought of getting married? you are rather old for it but I should think you could easily find somebody who wouldn't mind that. And Miss Pewrent said well I have thought of it sometimes and I should quite like it, but do you think I am good-looking enough? And Mr. Carnabas said well perhaps not but looks aren't everything, I am not very good-looking myself. And Miss Pewrent said oh I think you are one of the handsomest men I have ever seen, I was talking to Mrs. Mattrass, that was their landlady, only yesterday about you and she said it made her come over all queer to look at you.

Well Mr. Carnabas was pleased at her saying that because he wasn't at all handsome really, his ears stuck out and he had a wart on each side of his nose. So he liked Miss Pewrent better than ever, and on his last evening at the seaside he took her to a lecture on starfishes where there wasn't anything to pay, but he bought her a stick of chocolate out of a machine. And he said he would like to write to her when he went back to Birmingham, and she said she would write to him when she went back to London.

So they wrote to each other once a week, and at Christmas time Mr. Carnabas sent Miss Pewrent a present of a book with a hundred pieces of poetry in it, and she sent him a present of two napkin rings of imitation ivory, and she wrote in her letter that it would be useful to have two of them when they got married.



*Oh I think you are one of the handsomest men I
have ever seen.*

Well Mr. Carnabas was surprised at her saying that because he was thinking of marrying Mrs. Joby if she would have him, he didn't like her so much as he liked Miss Pewrent but she had more money, and he only hadn't asked her to marry him yet because he didn't know whether she would let him have some of her money or would want to spend it all on herself. So he sent back one of the napkin rings to Miss Pewrent and thanked her for the other one and said he should always think of her when he put his napkin into it. And he thought that was the best way of showing her that he wasn't thinking of marrying her without hurting her feelings.

Well the next thing was that Mr. Carnabas had a letter to say that he had committed Breach of Promise of Marriage and there would have to be a trial about it.

Well they had a trial, and the judge was a very nice man who was interested in the Boy Scout movement in his private life and went in for being as kind as he could to everybody. And he made Mr. Carnabas and Miss Pewrent stand up in front of him and said to them now can't you two people make it up and get married instead of going on with this trial? you are middle-aged and are both so plain that it isn't likely you will get another chance. You had better go into a private room and talk it over, I can easily go on with another trial while you are making up your minds. I have to try a murderer next but I don't think he did it so it won't take long, and when you have had your little talk you can come back and listen until I have finished.

Well Miss Pewrent said she didn't mind and Mr. Carnabas was just going to say he didn't either, because he hadn't seen Miss Pewrent for over six months and he thought he would like to have a little talk with her. But just then a woman got up at the back of the court and said I object.

And the judge said who are you? and she said I am Mrs. Joby and the prisoner at the bar promised to marry *me*.

And Mr. Carnabas said oh I never, but the judge said silence in the court, it is for me to say whether you did or not, and I warn you that if you are one of those men who go about asking women to marry you and then getting out of it I shall take a severe view of it, because we can't have that sort of thing in England, we are not Hottentots or Bolsheviks either.

So then the trial had to go on, and the first thing was to read out the letters that Mr. Carnabas had written to Miss Pewrent. And the judge said well I don't think there is much in those letters, when I was in love myself before I got married I used to call the young ladies Popsey or Mousey or something like that when I wrote to them, but Mr. Carnabas never goes beyond Dear Miss Ugly, and the jury will see that this is quite natural when they look at Miss Pewrent. And

there is only one cross in all the letters and that looks more like crossing out a word that he has spelt wrong than sending a kiss, why I sometimes used to put six rows of crosses in my letters when I couldn't think of anything more to say. Now Mrs. Joby please step forward and put in the letters he wrote to you.

So Mrs. Joby stepped forward but she said that Mr. Carnabas hadn't written her any letters except one when Mr. Joby died, and that was a business letter because Mr. Carnabas was an undertaker and he had offered to do the funeral cheap for her.

And the judge said well that might look as if he was already in love with Mr. Joby's relict and it is for the jury to say whether he was or not, but I shall direct them that he would be a very bad man if he was and there is nothing to prove it.

Then he asked all of them about their incomes, and Miss Pewrent said she hadn't got any income except what she earned by holding the curling-tongs in a shop where ladies went to be shingled and sweeping up the hair afterwards. And Mr. Carnabas said he was in a fair way of business but the place where he lived was so healthy that there wasn't as much custom as there might have been. And the judge said well now let us hear about Mrs. Joby's income.

Well Mrs. Joby didn't want to tell him about her income, and she said she didn't really want to marry Mr. Carnabas because he was too ugly for her, but the judge said oh we can't have that now, you have intervened in this case so I must go through with it, and he made her tell him what her income was. And she had got it from Mr. Joby being a tin bath manufacturer, and when people had begun to have more baths than they used to be had got quite rich from selling his tin baths, and Mrs. Joby had a good deal more than a thousand pounds a year.

So then the judge summed up, but first of all he asked Mr. Carnabas whether he would marry Miss Pewrent if he summed up in his favour, and he said he would because by this time he was feeling quite fond of Miss Pewrent again, and besides he didn't want to pay her money for not marrying her.

So the judge said very well then, you will leave this court without a stain on your character and so will Miss Pewrent, who is not so ugly as I thought she was when I first saw her. But I am not at all satisfied with the way Mrs. Joby has given her evidence and I shall fine her a hundred pounds which will be paid to Mr. Carnabas when he can show me documentary evidence that he is married to Miss Pewrent. So they will have something to set up house with and I hope they will be very happy.

So the jury brought it in like that and Mr. Carnabas and Miss Pewrent got married as soon as possible. And what was nice about Mrs. Joby was that she bore no malice but paid her hundred pounds, and she said it was well worth it for making two people happy and she would ask them to supper sometimes on Sunday evening.





IX

THE DOCTOR

Once there was a doctor who had a very bad attack of chicken-pox, and he was ashamed of having a thing like that so he said it was only nettle-rash, and he went on visiting his patients and gave it to so many of them that there was quite an epidemic in the town where he lived and they had to put beds in the Corn Exchange.

Well nobody died of it but of course it was very awkward and interfered with the business of the town, and everybody was very annoyed with the doctor and the Mayor said he should send him to prison when he got better, but he caught it himself the next day and when he recovered from it the Town Council paid for him to have a holiday at Brighton and by the time he was quite well again it had all rather blown over. But nobody would have the doctor to attend to them any more and he got so poor that he had to be a pavement artist, because he was rather good at drawing with coloured chalks and he couldn't think of any other way to make enough money to live on.

Well he made a fair amount of money because people were sorry for him having to come down to that and they put coppers in his cap and sometimes sixpences, but he didn't make as much as he wanted to and presently he said to himself well I shall have to strike out a new line, and instead of doing pictures of beefsteaks and sunsets he began to do all the different parts of people's insides because of course he knew what they looked like as he was a doctor. And people were interested in seeing what their lungs and livers and all those things looked like and he did fairly well out of it.

Well one day the chief clergyman of the town was going to give a lecture in his schoolroom about the Pyramids which he knew a lot about as he had seen them himself, but he had such a bad cold that he had to keep in bed. And he didn't want to disappoint his congregation so he sent for the doctor who had been a friend of his before he had become a pavement artist, and he said to him could you give a lecture about people's insides instead of my one about the Pyramids? you could do your pictures rather large on pieces of cardboard and have them instead of lantern slides. There will be a collection afterwards and I will give you half of it, and if your lecture is interesting enough I should think you would make quite a lot out of it.

And the doctor said well I will if you will lend me a good shirt and a pair of patent leather shoes, all my clothes are very shabby now except my dress suit and that is all right because nobody has invited me to go to anything lately where I should have to put it on.

Well the clergyman's feet were about the same size as his so he lent him his patent leather shoes which he wouldn't want himself that night as he was in bed and a clean shirt and he had his hair cut and when he got on to the platform he looked quite like a doctor again instead of a pavement artist, and people who had never seen him like that were surprised and said they should never have thought it. And he gave a very interesting lecture mostly about appendixes with a lot of illustrations, and at the end of it he said you would all feel much better if you had your appendixes taken out, and I shall be pleased to do it for any bonâ-fide member of this congregation at half price.

Well a lot of people thought this was a good offer but the other doctors in the town were annoyed about it. And they said well anyhow he hasn't got any place to operate in and we certainly shan't lend him one. But the clergyman took his part and he said he would lend him his vestry to do his operations in if he would promise to have it properly cleaned and made tidy again afterwards. So the people came there, and when he had operated on them he took them home in an ambulance and visited them every day until they got better, and as he only charged half price he soon had quite a good practice again and was able to buy himself some nice clothes and some new stethoscopes and microscopes and things like that.



People were sorry for him.

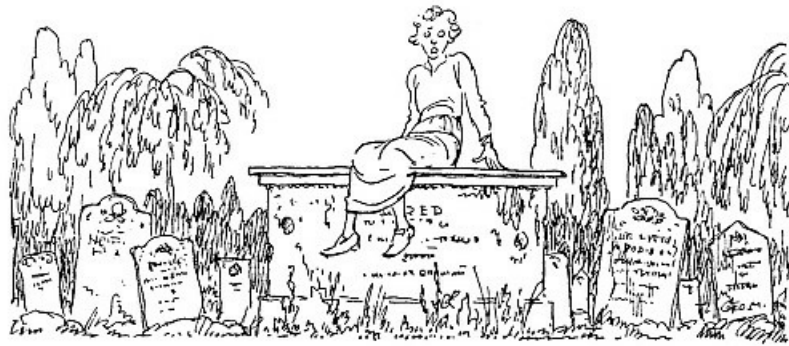
Well soon after that the doctor fell in love with the daughter of the Mayor and wanted to marry her. And the Mayor didn't mind because he wasn't quite a gentleman himself and he thought it would be a good thing for his daughter to marry a doctor, but when he asked how much money he made he said oh it isn't nearly enough, if I hadn't shown more enterprise than that I shouldn't have been nearly so rich as I am. And the doctor said well I work hard but of course I can only charge half price, what do you think I ought to do?

And the Mayor said well I will tell you what you can do. That was a very interesting lecture you gave about people's appendixes and you got a lot of custom after it. What you ought to do is to go into partnership with another doctor. You can go about the country giving lectures and leave him behind to take out the appendixes while you go on to the next place. I will look after the business end of it and we will divide the profits into three parts and each of us take one.

So he got another doctor who was a friend of his to go into partnership with him, and he was glad to do it because he was good at all operations but his other practice had gone down because he had ordered a rich old lady to eat less food when what she wanted him to do was to order her to eat more food, and she had taken a dislike to him and told everybody that he was no good as a doctor. And the Mayor approved of him and he said we don't want to overdo it at first, we had better make appendixes our chief feature but we can do tonsils and adenoids too and when we have worked up a good connection we can think of something else that people can do without.

Well it was such a success that the doctor soon made enough money to marry the Mayor's daughter, and the Mayor was so pleased at the way things were going that he gave up his business of being a bottle-blower and devoted all his time to it. And he engaged two more doctors and several dentists besides, because he said everybody has thirty-two teeth and only one appendix and it is a pity to let all that custom go begging. And he said it was only fair that he should take most of the money for that himself as he had thought of it, but the doctor didn't mind as he wasn't a dentist and besides he was making plenty to live on now, and the Mayor had promised to leave his daughter all his money.

Well he left a good deal of money, because he had been so enterprising and the doctor was able to retire and go in for painting entirely. And he got so good at it that he sent a picture of a doctor doing an operation to the Academy. But they sent it back to him with a polite note to say that they would have liked to hang it but they thought it would make people feel too squeamish.



THE SPECTRE

Professor Crimple was one of those people who can see ghosts and spectres, and it was very useful to him because he was often asked to stay at quite important castles belonging to lords and people like that. And sometimes he got rid of their ghosts for them by finding out what they wanted so that they would leave off haunting them, and once he had been able to tell the owner of a castle where some treasure was buried which a ghost showed him, and the owner of the castle gave him some of it, enough to pay for a vacuum cleaner which his wife wanted.

Well one day a clergyman wrote to Professor Crimple and asked him if he would come and stay in his vicarage and see about a spectre which sat upon a tombstone in his churchyard and gibbered at people and frightened them. And Professor Crimple hadn't any castles to go to just then so he wrote back and said he would if he might bring Mrs. Crimple and if they could have a fire in their bedroom. And the clergyman said that would be all right so they went there.

Well when they got there the clergyman said I think we had better go to the churchyard as soon as possible, we will just have a cup of tea first and then it will be dark except for the new moon.

So they did that, and as they were going to the churchyard Professor Crimple said now tell me what the spectre is like and if you know who it was when it was alive.

And the clergyman said well I have never seen it myself but people who have think it is a young woman called Meg Jillip who pushed another woman out of a boat and drowned her because she had married somebody she wanted to marry herself.

Professor Crimple said was she hanged for it or not? because it is important to know that if I am to do anything.

And the clergyman said yes she was, what I like about you is that you go into everything thoroughly, would you rather drink claret or white wine for dinner to-night?

And Professor Crimple said well I would rather drink both, and the clergyman said well you shall, I can afford it because an uncle of my wife's has left her some money and we haven't spent it all yet.

Well they came to the churchyard, and the wind was howling and shrieking, and the first thing Professor Crimple saw was the spectre sitting on one of those old-fashioned flat tombstones. And the outside of her wasn't bad-looking at all, and directly she saw him she smiled at him and said I am so glad you have come, I like the look of you, but do send that old chimpanzee away and then we can have a nice talk.

So Professor Crimple said to the clergyman she thinks we shall be more comfortable talking together alone, and he was quite surprised because he hadn't heard her speaking himself. But he went away and Professor Crimple said well I shall be back soon, mind you make up the fire well because it is rather cold in this churchyard, and if you don't mind I should like some whisky to drink when I come in.

Well directly the clergyman had gone away the spectre said to Professor Crimple do come and sit down by me on this tombstone, I have taken such a fancy to you that I am quite in love with you, do you think you could love me for myself?

Well Professor Crimple was rather flattered but he said no certainly not, for one thing I can see right through you to your skeleton and for another Mrs. Crimple wouldn't like it.

Well directly he said that the spectre grew simply hideous with passion and gibbered at him, and she said no gentleman would mention her skeleton to a lady spectre and the moment I saw you coming I said to myself who is this revolting old baboon?

And Professor Crimple said well then why did you say you had taken a fancy to me?

And the spectre let out a screech, but directly after she smiled again and said oh I was only teasing you, come and sit down by me and I will tell you everything.

But Professor Crimple thought there was a catch in it and he said no thank you, you can tell me while I am standing up.



If you will only leave off gibbering.

Well then the spectre grew more furious than ever and gibbered at him again, and she said oh if I could only get at you do you know what I should do? and he said no.

She said well I should tear you limb from limb, and she made a sort of struggle to get at him but she couldn't move from her stone. So then he knew why she had wanted him to sit beside her on the stone and was glad he hadn't.

Well when she saw it was no use she calmed down a little, and told him that she was obliged to haunt the churchyard whenever there was a new moon until somebody came who would love her for herself, and she asked him if he couldn't possibly find somebody for her but he said he didn't think he could and went away as soon as possible.

Well directly he got outside the churchyard he saw a farmer coming towards him, and when he came close he saw that he was a spectre too. So he stopped him and asked him who he was.

And he said well about fifty years ago I wanted to marry Meg Jillip but she didn't care about it. Then there was some unpleasantness which I needn't go into and she became a spectre, and I didn't see her again until I became a spectre myself. I am allowed to come here once a year and see her but she can't see *me* until she leaves off hating everybody, and people take such a dislike to her and run away whenever they see her that I don't suppose she ever will.

Well Professor Crimple was sorry for this spectre because he looked so nice and honest, and he said do you still love her for herself? I shouldn't have thought you could, because she does gibber so.

And he said oh yes I do, you can't blame her for being a little irritable, she has had such a lot to put up with.

So Professor Crimple said well come along with me, and he led him to the churchyard, and directly he got there the other spectre said oh you have come back have you? have you found that you can love me for myself after all?

And he said no, but I have brought somebody who can if you will only leave off gibbering, and then you can see him.

And she said who is it? and he said well I don't know his name but it is that farmer who wanted to marry you about fifty years ago.

So then her face got quite nice and she said I have often wished I hadn't been so hasty because I did like him.

And directly she had said that she saw the other spectre, and he went and sat down by her on the tombstone, and then they both faded away.

So Professor Crimple went back to the vicarage, and the clergyman was so pleased with him for getting rid of the spectre that he gave him a very expensive cigar out of a box which his wife's uncle had left her, and they had a comfortable time sitting in front of the fire and talking about ghosts and spectres.



XI

THE CHEMIST

Once there was a chemist called Mr. Rainspot who liked making up prescriptions for people, but he didn't quite approve of everything the doctors put into them so he often used to alter them and put in something else instead. And people generally got better from taking the medicine he sent them, and if they didn't he would say to them well I never did think that medicine would do you much good, if you like I will make you up one of my own to try, I don't suppose it will kill you, and if it makes you better you will save having to pay a doctor because I shan't charge you anything except for the medicine, and if you send back the bottle I will take off twopence.

Well what Mr. Rainspot used to do was to collect all the plants he could and make medicines out of them and see how they acted, and he always tried them on his children's rabbits first, and if the rabbits died then he knew that they were poison so he didn't use them in the medicines he sent out to people. But if they didn't do the rabbits any harm then he used to try them on different people, and sometimes they felt much better and then they would tell their friends how good Mr. Rainspot's medicines were.

Well one day Mr. Rainspot was digging in his garden and he saw a weed which he had never noticed before, and he said to himself I think I will make a medicine out of this, it might be quite a good one and I could make plenty of money out of selling it.

So he did that and he gave it first to an old rabbit which rather liked taking medicine and hadn't been poisoned yet by anything he had given it. And the next day the old rabbit was jumping about everywhere and fighting much younger rabbits, and it seemed to be stronger than any of them. So Mr. Rainspot said to himself I am sure I have found out a good medicine at last, who shall I try it on?

Well that afternoon Mrs. Rainspot said to him I don't feel at all well, I suppose it is this heat. I wish you would make me up a tonic or something like that, but I don't want any of your private medicines, it must be something that a good doctor has ordered for somebody else.

So he said oh very well, and he gave her the same medicine that he had given to the rabbit because he knew she couldn't tell the difference, and he told her it was something that had been ordered for the wife of a bishop, so she said she supposed it would do and took a good dose of it.

Well the next thing that happened was that Mrs. Rainspot came into the shop where Mr. Rainspot was arguing with a navvy who said that he had poisoned him with some medicine he had given him for the rheumatism, and it was so strong that it had made his eyes squint but it hadn't done his rheumatism any good at all. And Mr. Rainspot was feeling very uncomfortable about it because he knew he had made a mistake with that medicine which he had meant to pour down the sink because it hadn't agreed with any of the rabbits and one of them had had convulsions after taking it, and the navvy was so angry that he knew he was going to hit him directly he had finished saying all the rude things he could think of saying.



She took hold of him and turned him out of the shop.

Well when Mrs. Rainspot came into the shop the navy was saying something so rude that it wouldn't do to write it down, and she said what is that, how dare you say a thing like that to my husband?

And the navy said who is going to stop me? and she said why I am, and she took hold of him and turned him out of the shop though he was about twice as big as she was, and she said to Mr. Rainspot that tonic you gave me has done me such a lot of good that I feel ten years younger and I must go out for a good long walk, I think you had better come with me because you look rather pale.

So Mr. Rainspot left his assistant in charge of the shop and went with her because he wanted to see how she would walk which she had never much liked doing before and always took buses if she could. And she walked about ten miles there and back very fast and kept on saying how strong she felt, but Mr. Rainspot didn't feel at all strong and when they got home again he was so done up that he could hardly eat his supper and went to bed directly after it. Still he was very pleased because he knew that it was all because of his new medicine, and he thought he would take a dose of it himself, but then he thought well perhaps I had better try it on somebody else first just to make sure.

So the next day he sent a bottle of it to the bishop's wife instead of the medicine that the doctor had ordered for her. And just at that time the bishop was having a lot of trouble with the inferior order of clergy, but after his wife had taken Mr. Rainspot's new medicine she said oh leave them to me, and she was so strong in what she said to them that the bishop didn't have any more trouble with them and she took him for a motor tour in a two-seater, though they were both quite old.

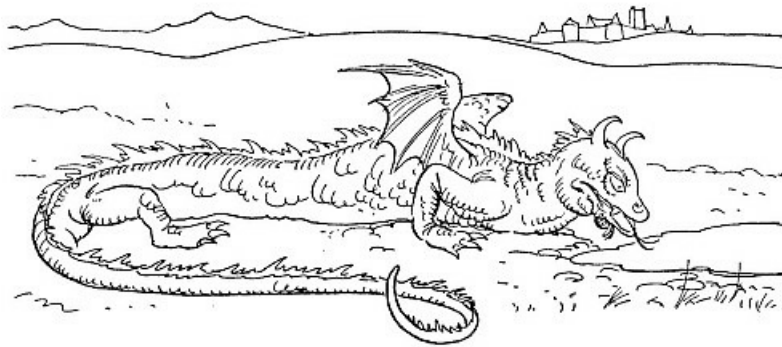
Well then Mr. Rainspot knew it was all right and he took some of the medicine himself, and directly he had taken it he felt as if he wanted to break all the bottles in his shop and dance on them. But he knew he would be sorry for it afterwards if he did that, so he offered to fight his assistant who was quite young and strong. And the assistant was glad to fight him because he thought he didn't give him enough money or time off and it would be nice to give him a black eye. But Mr. Rainspot won the fight quite easily and made the assistant's nose bleed, so then he wasn't so glad and he said I didn't know you were so strong as that, I suppose it is from one of your private medicines, I wish you would give me some of it. So Mr. Rainspot gave him some, and when he had taken it he wanted to fight him again but Mr. Rainspot said no once is enough.

Well then Mr. Rainspot knew that he had discovered about the best medicine that had ever been invented, and he

confessed it to his wife that it was what he had given her and she forgave him and helped him to pick the weeds that he made it of and put it into bottles. And he put it in the newspapers that he had invented a medicine that would make people feel ten years younger and they must pay him five pounds a bottle for it less twopence for sending back the bottle, but if anybody couldn't afford that he could send them a weaker medicine that would make them feel five years younger at half the price.

Well it was a great success, and Mr. and Mrs. Rainspot spent all the time they could spare from going for long walks in making up the medicine, and they made so much money out of it that in about a year Mr. Rainspot was able to retire from being a chemist altogether, and they went to live in Switzerland where there were plenty of mountains to climb because they both felt so strong that they liked doing that better than anything. And by that time they had used up all the weeds out of which the medicine was made and couldn't find any more of them, but it didn't matter because Mr. Rainspot had sold his invention to a large pill-maker and he didn't have to worry about that.

And after ten years when Mr. and Mrs. Rainspot were feeling about as old as when the medicine was first invented they came back to live in England because they were tired of climbing mountains by this time, and they took up reading books instead. And they had a nice house and garden and plenty of money, and their children were all getting on well so they were quite happy for the rest of their lives.



XII

THE DRAGON

Once a long time ago there was a very horrible dragon that settled itself in a swamp near a city and began to eat up the people who lived near it. So of course they didn't go on living there but came into the city where there was less chance of the dragon getting at them.

Well nothing happened for about a week because the dragon was sleepy after its last meal and was drinking water out of the swamp, as it didn't believe in drinking with its meals. But when it began to feel hungry again it came waddling up to the city to see what had become of all the people. And everybody saw it come and they had time to shut all the gates, but that didn't make any difference because the dragon just blew fire at them out of its nose until they were burnt down. And it was no use their shooting arrows at it because its skin was so hard and thick that they didn't even stick in it and none of them got through. So all they had time to do was to take a murderer out of prison and tie him to a post just inside the gate and then run away again. So the dragon ate the murderer and waddled back to its swamp.

Well the King lost no time in collecting all his counsellors together to make a plan about it. And he said to them it is very unfortunate this happening just now because I was just arranging for a nice little war, we haven't had one for some time and the soldiers are getting fat and lazy, but of course we must get rid of the dragon first.

And the counsellors said well how are we to get rid of it? and one of them said much the best way will be to give it a murderer once a week and perhaps that will keep it quiet.

And the King said oh that's silly, for one thing we haven't got enough murderers, and besides the dragon is sure to want a change of diet. None of you seem to have read history, the only thing to do with dragons is to send out notices that anybody who kills one which has happened to turn up shall marry the King's daughter and have half his kingdom.

And the counsellors said well that might work, but it is more a thing for you than for us.

And the King said well I have only got one daughter and she will have to get married some time or other though she is a little young for it now. Of course she must marry a prince, but there are plenty of them about and it won't so much matter if they haven't got kingdoms of their own as they will have half of mine.

And the counsellors said but will you like giving up half of your kingdom? and he said oh of course it will be for me to say *which* half.

Now the Princess was too beautiful for words, but as she was so young and had been kept in the schoolroom until then none of the princes who wanted to get married knew much about her except that she would be quite rich when her father died. But the King had a lot of pictures done of her with her hair up and sent them all round, and presently all the princes who weren't married and were brave enough not to mind about the dragon were sending in and asking to have their names put down.

Well the King was pleased at this, and he got his counsellors to help him make a list so that he could invite one prince a week beginning with the one who lived nearest, and keep the dragon quiet until one of them managed to kill it. But it all took a little time and they had to give the dragon another murderer until the first prince had made his arrangements.

Well the Princess had been told all about it, and before the princes went out to the swamp to try and kill the dragon the King always gave them a nice banquet with plenty of good wine and flowers on the table and interesting people to talk to. And at the end of the banquet some trumpets were blown and the Princess came in looking too utterly lovely and the Prince who had come that week was allowed to talk to her for half-an-hour on a sofa and then her governess took her up to bed. And they all fell so much in love with her that they never minded going to the swamp the next morning to fight with the dragon.

But the Princess didn't fall in love with any of them, so she didn't mind it as much as she might have done when they never came back again though of course she was sorry for their relations.



So the dragon ... waddled back to the swamp.

Well it doesn't say in the histories how many princes tried to kill the dragon but there must have been a good many, and one of them must have run away because the dragon was hungry and came into the city the next day and took a lame poulterer who was going along the street. And presently there was only one prince left who came from a long way off, and if he didn't manage to kill the dragon the King didn't know what on earth to do next. And he said well it is no good worrying beforehand, let us enjoy the banquet.

Now when the Princess heard that the last prince of all was coming she said to her old nurse supposing he doesn't kill the dragon what will happen then?

And the old nurse said oh I can easily arrange that for you, I was a witch before I came to be your nurse, only I had got very tired of it because it led to so much unpleasantness so I was glad to take the situation. I will give you a tabloid that makes whoever swallows it invisible for any time up to half-an-hour, so all you will have to do is to give it to the Prince and he can swallow it just before he begins to fight the dragon, so then the dragon won't see him and he can stick his sword through its eye and that will kill it.

Well the Princess thought this was a very good arrangement and when she went down after the banquet she took the tabloid with her. But directly she saw the Prince she thought it would be so awful to marry somebody who was perfectly hideous and bald and middle-aged that she didn't know what to do about it but waited until he came to sit on the sofa beside her.

But he didn't come to sit on the sofa beside her because he didn't want to marry somebody as young as she was, he only wanted half of the kingdom. And he was having such an interesting talk with the King about some new dungeons he had been making that he sent his page to sit beside her instead.

Well directly she saw the page whose name was Florizel the Princess fell in love with him, and of course he was in love with her because nobody who was young could help being, and as the governess had gone upstairs to read a book they had a lovely talk together and settled what they would do.

So the next morning the Princess asked if she might go to the swamp to see the fight with the dragon, and the King said yes let's all go and make a picnic of it. So they all went and of course the dragon killed the Prince, and the King said well that's the last of them and after we have had lunch we must think what we are going to do next.

So then Florizel stepped forward and he said if I kill the dragon may I marry the Princess? I don't want half the

kingdom, you can keep that for yourself.

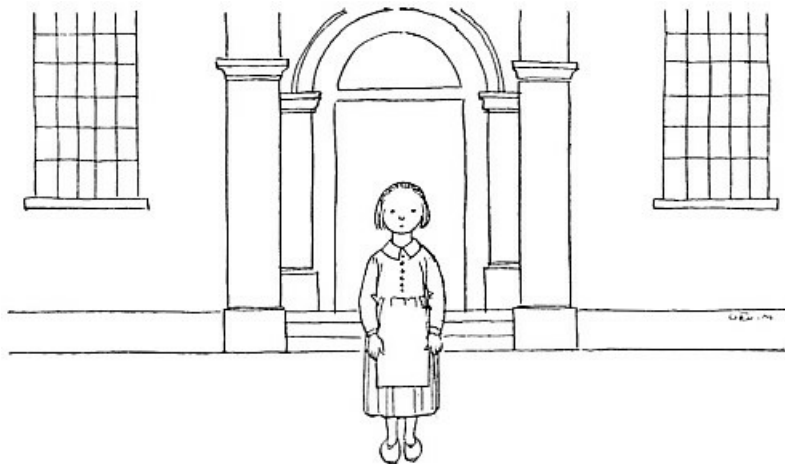
And the King said well if there had been any princes left I should have said no, but as there aren't any more you can have her if you kill the dragon.

So Florizel said thank you, and directly he had said it the King said why where ever has he gone?

Well of course Florizel was invisible because he had just swallowed the tabloid which the Princess had given him. And the next thing that happened was that the dragon looked up from eating the Prince and gave a great howl of anguish and the blood began to spurt out of its right eye and presently it was dead.

And there was Florizel kissing the Princess and she was kissing him, and the King was so pleased at getting rid of the dragon at last that he didn't mind at all.

So they got married and loved each other more and more as the years rolled on.



XIII

THE FOUNDLING.

Soon after Sarah November was born her mother left her on a doorstep because she had several children already and thought somebody else might take care of this one for her. But she didn't leave a label or anything like that with her so the people at the Home had to find a name for her, and they called her November because that was the month they found her on the doorstep and Sarah because they believed in giving foundlings unfashionable names so that they shouldn't think they were as good as other people. And they dressed her up as a foundling so that there shouldn't be any mistake about it.

Well when Sarah November was old enough to earn her living they said to her what work would you like to do?

And she said well I have never cared much about doing work.

And they said no we know you haven't but of course you must earn your living, would you like to go out to service?

And she said oh well I can try it, so they got her a situation and she went out to service.

Well she didn't care much for it except that she didn't have to dress up as a foundling any longer, but she could imitate people rather well so when they grumbled at her for not doing enough work she made them laugh and so they kept her longer than they would have done. But at last they said well this can't go on for ever, laughing is all very well but it doesn't wash up plates, you must find another situation.

Well she didn't take any trouble about doing that, but on the last day before she had to leave she put on her best clothes and went out, and one of the first people she saw was a rich old lady in a bath-chair. So she went up to her and said do you want a companion who can make you laugh? because if so I shall be out of a situation to-morrow and I could come to you.

And the old lady said well I shouldn't mind that, I like laughing and the last companion I had was rather dismal, what could you do to make me laugh?

And Sarah November said oh I could imitate the people who come to see you after they have gone. I will imitate the bath-chairman for you if you like.

So she did that, and the old lady laughed especially when the bath-chairman got angry about it, and she engaged Sarah November as her companion and she imitated all the nephews and nieces who came to see the old lady and the doctor and the clergyman of the church she went to, and the old lady laughed a good deal and felt all the better for it. But presently nobody came to see her any more because they didn't like being laughed at, so she said to Sarah November well I think it is time I had a new companion so you must find another situation.

And Sarah November said well I don't mind, I have got rather tired of this, but you must give me three new dresses and some hats and shoes to go with them and twelve pairs of silk stockings.

Well the old lady was rather surprised at that and she said what will happen if I don't?

And Sarah November said well I will tell you what will happen. When you go out in your bath-chair I shall go out in another one behind you and imitate you all the time, and people will laugh at you.

Well the old lady didn't want that so she gave Sarah November those things because she was quite rich enough for it not to matter to her, and Sarah November thanked her and said she would come and amuse her sometimes for nothing.

Well the next thing Sarah November did for a living was to be a mannequin in a very expensive shop, because she had some nice clothes now and she could imitate being a lady, so when she went to the shop they thought she was better than she really was and they were lucky to get her. And they paid her plenty of wages and gave her some more nice clothes as well, because if she wanted anything very much she didn't show it off well and they said oh that is no good

you can have it for yourself.

And that went on for some time, but Sarah November got rather tired of it because the hours were too long and there was too much standing to suit her, so she said to herself I don't see why I shouldn't go on the stage.

So she went on the stage, and they were glad to have her there because she had seen so many duchesses and countesses and people like that when she was a mannequin and could imitate them so well that she was almost like one herself, and they like that on the stage.

Well she got on fairly well on the stage and several people fell in love with her because she was quite nice-looking especially when she was dressed up. But she didn't want to get married just yet, and it was a good deal of trouble to learn up her parts, so she thought she would go on the films.

So she did that, and she was quite a success on the films, and she made plenty of money besides by letting them put pictures of her in the newspapers saying she owed it all to somebody's face cream or tooth paste, and presently the people in the Home said why there can't be two Sarah Novembers and this must be our one but we never should have recognized her, she looks quite a lady.

Well that wouldn't have mattered much, but Sarah November's mother whose real name was Mrs. Bunce saw a film one night with her in it, and she had found out what name they had given her in the Home so she went there and said I want my daughter.

Well the end of it was that Mrs. Bunce made herself a positive nuisance to Sarah November, because her husband was dead by this time and her other children weren't any good to her and she was so poor that she couldn't buy herself proper clothes and looked simply awful. And Sarah November didn't mind giving her money but she *would* spend such a lot of it on gin that she wasn't any more respectable than before, and Sarah November could never get rid of her.



If you go on like this people will begin to talk.

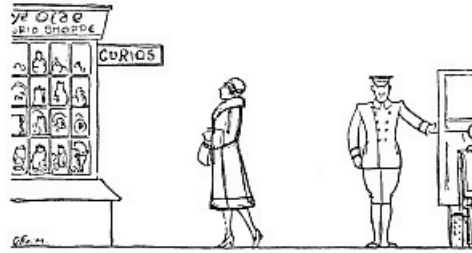
So she said to her mother look here if you go on like this people will begin to talk. It would have done me a lot of harm already only that I have told everybody you are a drunken charwoman who once saved my life in a fire and so I go on being kind to you.

But Mrs. Bunce only hiccoughed, so then Sarah November knew she had got to do something about it. So what she did was to have it put in all the newspapers that Mrs. Bunce was really her mother who had left her on a doorstep when she

was a baby, and she was a foundling and had gone out as a general servant when she was only fifteen. And she had a photograph taken of herself and her mother together when her mother was sober and had that put in the newspapers too and then waited to see what would happen.

Well what happened was that everybody said they couldn't have believed it that anybody like Sarah November could have had a mother like that and been a foundling and begun by going out to service, and it was wonderful how she had turned herself into what she was. And they said she must have a heart of gold besides not to be ashamed of it, because most people who had got on so well would have wanted to hide up all that.

So Sarah November became the people's idol and made so much money that she hardly knew how to spend it. But by this time she had got rather tired of being on the films because it was such hard work, so when a Viscount asked her to marry him she said she would, and she pensioned off her mother and took up collecting Toby jugs.



Decoration



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

Once when Mr. and Mrs. Juniper were just going out to have tea in their front garden a large motor car came bursting through the hedge and sent everything flying and broke down their chief laburnum before the young man who was driving it could stop it.

Well if it had been a minute later Mr. and Mrs. Juniper would both have been killed because they would have been sitting at the table, and they were getting rather old and were not used to having things like that happen to them, but the young man was so nice about it and explained that he had only just bought the car and didn't know how to drive it yet, and he had already had his name taken by two policemen for running into a lamp-post and a delivery van, that they couldn't say much, and besides it was partly their own fault for having tea in the front garden instead of the back, where it wouldn't have happened. And he said he hoped they would let him pay for the table and chairs and all the china he had broken and buy them a new laburnum from a nurseryman, and he was so nice and made jokes about the jam sandwiches being spoilt by petrol and being able to fill the kettle with hot water again from the radiator that they quite took to him and invited him to have tea with them in the back garden if he wouldn't mind waiting for a little until they could have it laid again with some other things instead of those that were broken and have some more sandwiches cut.

Well he didn't really want to stay to tea because he was so keen on driving his new motor car, and he was so rich that he didn't mind how much damage he had to pay for, though he didn't want to run over anybody if he could possibly help it because he was kind-hearted and thoughtful for others. And he was just going to make an excuse to get out of it when Mr. and Mrs. Juniper's granddaughter Lavinia came out of the house, and then he was glad that he hadn't made an excuse because she was so absolutely lovely that he fell in love with her the moment he saw her. And Mr. Juniper said this is my granddaughter Lavinia and if you will kindly tell me your name I will introduce you to her.

Well he was just beginning to come to a little from the shock of seeing somebody so lovely as Lavinia and he said Smith, and Mr. Juniper said Lavinia this is Mr. Smith who has just dropped in to have tea with us, if you will help Granny and Irene to get it ready we will go and sit in the back garden and have a nice little talk. And he said to Mr. Smith Irene is our servant, we couldn't always afford to keep one but a sister of Mrs. Juniper's who was house-keeper to a lord and had saved a lot of money out of what she got for showing people over his house died a little time ago and left all her money to us, so now we are in more affluent circumstances.



He fell in love with her the moment he saw her.

And Mr. Smith said what was the name of Mrs. Juniper's sister? And he said well it was Carbuncle, but she died of influenza. There was an epidemic of it and the lord whose house she showed people over died of it just before she did and left her a hundred pounds as well, so it all came in very convenient, as they had to die some time or other. And Mr. Smith seemed rather surprised at hearing this but all he said was ah.

And while they were waiting for tea Mr. Juniper told him that he had been a shipping clerk in a wholesale ham warehouse, and Mrs. Juniper had been a cashier and sat in a little box not very well ventilated giving out change to people in a provision shop before he had married her, and they had had a very beautiful daughter called Ermytrude, and they were so proud of her that nothing would do for them but she must marry an Earl. And she had done that through going on the stage, but it hadn't turned out at all well because the Earl had been so wicked and he had spent all his money long ago, but he died by falling down a precipice when drunk, and Ermytrude died soon afterwards when Lavinia was quite a baby and they had brought her up ever since.

And Mr. Smith said you seem to have had rather a tragic life Mr. Juniper, and he said well I have rather but I am quite comfortable now, with the wireless and cross-word puzzles, and it will soon be time for Lavinia to get married which will be interesting, but whatever happens I shan't let her marry an Earl.

And he said well I suppose you would if he was a good Earl and had plenty of money. And Mr. Juniper said no, no more Earls for me, I have had enough of them.

Well they had a very nice tea, and Mr. Smith couldn't keep his eyes off Lavinia she was so absolutely lovely, and he didn't know what he was putting into his mouth, but that didn't matter as Mr. and Mrs. Juniper had both been in the provision business and everything they had to eat was good, and he managed to keep lively and made them all laugh several times which nearly finished him off because Lavinia looked lovelier than ever when she laughed and it was like listening to silver bells chiming, only better. And she liked him too because he was so lively and amusing and handsome besides, and when they had finished tea he couldn't contain himself any longer and he said to Mr. and Mrs. Juniper would you mind going into the front garden to see if anybody has stolen my motor car yet because I have got something private to say to Lavinia.

So they did that, and the moment their backs were turned he said to Lavinia darling I love you, and she said I love you too, and before Mr. and Mrs. Juniper had got into the house they were kissing each other.

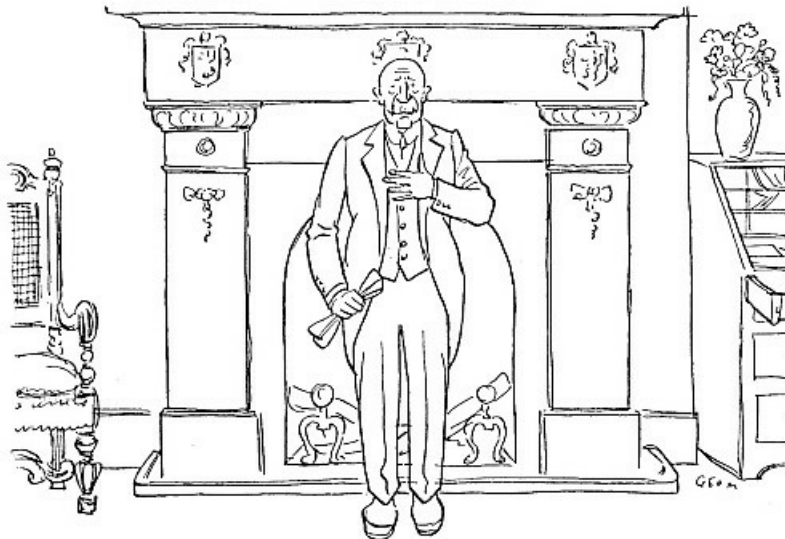
Well that evening as they were listening to the wireless the announcer said before taking you over to Billingsgate

Market for a talk on plaice and haddocks I have an announcement to make, will Lavinia surname withheld who is engaged to the Earl of Aubretia go at once to the Bond Street Hospital where he is lying seriously ill through having run into a confectioner's shop, I will repeat that, will Lavinia etcetera copyright reserved we are now taking you straight over to Billingsgate Fishmarket.

Well it was the first that Mr. and Mrs. Juniper had heard of Mr. Smith being really the Earl of Aubretia but he had told Lavinia, and he was the son of the Lord who had left Mrs. Carbuncle a hundred pounds, so Mr. Juniper couldn't very well object to her marrying an Earl though he had said that he wouldn't let her. And they went straight off to the hospital in a taxicab. And when they got there they found fourteen other girls and women who said their name was Lavinia and they were engaged to the Earl of Aubretia, and more were being put down at the hospital by every bus that went along Bond Street. But directly Mr. Juniper had told his name the porter made short work of all the rest and he took them upstairs to where Lord Aubretia was in bed in a private room.

Well he really wasn't seriously ill now because he had only been cut a little by being hurled through a plate-glass window which his motor car had already broken, but what had been rather serious at first was that he had fallen with his nose and mouth in a heap of éclairs and had nearly been smothered in cream and pastry. But they had washed him and lent him some clean pyjamas, and Lavinia fell into his arms and Mr. Juniper said he shouldn't say anything more about his being an Earl and he was sure it would turn out all right.

And it did turn out all right, and as Lavinia was the daughter of an Earl on the father's side nobody could say it wasn't a suitable match. And Lord Aubretia soon learnt how to drive his motor car properly and he took Lavinia for some lovely drives in the country, and they were as happy as two lovebirds and picked masses of bluebells.



THE RIGHTFUL HEIR

Once when Lord Mype was poking about in an old bureau with a screwdriver because one of the drawers had got stuck he found a secret drawer which he hadn't known anything about, and there was a bundle of letters in it yellow with age. Well he read through some of the letters and was just going to burn them because they weren't very interesting when he came across one of them which said that he had been changed at birth, and it turned out that his butler ought really to have been Lord Mype and he ought to have been his own butler.

Well this was rather a surprise to him and he didn't much care about the idea of being a butler, so he thought the best thing would be to burn the letter and say nothing about it, but just as he was going to do that his eye fell upon the Golden Rule which his Angel Child called the Lady Alicia had illuminated for his birthday and he had put it on the mantelpiece. And he said to himself well is this doing as I would be done by? And he was obliged to say it wasn't, so he put the letter in his pocket and went in to lunch.

Well there were only the Lady Alicia and her governess Miss Nock at lunch, because his wife had run away from him some time ago and all his other children had been drowned or run over by motor cars. But they hadn't been very satisfactory because they had taken after their mother except the Lady Alicia, and she was so good that all the people in the village called her the Angel Child, and she had never been naughty in her life except once when she had stolen two snipes out of the larder and she wouldn't say what she had done with them, so he had given her a whipping and told her that it hurt him more than it did her, and then it had turned out that she had taken the snipes to a poor cripple in the village and Lord Mype wept over her, but she said he was not to grieve because she knew she was much more wicked than most children though it didn't often show up, and the whipping hadn't hurt her much because it was winter and she had a thick skirt on. So he adored her more than ever after that and made up his mind to be a better man because of her.

Well Lord Mype didn't talk much at lunch because he was watching the butler and wondering what he would say if he knew he was the rightful heir and not a butler at all. And the Lady Alicia said to him dear Papa you are more silent than your wont, do you think you are sickening for something?

And Miss Nock said I have noticed the same thing, do let me take your temperature Lord Mype.

Well Lord Mype couldn't bear Miss Nock because she was always trying to marry him, so he said don't fuss. And the Lady Alicia thought he had said it to her and burst into tears, and Miss Nock said for shame Lord Mype, if you cannot control yourself before the servants you should leave the room. And she sent the servants out of the room, and as he went out the butler said she will catch you before you know where you are Lord Mype, the day she marries you I leave your service.

Well Miss Nock didn't mind his rudeness because she knew he was almost mad with jealousy about her wanting to marry Lord Mype and pushing notes under the library door asking him to run away with her, and Lord Mype was thinking that if he only knew that he was really Lord Mype and not a butler at all he could be much ruder than that and nobody could say anything, and he was so depressed in his mind that he pushed away his plate of shepherd's pie and groaned.

And Miss Nock said my heart bleeds for you Lord Mype, why do you groan?

And he said well wouldn't you groan Miss Nock if you had just found out that you weren't Lord Mype and I was a butler?

Well she didn't understand it at first but when he told her about the letter she said excuse me but I must just go and fetch a handkerchief, and she went straight out of the room and ran away with the butler.

Well there was nobody to bring in the suet pudding and golden syrup until things had settled down a bit, but that gave the Lady Alicia time to go to Lord Mype and lay her head against his shoulder and say never mind dear Papa we will go out into the wide world together and I will beg for you. And Lord Mype thought it was more than he deserved and he shed some tears, but by the time some of the other servants brought in the pudding he had controlled himself. And he and

the Lady Alicia both had two helpings of the pudding because they didn't know when they would get their next meal.

Well before they left the building the Lady Alicia said I should like to read those letters dear Papa if you don't mind so as to be able to help you more in your tribulation. So she did that, and she came across one that he hadn't read, and it was quite true that he had been changed at birth by the butler's mother, but the next day her conscience had pricked her and she had changed him back again, so he was the rightful heir after all and could go on being Lord Mype.



And ran away with the Butler.

Well the next thing that happened was that Miss Nock wrote a letter from London to say that she was going to marry the butler that afternoon because she had loved him for a long time and couldn't bear not to be married to him any longer. And she didn't say anything about him being the rightful heir because she didn't want them to think she had married him for that, and of course Lord Mype knew she had, because he wasn't quite a fool, but he didn't say anything about it to the Lady Alicia because he thought it was bad for her to hear about things like that at her age. And Miss Nock ended up by sending her love to the Lady Alicia and saying that she was sorry she couldn't go on being governess to her any longer but she hoped they would get another one as good as she was and a good butler too.

And the Lady Alicia said I don't think I want another governess dear Papa, I will mind my book myself, shall we send those two letters to Miss Nock for a wedding present? she will be interested in them because they are about her husband when he was a little baby.

So Lord Mype did that, at least he sent her copies of them which he typed out himself because he thought it would be interesting to keep the others, and Miss Nock was very annoyed but she made the best of it and she and her husband took a lodging-house at Margate and Lord Mype and the Lady Alicia went to it sometimes when they wanted a little holiday, because they didn't believe in bearing malice.





THE SECRETARY

One evening when Mr. Broadstairs went home after his business his wife said to him why are you so late? I am sure you work too hard and there is no necessity for it because you are getting on so well in your business and are quite rich, I wish you would take it easier.

And Mr. Broadstairs said well I should like to, but things do get into such a muddle in the office, I have just spent a whole hour looking for an important letter which I had to answer and at last I remembered that I had folded it up and stuck it into the window to prevent it from rattling.

And Mrs. Broadstairs said well why don't you get a secretary to keep things tidy for you, and she could type your letters for you too because you write so badly that it is difficult to read them.

And he said yes I know I do, only last week I ordered twelve bales of wool and they sent me twelve bags of coal instead, it is very awkward and I sometimes think I shall have to retire from business, but I don't want to do that yet because then I should have to learn to play at golf.

So they talked it over and Mr. Broadstairs put an advertisement in the newspaper to say that he would pay good wages to a lady secretary who was tidy and not too young and could do typewriting, and they were to write to him first and send their photographs, because Mrs. Broadstairs said she would want to see what the secretary was like first, she could trust Mr. Broadstairs not to fall in love with her but if anybody said anything about it she could show them her photograph so that they could see there was no danger.

Well the morning after he had put the advertisement in the newspaper Mr. Broadstairs found about fifty letters waiting for him at his office from ladies who wanted to be his secretary, and there were a lot of business letters to answer too, and he wasn't feeling very well through his bacon disagreeing with him at breakfast. And he was wishing he could take it easier when the office boy came in and said Miss Fumb would like to see you sir.

And he said who is Miss Fumb and he said I don't know. And then Miss Fumb came in herself and she was carrying a typewriter, and she said to Mr. Broadstairs good morning I have come to help you answer your letters, you don't look very well so if you will just sit down in that armchair and take it easier I will open all the letters for you and get them into order, and then you can tell me what you would like to answer to them and I will type it out on this typewriter and all you will have to do is just to sign your name.

Well Mr. Broadstairs was rather surprised at this and he said do you want to come here as my secretary? And Miss Fumb said well that depends on whether I like you and whether you will pay me enough wages, but we needn't talk about that yet, what you want now is to take it easier, and I think a little dose of sal volatile will be a good thing for your hiccups, I will just send the office-boy round to the chemist's for it and by the time it comes I shall have got halfway through these letters.

So she went to tell the office-boy, and then she came back and sat down and began to open letters, and Mr. Broadstairs wasn't certain about it yet but he was glad to sit down in his armchair because he wasn't feeling at all well, and he thought to himself well at any rate it will save me the trouble of opening all those letters.

Well after Mr. Broadstairs had had his dose of sal volatile and wasn't hiccuping so often Miss Fumb said well I have opened all these letters and I think it is a pity you told them to send their photographs because all of them want them back except the ones who think they are rather pretty and they say you can keep them if you like. I will just write a nice little letter to each of them and say they won't do, and I will put it in the third person so you won't even have the trouble of signing the letters, it will take me some time and you can have a little nap while I am doing it if you like, but there are some business letters to attend to so we can do those now if you feel up to it.

Well Mr. Broadstairs did feel up to it by this time and he was glad not to have to trouble about the other letters, so he read his business letters and then he told Miss Fumb what to answer to them and she took it down in shorthand and

sometimes she said no I don't think that will do and he altered it without having to scratch out something which was a great advantage, and in about half an hour he had done what would have taken him all the morning if he had had to write his letters himself.

So then Miss Fumb said well I shan't want you any more till after lunch, if you would like to go out and do some business I will get these letters ready for you to sign, and after that we will have a good tidy up, but you needn't trouble about that, all you will have to do will be to sit in that armchair and tell me what you want saved and what can go into the waste-paper basket.

Well Mr. Broadstairs wasn't quite certain about it even yet, so instead of going out to do some business he thought he would go home to Ealing and tell Mrs. Broadstairs what had happened.

So he did that, and Mrs. Broadstairs was surprised to see him and she wasn't certain about Miss Fumb either when he told her, and she said how old is she?

And Mr. Broadstairs said oh I don't know, I suppose about twenty or thirty, and she said what is she like to look at? And he said well she is rather like MARY PICKFORD only taller.

So Mrs. Broadstairs said well then I don't think she will do, and you had better go back and tell her so, and he said oh I don't quite like to do that because she has been very useful to me, and she hasn't tried to make me fall in love with her or anything like that, couldn't you come and see her for yourself?

And Mrs. Broadstairs said very well I will, but you had better stay to lunch now you are here, there is minced veal and a nice batter-pudding.

So Mr. Broadstairs stayed to lunch and afterwards they both went back to his office by Underground, and there was Miss Fumb turning out the drawers of his writing-table and directly he saw her doing that Mr. Broadstairs said oh I didn't want you to do that, there are a lot of private letters in those drawers, how did you unlock them? And she said why you left the keys in one of the drawers, and then she said to Mrs. Broadstairs how do you do, I am glad I have come to be secretary to Mr. Broadstairs, he is a nice old thing but he wants looking after when he is away from you, I can't stay more than a year because I am engaged to be married to a bank-clerk, and we shall have enough money by that time, but when I go I can get him somebody else.

So Mrs. Broadstairs didn't think it mattered her being pretty as she was engaged to a bank-clerk, but she said to Mr. Broadstairs what are the private letters you keep here? And he didn't answer, but Miss Fumb said oh they are all about business and it doesn't matter me seeing them as I am quite confidential, but some of them weren't important so I burnt them. And then she showed Mr. Broadstairs how tidy she had made the drawers, and Mrs. Broadstairs looked at some of the letters in them but as they were all about business she didn't want to read them, and soon afterwards she went away, because she had to go out to tea at Acton.

Well directly she had gone Mr. Broadstairs said did you burn a packet of letters tied up with pink ribbon? And Miss Fumb said yes I did, I saw they were love letters and I didn't want them cluttering up the office.

And Mr. Broadstairs said well they were written forty years ago by a lady I was in love with but she married somebody else, and Miss Fumb said yes I know, I read one of them but it was so silly that I didn't go on, now if you will sign these letters I will send them to the post, and after that I will go and talk to your manager and see if he is keeping the books properly.



*I am glad I have come to be secretary to Mr.
Broadstairs.*

Well Mr. Broadstairs was pleased that she had burnt his love letters because he didn't really want them and he wouldn't have liked Mrs. Broadstairs to see them. And after that he found Miss Fumb so useful to him in his office that he was able to take it much easier, and he was always cheerful when he went home to Ealing after he had finished his business.

And Mrs. Broadstairs got quite fond of Miss Fumb and asked her to bring the bank-clerk to supper at Ealing on Sunday evening, and when ladies said to her I wouldn't let *my* husband have a secretary as pretty as that she said well perhaps not, but my husband is different and he has never loved anybody but me.





THE DICTATOR

Once there was a Dictator who was determined to have nobody but good people in his country, but as he couldn't expect to make everybody good all at once he told Parliament to pass a law that there must be at least one good person in every family or they would have to give up their house to somebody else, because there weren't enough houses to go round and the Dictator thought it would be a good start if there was at least one good person in each of them.

Well it was rather difficult to get it all arranged and there had to be a lot of Inspectors to go round and see about it. And one of the Inspectors went to the house of a family called Risotto, and he said I am sorry to have to turn you out because if you have to give up this house you won't be able to get another one and I'm sure I don't know what you will do, but you are such a dreadful lot that I don't see how I can help myself.

And Mr. Risotto said why what is the matter with us? we are as good as anybody else and I pay my rent regularly.

The Inspector said yes but how do you pay it?

And he said well I pay it out of what I make by taking clocks and fur-rugs and things like that out of motor-cars and selling them, and if I am caught I am quite ready to go to prison for it, so what is the objection?

The Inspector said well I don't know, but you can't call it good exactly can you? And your wife takes in washing and often keeps back things and says they were lost in the wash when all the time you or one of your children are wearing them.

Mr. Risotto said well we can't go about without anything on can we? I think the Dictator is very unreasonable and it is quite time somebody assassinated him.

The Inspector said now that is just the sort of thing he doesn't like people saying, and if I were to repeat it to him you would get into trouble, but as I am sorry for you I shall say nothing about it. If only one of your children were good he might let you go on living in this house, but I have asked the neighbours about them and they say they are perfectly awful. Your little boy steals milk-bottles that are put outside front-doors, one of your little girls falls down just in front of ladies coming out of shops so that they can't help tripping over her, and the other one snatches their bags and runs away with them before they have time to get up. So you can't call any of your children good can you?

Mr. Risotto said well two of them perhaps you can't, but there is no law against falling down on the pavement, or if there is I have never heard of it. But there are so many new laws now that you can't keep them all in your head.

The Inspector said well I haven't time to go into all that, and as you can't point to one single member of your family who could pass the easiest examination in goodness I am afraid you will have to go.

Mr. Risotto said well wait a minute, what about William?

The Inspector said who is William? and he said well he is a member of my family, and he is so good that he goes on loving you even when you kick him for something he hasn't done, and he has never told a lie in his life, and if anybody tried to hurt any of us he would go on fighting them even if they were much bigger than he was and nearly killed him. Now does the Dictator call that good or not?

The Inspector said well I haven't had time to get up all the rules but I should think he would, is William your nephew?

Mr. Risotto said no he is our Sealyham, there he is wagging his tail at you, and that shows how good he is because you have come here to turn us out of our house, and yet he likes you and is returning good for evil.

Well the Inspector didn't quite know what to say about it, and there wasn't anything about Sealyhams in his book of rules, but William was really a member of Mr. Risotto's family because he slept on his bed and had his meals with them.

only on the floor instead of the table, and he never drank beer or whisky which the Dictator thought there was too much of and wanted to do away with. So he said he would ask the Dictator about it and perhaps it would be all right but he couldn't say for certain.

So he asked him about it, and the Dictator said well I wasn't thinking of Sealyhams when I made up the law but I want to be fair all round so that the newspapers can't say I am a tyrant, so I will let it count this time but not again.

So Mr. Risotto was allowed to stay in his house and he became quite famous because soon afterwards the Dictator made a speech about him and his Sealyham, and he said it ought to make people ashamed that very few of them were as good as dogs were although they had so many more advantages, especially living in a country where there was a Dictator who wanted them to be good more than anything else, and they had better look out for themselves if they weren't.

Well Mr. Risotto knew he had had rather a narrow escape so he thought he had better turn over a new leaf, and he told his wife and children that they were to do it too. And first of all he was rather annoyed with William for being better than they were and kicked him for it. And William gave a yelp because it hurt him, but then he wagged his tail and licked Mr. Risotto's hand so as to show him that he didn't bear him any malice. And Mr. Risotto said to his wife and children there now see that, it is quite true what the Dictator said in his speech, William is much better than you are though he hasn't had your advantages, and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves that you are not so good as a dog, and if I ever catch you doing anything wrong again I shall give you a good welting.

And Mrs. Risotto said yes that's all very well but how are we going to live? and he said why do some honest work, look at William, he doesn't steal ladies' bags and keep things back out of the wash.

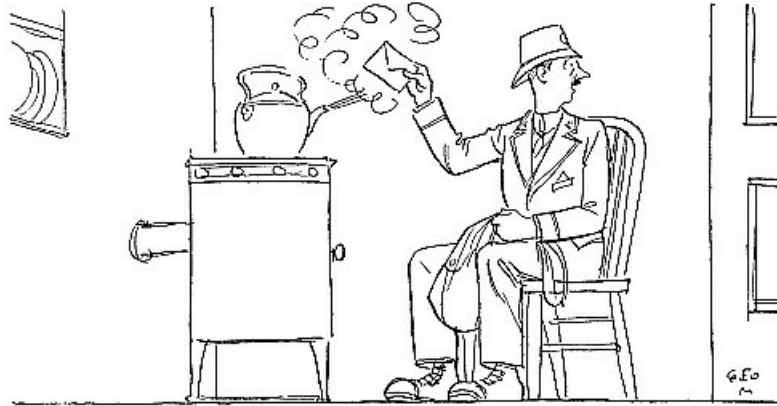
Mrs. Risotto said no and he doesn't take clocks and fur-rugs out of motor cars either, what are *you* going to do? And he said you wait and see.



William is much better than you are.

Well what Mr. Risotto did was to sell Sealyhams and other dogs to people who wanted to have them because of what the Dictator had said in his speech about dogs, because they were ashamed of being worse than dogs and a lot of them wanted to keep them so that they could see how they behaved. And at first he stole the dogs, but after he had had several litters of puppies he grew ashamed of that because he knew William would never have done it, and he became known for being as honest as a dog-dealer could be. And the Dictator heard of it and sent him a letter to say how pleased he was to hear that he had turned over a new leaf and was helping other people to do it by selling them a good class of dog.

So Mr. Risotto had the letter framed and hung up in his shop, and after that more people bought dogs of him than ever especially Sealyhams because of William, and he grew quite rich. And the people got so much better in their behaviour that the Dictator had to see about having a lot more houses built, because the Inspectors couldn't find enough bad people to turn out of the old ones.



XVIII

THE POSTMAN

Once there was a postman called Hector Bolsover who started by being quite honest, but one day he saw a postal order for ten shillings in an envelope that had come unstuck, and he happened to want an extra ten shillings just then because he owed for an instalment on a gramophone he had bought on the hire-system, so he tore up the letter and stole the postal order. And after that he often used to steal postal orders, because he got clever at feeling envelopes to see if there were any inside them, and he used to steam open the envelopes over a kettle, and sometimes he stuck them up again after he had stolen the postal order and sent them on, and sometimes he tore them up. And he made quite a lot of extra money out of doing this, but he didn't spend it on beer or horse-races or anything like that, but on buying nice clothes for his children and on a wireless set. And the Vicar often used to tell people what a nice home he had and say that he wished there were more people in his parish like him.

Well of course it couldn't go on for ever like that without its being found out, and one morning the postmaster called Hector Bolsover into his office and he said do you mind telling me how many postal orders you have stolen within the last month, because I am making up my accounts and I don't want to have any mistakes in them.

And Hector Bolsover was so surprised at this that he told him, and the postmaster said thank you, I wish you hadn't taken to stealing postal orders because I was doing it myself before you began on it, and it is more likely to be found out if two people are doing it than one.

Well Hector Bolsover thought it was perfectly awful for a postmaster to be so dishonest as that, and he said I should never have thought it of you, I have a good mind to tell the Vicar.

And the postmaster said well why not? I always like to do people a good turn if I can, and you and I have always got on well together, if you put it all on to me nobody will think that you have been stealing postal orders too, and I shan't mind myself because I shan't be here.

And Hector Bolsover said why not? And he said oh because a policeman is coming here to-morrow to take me to prison, I opened a letter which told me all about it, so I thought I had better go to America before he came, only I thought I should like to leave everything in order here, except the money I have stolen, and that is why I mentioned the subject to you. It is rather funny that there should be two dishonest persons in this post-office because in most post-offices there isn't even one.

Well that made Hector Bolsover see what a wicked man he was to be a thief and not to think more of it than that, and he said what have you done with all the money you have stolen, have you been gambling on race-horses?

And he said oh yes, that and other things, and I have done very well out of it or else I shouldn't have enough money to go to America with.

And Hector Bolsover said well I hope you will lead an honest life when you get there. And he said oh no I shan't. I shall go on stealing, I haven't done much work lately, but I would much rather do none at all and that is the best way. But don't you worry about me, it is you I am thinking of. Your wife was very kind to me when I had my appendix out, and I should like to do her a good turn. I shall leave a letter recommending you to be postmaster instead of me, and I shall say I have always found you quite honest.

Well Hector Bolsover was pleased to hear this, and he was so shocked at finding the postmaster had been a thief all the time that he forgot he hadn't really been very honest himself, and he said well there is one thing I would never do and that is to gamble on race-horses, so if I tell them that perhaps they will be all the more likely to make me postmaster.



I wish you hadn't taken to stealing postal orders.

And the postmaster said yes I should think they would. Well give my love to Mrs. Bolsover and the children, I am sorry I can't look in to say good-bye to them but I have got all my packing to do. And you might tell the Vicar that I should have been more dishonest still if it hadn't been for him. I don't suppose I should, but he is a nice old thing and it will please him.

Well of course there was a great fuss made when it was found out how dishonest the postmaster had been, especially as he had taken all the money there was in the post office that day as well as what he had stolen before. And he didn't leave everything in order as he had said he would but burnt all his papers before he went away. And he didn't go to America either because he knew they would look for him on the steamers, but skipped away somewhere else and they never caught him. But a few years later there came a letter from him to the Vicar from Spain to say that he had been found out doing something dishonest and had been sent to prison for it, and would he send him some nice books to read.

Well by that time Hector Bolsover had been postmaster for some time, and everybody said he was a great improvement on the old one because he never gambled on horse-races and he was bringing up his family so well that everybody in the place was proud of them, and he was so honest that people were sure of getting their postal orders now even if they were sent in envelopes that came unstuck. And the Vicar was rather old by this time, but he often used to say that it was a great comfort to him to think they had such an honest postmaster and he wished he could say the same of everybody else in his parish.

Well this was all very well, and Hector Bolsover was pleased with himself for having turned out so honest after all. But it began to prey on him to remember all the postal orders he had stolen when he had been a postman, and presently he went to the Vicar and said I have got something on my conscience, I can't very well tell you what it is but I think the best way will be for me to leave off being a postmaster and go back to being a postman again and then I shall feel more comfortable.

And the Vicar said well will your wife and children feel more comfortable? because you ought to think of that as you won't be earning so much money.

And he said well the children are grown up now and they are all doing well and there will be enough for me and my wife to live on, I think I had better do it if you approve.

So the Vicar approved and Hector Bolsover became a postman again. And at first he found it rather difficult not to

steal postal orders but he soon got over that, and the Vicar told people what he was doing it for, though he didn't tell them exactly what he had done wrong because he didn't know himself.

And everybody was very interested, and they were proud of having Hector Bolsover as their postman because he was getting fairly old now with a white beard and no other town had one like him. And they gave him such good Christmas boxes that he made almost as much money as he had made when he had been a postmaster. And he felt much happier because he hadn't got nearly so much on his conscience.



THE BUTCHER

Once there was a butcher called Mr. Pickalow, and he quite enjoyed being a butcher after he had once got over killing animals which he didn't like at first because he was very kind-hearted, but he said to himself well somebody has got to do it, and he was always very humane about it and any animal he got fond of he told his assistants to kill.

Well Mrs. Pickalow was rather a tedious woman, and she was always changing her religion or the furniture in her drawing-room or her servants, because they got tired of never knowing what she wanted them to do next, and one day she said to Mr. Pickalow I think it is perfectly disgusting eating animals and I am going to be a vegetarian.

And Mr. Pickalow said very well honey you please yourself, because he was quite fond of her although she was so tedious, and he never argued with her.

But she liked arguing, and she said you know you wouldn't like it yourself if you were an animal, and I think we ought to do as we would be done by.

And Mr. Pickalow laughed at her, and he said well you wouldn't like to be eaten if you were a vegetable would you? So I don't think there is anything in that, vegetables were made to be eaten and so were animals.

And she said cats weren't or dromedaries, and how do you know that any animals were? You ought to be a vegetarian yourself.

And he said how can a butcher be a vegetarian? Supposing I were to tell my customers that I thought it was disgusting to eat animals they would be sure to say well then it is disgusting of you to cut them up and sell them for eating. And she said well so it is.

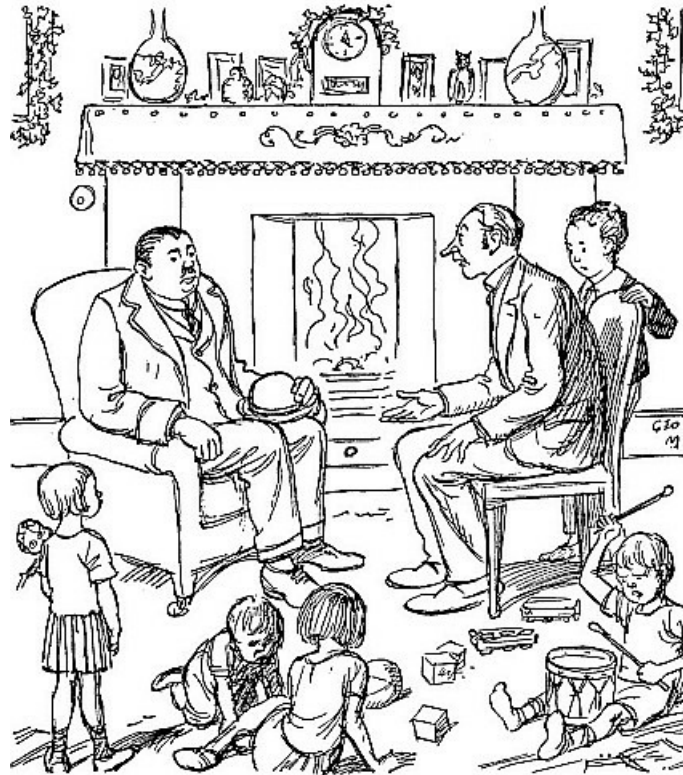
Well it didn't really suit Mrs. Pickalow being a vegetarian and she got very bad-tempered and peevish, and it was very uncomfortable for Mr. Pickalow but he went on being kind to her, the only thing he wouldn't do was to be a vegetarian himself, and when he was eating a nice beefsteak or something like that and she was only eating cabbages or brussel sprouts she could hardly bear it. And she pretended it was because she thought it was so disgusting of him, but he knew it was really because what he was eating smelt so good and she wanted to eat some of it herself but she wouldn't because she was so obstinate. So he didn't answer her back when she was nasty to him but made it up to her in other ways, and he bought her a china box for her powder puff made to imitate a cauliflower, but she only threw it out of her bedroom window and didn't even say thank you.

Well at last it got so bad that Mr. Pickalow didn't even enjoy himself at Christmas time when he stuck rosettes on his prize bullocks, and Mrs. Pickalow had hysterics when he was eating turkey and sausages and said he was like a great bullock himself and she wondered he didn't grow horns. And his Christmas was very miserable, and he wished they had some children so that they could have a Christmas tree for them and put presents in their stockings, and then perhaps Mrs. Pickalow wouldn't be so awful. Still he was sorry for her, and he told the cook to put plenty of suet into the Christmas pudding, and she was a little better when she had had three helpings of it and some mince pies, and after dinner he said she had better lie down, and he tucked her up and kissed her and went out for a walk.

Well he came to where a friend of his called Mr. Winklebody lived, and Mr. Winklebody was a market gardener, so he thought he was just the man to advise him about vegetarians and he went in to talk to him about it. And Mr. Winklebody had several children and they were all enjoying themselves very much after their Christmas dinner, and they were glad to see Mr. Pickalow who was the godfather of Jacob Winklebody the eldest boy, and he had sent them their turkey for a Christmas present. So he was quite cheered up but he wished more than ever that he had some children of his own and that Mrs. Pickalow was less peevish.

Well he told Mr. Winklebody all about it before he went home and he said what can I do? And Mr. Winklebody said well I don't see that you can do anything unless you would like to exchange businesses with me, I am sick and tired of

growing vegetables, there is so much stooping about it, and I have never been able to eat as much meat as I should like to because it is so expensive, if I were a butcher I suppose I shouldn't have to stint myself in that should I?



Mr. Winklebody had several children.

And Mr. Pickalow said oh no, you could eat as much as you like of what is left over from the shop, but I don't know that I should like to give up being a butcher, I do enjoy it so, and besides you don't make a quarter as much money in your business as I do in mine.

And Mr. Winklebody said well of course there is that, but what I always say is anything for a quiet life, and if it will make Mrs. Pickalow less tedious it might be worth it.

And Mr. Pickalow said well it might but I doubt it. But he was so kind-hearted that by the time he got home again he thought he would do it. And he said to himself I suppose I shall be very miserable not being a butcher any longer, but then I am rather miserable now so what does it matter? Anyhow it will please her and perhaps she will be less peevish.

But it didn't please Mrs. Pickalow at all when he told her, and she said what go and live out in the country away from the shops and the cinemas and only keep one servant and not have any money to spend, you are a brute to think of such a thing and I shall divorce you.

Well Mr. Pickalow didn't often lose his temper but he lost it now, and he took Mrs. Pickalow by the shoulders and shook her, but not very hard, and he said I have had enough of it, get up off that bed and come downstairs, and he went out of the room.

And she was so surprised at his shaking her and speaking to her like that that she thought she had better obey him, and she went downstairs. And he heard her coming and met her at the bottom of the staircase with his blue apron on and a knife in his hand, and he said to her go into the drawing-room.

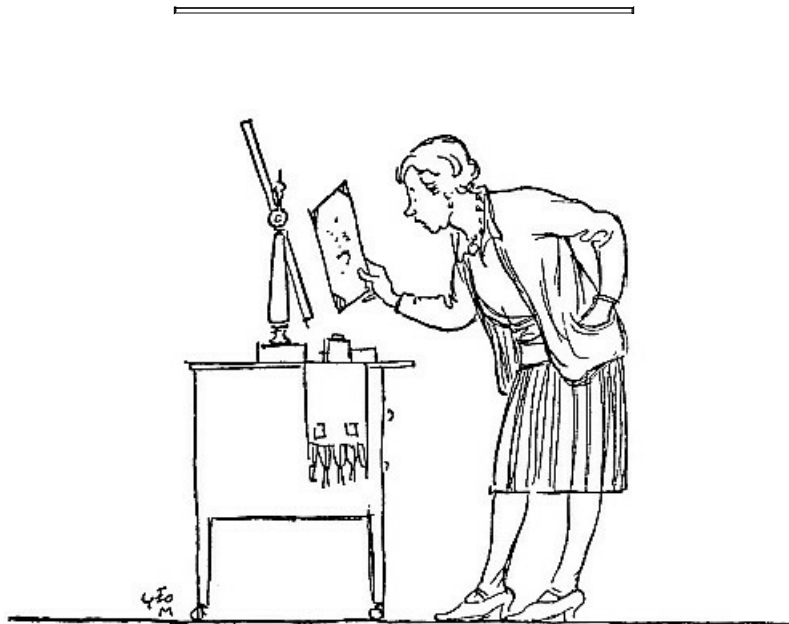
And she was frightened and said are you going to murder me? And he said I don't know yet, go into the drawing-room and don't come out till I tell you.

Well in about a quarter-of-an-hour he opened the door and said to her come into the dining-room. So she did that, and there was the Christmas dinner all laid out again, except that the turkey was cold, and Mr. Pickalow carved several slices and gave them to her on a plate. And he said to her eat that.

Well she was too frightened of him to make any objection, and she was so pleased to be eating turkey again although

it was cold that by the time she had finished the plateful she was quite amiable.

And that was the end of her being a vegetarian, and now that Mr. Pickalow had found out the proper way to treat her she got much less changeable in her ideas and did what he thought would be good for her instead of a lot of silly things that she would be sorry for afterwards. And they were both quite happy together again, and soon after that they had a little girl called Rosemary, and then three boys and then four more girls. And Mr. Pickalow got on so well in his business through being honest and always selling good meat that he was able to make all three of his boys butchers when they grew up as well as his godson Jacob Winklebody. And Mrs. Pickalow was quite pleased about it and said she would rather have her sons butchers like their father than anything else even clergymen.



THE BLOTTING-PAD

One day Mrs. Seedling was going round the spare rooms in her house to see if anybody had left something behind, because she had had several friends staying with her for the week-end, and people sometimes did leave things behind and then she would send them on to them with a polite note. But she didn't find anything this time except a diamond ring that somebody had dropped in the bathroom, and she thought she might as well keep that until it was inquired for because it just fitted her third finger. But when she came to the room that Miss Willibond had slept in she looked at the blotting-pad, and there were some marks there of a letter that Miss Willibond must have written because there hadn't been any marks there before, and she thought she would like to know what the letter had been about.

So she held the blotting-pad up to the looking-glass, and what do you think she read in it? Of course she couldn't read it quite all, but at the end was written Mrs. Seedling cheats at bridge no time for more she is a thief love from Polly.

Well it made Mrs. Seedling simply furious that people should come and stay in her house and be just as comfortable as if they were staying in an expensive hotel and not have to pay anything for it and then write about her like that, and she sat down then and there and wrote a letter to Miss Willibond to tell her what she really thought of her, which wasn't much. And she felt better after it, but when she had finished the letter she said to herself well of course I did cheat at bridge because I think it is such a dull game if you don't, and I always do at patience so as to make it come out, but I didn't know that anybody had noticed it, perhaps I had better say nothing about it. So she tore up the letter, and then she said to herself perhaps I had better not keep the diamond ring because people might misunderstand that, I know it belongs to Mrs. Brimtop, I saw her wearing it, and if I send it back to her at once with a polite note nobody can say I stole it.

So she did that, and Mrs. Brimtop wrote her a nice letter back, and she said she was very glad to have the ring again because it had been given her by somebody she had been very fond of, but he had married somebody else soon after and she didn't think the marriage had been at all a happy one. And she ended up by saying how honest Mrs. Seedling was and she wished everybody was like her, especially Miss Willibond.

Well that made Mrs. Seedling think, and she wrote another letter to Mrs. Brimtop and said what do you mean about Polly Willibond, if I thought she wasn't honest she should never come to my house again, because I hate that more than anything and should never think of being dishonest myself.

Well the next morning Mrs. Seedling had a letter from Miss Willibond, and she said in it please excuse me for not writing before to say how much I enjoyed myself, I didn't write because I didn't enjoy myself at all, you could just eat the food without being sick and the wine wasn't bad because of course you drink such a lot of it yourself, but the bed was so uncomfortable that I should think you must have moved it out of one of the servants' bedrooms because no servant would stay in a house with beds like that, and I know the bath salts were the cheapest you could buy anywhere and made the water smell of carbolic, I suppose you like that sort of thing yourself, but I don't because I can keep nice without it.

Well nobody could have written a much ruder letter than that, and Mrs. Seedling was so angry about it that she wrote back to Miss Willibond without waiting for Mrs. Brimtop's letter, and she said to her I know you cheat at bridge because I have received a complaint about it, and you had better be careful or you will find yourself in prison.



Well it made Mrs. Seedling simply furious.

Well the very next morning there came another letter from Mrs. Brimtop and in it she said I didn't mean that Miss Willibond was a cheat or anything like that, but while we were staying with you she said you were a thief and I was angry with her and said you were an old friend of mine and if you had been a thief I was sure I should have heard of it before. So then she said very well I will write something about her being a cheat and a thief and blot it on the blotting-pad in my bedroom, she is sure to go nosing round directly we have gone away, and of course she will read what I have written in a looking-glass, and we shall see what she does about it. And I said I would drop a diamond ring in the bathroom and see what you did about that, and I knew it was rather risky but if you didn't send it back I could always write for it, and besides the diamonds weren't real ones.

So then Mrs. Seedling was glad she had been so honest over the ring, and she thought if she sent Miss Willibond a postal-order for one shilling and threepence, which she had cheated her out of at bridge and say that it had been a mistake it would all blow over. But before she could do that a policeman came to take her up for calling Miss Willibond a cheat and for stealing one and threepence from her.

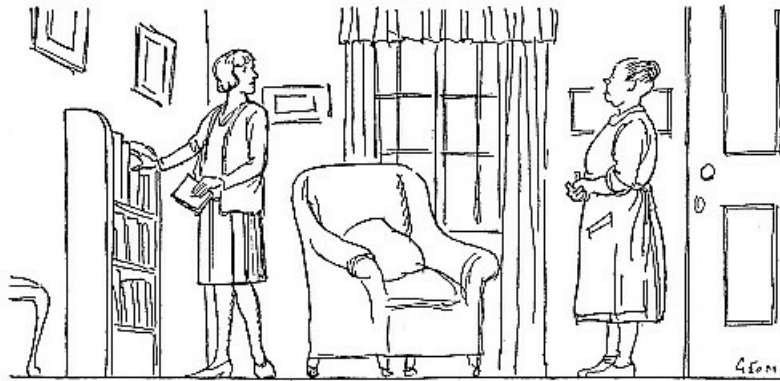
Well there had to be a trial, and the judge was rather against Mrs. Seedling at first because he said he didn't like the gambling that went on at her house, and he thought she ought to be ashamed of herself for reading people's private letters by holding up blotting-pads in front of looking-glasses. And he said he was afraid he should have to send her to prison for a short time just to teach her a lesson, but he shouldn't put her on bread and water because he was sure she had yielded to a sudden temptation over the one-and-threepence.

But when Miss Willibond's letter was read out he quite changed over, and when it was proved that Mrs. Seedling had once lent Miss Willibond several pounds to buy a typewriter with and hadn't asked for it back he said he had never known a worse case in all his experience. And when Mrs. Brimtop got up and told about the diamond ring he turned to the jury and said I wonder how many of you would send back diamond rings that people had dropped in your bathrooms.

So he sentenced Miss Willibond to several years' hard labour, but Mrs. Seedling broke down and cried at that, and she said she had been at school with Miss Willibond and couldn't bear to think of her doing hard labour, and she would freely forgive her for the typewriter and pay her back the one-and-threepence besides. So then the judge broke down, and the jury broke down too, and even the people who wrote about trials for the newspapers broke down, and the end of it was that everybody left the court without a stain on their characters.

And Mrs. Seedling invited the judge and Miss Willibond and Mrs. Brimtop to stay with her over the week-end, and

they played bridge for love, and Mrs. Seedling won all the rubbers because she could cheat now without having anything on her conscience.



THE JOINT OF MEAT

One morning Mrs. Gorrilow's cook came to her and said the butcher hasn't sent the joint of meat and he promised faithfully we should have it before eleven o'clock so that I could cook it in time for dinner, I'm sure I don't know what people are like in this place, they don't seem to mind telling lies and I am not used to that, so I wish to give notice.

Well Mr. Gorrilow was a clergyman and he had just settled in at a new vicarage, and he and Mrs. Gorrilow and the cook and the house-parlourmaid whose name was Bolt and the nurse had all worked as hard as they could to get everything nice by Saturday so that Mr. Gorrilow could write his sermon in peace and none of them should have anything to do on Sunday which was a day of rest, and they always had dinner in the middle of the day because of the children, and now there was no meat in the house.

Well Mrs. Gorrilow's father had been a colonel and she wasn't quite so much used to controlling herself as if she had always belonged to clergymen but she had done her best, and while they had all been arranging the furniture and putting things away she had really been very sweet-tempered to everybody though the cook had been very trying and had kept on saying that it had been a mistake to leave the old vicarage where the kitchen range had been much better and she had known where to lay her hand on everything. And one thing that Mrs. Gorrilow didn't want was for her to give notice before they had got thoroughly settled, because she was a good cook and fairly economical and she didn't know where to get another one. So she had been extra nice to her but it had told on her temper inside, and when the cook gave notice because of the joint of meat not coming she nearly threw a book called *The Rosary* at her which she was putting away in a bookshelf, she was so angry. But before she could do anything there came a ring at the back-door and the cook said perhaps that's him and went out of the room.

Well Mrs. Gorrilow was pleased that she hadn't lost her temper with the cook but she thought it wouldn't do any harm if she lost it with the butcher just to show him that he couldn't behave anyhow, so she went out after her, and when the back door was opened there was a man standing there with a joint of meat in a basket, and she was rather short-sighted but she could see it wasn't the sirloin of beef which she always ordered for Saturday so that they could have it cold on Sunday and the cook could go to church and only have the potatoes to do when she came back.



She quite forgot she was married to a clergyman.

Well she really couldn't stand any more, so she snatched the joint of meat out of the basket and threw it at the man's head, and it was a leg of something all covered with hair, and that just finished it off, and she told the man what she thought of him and of his master, and while she was doing it she quite forgot that she was married to a clergyman and talked more as if her husband had been a colonel who hadn't got to be so particular about his language. And she was so upset that when she had finished what she had to say she rushed upstairs to her bedroom and locked the door and threw herself on her bed and cried. And that might have done her some good, but she couldn't do it for long because the cook followed her upstairs and knocked at the door and when she found it was locked she called out I shan't stay in this place any longer, I am not used to such ways, the butcher has sent us the leg of a goat, I believe he is a Dissenter and I have left it lying where you threw it.

So Mrs. Gorrilow had to dry her eyes and get up and go and see about it, and she felt she wasn't ready for that yet, so she was very glad when her husband came out of his study as she got downstairs and she could tell him about it, because he was a very kind man and always nice to everybody, and even Mrs. Gorrilow's father had liked him though he would rather she had married a major or a captain.

Well when she told him about it he said he didn't wonder she was a little overwrought with all she had been doing, perhaps it would have been better not to throw the joint of meat at the man's head but as she hadn't hit him with it no great harm had been done and they would live it down together. And she said couldn't you ask the cook to stay? I would rather you did it because I am not quite myself yet. And he said he would, and she was to go upstairs and lie down for half-an-hour and he would see to everything.

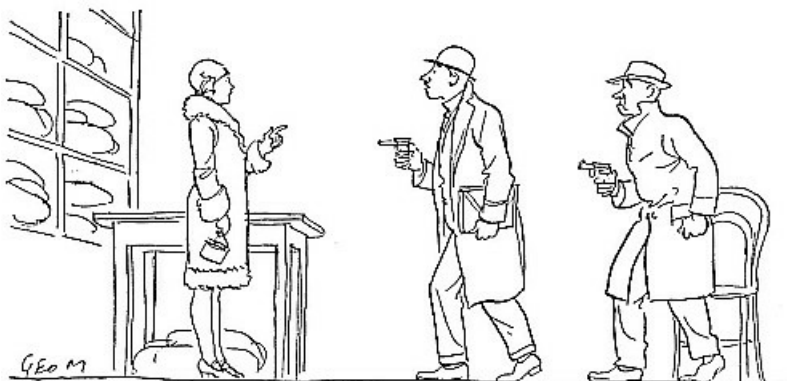
Well it was rather more difficult than he had thought it would be because the cook was upset, and when she was like that she always had a great deal to say. But he let her say it and agreed with all he could of it without forgetting that he was a clergyman, especially about the kitchen range, and he said he didn't know what they should do if she went because the children were so fond of her, so she was melted and said she would overlook it this time and stay.

So then they went out to look at the joint of meat which was still lying in the yard, and directly Mr. Gorrilow saw it he said why it is a piece of venison, and he picked it up and took it back to the kitchen. And just then Bolt the house-parlourmaid came in with her outdoor things on, because she had gone down to the village to post letters and to buy a few new dishcloths, and the moment she came in she said I wish to give notice, Mrs. Gorrilow has thrown the hind leg of a stag at my young man and I don't hold with such goings-on.

Well then it all came out, and what had happened was that Lord Furlong who was the chief gentleman in the village and lived in a very big house with a park had shot one of his private deer and sent parts of it to several of his friends to eat, and he had told his chauffeur to take some of it to Mrs. Gorrilow with a polite note to say that he hoped they were getting on well with their move and that he and Lady Furlong would come and call on them directly they were settled in. And Bolt had already begun to walk out with the chauffeur who had met her in the village and told her what had happened.

So Mr. Gorrilow thought the best thing was for him and Mrs. Gorrilow to go and make a clean breast of it to Lord Furlong. So they did that, and Lord Furlong laughed so much at it that Lady Furlong had to thump him on the back to prevent him choking. And it turned out that he had known Mrs. Gorrilow's father, and he took to her and to Mr. Gorrilow too, and Lady Furlong took to them and to the children, because she hadn't any of her own. So they were all very happy together afterwards, and the only thing that Mrs. Gorrilow found a little tedious was that Lord Furlong laughed every time he saw her about her throwing the joint of meat at his chauffeur and at what she had said about him, and they couldn't talk about anything else until he had finished with it.

And Lord Furlong provided the vicarage with a new kitchen range, so the cook was quite pleased and stayed on, and Bolt stayed on too because she didn't want to be parted from her young man, and Lord Furlong made it all right with him for having had a joint of meat thrown at his head, and he was quite satisfied and joined the choir.



THE HOLD-UP

Miss Bargain was telephone operator at the Romeo and Juliet Laundry, and one Friday evening just as she was ready to go home a ring came at the telephone and when she had said Hullo a very gentlemanly voice said pardon me are you the Romeo and Juliet Laundry? And when she said she was it said well pardon me for interrupting you but my name is Mr. Fruggin and I am Private Secretary to Lord Jones of Mwlch, and could you possibly let him have back the dress-shirt we sent to the laundry on Monday this evening instead of to-morrow, because he has been asked to go and have dinner with the Lord Mayor of London and we find that his other one is frayed at the cuffs, so if you could kindly oblige just for once we should be obliged.

And Miss Bargain said well how do you spell his name? because so many lords and people like that send their washing to this laundry that I shall have to look it up.

And he told her how to spell Jones but he said you wouldn't believe me if I told you how to spell Mwlch, it is one of those new Welsh titles, but it begins with an M and you can easily look it up.

Well Miss Bargain liked his way of speaking and she said on the telephone we always like to oblige people in this laundry, but it is rather awkward because everybody is just going home now and I don't know who I could send with the dress-shirt, I couldn't bring it myself because I am going to be taken to the Cinema to-night and I must go home and make myself look nice.

And Mr. Fruggin said oh I shouldn't think of troubling you to do that, I would come myself in a motor car to fetch the dress-shirt if you are sure you can find it for me.

And Miss Bargain said well I couldn't be certain of finding the right one but we have hundreds of dress-shirts here belonging to other gentlemen and you could choose one that fitted, and if there is any trouble about it afterwards we can say the matter will be looked into.

And he said well I have always heard that the Romeo and Juliet Laundry was the most obliging of all laundries, and I am sure I am very much obliged, I will be round in about ten minutes, pardon me for asking but shall you be quite alone?

Well Miss Bargain said she would, but afterwards she was rather sorry she had said that because Mr. Fruggin had sounded very gentlemanly and she rather wanted to see what he looked like, but she didn't want to be kidnapped or anything like that, and besides she thought it wouldn't be quite nice to be talking about shirts with a gentleman all alone. So she rang up the young gentleman who was going to take her to the Cinema, whose name was Mr. Priddo, and asked him if he would come round at once and fetch her. And Mr. Priddo said he would, because he was in love with Miss Bargain and she had never let him fetch her from the Romeo and Juliet Laundry before, much less asked him to.

Well almost directly afterwards she heard a motor car outside, and then two men came into the office with pistols in their hands, and the first of them said pardon me Miss but my friend and I would like to open your safe and take away the money that is there for paying wages to-morrow.

Well Miss Bargain was rather frightened, but she didn't shriek out or swoon or anything like that because she was made of sterner stuff, and she said are you Mr. Fruggin who rang me up just now about Lord Jones of Mwlch's dress-shirt?

And he said yes I am, pardon me for the liberty, I don't really know Lord Jones of Mwlch though I am quite friendly with some other lords, I have brought you a box of chocolates because your voice sounded so nice on the telephone.

And Miss Bargain said I don't want your chocolates or your compliments either, and you can't open the safe because it is locked with a patent key and you haven't got the combination.

And he said have you got it? and she said no.

And the man who was with him laughed and said as this is a laundry I should have thought you would have had plenty of combinations. But Mr. Fruggin was quite angry with him and said how dare you be so coarse in the presence of this lady? And he said to Miss Bargain if you will kindly give me the name and address of the gentleman who has the combination my assistant will go and fetch him in the motor car, and while he is away I should like you to take me over the laundry if you don't mind, because I have always thought I should like to see the place where they fray collars.

Well Miss Bargain didn't want to take him over the laundry because she knew that Mr. Priddo would come into the office where they were, so she said I would rather we stayed here and asked each other riddles, and I think I should like one of your chocolates after all as I am rather hungry.

Well Mr. Fruggin was pleased at this, because she smiled at him when she said it and she was really looking quite pretty although she was wearing her everyday clothes that she telephoned in and had only had time just to attend to her face and comb her hair, and he thought she might be falling in love with him. So he said very well that will suit me better still, pardon me but when is a door not a door?

So then they began asking each other riddles, and Miss Bargain had heard all his before but she pretended that she hadn't and laughed when he told her the answers, and Mr. Fruggin began to fall in love with her himself and to wish that he wasn't quite so dishonest. And he put his pistol down on the table, but some way off Miss Bargain, and kept on handing her chocolate-creams.

Well at last Miss Bargain asked him a really funny riddle about an elephant and a mangle, and when she told him the answer he leant back in his chair and laughed, and then she suddenly looked past him and said Hullo Ernest you *are* late.

So he jumped up and looked round, and she reached over the table and caught hold of the pistol and pointed it at his head, and she said sit still where you are, Ernest isn't here yet but he soon will be.



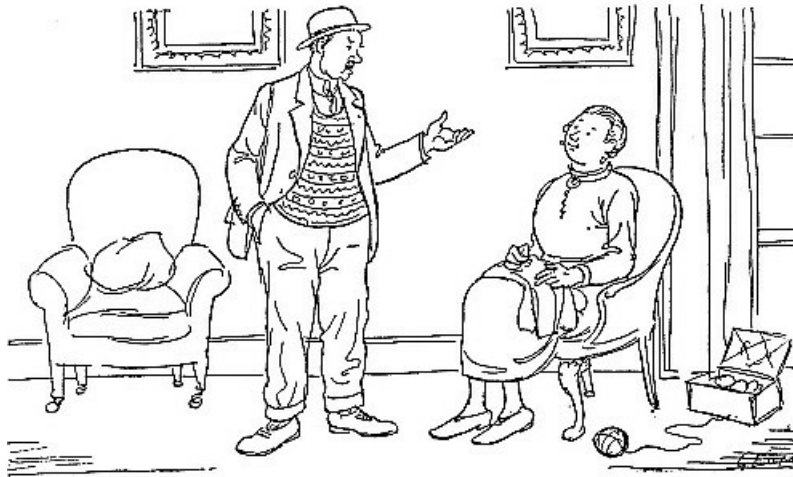
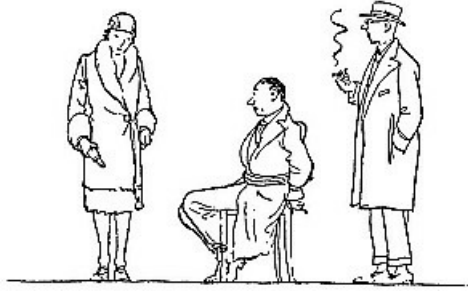
And she said sit still where you are.

Well at that very minute Mr. Priddo came into the room and heard her call him Ernest, which made him all the more in love with her, and Miss Bargain told him to keep Mr. Fruggin quiet while she went and fetched some rope which was used for keeping old washing-baskets together. And when she came back with it they tied Mr. Fruggin to his chair, and all he could say was that he hadn't known Miss Bargain was like that.

And Miss Bargain said well you know it now, and she went out and telephoned to the police, and when the other man came back with the gentleman who had the combination for the safe they took them both off to prison.

Well there was a trial, and the judge complimented Miss Bargain on the way she had behaved and said he should have much pleasure in giving her half the money they had made that morning out of fining motorists for a wedding-present, because it had come out that she was engaged to Mr. Priddo now. And he let Mr. Fruggin off lightly because he had been polite to Miss Bargain and promised to lead an honest life in the future. But he gave his assistant several years' penal servitude when it came out about his being coarse in his behaviour to a lady.

And Lord Jones of Mwlc'h was very angry at his name being brought into it, and especially because Mr. Fruggin had said that he only had two dress-shirts. And he wrote a letter to *The Times* newspaper to say that he had at least four dress-shirts and could afford to buy plenty more if he wanted to. But they didn't put in his letter and he was so annoyed that he bought six more dress-shirts and joined the Labour Party.



THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

One evening Mr. Howkerby came home to his wife and said to her I think the luck has changed at last and I have got a very good contract for building several bridges to go across the River Potomosi.

And Mrs. Howkerby said where is the River Potomosi, I have never heard of it. And he said well it wouldn't be quite fair to tell you that until the contract is signed as it is all very confidential, it isn't quite settled yet but they told me to-day that if my references were satisfactory I should get the contract, and I am sure they will be satisfactory, one of them is the Vicar and as I always go to church once every Sunday except when I am not very well or want to play golf he will give me a good character.

And Mrs. Howkerby said how much shall we get out of it, there are several things I should like to buy if you get the contract, some of the face-towels have holes in them and I should like to have a new fish-kettle. And he said well I haven't worked it out to pounds shillings and pence yet, but I should think it would come to about a million pounds, but I shouldn't buy anything new if I were you until it is quite settled because I believe in being cautious. And she said she wouldn't, because she had always been a good wife to him and had saved all the money she could when people didn't want bridges built and he had had to do quite little things instead, like putting down crazy pavements in front gardens.

Well the next morning Mr. Howkerby went to his office full of hope, and there was a letter there for him from the people who were going to buy the bridges, and it said Dear Sir we are sorry we cannot give you the contract for building six bridges to go across the River Potomosi because we have found out that you are not at all a satisfactory character yours truly Bulge & Co. Limited.

Well Mr. Howkerby was very angry at that because he knew that he was quite a satisfactory character and always had been, and he put on his hat and went straight round to the office of Messrs. Bulge & Co. Limited, and he said to Mr. Bulge what is this, I must know about it.

And Mr. Bulge who wasn't really limited at all except in his intellect said well Mr. Howkerby I am glad you called round, it is a very serious matter and of course we couldn't overlook it, but if you can clear it up nobody will be more pleased than I shall, I have never forgotten that picnic you invited me to and the nice bit of salmon that Mrs. Howkerby provided and all the cider we drank, and I would rather you had the contract than anybody if you can clear your character.

Well Mr. Howkerby felt a little more comfortable at that and he said hasn't the Vicar given me a good character? And Mr. Bulge said oh yes, he says the only fault he has to find with you is that you sometimes go to sleep in his sermons, but we decided to overlook that if you gave us a written undertaking not to go to sleep while you are making the bridges. No it is this letter that is so serious, and he handed him a letter which began Dear Sirs as one who has always taken an interest in the River Potomosi I warn you against giving the contract for six bridges to go across it to Mr. Howkerby for the following reasons, one when he made a bridge to go across the River Riposto he made it six feet too short, and if a train had gone across it same would have tumbled into river and everybody would have been drowned.

And Mr. Howkerby said oh what a lie, I only made it six inches too short and directly I found out the mistake I paid for making it longer myself. And Mr. Bulge said well I call that very honourable and what I should have expected of you, but read on.



Now Mr. Howkerby was simply furious.

So Mr. Howkerby read on, and the letter said two I have reason to believe that Mr. Howkerby is getting into debt in the place where he lives and owes a large fishmonger's bill. And he said well that is just the sort of half truth that is worse than a lie. I did tell the fishmonger that I would pay him for that cut of salmon we had at the picnic when I got the contract, I don't generally buy salmon because it is too expensive but of course I wanted to treat you well because of the contract and you had said something to me about liking salmon. And the fishmonger was quite agreeable, and besides that I don't owe anybody anything except for a bundle of peasticks which I can afford to pay for at any time.

And Mr. Bulge said well I don't see anything in that, and it was partly my own fault for saying I like salmon, but read on.

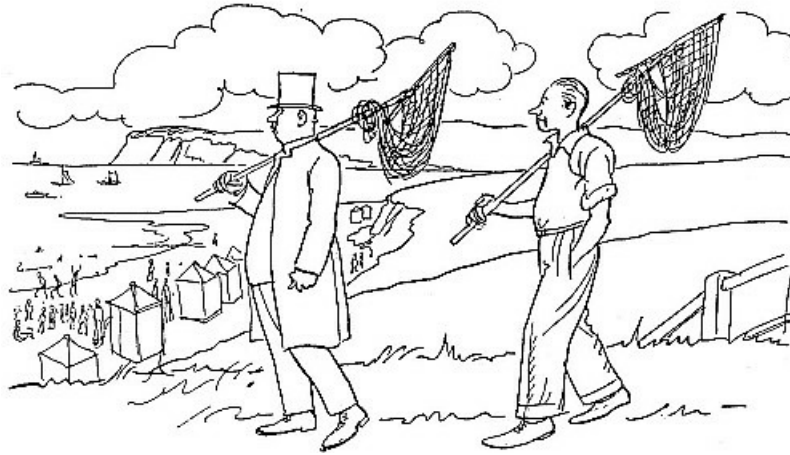
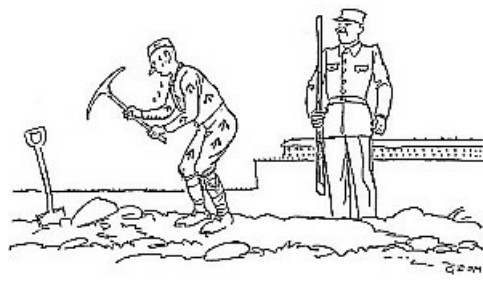
So he read on, three I accuse Mr. Howkerby of having mumps to wit in November last and going about and giving it to a lot of innocent women and children without saying anything about it.

And Mr. Howkerby was simply furious at that and he said that is the worst lie of all, I did have a sore throat and I told Mr. Trinkle that I thought it might be mumps, but it wasn't, and afterwards his wife and children did have mumps and if anybody spread it about they did.

And Mr. Bulge said is that the Mr. Trinkle who builds bridges himself if he can find anybody to buy them? And Mr. Howkerby said yes it is, and he built such a rotten bridge to go across the River Worple that all they could do was to grow ivy over it and say it was a Roman ruin. And Mr. Bulge said well then I expect it was he who wrote that letter, you see it is anonymous and he only signs it Philopotomosi which is French for being fond of the River Potomosi, but I am sure that is all humbug and he is just mad because he didn't get the contract himself.

And Mr. Howkerby said well I shall get him sent to prison for taking away my character, he is not at all kind to his wife and children and I don't suppose they will mind not having him at home for a year or two, especially as Mrs. Trinkle's father is a rich shoe manufacturer and can afford to look after them.

So there was a trial, and an expert in handwriting said that the P in Potomosi was exactly the same in the anonymous letter as in the one that Mr. Trinkle had written about the contract, and he was sent to prison. And he got some extra hard labour because it came out at the trial that he wasn't really married to Mrs. Trinkle at all, though she quite thought he was, but had a wife somewhere else. And Mr. and Mrs. Howkerby adopted one of his children because they were very kind-hearted, and as Mr. Howkerby got the contract for making six bridges to go across the River Potomosi they could well afford it.



THE GAMBLER

Once there was a gambler who used to play at cards for a lot of money, and he liked to be honest if he could because he had once heard a clergyman say in a sermon that it was the best policy, but if he was losing he generally cheated.

Well once when he was having a holiday at the seaside the clergyman he had heard preach was staying in the same hotel, and they made rather friends and used to go out shrimping together. And one day the clergyman said to him what do you do for a living? because you must have plenty of money or you wouldn't be able to afford to stay in this hotel which is rather expensive.

And the gambler said well what about you? And he said oh I had an uncle who had a factory for making boots, and when he died he left me quite a lot of money, so I am richer than most clergymen and I could afford to stay at a much more expensive hotel than this one if I wanted to.

Well at first the gambler thought of saying that he had had an uncle who had had a factory for making hats and had left him his money, but he didn't like to tell lies to a clergyman so he said well I don't do anything for my living except gamble, but I make enough money by that to be able to afford to have a nice holiday sometimes.

And the clergyman said I don't care much about people gambling and I shouldn't have thought that you could have made enough money out of it to live on comfortably unless you cheated sometimes.

And the gambler said well I do cheat sometimes, but not unless I am obliged to.

So then the clergyman told him that it was wicked to cheat at all and he hoped he wouldn't do it any more, and he said he wouldn't, because he liked the clergyman and wanted to please him. And he said I know honesty is the best policy because I once heard you say it in a sermon, but if I didn't cheat sometimes I know I couldn't make enough money to live on comfortably, so what can I do?

And the clergyman said it doesn't matter what you do as long as you are honest, I would rather sweep a crossing myself than cheat.

And he said oh would you? and he said yes I would.

And the gambler said but I couldn't live comfortably on that could I? And the clergyman said well perhaps you couldn't, but we can't all live comfortably, I couldn't myself if my uncle hadn't left me quite a lot of money, because I don't get paid much for being a clergyman and I only do it because I like being good.

And the gambler said I should think it must feel nice to be as good as that, and the clergyman said well it does rather.

And the gambler said do you think I should feel like that if I swept a crossing instead of gambling?

And the clergyman said well I can't say for certain because I have never done it myself, my uncle might not have left me his money if I had, but at any rate you could try it.

So the gambler took to sweeping a crossing, and the clergyman used to come and see him sometimes and encourage him, and he always paid him a penny for his crossing even when it was quite fine.

And the gambler was quite poor now, but he didn't mind that because he felt so good.

Well that went on for some time and then the summer came, and one day the clergyman came to him and he said how are you getting on, I am just going to have a holiday at the same hotel where we used to go shrimping together, I wish you could come too but I suppose you can't afford it now?

Well it was a very hot day and the gambler was tired, and he hadn't been given many pennies that morning because his

crossing was quite dry and people didn't see why they should pay him for it, so he suddenly got very cross and he said to the clergyman no I can't afford it now and it is all your fault that I can't stay in a nice hotel and go shrimping.

And the clergyman was quite surprised, and he said why?



I shall never go shrimping with you again.

And the gambler said why because I left off gambling to please you and took to sweeping this crossing instead, and all you can do is to come and talk about going shrimping and you don't mind it a bit that I can't do that, I shall give up sweeping this crossing and I shall take to gambling again, and I shall cheat as much as I like so that I shall make enough money to go and stay in a nice hotel, but I shall never go shrimping with you again, it is too bad. And he nearly cried he was so angry.

Well the clergyman was sorry for him, and he thought perhaps he hadn't been quite kind, but he had been so looking forward to his holiday and going shrimping that he hadn't thought much about anything else lately except his services. So he said well I will tell you what I will do, I will pay for you to have a nice holiday at that hotel, and I will buy you a new suit, because the one you have on is very shabby and I shouldn't like people to see me with you when you are wearing it except perhaps when we go shrimping, but you must promise me not to tell anyone you are a crossing-sweeper in private life because I shouldn't like that either.

So the gambler promised, and he and the clergyman went to the seaside together and enjoyed themselves very much. And one day the clergyman said to him I have been thinking about you sweeping a crossing and I am very pleased with you for doing that when you could have made enough money out of gambling to live on comfortably.

And the gambler said well I am glad you are pleased with me, I hoped you would be, and it is very kind of you to pay for this holiday for me and for my new suit.

And the clergyman said well I like to be kind, how would you like to come and be a vergger at my church? You could show people into their pews and blow the organ, and on weekdays you could sweep out the church, you have had practice at that and it would come easy to you.

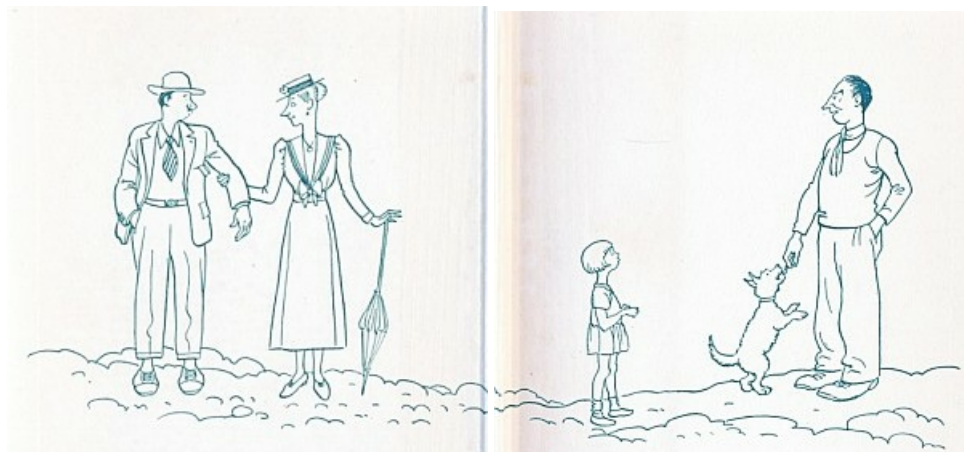
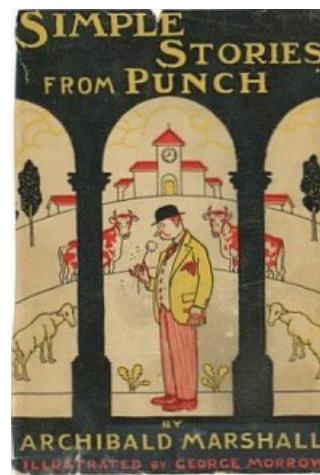
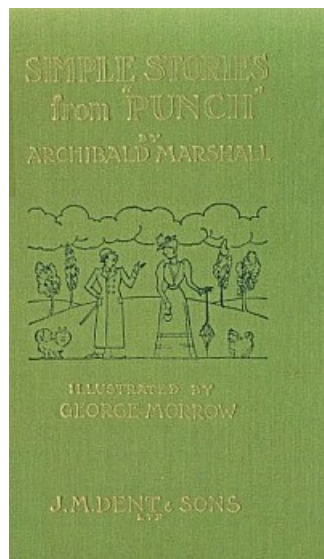
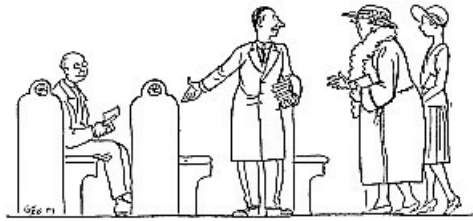
And the gambler said how much wages would you pay me?

And the clergyman said well I should have to think about that and see how much of it I could get out of the congregation, because I don't see why I should spend the money my uncle left me on paying wages to verggers, but I

would pay you as much as I could and at any rate it would be better than sweeping a crossing.

So the gambler said he would try it and he did, and he quite liked being a verger and the congregation grew quite fond of him because he was always polite to them when he was showing them into their pews. And the clergyman liked him more than ever, but he said he couldn't be exactly friends with him while he was a verger because the congregation might not like it.

And presently the gambler married quite a rich lady in the congregation who was only a little older than he was, and he left off being a verger because she had enough money for both of them. So the clergyman could be friends with him again now and they used to have a holiday every year at a nice hotel at the seaside and go shrimping.



[End of *Simple Stories from "Punch"* by Archibald Marshall]