THIS ENGLAND

BY

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This England

I. — THE CRASHED

I STOPPED my car before the gates to admire the little house. It is one of those picturesque old places that are all angles and gables. And there are high poplars and beautifully trimmed hoi hedges and a velvety little lawn as smooth as a billiard table.

In summertime there are flowers, gold and scarlet and blue, in the wide beds fringing the lawn—now one must be content with the green symmetry of box and laurel and the patch of deep red which marks Molly's chrysanthemums. Behind the house is a very serious vegetable garden and a field where chickens stalk. And an orchard—about two acres in all.

Such a house and grounds as you might buy for some twenty-five hundred or three thousand pounds. Perhaps cheaper, for it lies away from railways and is off the main road. Town folk would call it lonely, though it is entitled to describe itself as being on the fringe of the London area.

Somebody lives here (you would say if you did not know) with a comfortable income. A snug place—the tiny week-end home of some stockbroker who does not want the bother and expense of the upkeep of a more pretentious demesne.

There was no need to ask the owner of the cottage that nearly faces the oaken gates, because I am in the fullest possession of all the necessary facts.

"Mrs. F— lives there. Oh, yes, she's lived there for years. She's a lady... I don't know anything about other people's business, mister."

This latter in a manner that is both suspicious and resentful. If Mrs. F— were immensely rich, our cottager would advertise her splendours; reticence he would not know. Mrs. F— isn't rich. She's immensely poor.

Molly, who met me halfway across the lawn, put the matter in a phrase. "We are 'The-Crashed,'" said Molly definitely, "and we try not to be Poor Brave Things—Poor Brave Things get on Mummie's nerves. Mrs. G— is a poor brave thing, and writes to the newspapers about it—well perhaps she doesn't exactly write to the newspapers, but she sort of gets her name in as the officer's widow who is beginning all over again to build her war-shattered fortune by designing furniture."

Molly is fourteen, and at Cheltenham. The bare fact of the "crash" and its cause are recorded, on one of the many memorials that one passes at crossroads on the way to the races.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD

AND THE MEMORY OF

THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS,

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

AND MEN OF THE

ROYAL BLANKSHIRE REGIMENT,

WHO FELL IN THE GREAT WAR.

Molly's father got his majority in June, 1914—I forget to what, pension his widow, is entitled under the Royal Warrant. He left a small house in Berkshire that needed a lot of repairs, an old car that he had bought secondhand, a couple of hunters, a lot of odd dogs, and four children—three girls and a boy.

Oh, yes, and (as Molly reminds me) four hundred shares in Somethingfontein Deeps.

He, was killed early in the war, before he had time to save money, and everybody was terribly sympathetic, especially about Molly, "who was three, or some ridiculous age.

Molly's mother had some well-off relations—not rich, but people who kept two or three gardeners and had a flat in town. So there was a family council, and everybody agreed that the small house in the country should be sold, and Molly's mother should take an even smaller house. Family councils of this kind always advise selling the house and getting something smaller. Happily, nobody wanted to buy the little mansion unless big repairs were effected, and electric light put in and parquet flooring and running water in every room, and all that sort of thing. Molly's mother worked it all out,on a piece of paper when the children were in bed, and discovered that the repairs would cost a little more than the house would fetch, in the open market. So she elected to stay on. She had one maid, who refused to leave her, and a gardener so deaf that he couldn't be told that his services were dispensed with.

Molly's mother had two hundred a year to live on and four children to educate.

"Mother decided to breed rabbits, which are notoriously prolific," said Molly. "It was the only poor brave thing she did. But she got terribly self- conscious about them, and confined herself to chickens—which are natural. Anybody can keep chickens without it getting into-the papers. She did try hard to write love stories, but she said they made her sick. I read one the other day, and it made me sick, too. Mrs. Griffel, who has the cottage down the road, was another war widow. Lord L—, who owns most of the land round here, gave her the cottage, and she has two tons of coal and all sorts of things.

Nobody gave us anything, because, we were supposed to be gentry. I asked Mummie if she would have taken two tons of coal, and Mummie said, 'Like a shot!' But nobody offered, and we had one fire going besides the kitchen for years. It was terribly cold in the winters."

Education was an important matter. Tom had to go to Rugby, because Molly's father went to Rugby. The well-off relations helped, though their prosperity was diminishing with the years. The richest and most generous was a shareholder in certain coal mines, and dividends began to flutter like a bad pulse.

There was no question of "keeping up appearances." Molly's mother didn't care tuppence who knew of her poverty. She used to journey on a push bike every Saturday to Reading to buy in the cheapest market. And this small, sharp-featured lady was a terrible bargainer. She is not pretty—wholesome, but hot pretty. She cast no sad, appealing glance at susceptible butchers; she quoted glibly wholesale prices, and grew acrid when frozen mutton was offered in the guise of Southdown.

There was some help for Tom at Rugby—either an inadequate Government grant or a scholarship. One of the girls had only a year to stay at school when the crash came. Molly's elder sister began her education at a moment when coal mines were paying concerns—Molly was unfortunate in beginning her first term at Cheltenham under the cloud of an industrial crisis.

The two hundred a year has remained two hundred, but Molly's mother has performed miracles. Tom is at Woolwich, and Molly is at Cheltenham. God knows how she balances her budget, and what fierce and urgent appeals to the well-to-do relatives are slipped into the letter-box at the end of the lane. She does what cannot be done—adds two and two and makes it six.

I suspect Molly knows—she is so insistent upon that one point they are not Poor Brave Things.

"Getting married is going to be the bother." Molly was terribly, serious. "We're all so devilishly plain" (she uses this kind of language occasionally) "and unfortunately none of us is romantic—I mean we don't want be nurses or go on the stage or do anything eccentric. The great point is, as Mummie says, we must get used to the idea that we're the crashed generation, and we've got to sit tight and wipe ourselves out and work for the next. And Mummie says that there are hundreds and thousands of us, and we're jolly lucky to have a house and not live in lodgings, Tom thought he ought not to go into the Army because of the awful expense, but that's all rot. Mummie says that ashes without a Phoenix are just dirt."

Molly's mother is only one of the crashed, as she says. But for Molly, who is rather loquacious, you might never hear of them, because they are most

awfully scared of attracting attention, or qualifying for admission to the Society of Poor Brave Things. Up and down the land, in out-of-the-way villages, in obscure lodgings, in very populous suburbs, the regimental ladies who crashed are keeping step with Molly's mother.

II. — THE IDLE RICH

MY friend the Communist (a very nice man) only knows two classes, the Idle Rich and the Proletariat.

"People without regular jobs." I suggested, having looked it up for crossword purposes.

No, he meant "Proletariat."

"Wage earners?"

No, he still meant "Proletariat," but what that meant he wasn't quite sure.

"Karl Marx—"

He beamed.

"That's the fellow—what he says—"

"Wage labourers—wage earners," said I. "Only the people who work for a living are the proletariat."

My friend was rather depressed by this narrow interpretation of his grand word.. Anyway (here he brightened) the Idle Rich were, not to be explained away by the dictionary.

"Look at 'em! Any night you like in the West End! Motor-cars, fal-de- lals, wimmin, wine!"

"And song," I helped him, but he was not grateful.

"Go down to the Savoy any night you like," he stormed. "I've heard 'em on the wireless, laughing and clapping their hands for more music. And I've seen 'em through the windows at other places, sitting at tables and drinking wine— the price of every bottle would keep a family from starvation for a week! And outside on the Embankment, people without a shelter to their heads or a crust to eat. That's what is going to bring about the revolution!"

Because I am interested in revolutions I went to the cradle of the coming upheaval.

I do not know a nicer cradle or a more cheerful-sounding. To hear it all on the wireless is one thing, to be a participator is another.

The buzz and blare of the ballroom is not so noticeable as through the microphone. You scarcely hear the tuning of fiddles or the twink-twank of an absent-minded thumb on a banjo string. These things fit into a larger sensation— shaded lights and amber candelabras and the glitter and gleam of silver on white tables, and flowers and white-shirted diners, and beautiful women, and women who hope they are looking that way. The idle rich were having a most strenuous time.

The last time I met the idle rich youth who grinned at me from the next table was somewhere between the Baldock and Stevenage. He had come down from Cambridge, driving an awful-looking little car that he had wheedled from his idle rich father (one of those wealthy suffragan bishops who earn nearly £800 a year), and he begged from me the price of a two-gallon tin of juice. He had only a shilling in his pocket; his term allowance of £10 having been squandered in the riotous pursuit of pleasure and those hectic gaieties which are such a deplorable feature of University life.

He told me later that he had been invited to dinner by a topping fellow (the father of another undergraduate), that he was having a topping time. The topping fellow who invited him (a largish man with a cherubic smile) was another of the idle rich. He was an official of a big engineering company and spent most of his life sleeping on trains and interviewing hardfaced men who bought machinery. When he wasn't sleeping on trains he was sleeping on ships hound for foreign parts, or sleeping on ships bound for home. His wife manages to see him for two months in the year.

He doesn't dance, but he likes to see the young people enjoy themselves. There is wine on his table. Every magnum represents more than the fortnight's salary he received when he started work with the company he now controls. He sits a little dazed, a little absent, his mind completely occupied with centrifugal pumps and machine-tools, watching the brilliant throng gyrating to the rhythm of the band. The beautiful women in their indescribable dresses, the chameleon changes of hues, the subtle fragrances which come to nostrils used to the scent of lubricating oils and hot metals.

I like to reduce things to table form: pages of statistics fascinate me. Here is a census of the known idle rich within view:—

(1) A retired tea planter from Assam. Age about 50. Very rich. He had ten years of heart-breaking labour, rising at dawn, working in the plantation all day, and sleeping in a little bungalow a trifle larger than a suburban summer house by night. Worked like a navvy, seven days a week, and took no holiday during the first years of his apprenticeship. Paced season after season of disappointment and partial failure till the luck turned. Now he is home and trying to recover the wasted years.

(2) A director of a big newspaper combine. The most cheerful soul that ever came from Scotland. Spent his early married life in a one-roomed lodging, denied himself more than the bare necessities to ensure against unemployment; employed his spare hours in work.

(3) A rather imposing man who looks like a Cabinet Minister. A gossip writer in one of the newspapers. A hard-working and not particularly brilliant man, who is earning his living at this moment.

(4) A theatrical "magnate" who once peddled shoelaces in New York.

(5) The son of an impoverished Irish peer, wounded in the war, and himself working in a city office.

(6) A millionaire distiller who battled up from 6s a week clerkship, and who in the evening, of life, finds his chief pleasure in watching young people enjoying the life he was denied.

It is impossible that the census could be complete. Idle rich? I know a few. By some mysterious, wise workings of Nature, rust and rot go together, and one looks for the idle rich in queer places where nice people do not go. They run to poetry of an exotic kind and to strange friendships. Some write nasty little plays. Mostly they live on the association of nasty little people, and move in a cloud of sycophants and parasites. One reads regularly of their doings in gossip paragraphs—there is one writer who specialises in such a chronicle. Now. they are on the Lido, extravagantly costumed or engaged in lunatic games; now they are at Deauville; now doing something extraordinary or bizarre in London itself. They have Baby Parties, where they array themselves in the costumes of childhood, or Treasure Hunts, or officiate at mysterious gatherings. You never see them on a race-course or in the hunting field. They may appear at St. Moritz or in ten costumes per diem, but they do nothing more exciting than pose for their photographs.

And in due course they die, and their estates are divided amongst their wholesome relatives, and that is the end of them.

But this Savoy ballroom belongs to youth, gilded but not golden; wearing the uniform of affluence, but no more. Money doesn't worry the subaltern down for a short leave. He isn't giving the party, but he is the soul of it. He asks for nothing more than a pretty partner, a syncopated jig-tune, perfectly timed, and his. enjoyment is in ratio to his partner's dancing ability.

He is young and good-looking, fresh-faced, bubbling over with energy. He has no money, and doesn't want much. He needs for the moment a perfectly topping time. Good wine is wasted on him. He can never remember the menu. He would as soon drink lemonade. He has not learnt to call things and people "divine." Mostly he talks about cars—fast, ugly, uncomfortable cars—but fast.

He may not be in the Army or the Navy. Perhaps he is in the motorcar business, which has an irresistible fascination for youth. Or in an office. You know that he is "public school" from the moment that you hear him speak—it really does not matter whether he is soldiering or selling buttons.

There is a waiter at the Savoy who is a great friend of mine; we have this bond of union, that we went to the same school, and he knows more about the idle rich than any man in London.

"Is there anybody here who does nothing for a living?" I asked. He knew a man from the Argentine and another from France who had no occupation but dancing.

"But English?"

He took a careful survey of the room. It must have been an off night for the idle rich, since he could; only; distinguish one man.

"And he's a member of Parliament!" he said, almost apologetically.

III. — THE IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE

HE isn't a tramp. He very seldom leaves the West End and never goes out of London. He is very unwashed and wears two overcoats, and I have never seen him begging. Shuffling along by the edge of the pavement, his downcast eyes seeking a cigarette-end, he would be an object of pity, if compassion could overcome nausea.

The women of his species you can find any afternoon or evening, sleeping in the doorway recesses of West End theatres. Why she chooses theatres nobody knows, unless they are the only public, buildings about the doorways of which it is permissible to loiter without incurring the censure of the police. She is terribly grimy and carries a market bag in which she stores the treasures she finds in her waking hours.

Everybody associated with charitable work has tried to help them both— the Impossible Man and the Impossible Woman. They have been prayed over and bathed and given good food and good advice and money and clothes and disinfectants; but they have gone back to The Life and the two overcoats and the gallery entrance of St. Martin's Lane.

A lady friend of mine who had incited her husband to kill a former lover, and was tremendously well known in consequence, once told me that the spectacle of the Impossible People was a shame and a disgrace to England.

"We wouldn't stand for it in New York," she said.

So you see how badly we compare with New York, and even Chicago, which has two murders a day, but no Impossible People. Because they wouldn't stand for it.

In warmish weather, when charitable well-to-do folks, their hearts glowing with loving kindness and wine, dash down to the Embankment and distribute largesse to the submerged, the Impossible People gravitate towards the Embankment. They occupy most of the available seats and huddle themselves up in odd corners, looking oh, so wretched, and they take their share of what is coming.

In the winter they keep to the brighter, warmer spots, knowing that loving kindness doesn't often square with cold feet, and that slumming comes more natural on a warm, moonlit night in June than in the icy blasts of December, when a north-easter is blowing and horribly cold rain is liable to trickle down the necks of vicarious philanthropists.

I dislike the Impossible People because they are like the small boys who are always getting in the way of the photographer who is snapping the genuine article.

There is one called Old Frank, whom I have known for years. This frowsy man was old and dirty in 1910. He has slept out of doors ever since (except for a month he spent in Pentonville), and soap advertisements are meaningless to him There he is—a shuffling old body with his three waistcoats and cardigan jacket, alive and fit. There has been a war. Thousands of men have passed in their prime. Millionaires and princes, with all the resources of medicine and surgery at their command, have been gathered to their fathers. Old Frank, who sleeps in the oddest corners, and garners his meals in unbelievable places, is prime and hearty.

I have only given him one penny in my life. He remembers the circumstance vividly. He also remembers all the air raids.

"Frank, there is only one remedy for you,—and that is a lethal chamber," I told him when I met him a few nights ago.

He was not offended.

"There ain't many of us left now," he said, regretfully. It was as though he were speaking of a decaying industry—you might have imagined that he was a flint-knapper or something of the sort.

He named about thirty impossible people, all males, and could, with an effort, have named a hundred.

He was once a soldier, and got a wandering fit on him when quite a young man. He became a tramp in the more noble sense, but the country was too lonely, and farmers kept dogs and rural policemen were entirely unsympathetic In the country the Vagrancy Act is a real, vital thing. In London it is a curiosity. He "did" three weeks in Exeter Prison and three weeks in Gloucester, and so he came back to London, where the police are kind. He was not sorry for himself, but regretted the passing of two old friends of his, one of whom had been knocked down by a motor-omnibus a few months before.

"These motors oughtn't to be allowed," he considered.

Unlike his kind, who take an intensive interest in themselves, are casually concerned about their fellow-unfortunates, and are wholly oblivious of the phenomena of life that appear daily before their eyes, Old Prank is sensitive to economic conditions.

"There's less regulars on the pavement," he said, "but there's more outsiders than any time I can remember. They come and go and don't stay long. Young fellers, some of 'em, out of work and not used to the road. Gentle chaps, clurks, and what not. Some of 'em had good positions, too—orficers in the army. They drift in an' drift, out."

You can watch the drift if you spend a night at the "Morning Post" home— a place where wretchedness loses for a while some of its depressive quality. Here come the pieces that refuse to fit into the jigsaw puzzle called Economic Life. Some have lost all shape and belong to the waste section that go into the rag-bag. Some are only momentarily lost to place. Youngish men, rather bewildered, rather ashamed, by this glaring emphasis of their inadequacy.

They don't exactly know how they got here It is easy to explain, but difficult to convince them that such an explanation is a true one.

I wonder how many people realise the number of wrecks there are that are traceable to the coal strike of three years ago? Immediately after that strike I edited a hard-luck page for a weekly newspaper, and at least thirty per cent, of the men who confessed their ruin traced it directly to that strike. Small shopkeepers, like master men, found them.selves one day (figuratively) snug and comfortable; the next day they were waiting in a queue for admission to a Church Army institute or begging admission to the "Morning Post" home.

Now you find plenty of small tradesmen; you find, too, officers and soldiers with a bitter recollection of gratuities ill-spent. Not squandered— just badly spent. They invested their all in business, which they knew nothing whatever about. Poultry farms and garages and things that seem easy.

Chess figures carved from bones, as big as a man's fist, and said to date back to the tenth century, are now on show in the British Museum.

IV. — OUR BURGLARS

NOTHING gives Bill a bigger laugh than newspaper articles on prison reform. The State started to reform Bill when, as a ragged little pickpocket of 12, they sent him to an institution for youthful delinquents. I don't know how long he was there, but he went in a clumsy, inept little thief, and came out as dexterous an expert as ever picked a pocket or dipped a bag.

Then he became a burglar and a jewel thief (he got his introduction to the right kind of mentors when he was in Pentonville); and later he learnt from a friend in Dartmoor of the good pickings that could be had by a man of smart appearance who hangs around railway stations and picks up momentarily neglected suitcases. Bill has a poor opinion of humanity, and his one grim jest which never fails to tickle me is that when he meets a funeral he takes off his hat and says piously: "Thank Gawd he's going straight!"

Alec is another burglar: a slim, refined man with an amazing vocabulary (he speaks with a very pleasant Scottish accent, and is invariably voluble and earnest). He is an office-breaker.

Joe is known to the police as a ladder larcenist. Of late he has been dignified with a new title—they "call him a cat-burglar. But he is still a ladder larcenist, whose job of work it is to enter bedrooms whilst the family are at dinner, usually by means of a ladder, lock the door, and, clearing off all the available jewellery, make his escape, all within a period of ten minutes. The ladder larcenist who takes more than ten minutes at his job is regarded as a bungler.

I don't know whether Bill has ever engaged in ladder larceny, but he confesses that at the moment he is too fat. We were talking the other day about the possibility of burgling my flat, the difficulty of climbing up into my study, which overlooks a busy street, and the almost impossibility of opening a safe of a well-known make, in which I keep, if, the truth be told, nothing more valuable than the duplicate copies of manuscripts that have gone to America, and have not yet been printed. Bill was amused.

"No man of intelligence would dream of climbing up the front of your house," he said. "All he wants is a key blank"—(I have a patent lock on the front door)—"and I'll show you how he does it."

He produced a key blank from his pocket, which he swore he kept only as a souvenir and not for business, blackened it with a match, inserted it in the lock of my door, turned it gently, and then, withdrawing it, showed me the marks that had been made on the blackened surface.

"I could file that key to fit your door in a quarter of an hour," he said. "All I've got to do is to step into a telephone box, call you up, and if there is no

reply—-which shows that the family are out—walk round, try the key, file it, and be inside your flat under half an hour. As to the safe—!"

He said insulting things about the safe, and left me with the impression that a child of three could overcome that obstacle with a corkscrew.

I don't know how many times Bill has been in prison. He has been flogged for bashing a "screw"; he has been birched for various offences; he has been in Dartmoor, in Portland, and Parkhurst, and dislikes them all, but finds nothing in the experience calculated to act as a certain deterrent to the criminally minded. I call him a burglar, but he isn't really a burglar, for he loathes night work and the danger attendant upon breaking into occupied premises. Of late years, he tells me, "fencing" has become a well-organised business. Mr. Fence is sitting in the saloon bar of a handsome establishment at Islington, when there enters, a respectable-looking man known to him. Possibly they drink together. After a while Mr. Fence and Mr., Burglar adjourn outside. Says the burglar: "I'm going to 'do' a fur store in Wardour street. I wish you'd come along, Mr. X, and price it for me."

"Is it dead or alive?" asks the interested "fence," meaning thereby: "Is it a lock-up shop or is it one over which people are living?"

"It is dead," explains the thief; and the next morning the fence drives down to Wardour street strolls into the shop, examines a few of the furs offered for sale, and makes a rapid and fairly accurate estimate of the value of the shop's contents. That afternoon he meets the burglar, or a friend of the burglar's, by appointment; there is a little bargaining, a little haggling, and eventually a sum is agreed upon. The contents of that unfortunate store have been sold before the burglary is committed. The place to which the furs are to be taken is decided upon, and nothing more is left than for the crime to be committed, the furs taken away and stored, for the thief to receive his price.

Similarly, whilst your Rolls-Royce is outside your door, there may be a car thief and his receiver haggling over its price hours before it is "knocked off" and disappears from all human ken, later to find its way to the colonies or to India, the latter being a favourite market for stolen motor-cars. It may be some satisfaction to you to know that the Morris-Cowley, the pride of your house, which vanished mysteriously a year ago, is now the favourite vehicle, of a Babu clerk and his bright-eyed family somewhere around Lahore.

Our burglars arc-considerably more attractive than, say, the American variety.

"Have you ever carried a gun, Bill? I asked, and he was genuinely shocked.

"Good God, no!" he said. "What do you want a gun for? If you want to commit murder, go out and commit it. If you want to be a burglar, be a

burglar. No policeman is going to be afraid of a gun. You've either got to kill him or he'll get you. Besides, these men are doing their duty. When a lag says, 'I'd sooner be hung than go back to prison,' there's nothing to stop him hanging himself is there?" His own theory is that shootings are prevalent in America because the police carry pistols.

"When you hear of mail vans being held up, or post offices, by people with revolvers, you can bet that the chaps who do the job are amachers."

Individual burglary is not a thriving trade in these days. There are two or three little confederations responsible for most of the more startling robberies, and these, according to Bill, owe their immunity to their perfect organisation. They'll take, a year to plan a real big job, and very likely get one of their own people inside the premises six months before they bust the place. They have tools worth hundreds of pounds, and work to a time-table. Generally they're foreigners, who go around the Continent between busts."

The day of the old burglar, with his dark lantern, his bit of candle, and his simple jemmy, has passed. This is the age of the specialist; and although there may be a sprinkle of old-timers, who are prepared to take the risk of a "bust" with little or no preliminary investigation, they are seldom successful.

"It's just as hard to burgle a country house as it is to get into a bank nowadays," said Bill. "And, anyway, silver doesn't pay for stealing. Most of the big jobs you read about are done at country houses by somebody inside. An old lag gets a job as butler or chauffeur, and waits till he finds something worth taking before he skips. In fact, there are more of this kind of crime nowadays than actual burglaries."

He tells me there is a class of "workman" who specialises in dressmakers' shops, and, curiously enough, not the great establishments, but the smaller, struggling fry.

"It doesn't pay," he said, "but they're satisfied with a few pounds for a night's work, and the job's a pretty easy one if you know anything about the beats, when the police are likely to be around.

"Generally speaking," summarised Bill a little despairingly, "the game's never been so bad as it is to-day. When I was a boy, almost every house had a box hidden somewhere, and you were pretty sure of finding money in it. Tradesmen especially. Nowadays people have banks and cheque books."

A cheque book, by the way, is regarded by most burglars as a valuable acquisition. A man who specialises in the stealing of cheque books told me once that a packet of Bank of England "kites" (cheques) would always fetch £20 from a fence. He sells them to the members of the well-dressed mobs that haunt the West End, and these in turn, make big profits by inducing simple-minded tradesmen to cash big cheques after banking hours. But that is another graft. Bill is emphatic on only one point— that burglary is not what it used to be.

V. — THE SURGEON

Small boys without tummy pains are not quite natural. Especially in that month of the year when the orchard is a place of greenish apples spuriously rouged. But in November... and when passing under rapid review all that was of his dietary on the previous day without, detecting anything more ache- compelling than Vitamin A...

It isn't right. So you ask for a history of this disagreeable pain that makes a small boy inclined to double up like a jack-knife.

And, of course, he is drawlingly vague. Last year? Oh, yes, but really not bad; a sort of... you know.

Once he remembered, when he was in Caux, just a funny sort of ache that went on and on. I remembered, too sitting on the edge of his bed, the temperature 20 below, and the heat turned off. And I lectured him on the gluttony of small boys, and the horrid things that happened to them when they eat marachino-nougat before going to bed.

But now it is November. "Does that hurt?" If you press a little boy gently to the right of what is euphemistically called his "button," and he winces painfully, you call in your family doctor, and after he has asked a lot of uncomfortable questions and has done his little bit of pressing, he looks at you knowingly and says with diabolical cheerfulness:

"Well, my boy, you know what that is?"

And, of course, you do. And when you've adjourned with him to your study you ask the inevitable question: "Well, whom shall we get?" And he as inevitably replies: "Y-Z."

You knew all the time he was going to say "Y-Z", but you ask just to make him testy. He only gets testy on two subjects—the suggestion that you shouldn't call in "Y-Z" and the unbusinesslike methods of nursing homes.

All this happens if you are a wise lather or husband. If you're unwise you say, a little resentfully: "Can't this thing be cured without an operation?... I must think it over for a week."

If, whilst he is thinking it over the patient dies, he says that the doctor "didn't understand the case," or (this is even more popular) "the doctor should have seen, this coming months ago."

For myself, I said: "Y-Z, of course." And at nine Y-Z's handsome limousine came to a halt before my humble flat. Y-Z is rather young-looking, a leisurely and amusing teller of good stories. Fresh-complexioned, longish-nosed (you cannot be very clever if you have a small nose), something of an athlete, I should imagine. There is the small boy, rather amused, on the bed when Y-Z strolls in, hands in pockets. He is rather engaging, knows boys'

talk backwards (which is a little more intelligent and purer than man's talk), strikes a very high note of confidence.

Back he strolls to the study, hands in pockets...

Doesn't seem very bad, but it ought to come out. Going abroad, are you?" He shakes his head at this. "It might be all right—but why sit on a bomb?" I agree. When? The doctor, a foreseeing man, as well as the greatest G.P. in London, has already booked a room. He confirms this by telephone. Y-Z, the surgeon produces his engagement book. It is alarmingly full. "Let him go in to-morrow; we'll do it on the next morning. What about ten o'clock?"

The doctor thinks ten is a good time.

A telephone inquiry. Dr. Z is doing one at ten. The great doctor grows a little choleric (he must sound terrible on the telephone). "Most unbusinesslike... I told you ten o 'clock."

"I'll bet he didn't," says Y-Z sotto voce. "

"...Well, eleven-thirty."

"That will suit me," says Y-Z.

It suits everybody. Even the small boy on the bed who is promised "treatment"—that wicked word "operation" is never used. (Next afternoon, as a treat, he goes to the cinema—both of the films have operations in them!).

Have you ever sat in the: waiting-room of a nursing, home and seen the cars come up? The anaesthetist, in a little runabout, with his little black bag (anaesthetists aren't allowed to have Rolls-Royces), and then the doctor with his little black bag, and then the surgeon with his absurdly small equipment. Have you heard them foregather in the hall and talk about the weather, and that poor old soul who popped off last week?

"She had a long innings," says somebody cheerfully.

And then the wait—eternities until the brisk anaesthetist comes down looking awfully pleased with himself.

Well, that's a relief. He wouldn't be smiling, or discussing outside the petrol-eating propensities of American cars with my chauffeur, if the small boy had died under the anaesthetic. He would be thinking up a good story for the Coroner. (You think things like that when you're in the waiting-room of a nursing home.)

And now the surgeon comes in.

"I had a bit of a shock."

He explains in non-technical language the reason for the shock. If the operation had been delayed a month—a week. He spreads out his hands expressively. He is saying "Good-bye" to the small boy.

Later that same small boy is on view propped up by a bed- rest—terribly white, with dark shadows under his big eyes. He is drowsy, a little sick, has a pain in his side which he cannot understand, is not interested in anything. In three days he will be eating boiled chicken, and between proud references to his lost appendix will be devouring the exciting stories of Mr. Percy Westerman at the rate of two books a day. That little job cost me a hundred guineas—one hundred guineas for the use of those sure, confident hands for a quarter of an hour. It is the cheapest service I know.

Somebody else has the use of those hands to-day. Poor Mrs. Brown who is in the Something Hospital. She is literally a washerwoman, and has never seen a hundred guineas in her life and never will. Somebody gave her a "letter" to the hospital. She also has had queer pains, but the idea of an operation is dreadful. All her neighbours put the corner of their aprons to their mouths in horror at the thought "It's awful... with all them bits o' boys lookin' at you an' practisin' on you, maybe."

The bits of boys will be looking on just as all young surgeons in the making look on, but it will be Y-Z in a white wrapper who will "do it." He will talk rather rapidly as he works—perhaps he will tell stories of great surgeons and what they have done; but he will be just as careful, just as expeditious, just as considerate as he was with the small boy. And if Sir X-0 (whose fee sometimes runs into four figures) is performing the operation he will give the washerwoman just as much intensive thought as he gave the Duchess when she was being treated in her West End nursing home.

It would cost the washerwoman nothing.

The people who pay big money to big surgeons make the least extravagant outlay of their lives. They are doing something for Mrs. Brown, too. That is the excellence of our system. What he did for Mrs. Brown he did also for her boy son in Flanders—maybe he learnt a lot of his trade there. He has a string of letters after his name which suggest military virtue. In queer old barns and chateaux, with shells bursting picturesquely and unpleasantly close...

Modern surgery is the most wonderful phenomenon of the age. I say this having seen some of the old surgery. It is worth just what life is worth' Never be afraid to call in Mr. Y-Z or Sir X-O or Mr. Z-X. That is, if you want to live.

VI. — COMMONPLACE PEOPLE

You lose an awful lot of fun in England if you only talk to the people you meet in the club. Their very affluence has stripped them of romance and the glamour of great pasts. I am a teller of stories by profession, but I seldom take stories from real life because they are so improbable that literary critics say: "Well...! Really...!" and a writer who makes a literary critic angry ought to be well slapped.

All the real stories, the big ones, are not contained between covers. Adventures...?

There's a stout and sturdy young joiner who will come to your house and cover your walls with oak panelling that looks really old—worm-holes and knot-holes, and bits of moulding breaking off through extreme age, and all that sort of thing. He rides a motor-bike and was nearly killed a year ago somewhere in Kent, but he is all right now and is going to be married. Maybe he is married.

A stout fellow, terribly tightly dressed, with a reddish, round face and good-looking.

I got tired of talking about wormholes, so I ventured to express views about Stalin. He brightened.

"I was with Denikin's army," he said staggeringly. "It was really awful. The Bolshies retreated on Moscow because they thought Denikin's crowd was led by British officers—they were Russki's really, in British officers' uniform. My feet were frozen and I was taken to the hospital, and then the Bolshies began their advance. We could hear the guns in the hospital. A Russian nurse used to come and sit on my mattress and, drawing her fingers across her pretty neck, used to say: 'Presently Russians come—' they cut your t'roat!' Cheerful, eh? A pal of mine got me out under fire. Laid me on a sledge and ran for it. What was my job? I don't know what I didn't do! Machine-gun instructor—everything!".

Here was Denikin's army in London, N.W.! You would never know that unless you took the trouble to find out.

A rather dour, middle-aged taxi driver brought me home one evening. In front of where he pulled up was a big American car. He looked at it critically and wondered if the back axle was O.K. in the new model.

"Know it?" I asked. He nodded.

"Last time I drove one was over the Khyber Pass," he said. "They're wonderful on hills."

The chauffeur who was standing by the car had views. His driving was in Serbia. He was awarded a gold medal, but never got it.

Khyber Pass and Monastir compared notes. They said horrible things about certain makes of cars. I sat on the running board and listened, I think my neighbours thought I was the worse for drink.

There are two racing reporters—you can meet them at any meeting. One of these took convoys to the edge of the Afghan country, and knows quite a lot about the playful ways of hill rivers. The second man had an easier job. All he had to do was to teach young flying corps officers to jump out of balloons. He knows almost as much about parachutes as he does about Galopin' Blood. But these two are not really eligible for my category of commonplace people. Journalists are very uncommon people—especially racing journalists. My experience of life is that the best stories are those of the most (apparently) commonplace folk, and the worst are those of men whose lives you would imagine were packed with thrills. I once interviewed a hangman, and all that he said was: "Well, sir... it was like this..."

He never really got interesting until he started to talk about chickens and advanced this brand-new theory about biology: That hens lay eggs and produce all cockerels if you put the nest under a green light. And that was a lie. Probably hens do that sort of thing for hangmen, but they don't do it for humble reporters.

You could not walk through Covent Garden Market any morning without rubbing shoulders with incredible adventure. It comes to your door, if you can see.

One night rather late there arrived at my flat a gentleman who talked with an accent—well as the good people of Walworth road speak. He was selling tickets for a concert on behalf of broken-down horse cabmen. His voice was loud and hearty. He was, he confessed with pride, of the people. And he was educated—at where do you think? I won't tell you the school but it has as proud a name as any in England; a great public school that has sent out splendid generals and statesmen.

I didn't believe him till he began rattling out from memory long passages of Virgil. My Latin is negligible, but I knew enough to be staggered.

"That's the kind of muck I had to learn," he complained bitterly. By the way, he is pretty well known in South London, but I know he will not object to my telling the story—he oven invited me to "put it in a book."

His father, a self-made and uneducated man, amassed a fortune—I think he owned buses. When the father died intestate the fortune was thrown into Chancery. An unimaginative master decided that our hero and his brother should be educated. He only knew one school—the boys were sent there.

"I hated it," said my friend. "Latin an' Greek an' God knows what! As soon as I came out and got hold of a bit of money I bought a pub in the _____ road!"

Would you say that was possible? It is not only possible, but it is a fact. A thoroughly honest, decent fellow, is this public school boy. But he hated the life —loathed his companions. Can't you see him sitting at prep., his mind hovering about "The Red Cow" of his dreams?

There are some amazing people in London. Down Pimlico way a lady was pointed out to me. She lived in a shabby lodging, and, attired in carpet slippers and an old cap pinned to her brassy hair, she was carrying a beer jug to a nearby public house. To get, she said pleasantly, her morning ration. I happen to know that she made history—changed the succession of a great reigning house of Europe. It seems absurd, but it is a fact. The story cannot be told, but it is common property in Press circles.

The truth is that in this country (and possibly in no other country) there are no commonplace people except to the superficial observer. If you can't see behind the eyes or get into the minds of folk and accept just what they present to you, features, figures, and manners, the world must be a dull place. And you miss a lot of drama. And some splendid pathos.

There is a man working for me—an Irishman. A big, good-looking Handy Andy, and a splendid car driver and mechanic. It was his ambition to ride at Brooklands on a racer, and at last his chance came. A well-known driver was taking him in a race as a mechanic. On the morning of the race: — "I'm sorry, F—, I've just learnt that you are an Irishman."

"Yes, sir."

"I can't take you. My brother was murdered in Ireland by Sinn Feiners, and I've sworn never to employ an Irishman."

"Very good, sir," said F— quietly. He did not tell the car racer that his own father, an inspector of the R.I.C., had been shot down in cold blood in the streets of his native town.

VII. — THE PRECARIOUS GAME—RACING STUDIES

A pretty little house on the Bury road, every wall or every room covered with paintings—there is a Greuze in my bedroom, and I sleep on a noble bed designed for Royalty.

Raphael looks down upon me in the dining-room as I eat real Yorkshire pudding—the host comes from that county. And Yorkshire pudding served as a course and eaten solemnly—and what Yorkshire pudding! Not the custardy stuff that London cooks prepare; not the thin slither of yellow pastry that cracks down on your plate at the fashionable restaurant. But Yorkshire pudding.

The host is a burly gentleman; the other guest is a dapper, shrewd man from France.

"I saw that horse this morning—you' shouldn't let him run loose... I never saw a horse more improved, and if he has any luck they can't keep him out of the first three."

He was talking of Asterus, who occupied that position in the Cambridgeshire. It was rather a depressing week for host, for the betting tax was due next Monday, and he was a professional backer of horses.

A gambler? Not exactly—in the Monte Carlo sense.

You see, racing, from the professional backer's point of view, is a business. You can reduce a field of thirty-seven runners to four or five, and can say nearly with certainty: "One of these five will win." You cannot sit at a table at Monte Carlo and be assured that, of the thirty-seven numbers, one of five will turn up. That is the difference between racing and gambling. If you take black and red and gamble on one or the other, there is nothing to prevent red and black coming up alternately; but if you match Coronach against a selling plater in twenty races, it is definitely certain, bar accidents, that Coronach will win every time.

You can make mistakes, of course.

Arthur (as I-will call him) climbed up to the stand as the horses were at the post.

"Have you made a bet?"

He nodded.

"I've got twenty-eight hundred pounds on Adam's Apple," he said, "and, having seen him go to the post, I think I've lost my money."

Something had happened to Adam's Apple. He was beaten, and well beaten, and returned to the paddock with peculiar symptoms, to which the attention of the stewards was drawn.

Arthur knew he was beaten before the field came to the dip.

"I've lost," he said in a conversational tone, and asked me whether I had slept well on the previous night. There was no emotion, no hectic reviling of horse and jockey. He had lost—that was all. If he had won, he would still have asked me if I had slept well. He won a thousand on the last race, and finished the day losing £1300.

"I have turned over as much as two millions in a year—my winnings on balance were not very considerable. If I had paid a tax of 2 per cent. I should have lost £20,000 on the year!"

He goes to the South of France regularly, but the tables never see him. One of his friends complained that he had lost £5000 in six weeks. "You haven't," said Arthur promptly. Indignantly the friend produces his pass- book.

"Still you haven't lost," said Arthur, and proved it.

The man had been playing regularly, and from every coup the Casino had extracted its little tax. The friend sat down and worked out roughly how much the Casino authorities had taken—£8000. "You've won three thousand—congratulations! " said Arthur sardonically.

That 2 per cent, tax has made betting impossible for him, and he argues that racing will be made impossible for the masses. The "same principles apply whether a man bets in shillings or thousands.

"Kitty" is draining steadily. With every twenty-five bets the stake is absorbed to the State. Politically, the result will be interesting to see. For some reason racing folk are conservative in politics—even the smaller fry are Tories. My own view (which is entirely dispassionate) is that the Bets Tax will produce an enormous turnover of votes, and that it will be remembered against the party when the coal strike is forgotten.

But that we shall see. It is certain that every bookmaker will be a nucleus of anti-Government propaganda, and that the rough machinery exists to spread that propaganda. This factor is not to be despised. A test canvass would, I think, produce results that would stagger the party managers. As to Arthur, he can afford to wait and "look on," but he is more favourably situated than some of the other "pros."

"Quite a lot of people will go out of ownership in a year or so. Two thirds of owners can only afford to keep up a stable if they can bet—you can't keep horses on the money you win through stakes. If the tax continues, we may not feel the effect for three years."

The professional backer lives a strenuous live. He is up in the morning (if he lives at Newmarket), watching the horses at exercise. He has to understand horses, and mostly he must be able to distinguish in the course of a race

just what every animal is doing. His judgment is perfect. He will tell you two furlongs from home what horse will win, and when they finish by the post in a close finish he seldom is in error when he names the winner, however bad the angle may be.

There was a race at Newmarket when three horses, widely separated seemed to have passed the judge in a line. He knew that I had backed one, which in my judgment was third. "Yours has won for a fiver!" he said, but I didn't bet. I knew that he must be right. And I was wise in my generation, for the horse I had backed had won by a head.

Arthur seldom bets on handicaps—it must be a weight-for-age race or nothing.

What does a man like that do with the money he wins? He took me in his car to a place beyond Dullingham, and introduced, me to his new stud farm. They were ploughing the far field, and bricklayers were already at work laying the first courses !of his new boxes. This untidy field was to hold three paddocks—that stretch of grass land was for the yearlings. His sire, the pride of his eyes, was coming here, and he was very confident about the future. "I put all my money back into racing side of racing. I have just sold my old stud farm—l think this is a better one." I spoke well of his stallion, one of the grandest looking horses i have ever seen at stud. "This is where the gambling comes in," he said. "That horse should have won the Stakes at Goodwood, but was left at the post. He could have won pulling up, and his fee at stud would have been somewhere in the region of ~8 guineas. As it is, I am giving subscriptions for nine guineas—it is the only way I can 'prove' him. He'll sire great horses, that is certain. Look at his legs! The hardest thing to breed out of a horse is bad legs, and yet breeders send their valuable mares quite gaily to broken-down animals and pay 198 guineas for the privilege." I watched the big tractors steaming away on the far field,and turning the dirty green into rich black earth, and seemed to be very far away from the precarious game. And yet it is all part of.it. All round were cottages occupied by families that lived on horse-racing, though they themselves may never have seen the colours on a horse. The ploughman and the tractor men, the hedgers, and bricklayers.

A smart-looking man in gaiters came across the soon-to-be paddocks. "I've just been looking at that mare's pedigree, Mr. A—. She's got two close crosses to Galopin'..."

The stud groom brings you nearer to the track. Yet he is not passionately interested in the actualities of racing.

Driving back, Arthur indicated the points of interest in the landscape. "Captain Cuttle stands over there, and..." He named in rapid succession a

dozen famous names. Newmarket again. The main street blocked with hackney carriages and char-a-bancs, and the pavements thronged with newspaper sellers and purveyors of race cards; all the world flocking up to the Heath, and the air vibrating with tips. And a little later: "I'll take you six hundred to four twice!" The tapes are up, and the huge field is on its way home. Thousands of race-glasses are levelled on the silken jackets. And then, as the field comes down Bushes Hill, a bookmaker airs his opinion. "I'll lay five hundred to two, Sea Girt!"

"Take you!" One of Arthur's kind backs his judgment, and wins.

Going home that evening: "There's a mare coming up at the December sales that ought to be bought—she hasn't foaled a winner, but I'm confident that she will. A friend of mine bought a mare, kept her for years and she never gave him a foal worth racing. The year he sold her she had a colt that won £12,000 in stakes..." A precarious game.

VIII. — THE PARSONS—ALWAYS IN DEMAND

Parsons..." One does not know very much about them. Some of them have nice houses in beautiful little country towns. Some go trudging through the slush and fog of London. All seem desperately short of money. One is awfully careful about what one says in their presence, and they marry you and all that sort of thing.

An ill-paid profession, sometimes an annoying profession, for do they not occasionally refuse to bury Dissenters or even refuse burial at all in consecrated ground? And do they not some times figure in scandalous columns of Sunday news—an appropriate day for the exposition, of their weaknesses? Whereupon do we not raise our voices and say:

"Ah! These parsons...!"

Down Tidal Basin way on a rainy night last week they came and knocked up a parson. His parents live rather nobly in a Yorkshire mansion, and have cars and things. He lives meanly in a very small house, a thin, rather plain young man (he admits this joyfully), and be has to keep body to soul on a dietary a little better than you can get in a workhouse, but not so good as they serve at Dartmoor. He got out of his bed and went out into the night, and eventually was guided to a hovel where a man lay with the sweat of death upon his face and a great unrest in his heart. And he was there, in that frowsy room, until daylight came uncleanly through the panes, and the man went to his appointed end.

He had to go back to his little church for Matins. Nobody else was in the church—few people came at that hour. At 11 o'clock he had to meet church officials about the heating of the little mission hall. He lunched expensively with Lady Somebody. He was rather bored, and would gladly have taken the value of it instead, but she was helping to raise some money for one of his funds. People who saw him lunching probably said:

"These parsons! They do themselves jolly well."

He had some old women to see in the afternoon; lonely old women who were not picturesquely starving, but were dying of dullness. They have enough to live on, but nobody speaks to them. They just sit and look out of the window at the backyard, or put a little coal on the fire, or make themselves a cup of tea. They are the living dead. The noisy tide of life sweeps past them but none of the noises is directed towards the sad old women and men who hobble from bed to fireplace, and from fireplace to window.

"Bore me?" he chuckled. "Of course they bore me! They would have plenty of visitors if they were amusing. But it is worth being bored to see them brighten up at the sound of a human voice. They like their religion in its most formal shape—some of them shy when I tell them I am an Anglo-

Catholic—they want to know what I think of the Pope! Poor, drab creatures—but you can find lots of flowers and beauty in their lives."

Were they churchgoers? Frankly, he wasn't sure.

"But what we're building on is the knowledge that the Church of Christ is not a friendly society which has no benefits except for its members. People come to me at all hours to ask me if I would visit their dying relatives. And I go. I've never seen them before nor heard of them. I have the shining example of the Jewish rabbi who, on the field of battle, gave absolution to a dying Catholic. A stout fellow, that—and inspired."

Curiously enough, the old cadging class that hung like parasites to the robes of the Church have dropped off. The blanket and coat brigade that attended two services on Sunday, and had its material reward at intervals, seems to have shrunk to platoon size since the war.

"The terrible thing about dying people is the anxiety of their friends to 'humour' them.

A great West End surgeon had told me the same thing in almost identical language a few days before. He said the most pathetic spectacle in the world is a dying man or woman who really wants something done which nobody will do.

"Get me the documents that you'll find in the top right-hand drawer of my desk!"

The well-meaning wife or husband tries to soothe the sufferer.

"That will be all right—don't worry everything will be all right."

The poor, exhausted creature has no strength to insist. Sometimes it is a bundle of letters to read which will add bitterness to a widow's sorrow. Once it was a book of dubious character.

Nobody takes dying people seriously—which is dreadful.

My Ritz-lunching parson has many callers at his little house. Girls in trouble—women whose furniture has been distrained—men who would like him to break bad news that they have not the courage to break...

His church is not crowded on Sunday. Nor do his parishioners call him blessed as he passes by. They greet him with embarrassed grins; most of them think that he makes a fine living out of parsoning.

"Otherwise," they argue, "why should he?"

They have for him the same respect as they offer to the fire brigade; that is in many ways a perfect parallel.

The Church has grown curiously since the war. Such trace of its development as may be found in statistics gives no real understanding of what has taken place. Men came back from France immensely advanced in their views of eternity. Death was a palpable fact; ordinarily a man might go through the best part of his life and never see the ludicrous thing that once held a soul. War changed that for millions. The phenomenon was a daily experience. It was the living which became curiosities. And what after? Here's a man in a white surplice who one thing; here's a man in a biretta who says different. Some men found temporary comfort and courage in one set of observances, some in another. I imagine that in the vast majority of cases the final settlement of this soul business was postponed with the contingency that, if the Reaper came m the meantime, they had effected a sort of short-term spiritual assurance.

Certainly the god of war has a countenance more terrible than the god of peace.

They came back in their millions, not to mope or mourn or pray, but to find relaxation and forgetfulness of the mad years that had gone. And such as retained any curiosity on the object learnt on inquiry that the civilian God was something of a stranger. It is absurd of course, but the God who is beseeched to bring rain for farmers bears no resemblance to the terrific God to whom hearts go out in an agony of supplication when red death is leering at your elbow.

"People had to scrap their old conceptions and begin building again. And the Church is the gainer. I especially believe that the Anglo-Catholic Church has gained most."

There is a stout evangelical section which is for "broadcasting" the Church, making wider the gap between the old Church and the new. They believe that Christian religion should be stripped of its fal-de-rals and its esotericism. Where the stripping shall stop, nobody knows.

The passion for simplicity of service and observance would be understandable if the Christian religion were of itself entirely free from mysteries. But it isn't. If it is, then there is no religion. When your scientist and your philosopher have found a purely logical explanation for such phenomena as the Resurrection and Prayer, when even faith is reduced to a pathological term—when all the mysteries are mysteries no longer, what remains? You may go on informalising until there is nothing left. And the strange thing to me is that, even as the Socialist sneers at evening dress, yet wears a red tie, so those who are all for removing crosses from churches are sticklers for the formal. They must have pews of a certain shape and discomfort— they even close their eyes when they pray! Why? There is nothing more reprehensible in a genuflexion than in kneeling to pray. One

act of adoration cannot be wrong and another right because different sets of muscles are employed in the process.

"Prayer book revision?" My friend the priest shook his head. "I really don't know what will happen. They will leave me my altar..."

He needs his altar very badly; In the early morning you will find him kneeling there as the church bell clangs unmusically. Always providing that he has not been called somewhere.

"Doctor says mother can't live another hour, and father says would you come along an' say a piece?"

IX. — BACK TO THE ARMY—THE SAME OLD SERVICE

"To the old village church

They marched our young he'ro,

'Aim straight at me 'art!'

Was the last words he said,

Exposin' his breast

To the points of their ri-fills.

The smoke cleared away—

Our young he'ro lay dead!

"GOOD GOD!" said I, shocked. "Haven't they forgotten that song?"

"They don't forget nothing in the Army," said Ernest with pride.

Here was I in a canteen—a sort of idealised canteen—and here was Private Somebody-or-other singing the song that brought tears to my youthful eyes way back in '94. Nothing has changed. The Army forgets nothing.

Do you ever realise that there are no printed rules for hopscotch or rounders or tipcat, and no treatise on the art of spinning tops? The mystery of these noble practices is handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. And nobody has ever laid down the rule that the favourite songs of the Army should be Irish revolutionary songs, and yet they have been for so long as I can remember. I suppose there is a certain plaintiveness about Irish songs which appeals to the sentimental soldier—for soldiers are still sentimental.

No change. More money, a little more work, better feeding (in dining- halls instead of the barrack-rooms), but otherwise just the same, old Army—the Army of '14 and the Army of Wellington and Marlborough. Who told the soldier that Ypres was to be pronounced "Wipers"? The British Army has always called : Ypres "Wipers." Marlborough's soldiers did. I saw a letter the other day from one of Marlborough's officers. "The men speak cf the town as Wypirs," he wrote. In one respect, however, there has been a change for the worse. An old dummer with umpteen years' service says that beer is not what it was.

But then they used to say the same thing when I was a soldier. There was an old Crimean veteran, Callaghan, of the Rifle Brigade, who could and did speak for hours on the subject of Brews. He was a teetotaller when I met him, having been driven to this distressing decision by the falling off in the quality of Army beer.

The older men, the '14 veterans, will tell you, shaking their heads, that the Army isn't what it was. But then, the Army has never been what it was. In 1893 I was told by an ancient barrack warden that when he was soldiering—it was soldiering.

"The present generation" (I can hear his quavering voice now) "is midgets compared with the men who was soldiering when I was a recruit."

And so on ad infinitum —down the ages will go that head-wagging. "In my time soldiering was soldiering!"

A second-in-command major challenged the "no change" theory.

"There is one difference—we don't get half as many 'drunks' as we did. In your time you'd probably have three drunks in the 'clink' every night—we very rarely get them. I think the standard is higher than it was before the war—physique and character. Certainly the Army of to-day as more technically perfect; the drill and training approximate nearer to the realities of war. We are building up a magnificent force."

The Army really doesn't change, because it is recruited from an unchanging class—youthful working-class people. Men of better education, the kind that with luck and application have got a job pupil-teaching or bank clerking, can make good in the Army only if they are good mixers. Tommy still resents swank.

Of one who gave himself airs because he imagined he was superior to his fellows, Ernest said:—

"He struck pa with a roll of music and run away for a soldier!"

I was awe-stricken. "Do they still say that?" I asked in a hushed voice.

The Army doesn't change. As, for instance:

"The worst thing about soldierin' is that people look down on you. When there's a—"

"—war on," I finished, "they make a fuss of you, but now the war's over they treat you like dirt, and won't let their daughters go strolling with you down dark and draughty lanes."

"You heard about it?" said Ernest, interested.

"Thirty-three years ago," I told him.

Private soldiers are very human and are pleasant to talk to; warrant officers terrify me because they have grievances which revolve in some mysterious fashion around the Royal Warrant for Pay and Promotion. And a warrant officer with a grievance is more fearful than measles...

Here is the old square again, gravelled and uneven. And the old red barracks with their shining windows, and the faint blare of a bugle summoning orderly sergeants, and the little knot of left-footed recruits being initiated into certain mysteries.

Gosh! How lovely and young it makes you feel to see three youthful military gentlemen pushing a hand-cart full of coal, under the eyes of a self-conscious lance-corporal, and to hear one wind-blown fragment of speech as they pass.

"There ought to be a so-and-so coal mine outside every so-and-so married quarters!"

In my days love and light refreshment were the curses of the Army. To- day, even as the guard-rooms have fewer occupants, so have the hospitals—in certain respects. We are much more intelligent about things to-day—broader, more humane, and we teach soldiers things that would never have been possible in the prudish 'nineties. Aldershot, as everybody knows, is the hub of the military universe (though Catterick is making a little hub of its own), and in or about Aldershot are all the mysteries and wonders which science has evolved for the destruction of possible enemies. The new soldier by rights should be a slim wan with a bulbous forehead, a little short-sighted and mathematically minded. He should approximate to those supermen whom it is the joy of Mr. Wells to describe when he is not engaged in particularising the nasty amours of self-made men.

Think of all the material progress we have seen since the days of the Martini-Henry! The tanks and gas masks, the armour-plated aeroplanes and wireless, and the Lord knows what. But the spirit of progress has not touched the poor so-and-so infantry; they are just whore they were in the days of William the Conqueror.

Ernest (who is something of a find) wrinkles his nose sneeringly at science.

"I've heard all the muck about the next war—repeatin' rifles an' what-not. And gas and sick-smoke and aeroplanes that can wipe out Aldershot in three ticks. Death-rays—you ain't mentioned them! But when the war comes, what'll it be? A fatig' just the same as the last one! Workin' parties an' whizz-bangs, snipers, and cetera. 'Over the top and good luck, old boy!' I know!

"They'll sit down an' work it out on paper—so many places to be wiped out with aeroplanes, so many miles of trenches to be took by tanks, and so on and so forth. An' when the places ain't wiped out and the trenches ain't took, they'll say, 'Shove in the Fif' Division, an' see what they can do.'

"Moppin' up is war—not tanks an' aeroplanes—it's fillin' up the gaps that counts. I'm not sayin' anything against science, but I'll believe in it when the

War Office takes away the soldiers' bayonets and scraps the bombin' school."

In almost exactly these words did Ernest recapitulate his faith in the indispensable infantry.

X. — THE MODERN GIRL—AN AGE OF REALITY

"That is about the silliest book I have ever read," said Diana.

I took the slim volume from her hand and read it. And as I read, my hair stood up. It was the nastiest little book that has ever come my way, being the confession of a peculiarly unpleasant young lady who had the habit of going into the woods and taking off her clothes. And, of course, it was most "literary," all high-falutin', and on the loftiest plane. It has to be that, or the queer folk who like that kind of stuff would have no excuse for reading it.

"But it is so well written," they plead.

I put the book down.

"What do you think of this kind of muck?"

"I think it is silly," said Diana, "and it is not terribly well written. Anyway, who would do that sort of thing?"

That was all. Nothing about the blatant indecency of it—its syrupy impurities. Diana is not so terribly modern that she stands out from her girl friends. They have all read the little book.

("Please return it directly to the librarian," says the lady at the library, a little shocked.)

There are stern fathers who, having seen that kind of literature in their daughter's hands, would grow tremendous and awful. They would talk about what their dear mothers would say if they were alive, and the effect on their dear grandmothers. But that is rather stupid.

There was an age when girls were not supposed to have legs—only trim little ankles, and those only occasionally, when big masculine D-s produced faintness in gently-nurtured females. An age of artificiality that tolerated the nude in Renaissance art, but rather suggested that things had improved since then.

This is an age of reality; emphatically more wholesome. Gone are the days of nasty ancient mysteries which were not mysteries at all, though everybody pretended they were. Truth is a great killer of diseased imaginations. There is an idea amongst quite nice people that the modern girl drinks too much, smokes too much, keeps abominable hours, and is rather heartless.

"Which means,",said Diana, in relation to the last stricture; "that she isn't as sentimental as she was. I don't think we are—in fact, I'm sure. Naturally, I can't remember pre-war men, but I am certain that they weren't as sentimental as the young men of to-day. They slop! I know it's an ugly word, but they just slop. Women are being driven to heartlessness in self-defence."

Later Diana was very frank on a matter which her mother would never have discussed with her father.

"That's silly, too," she said when (very mildly) I pointed this out. "If a motor engine were human, I am sure it would never blush when it discussed its carburettor. I think the other generations of women must have had an awful time—they were never allowed to have anything but headaches. That is why they never had their appendices out—they weren't supposed to have 'em! It was ladylike to die gracefully surrounded by your weeping relatives, but only the doctor and the intimate friends of your family were allowed to know that it was something to do with the tummy.

"And the mysteries! Whispered in dark corners like a tribal secret—The Thing Unknown To Man! And think of the girls who went to their marriage with the idea that the doctor brought the baby in a big black bag——"

"Stuff," said I.

"Stuff," echoed Diana. "I know a girl who was brought up nicely. Her mother told her nothing—froze her to death when she asked. You know the sort of thing—'My dear, that is not the sort of thing one wishes to talk about.' A sort of inverted vanity."

Now the modern girl knows. Is she worse or better for the knowledge? If she is worse, then society is in a rotten state, for these secret matters are discussed very frankly.

And of course she is better. Prurience succumbs to the germicidal qualities of Stark Truth. You discover that if you are acquainted with any of the big girls' schools in the country. Behind the slang phrases employed to describe the indescribables of life is sheer sanity—which is Truth. It is good form to be flippant on subjects that would make the overworked and over-libelled grandmother turn in her grave; it is bad form to make such matters a subject of conversation.

I was in a night club (so called) last Wednesday, and had a good look round for the cocktail-drinking. and modern young lady who is supposed to haunt these establishments. There were about two or three known to me, and they were drinking something innocuous. They had come in after a theatre, and were gone before 1 o'clock.

"The average nice girl hasn't a look in at these places," said Diana, relentlessly. "You could comb all the night clubs in London any night and never find more than two dozen, and they would be with their parents or uncles or things. Young men haven't any money. Most of the women you see at the club are middle-aged, and if they're young and pretty and are always dancing with the same partner whenever you meet them, they are 'What'll I Do's.'"

"What is a 'What'll I Do'?" I asked.

"Don't you know that brand of song?" asked Diana. "'The Broken Doll' and 'What'll I Do' and 'You Made Me Love You'? They're all about girls who have lost their well-off dancing partners—poor dears!"

There is an idea abroad that her growth to athletic excellence marks the complete emancipation of the modern girl.

"That's silly—girls have always played tennis and hockey as long as I can remember. Golf isn't novel, either. People get foolish ideas about women's athleticism from seeing freakish ladies boxing and running. Everything that, has 'come over' girls in the past twenty years is to the good. Short skirts and open necks, shingles too. If men like long hair let 'em grow it! Let it be their crowning glory. Women have never been so sensibly dressed as they are today—they are leading the dressmakers, for a change. In the old days a Paris dressmaker could ordain just what we had to wear. They've tried to get back their old supremacy and failed. Time and time again they have tried to bring the hem of the dress to the ground, and they haven't. Women have found their legs—literally!"

The modern youth, whilst he grows properly indignant at the suggestion that he is a "slop," is quite satisfied with the modern girl. A blasé bachelor told me!

"A boy can always tell her that he is broke, and it's nice in other ways. Girls are better pals than they ever were. They're easy to get on with, and you don't have to pretend. We've lost a lot of the pretty-pretty stuff that is so popular on the Continent—the bowings and scrapings and hand- kissing, but that stately business never meant anything. I congratulate myself that I had the sense to wait for this generation to come along."

There she goes—just ahead, of me!

"At the wheel of somebody's car, her shingled hair blown all ways, the end of a golf bag sticking up out of the dickey. Beside her crouches a bare-headed boy in a University who winces every time she changes gear. Presently she turns abruptly to take a side turning. She doesn't put out her hand until she turns the wheel... Fortunately I have fierce brakes on my car. The modern girl is a rotten driver.

XI. — "MUSHERS" AND RIDERS

The musher got his cab on the never-never system. He paid so much down and pays, so much for years and years. Too much for too long. The cab, looking at it with an honest eye, is worth something under £400—he has to pay nearly £900. Some men have paid more. It is a form of licensed brigandage which has been going on for years.

Saddled with this horrible liability, the "musher" (by which name the small owner-driver of taxi-cabs is known) took to himself a working partner.

Nobody asks the cab whether it likes the work day and night—it just does. Every morning and evening it is cleaned and the engine gets a bit of a rest.

It is a hard sort of life; the reward is poor; it is often a struggle to keep a family and pay the installments. There are one or two cab builders who have played the game with the men. Most of these have only made their presence felt recently.

I have owned some beautiful cars in my time-I've never had one that cost as much as the taxi which would have brought me home to-night but for an unfortunate journey to Belsize Park; just think of it—for another few hundred pounds you could buy a 1925 car, second-hand, but of the best make and in fine condition!

"They talk! about taxi-men expecting tips—they couldn't live, without 'em! I've been out since 3 o'clock this afternoon, and I've not taken enough to pay for the juice I've used! I hand it over to my mate at 10 o'clock. He takes the theatre and supper trade—as much as he can get of it. The theatre trade's a gamble, especially on wet nights. You don't get regular riders but three or four.people who use us instead of a bus.

"I was on the rank for three hours the other, night, and when it came to my turn to; pick, up, I got an old gentleman who wanted to go from Haymarket to Pall-Mall. One shilling—no tip. Three hours' waiting, and me, dreaming of taking home a young swell and his lady-friend and going to Hampstead by the longest way—three times round the Outer Circle and up Avenue road."

He kept a rough diary—a sort of day-book, for the satisfaction of his partner. Here was a busy and eventful day:

8 a.m.—Great Central Hotel to Victoria. Three trunks. Tip. 6d

9.15—Victoria to Bayswater road. Tip 3d.

10.20—Paddington to Claridge's. Tip 1s. 3d.

11.30—Pall-Mall to Charing Gross Hospital (gentleman in a fit. No tip.)

2.15—Queen Victoria street to New Kent road. Tip 3d.

4.30—Westminster Bridge road to Kennington Oval. Tip 4d.

6.0—House of Commons to Buckingham Palace. Tip 1s.

"You see what happened; I was lumbered down to Kennington Oval just as I might have been picking up in the city. The House of Commons man? I don't know who he was. I've been lots of times to Buckingham Palace, and it's a funny, thing, but you always get a good tip. I suppose they're afraid the King will tick 'em off if they don't pay up. The most generous member of Parliament I've ever driven is —— (a great Labour leader), and the meanest is —— (another great Labour leader).

Generally' speaking, the master man in the cab trade hasn't the best job. The drivers who work for the larger corporations know that their salary is assured, and the tips are so much extra. They haven't the bother of upkeep, insurance, garaging, and if they pay for the juice they use that is allowed for in adjusting the wages. Some men receive (with: a 'guaranteed' minimum) a proportion of their earnings as shown by the clock.

One trial they are spared—the spectre of the day when the instalment becomes due.

"I've seen mushers sell their furniture to keep up their payments. It is hardest in the winter, and just about September, when the regular riders are away. Do you know, I can always feel the effect when the Newmarket meetings are on? The regular riders are away. It's worse with the Doncaster St. Leger Meeting. People are beginning to go North. It's just that class of rider, a man with a car of his own, who makes all the difference between a good week and a bad one."

This musher (an old hansom driver) swears that the days of the horse cab were royal compared with the present.

"I'd ten thousand times rather drive a hansom than the best taxi! There are still one or two of the old crowd that stick to the dickey. One of 'em's got a bit of money, and he brings his hansom out day after day and makes it pay. People like to ride in hansoms for the novelty of it. But he can afford to take a chance; I can't."

He has had his drama.

"I've driven two murderers—one to Pentonville, one to Wandsworth—after they've been sentenced to death. And I drove —— when he came up to London for his appeal. When he got down at the Law Courts he said to me; 'I wish I was you!'

"I can't, tell-you how many people I've driven to Brixton Prison for debt. I had a regular epidemic of them once. Almost the first job I had when I came out of the Army was to take to Brixton an officer I knew.

"I haven't had many lunatics, but my mate has. One cut all the cushions on his way to Camberwell House, but the gentleman who came with him paid without questioning."

(You must imagine this little interview going in in the middle of a busy West End street at 8 o'clock at night, with buses and cars rumbling past on either side and the mud of them producing strange patterns on my Burberry.)

"Mushing is all right when the cab money is paid, and there's nothing to worry about tires and repairs—at least, I suppose so; I haven't got there yet. And it's all right if you've got regular riders. I've got one that I pick up every morning and bring to the City. He never goes home at the same time, so he's no use to me for the return journey. And I used to have a regular who came from Birmingham every Monday morning. I picked him up at Paddington and used to take him round various places and land him at Bloomsbury about 1 o'clock. He always stopped the cab at the same place and waited on the pavement after he'd paid me until I was out of sight. That's a bit in your line! I found out what it was all about when a private detective jumped on the running board one day after I'd dropped the old boy. He wanted me as a witness in a divorce case, but it never came to anything; and though I turned up at Paddington—always used to wait near the indicator board for him—I never saw my rider again."

Apparently when you have been mushing or driving long enough, you develop an eighth sense and can foretell the value of riders as tipping propositions at a glance. My musher advanced the astonishing theory that narrow-headed people never gave more than threepence, and was emphatic on one point—fat men are invariably generous.

"I've never know a fat man who gave me less than sixpence. Women I don't like at all. They've got no sense of what is right. Two out of every five give you the exact fare. But a fat woman has never let me down. Another thing: if a rider, before he gets in, gives you the exact address and stops to tell you the best and nearest way to get to a place, he's a certain threepenny touch—if that."

A few minutes later a gentleman crossed the half road and signified my musher.

Cab, sir? Yes, sir,"

"Take me," said the passenger, "to Belsize Park—go by way of Bow street and Gower street."

The musher cast one pathetic glance at me—it said "Threepence!" And looking at the passenger's head as he opened the door of the cab, I saw that it was narrow. Possibly not oven threepence.

XII. — 99, SOMETHING CRESCENT

THE curtains that cover the lower parts of the windows of No. 99, Something Crescent are white and stiff. A flat strip of polished brass conceals the rod that stretches them. There is a perennially green plant on a small table in the bow window, and if you are so rude as to look over the curtain you will see a polished table in the centre of the room, and books in a neat bookcase—not, as they used to be, disposed star-shape about the table.

Though the cottage is a villa and has tiles for thatching, yet, like the home described by the emotional poet:

"Everything within that house

Is wondrous neat and clean"

The stair carpet has snowy treads; the stair rods gleam like a Grenadier's buckles; the kitchen, you may be sure, has a grate in which you could see your face—if you preferred that to the mirror in the hall stand.

There is rather a nice fragrance—a sort of hot bread and lavender perfume. Outside the front door is a boot-scraper, which is no mere ornament; inside, a mat designed for use. When the children come in from school, Mrs. Z appears in the passage with the forbidding eye of a drill sergeant.

"Rub your boots," she says mechanically—as mechanically as she brushes their hair when they go to school again. (A painfully brisk business, this hair-brushing by a third party.)

She inspected them as they pass to the scullery... a rapid fire of admonition and instruction. All about soap and nail brushes and splashing water on the floor and the effect of careless washing on clean towels. Before the midday meal she says grace—one of those queer old customs still retained at Lord Mayors' banquets and in decent suburban homes.

She really does wonders on four pounds a week. Of course, four pounds a week is a tremendous lot of money, but you must remember that she has to pay the rent out of that and the rates and buy her clothes and pay The Girl, and perform other amazing feats of financial jugglery.

On the other hand, praise is due to Mr. Z.

He has three pounds with which to get through the week, and out of that he pays his insurance, his fares, newspapers, lodge subscription, and of course he has to eat and drink and smoke. Oh, and he has to buy clothes. He's always well dressed. You might mistake him for a quite wealthy man. He served in the war, is so devout a Liberal that he can explain Mr. Lloyd George, is a churchman, can vamp on the piano with two fingers, and just now is flirting with spiritualism.

In the spring and summer he potters about the garden, smoking a pipe and wearing pre-war trousers. He mows the lawn and digs up flower beds and wields an adroit hose on hot and rainless summer evenings. In the winter he and his wife attend lectures at a local culture trap, wherein are sometimes snared quite important literary personages. Sometimes culture has her moments off, and there is a programme of song and music, for there is considerable talent in the neighbourhood, and Mr. Z's eighteen-year-old daughter has framed in her bedroom a certificate of the Royal Academy of Music.

"When she was only twelve, my boy," said Mr. Z—deeply content.

"And ten months," says his wife. " Practically thirteen."

"Twelve," says her husband firmly. Mr. Z has a full life. There are one or two tennis courts in the neighbourhood to which he has admission by right, but generally speaking the garden keeps him pretty well occupied in the summer months. In the winter he has his wireless set, and occasionally a couple of stalls for a play that isn't going too well come his way. Then does Mr. Z get into a dress suit and Mrs. Z wears her clever frock and a fascinator over her hair. And they always enjoy the play—unless, of course, it is one of those plays about the rights of wives to soul mates, and things like that.

"I didn't know which way to look," says Mrs. Z. There are still women in England who don't know the way to look in the presence of dirt. And thank God for it! His Royal Academy of Music daughter rather worries Mr. Z. She's in business and of late has taken to putting it on thick. He wouldn't mind that, for he realises that, though his wife's face normally shines from honest soaping, most women put it on—but, of course, not thick. His R.A.M. daughter isn't content with powder; she uses lip-stick, and has been known to use it publicly.

"You've put it on thick to-night, Dorothy," says Mr. Z severely.

"I can't go out looking like a scarecrow," says Dorothy, glancing sideways in the mirror.

"Your mother doesn't look like a scarecrow," says Mr. Z with ominous calm. If Dorothy is wise, she will leave the matter here.

"I'll take a bit off," she says; goes upstairs and doesn't.

The Z's have no use for fast women. The lady at 95 is more than fast. According to what her Girl told the Girl at 97, and what the Girl at 97 passed across the wall to Mr. Z's Girl, Mrs. O is no better than she should be. There is even a doubt as to whether she is properly married to Mr. O. She may be seen in the garden quite late in the morning in a greenish

kimono, smoking cigarettes. Unmistakable court bailiffs have called at her house and left papers.

Mrs. Z shivers at the sight of her, and refers to her as "Slommicky." It is a strange word, which means, so far as I have been able to trace it, "obscenely untidy."

The Girl is an institution in the Crescent. She is not exactly a cook and not exactly a housemaid. She helps Mrs. Z—and is thoroughly unsatisfactory. You can never trust her to do anything unless "you stand over her all the time." A terrifying picture.

Few young ladies have the distinction of being The Girl for long. They come and they go. The servant problem is perpetual in the Crescent. Once a year the Z's go to the seaside—departing in a cab to the nearest station. They return at the end of a fortnight, their baggage garnished with wooden spades and buckets, their faces a deep mahogany brown. Mrs. Z's souvenir is a small bottle half full of lotion which alleviates the irritation of gnat bites.

The boys will grow up and form little households of their own. There are some that grew a little too quickly and were mature in 1914. They went off naturally to France. Some came back and some didn't. In dozens of parlours, behind the aspidistras, are photographs and pitiable relics of nice-looking lads who are memories.

The household goes on the same. Still the Mr. Z's catch the 9.15; still the younger children come in from school and are washed and fed. Still stands Mrs. Z, a little more worn, a little more faded, as voluble as ever, directing the ablutions. Mr. Z still walks to town when there is a big strike, and is the first to volunteer for Special Constabulary duty. And if there is another war, he will stand by the iron gate that separates his front garden from the road and wave farewell to the new generation on the way the Crescent folks have trod from generation to generation.

XIII. — POLICE

The policeman stands aloof, watchful.

"You will?"

"I will!"

"It'd take a man to punch me on the nose!"

"Would it?".

"Yes, it would!"

A slight, more or less harmless scuffle, undignified perhaps, but painless, and the policeman moves silently from the shadows.

"Now then, now then!!"

His tone is not stern. It is rather amused. "Now, you chaps, hop off home," he counsels. Confronted by seventy-four inches of legal advice, one of the combatants grows explanatory.

"This dirty dog called me..."

The offender has cast reflections upon the complainant's parentage. The policeman grows philosophical and ambiguous.

"There's many a true word spoken in jest," he says. "Now hop it, both of you."

They hop it.

"No—they're too talkative to fight," said the officer, producing a handkerchief from his sleeve and blowing his nose loudly. "You seldom see street fights nowadays, and then only when chaps are tight. All the real fights are one-sided. A fellow calls at another fellow's house or meets him in a pub and gives him a punch, and that's the end of it. You have a lot of right on your side before you get up and ask for another. A fighting man told our inspector: "If a man insults you, knock him down; if he gets up to fight, run like hell!' and there's a lot in it. I've had trouble arresting scrappers, but nothing much. Women are different, but there's no danger now that they wear this new kind of hat."

I thought he was joking, but he wasn't.

"Hatpins," he said tersely. "I've seen a constable's face ripped open when tackling a struggling woman—an accident, of course. But down Lambeth way I've known women to use them for fighting."

A policeman's life is in the main a very dull one. All the interesting work is in the hands of the C.I.D., and the chance of a constable figuring in a big case is as remote as his drawing a lottery prize.

Generally speaking, he gets more kicks than ha'pence.

"I had a cat burglar on my beat a month ago, and naturally everybody wanted to know where I was. A cat burglar always works with a pal, and a policeman being as conspicuous as Big Ben, it's not hard for the look-out to see him coming. If I had my way I'd have half the police force doing night duty in plain clothes. In the old days it was necessary to have men about in uniforms so that people who wanted to find a policeman could see him, but nowadays, when almost every house has got a telephone, it is a simple matter to bring an officer to the spot. Besides, if you're in plain clothes it is pretty easy to detect anybody who is looking for a policeman—they go sort of wild."

The worst hours of night duty are from three to five. Patrolling a quiet street, a policeman may break regulations and indulge himself in a quiet pipe.

"It isn't safe. I've known men to be reported by the people whose property they are guarding."

Two o'clock" in the morning, and a noiseless figure strolling through a quiet London square His electric lamp flashes on door and window; it searches areas and lingers on the area door. Sometimes he mounts steps and tries the door.

Here is a window open at the bottom. He doesn't remember having seen that before. He goes up the steps and knocks thunderously on the door. Presently an upstairs window squeaks and a quavering voice demands explanation.

"Your window is open."

Presently the householder in dressing-gown and pyjamas opens the door and admits the policeman. He doesn't know why the window is open. The constable turns on the lights and examines the room. Maybe he will continue his investigations into the kitchen. Then a servant, drawn from her slumbers, remembers that she opened the window just before she went to bed and forgot to close it. If the householder is a nice man he slips half-a-crown into the hand of the constable. He is not allowed to accept tips, but, not being a superman, he takes it. I should. Perhaps he gets a drink—which is against regulations. Being human, he puts down the glass and wipes his lips before going forth to the inspection of more areas and doors and windows.

Luck is with him to-night. At four o'clock he sees a brisk little man carrying a workman's basket who bids him a bright "Good morning" as he passes.

"Good morning," says the constable politely.

Observation and experience tell him that that kind of basket is carried by a certain type of man. For instance, carpenters are an autocratic race that do not go to work at four o'clock in the morning. A sewer man clumping along in thick boots and carrying a sack, he would let pass. But a shabby little man with a carpenter's bag—

"Here—come here."

The little man turns reluctantly. What have you got in that bag, governor?"

"Tools—I got a job to do down in; Kent—"

"Let's have a look."

The little man can either stand on his dignity or drop the bag and run. If he is wise he takes a middle course.

"It's a cop," he says fatalistically.

The bag has a number of brass taps and portions of lead piping lifted from an empty house. Net value about 12s.

Small thieves make this sort of thing pay. Sometimes they make quite a good haul, and one man once got away with a hundred pounds' worth of silver wall brackets. There is little risk, for no family is in residence, and a caretaker would be sufficient to keep the thief at bay.

A red letter night this for a uniformed policeman. One hand clasped affectionately about the burglar's arm, the other carrying the bag, they walk to the police station.

"I was on duty in. Wigmore street when I saw this man carrying a bag. I asked him what it contained, and he replied, 'It's a cop.' I then took him into custody."

The police are credited, not only with a comprehensive knowledge of torts, but they are even supposed to be authorities on such matters as the laws of succession.

I was with a policeman in the Edgware road one night, when a woman approached him.

"Excuse me, young man, (a favourite method of address), "but could you tell me the rights of this? My poor dear mother died last month, and my brother says the furniture's his, though I'm older than him. And his wife's come round to take the sofa from my house..."

The policeman knew nothing about the laws of succession, but he knew that not even the rightful heir can pinch sofas. He walked round the corner and interviewed the brother.

"If you think it's yours, go to the courts. You can't go taking people's sofas out of their houses. How do I know it's yours?".

He had the rough law of it. But then, he has the rough law of everything. He knows what to do in all sorts of embarrassing circumstances. When he finds a lady, in the middle of the night walking along the pavement in her nightgown, he knows just where to take her, and knows that, even if she is freezing to death, he must, not take her by cab unless another constable accompanies him. He is a frequent visitor to hospitals and mortuaries, and recognises a homeless dog a hundred yards away. The child who is "lost" in the street gravitates towards him naturally. He appears as by magic whenever a crowd gathers, and he can handle the ugliest of these with perfect good humour, giving banter for banter. He never loses his temper; he'll go out of his way to inform the wife of a prisoner that her husband is inside and wants a bit of breakfast.

Never in all the chequered history of Scotland Yard (and you have to read George Dilnot's new book on that institution to understand how chequered it has been) has the police force of the Metropolis been so efficient as it is to-day, or held a better type of man.

"It's a hard job, and yet it's an easy job," said my policeman, hitching himself characteristically. "The work is tiring and monotonous, but you're dealing with English people, and there's nobody like 'em. A lady—an American lady—says to me the other day: 'Why don't you carry a pistol, the same as the police do in New York?' I says to her: 'Madam, the police don't carry pistols in this country because there's nobody here bad enough to shoot."

XIV. — THE FARMER—COUNTRYSIDE PHILOSOPHY

The snow it fell down on a father and mother,

As up to the workhouse they helped one another.

The poor old man cried In a voice full of sorrow:

"Our children will learn of this come-down with horrow.

Young Harry's In Dartmoor; a seven he's doin',

And Alfred's in Hamwell—young wimmin his ruin.

In the Infirmary Jim's a bit silly.

And Maude has a business on Piccadilly."

The tears of the father they couldn't be hided.

"Thank Gawd that our children is amply provided!

Let's lay our old bones in the workhouse so cruel,

An' live till we're ninety on rate-payers' gruel."

—The Ballad of the Lump

I met him on a country road, and I thought he was a tramp who had stolen a ready-made suit of clothes. His eye was a little wild and he walked unsteadily. He was sober enough, but he confessed that he had "fairly put it away" last night. Him and a Birmingham chap and a feller from Poplar.

His profession?

"Farmin'," he said without a blush.

I will not arouse to resentment the humanitarian society or Red municipality whose experiment he is by putting down in cold print their style and title.

All over the country are well-meaning but ill-balanced people who believe that farming is the natural and proper outlet for its unemployables. Back to the land is only the feeblest bleat of a slogan, but there are various associations that are plodding along the sticky path of illusion.

"Farmin'—hard work! Diggin' an' ditchin'," said the victim. "Slave drivin'—a dog's life!"

In fact, unpleasant. He by trade was a plumber. A plumber? Well, not exactly a plumber, a sort of plumber's mate. Anyway, he once worked for a plumber. Before that he was in the docks, and after that he had been a watchman on a road-mending job. Also his misguided relatives had once set him up in the fried fish and stewed eels business.

"Eels never die till sunset," he said, zoologically. The business was a failure from some cause—he was rather vague about this—and then a man he

knew started backing horses on a system. The system was good, but the horses refused to conform to it.

"It's a pretty hard life farmin'. I don't know how these farm labourers stick it. No life, no cinema, nothin'! Just gettin' up in the mornin' an' workin' all day. Lord love a duck, what a life!"

Possibly, I suggested, there were compensations—a healthy life for the children, a freedom from care, congenial employment in the open air.

"A pal of mine went out to Canada," he went off at a tangent. "Took his wife and family. A nice chap, one of the best bird fanciers in Barkin'. But somebody put this silly idea in his head about Canada, and somebody else paid the money for the fare, an' he pops off. And where do you think they sent him. To a placed called —"

I told him that he probably meant "Manitoba."

"That's right—you've heard about it—Manitoba. They put him in the country in a wood house; had to get his water out of a well. No life—nothin'."

"Life" is, of course, essential to the happiness of the townsman. It is made up of seeing people walk down the street, and the sound of motor-buses and trams, and the final Star with all the results. And a picture palace round the corner; "Soft Bodies" on Mon., Tues., Wed., and "She Sold Her Soul For Extras" on Thurs., Fri., Sat. Something innocuous. Something innocuous, with all the dirt in the title.

"They couldn't stick it, so they came back. As Joe said: 'We've only got to live once—let's have a bit of Life!' Poor old Joe, he's in the lump now—him an' his missus and the three children—four, as a matter of fact, and one coming."

"The Lump," I would explain, is the workhouse.

"Lloyd George is behind all this. Didn't he say this was goin' to be a country fit for heroes? Is it? No."

He was thirty-eight years of age, but he hadn't been to the war.

"Let them that make the wars fight 'em," he said, but offered no explanation as to his escape. Indeed, he returned to the question of farming.

"It's unhealthy; it stands to reason it must be—out of doors in all sorts of weather. Up before it's daylight, dodgin' here and dodgin' there. Lookin' after pigs, and what not. You're never done! It's not like plumbin'. There's your job, and when it's over it's over. But farmin' is blacklegs' work. You're no sooner finished mendin' a fence—which is carpentry—than you're shovellin' muck into a cart—which is transport. You take it from me, no man can be a farm labourer without blackleggin' on some other union."

He had a wife and a number of children (he wasn't quite certain how many) in the care of the Guardians. He came from one of those generous municipalities that never spoil their own ship for a ha'porth of somebody else's tar.

"I've been doin' this farmin' for nearly two months. The food's not bad—but the life! I'm blest if these country yokels didn't start complainin' to the police because a lot of our boys had a bit of a bean-feast the other night! They're not used to Life. There was no harm in it—a lot of us went down to the pub and had a bit of a sing-song. There was a sort of fight, but nothin' that was wrong, if you understand me. They don't expect us to go farmin' in this dead-and-alive hole and not try to enjoy ourselves when we can, do they?"

On the science of farming he is something of an authority. Pigs interested him. I told him the story of the labourer explaining to a more obtuse friend the theory of transmigration of souls.

"When you die, Fred, your soul goes into something else—maybe into a pig. And then I comes along one day and looks in the sty an' says: 'Bless my soul, there's old Fred! He ain't changed a bit!'"

My farming acquaintance was not amused.

"You ought to see the stuff they eat!"

That is what he know about pigs. As to such matters as root- crops—

"Mind you, I know a lot. about gardenin'. I used to go hoppin' regularly, so did my mother and missus. That's different. You all pull together there—even the kids do something. Mind you; I never did much because I hurt my hand—fell over a hop pole first day. But between us we used to make a good thing of it. This kind of farmin' is different—messin' about with carts an' horses an' spades. You go an' work' for a day in the fields, turnin' over earth... by dinner time you're fit to drop if the foreman's anywhere about. You can have a mike when he's away—but that man never thinks of goin' away. There's some talk of gettin' up a petition to the guardians about it. The proletariat are bein' put on. Slave-drivin' and nothin' else!"

But (here he brightened) he was giving up farming. A gentleman he knew had written to him offering him a job.

The gentleman in question sold unpatent medicines at street corners, and he wanted somebody to go round with him. As a matter of fact, our friend's retirement from agriculture was not entirely volitionary. There had been some trouble at the farm about illegal absences.

"I ought to have been in last night, but me an' one of those clod-'oppers had a few drinks last night an' I slept at his house," he volunteered. "This old so-and-so in charge of the farm is bound to get saucy about it—but I've got me

answer ready for him! The new job ain't much in the way of money, but thank Gawd I'll see a bit of life!"

I left him at the entrance of the Farm Settlement and walked back to the village. I had intended interviewing the superintendent, and had come down for that purpose. Somehow it did not seem necessary now.

XV. — IN THE SCHOOLS—LEARNING TO LEARN

About popular education...

It is just on 40 years since I crossed the threshold of my Alma Mater, but the first visible changes are extraneous to the school. For example, the dust chute that was such a fascinating feature of the 'eighties has gone. The deep and smelly pit has been filled up. Houses and workshops have been built upon it. And the school seems absurdly small compared with what it was in my days.

It is a reddish, yellowish building, consisting of three floors; the lower for the infants, the second for the boys, and, appropriately, the highest floor of all for the girls.

The stairs seemed rather shallow-stepped. How often have I panted up them! It is when you get into the corridor that you begin to see the changes—the pictures, the little shrine that holds the book wherein are inscribed the names of the boys who served; the memorial for those who fell, with the poppy wreath beneath it.

First of the revelations was a photograph of the swimming team, then a certain mystic chart inscribed with figures and baffling initials.

"Each of these stands for a 'house,'" said the head, a gentleman who came recently and in some trepidation from North London to the vicinity of the Old Kent road, and has been agreeably surprised to find his new pupils "perfect little gentlemen."

"Houses?" said I, staggered.

"Oh,yes, we have 'houses.' Four nouses to a class; they had named after streets in the neighbourhood, and they make for competition."

The houses are mythical, but it is a myth which spurs youthful energies to excellence.

"The old 'standards' have disappeared; they are classes now, and the top is the first."

I looked over the lowest class, small boys who had just come from the "infants." A sturdier lot of young Britons I have never seen here; and here is a matter which may well interest the anthropologist—forty years ago the children of the working classes were not good to look upon. I vividly remember one standard in which half the faces were dreadful to see—asymmetrical to a point of deformity. Now there was hardly a face that was not good-looking; I only saw two children (one a girl) who were short of normal. There isn't a school the Kingdom that could show a more wholesome-looking lot of children.

"Things have changed considerably since your time," said the head. "A whole lot of unessential have been scrapped, and, of course, there is medical supervision of the children The most curious thing is the amount of rheumatism you find amongst children nowadays; possibly it was prevalent before, but nobody troubled to diagnose it,"

The elementary school teacher is a remarkable person. When you realise the drab monotony of teaching year in and year out the same old things to the same vague little mind, you will imagine a condition of boredom which he or she cannot help communicating to the pupil. But the men and women I met were enthusiasts, and Reddins road is no exception; you find that condition everywhere. One master has devised a method of teaching history which, naturally, I think is perfect. Naturally because two years ago I wrote a series of little books with the same idea. He has invented a mythical family history which covers all the important periods of history. He writes these stories in his spare time.

Another master directs the sport. This season their football team is unbeaten. Their swimming record is truly wonderful. I have an idea that one small lad is a coming champion.

In another class-room—the top class:

"Stand up, the prefects!"

Prefects? Was I hearing aright? Oh, yes, they have the "pre" system—a smart lot of boys they are.

"They are tremendously useful," said the head; "and from a disciplinary point of view invaluable. They have reduced the necessity for corporal punishment to a minimum."

He brought down the captain of the football team—I think he is also senior prefect. Such a nice, gentle soul; one suspects that his people are passing through a pretty tough time in this period of general unemployment. This child of fourteen goes out to face the world at Christmas. He thinks he may get into an office, for he is good at figures. "And the best boy in the school," Norman Yabsley tells me. Too good for an errand boy—you need a little influence to get out of that rut.

The girls' school on the upper floor was a revelation. The top class wears a uniform dress! They knit their own red jumpers and make the overalls in school. And in the enforced absence of the mistress one of the prefects will "take" the class, set its lessons, and expound the teaching. The senior prefect, a pretty child, who doesn't look big enough to wield the authority of a head girl but does, is thirteen.

Net-ball and swimming are their great games. By the way, the boys have a wall-game (six-a-side), which they have played for years.

"We are feeling now the beneficial effects of having the children of former pupils," said the head mistress. "The old board schools are the foundation of a new esprit de corps."

All systems of education depend primarily upon the education of the parent—and the poorer parent is becoming educated. They know (what they did not know thirty or forty years ago) that compulsory education is not a piece of arbitrary oppression invented by an autocratic Government. I suspect that a great deal of mischief was done by the insistence of that word "compulsory." People used to go to a lot of trouble to hoodwink the attendance officer, and not even quarterly awards and annual prizes induced regular attendance. Now the rewards for all-round excellence are more important. There are scholarships to secondary schools; children may even win scholarships to the universities.

The terrible handicap remains—age limit. When a child has passed through the top class and has reached the age of fourteen, he or she leaves school automatically to swell the forces of child labour. And at this age boys and girls are at a most receptive stage of their existence. They are learning because they want to learn. Their natural talents and leanings are becoming manifest. School is no longer a terror, but a jolly interesting place. There is nothing to prevent their going to secondary schools, but that means a definite break and, in some sense, beginning all over again. To the average parent release from school attendance is welcomed, because there is added a new wage-earner, with the consequent cure to their finances. The longer the child is at school the heavier the burden becomes. A boy or girl of fifteen is a much more expensive proposition than the child of a more tender age.

People much more favourably placed heave a sigh of relief when term bills and college fees and tradesmen's accounts no longer come three times a year for settlement. With families subsisting on three pounds a week it is a much more vital matter.

Out of school I gathered round me a group of small children and asked them what they thought about it all. Alas! They were looking forward to release from the daily tyranny of the school bell.

"What are you going to do when you leave school?"

"Work," said the small boy promptly. "I'm going to drive a motor-car!" Any old motor-car so long as he drove it.

There was a general agreement that to go through life driving motor-cars was an ideal occupation. In my day we elected for engine-driving. The

trouble is that, however well-wishing you may be, it is impossible to help them towards a definite occupation.

Those fatal four years between 14 and 18! It is the period of shiftlessness, the period wherein the van boys and the other shiftless jobs receive their recruits, and when all the good work of devoted masters and the contributions of groaning rate-payers are almost entirely dissipated.

XVI. — THE BABY'S GUARDIAN—"NANNY": AN INSTITUTION

The newest addition to the nursery called loudly for attention. Nanny, who knows the exact urgency denoted by every inflection of squeal, hurried away. The squeal softened to a plaintive wail, presently ceased altogether.

"Wonderful people—English nannies. Take yours. She's been handling babies for over thirty years; all sorts of babies—English, French, German, Argentine—and she's not sick to death of the job. She's watched 'em grow up and out of control; she's nursed the babies of the babies she herself brought up, and she's just as ready to quarrel with the cook over the quality of the beef-juice as ever!"

Not only that, but the properly constituted nanny is all for the style and dignity of babyhood.

"You don't mind my saying so," she says in a hushed, pained voice, "but I thought the perambulator looked a little shabby in the park this morning. Of course it has had a lot of wear. But by the side of Eric's and Hyacinth's perambulator it looked... Well, I thought it looked shabby."

Eric, I understand, is two years of age. He has an aristocratic father, with a title and a number of decorations. But to Nanny he has no existence. He is attached to Eric; a shadowy, imponderable quantity in the eternal background. Hyacinth has an important parent not unknown in the world of medicine. But the real entity, from Nanny's point of view, is this diminutive person, who lords or ladies it from a pram which is distinctly superior in appearance and quality to my pram.

She lives everlastingly in a world entirely populated by babies. A policeman, to her is a person who holds up the traffic to allow babies to cross the road in safety. She never really took an interest in His Majesty the King until she learnt that somewhere were preserved the little shoes he wore and the robes in which he was christened. The weather is good or bad, not by any other standard than its suitability for infants, and shops are interesting or not interesting according to the enthusiasm their window displays will arouse in the bosom of a three-year-old baby with a passion for balloons.

And if this young lady invents weird names for members of the household they are instantly adopted by Nanny. "Mummie" may be Mrs. Something-Somebody to all the world, but she is "Mummie" to the lady in the starched white cap.

"No real nanny ever grows up—that is why they live to be ninety," said the doctor. "They have dual minds. I know one nanny who speaks four languages fluently, and is intensely interested in the European situation, but her real life is centred in the nursery. She can talk to a baby of three—carry on a conversation for hours, and both parties can understand one

another. Have you ever tried to talk intelligently to a baby for ten minutes? Try! You'll feel like a mental case at the end of five."

On the question of clothes, Nanny is an autocrat. She is entitled to be, because she spends quite a lot of time turning them over and mending a rent here and a hole there, and washing them when the rest of the family are thinking of going to bed, and tying up little bundles of pants with blue ribbon She applies for new clothes at cunningly chosen moments, and urges the claim of her client in the tone one would employ with a hard-hearted uncle, supposing you were trying to borrow a fiver. The impression is conveyed, that it is only by an appeal to your wife's better nature that the new hat or the new coat can materialise.

"I think she ought to have a woollen cap. Hyacinth has one—blue."

Demands for wardrobe never go to the father. His donatory province is confined to the expensiveetceteras.

Nanny is a phenomenon belonging to the comfortable, class. She lives in prim squares, nice country houses, and the cosy suburbs. She is Her Royal Highness' and My Lady's prop and stay; she lifts a burden from Mrs. Bourgeoisie.

Generally speaking, her beginning was scientific. Hidden away in her box is the certificate awarded by some maternity hospital authorising her to act in critical circumstances. In one sense, though she would not like to be told this, she is the legitimate successor of the unqualified Mrs. Gamp, who was called out at all hours of the night to assist ladies in their more delicate duties.

More potent than a captain's guard, she does a perpetual sentry-go about the cot. No chill draught may enter the protected zone; all admitted to the presence are carefully scrutinised. She will have no promiscuous kissing of infants—a measles epidemic drives her into complete isolation.

"That was a nice little boy who called to-day—I suppose there is no sickness in the family?"

She has a quick ear for rumours of epidemics, and demands (subtly and artfully) a clean bill of health from every nurse she meets in her daily perambulations, before she allows her client to get more closely acquainted with the young man who occupies the adjacent baby carriage. Fussy? Yes. That is her job. Hers is the one occupation of life in which falseness is a virtue.

I was talking to a German diplomatist a long time ago. He could not be accused of being Anglophile, though he did go very violently in the other direction. He disliked the English on paradoxical grounds, since he traced

Germany's downfall to William's obsessive hatred of this country, which influenced his policy. There were certain of our qualities he admired; certain of our types.

"The English nanny is, of course, incomparable. I wonder she hasn't a literature of her own. We were all brought up by her, and she gave us something which has lasted all our lives. It isn't the school or the university, nor yet the codes we acquire at these places; it is the nanny who makes ladies and gentlemen, and as for the codes—well, we are acquainted with them before we ever see the gymnasium or cottage. You may think it is absurd, but none the less it is a fact that I do things or don't do them to this day because of my nanny's teaching!

"And it isn't only in the commonplace intercourses of daily life that her influence is felt—the psychologist who cares to examine first causes will have no difficulty in tracing the reflection of his nanny in the acts and utterances of public men. I was rather an impetuous child, and she trained me to silence when I was in a fury to make rather unpleasant retorts. In a sense she shaped me for a diplomatic career. That may sound ridiculous, but I know how true it is."

I have heard other men give the same testimony. The psychopathologist knows only too well the immense importance of those early influences. And exactly what are they? I confess that for a week after this conversation I played eavesdropper at the nursery door.

"We musn't throw things on the floor, must we? Baby must be a little lady and eat her pudding nicely. I know a little girl who never speaks until her pudding is finished."

"Why?" asks a voice.

"Because she's such a little lady."

Not exactly a training for a diplomatic career.

Nanny's is an amazing life of self-sacrifice; a life of little heartaches as the children grow up and away from her. I never go to a great public school without seeing the shades of a thousand wistful nannies watching the boys at roll-call. Sandhurst is full of those gentle ghosts, and the universities—and even the great offices of State. I should rather like to have met Winston 's nanny. What stories she could tell!

XVII. — QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S

A VERY nice woman got out of the taxi. The driver lifted out her bag and rang the hospital bell, and the brown doors opened. I had just a glimpse of her, in her long ulster, and then a nurse came forward and, taking the little suitcase, went up the stairs before her. A woman on the verge of tears. Her first visit to Queen Charlotte's, and full of dread at the coming mystery.

"Providing she fulfils requirements, a married mother may come here as often as she wishes," said an official. "The unmarried mother we can only take in once; not because we make any moral distinction between one and the other, but because, owing to our limited accommodation, we must make some sort of rule to keep our numbers down." Five or six babies a day are born at Queen Charlotte's, and very nearly as many outside the hospital attended by Queen Charlotte nurses.

Half the art of producing healthy babies is the pre-natal work of the hospital, which is comparatively a new branch of medical activity. And the clinic at Queen Charlotte's is growing in popularity.

There is an idea—and how it came into existence nobody seems to know—that Queen Charlotte's is a hospital that deals only with the unmarried mother; but in point of fact, only twenty in a hundred of its inmates are in that unfortunate position. That this place has been a godsend to hundreds and thousands of unhappy girls, you need not doubt. Women are admitted "by letter" or . . .

Whilst I was taking tea with the medical officer in charge, the telephone bell rang and he answered it.

". . . Yes, I think we have a bed."

He put down the telephone and rang the house 'phone, and had a short conversation with Sister. There was a bed to be had at a pinch, but ". . . If you think she would be all right till the morning, it would be better. . . . All right, send her in to-night."

He hung up the telephone.

"We take in abnormal cases at any hour of the day or night," he said. "And by 'abnormal' I mean cases that a doctor cannot safely treat in the patient's own home. Ordinarily, we see the women first as out-patients, and if they express a desire to come into the hospital we give them a list of subscribers, any one of whom could give them a letter. If there is a letter available, it is never refused. Pay ? If they can, of course, we take fees, which vary. If they can't, we take them in for nothing. Ten days after the child is born, the mother is ready to go home."

That seems a very short time, doesn't it? I wonder if you realise what happens in a poor patient's home? Women have been known to do housework the day after the baby has been born. And worse things happen than that.

Just now Queen Charlotte's suffers, as all hospitals are suffering, from the financial depression. It costs a lot of money to add some three or four thousand new young citizens to the population of London every year. You may legitimately prey upon the fear of a possible contributor to a general hospital by reminding him that he may be in need of the benefits that hospital confers upon suffering humanity—but Queen Charlotte's hasn't the same appeal. A poor woman came into the hospital one day to interview the medical officer in charge. She looked at him dubiously for a moment, and then asked:

"Are you the pregnant doctor?"

"Thank God I am not!" was his hearty reply.

Queen Charlotte's appeal, however, is universal. It reaches, or should reach, to the heart of every man and woman; and although subscribers, since they receive a number of letters each of which entitles some poor soul to admission, may perhaps be importuned for their good offices, nobody really objects to the bother of doing a suffering woman a good turn. The outdoor work isn't nice. I have heard from Queen Charlotte nurses stories that made my blood run cold. And you get an idea of some of the difficulties when you learn that nurses and doctors who go out on this kind of work usually carry spare pennies. Why? For the penny-in-the-slot gas meter, which sometimes fails at a critical moment.

Into some queer places these nurses and doctors go. Four floors up narrow stairs. All the water has to be brought by hand from the back yard, Sometimes practically no preparation has been made for the coming of the little stranger, and clothing has to be extemporised. Happy indeed is the woman with a letter of admission. She is carefully watched for months, and her hour is made as smooth as science can devise.

"Oh, yes, they come in tears sometimes," said a nurse, "but they go out happily enough with their babies. And they're terribly grateful for all that can be done for them." I asked the medical officer if any distinction is made between the married and the unmarried mother. He shook his head.

"Practically none. There is a mark on the chart by which I can tell, but the average person wouldn't notice it. Unless a girl tells the others in the ward that she is unmarried, nobody knows. In the old days the married and the unmarried were separated, but now we make no difference at all."

Beside each mother's cot was a smaller one containing her tiny baby. Sometimes, if the baby is noisy, the cot is bodily transferred elsewhere, but the Queen Charlotte's babies are wonderfully well-behaved, and spend most of the early days of their lives sleeping off the effects of a full little tummy.

The value of such an institution for congested districts of London is too apparent to need any emphasis. The pity is that there is not a Queen Charlotte's in every crowded working-class area. As it is, I believe that this hospital has one-tenth of all the beds available for maternity cases in London. Roughly, there is only one hospital bed for maternity cases to 10,000 of the population of London.

"The working woman, and the wife of the working man, has very naturally a horror of Poor Law institutions," said the medical officer; "and though this prejudice is of course absurd— for they are very well treated and have the best medical service—it is quite understandable that a woman, however poor she may be, shrinks from inflicting upon her unborn child the stigma of having been born in something which in their minds is barely distinguishable from the workhouse."

The obstetric branch of medicine has made enormous strides even in the past decade. The old school which believed that pain was "natural "have taken a lot of convincing that certain legitimate help may be given to a woman in her hour.

The living still remember the ghastly tenet that all must be sacrificed for the child: to-day the unwritten law is "the mother first." This does not mean that any less care is taken of the new-comer: he (or she) was never so well looked after.

"Our nurses love babies—it would be an impossible life for them if they didn't! You would imagine, to see them handling the newest that has come to town, that it was all a delightful novelty to them."

The baby takes the mother's name immediately. Mrs. Wallace's child (I use "Wallace" because some of the Joneses are getting rather tired of the liberty I take with their name) becomes automatically "Baby Wallace," and is so ticketed.

The percentage of quick recoveries is very high—the cases that start and end badly are usually those remitted from outside—women who have never been near the clinic and are only sent in by their doctors when they have come perilously near to being casualties.

As I passed down the stairs after a visit to one of the wards, there came, through a door out of which a nurse was passing, a loud and lusty little voice raised in passionate protest at the thing called Life.

"Just born," said the medical officer with a smile.

Five or six times a day that little squawk of annoyance comes faintly through the closed door of a ward; day in, day out, the total mounts up. Five or six mothers come apprehensively every day; five or six others go away with a small fluffy bundle and pride in their eyes. Year after year the total rises—think, you military men : two divisions of babies born in Queen Charlotte's since the war! And in the past twenty years as many as would fill the Wembley Stadium, occupying every seat, have been given to the world in the hands of Queen Charlotte's nurses.

XVIII. — SEA TALK

It occurred to me that sailoring had gone a bit out of fashion as the ideal future of small boys and melodramatists. Did not the Staff-sergeant, in writing and sketching out the cast of a small drama we were producing for the A.T.A., make this vital note:

"Sailors, rollicking, one"?

But the sailor, where is he? He has vanished from, our midst; he is so shadowy a figure that even the designers of Christmas almanacs hesitate to employ him as a model. No more does he appear with his oleographic smile, clasping to his bosom mothers, aged, one.

We have a Royal Navy somewhere; occasionally we see a bluejacket passing through London on holiday leave. Why he does not appear in London by the battalion once a year and take over the Royal guard for one short month, nobody knows. It isn't because we don't like to see him, or that he isn't as picturesque as the Guardsman. One supposes that somewhere in Whitehall sits a permanent and snuffy official who cannot agree to the expense.

But really, I am not writing about the Royal Navy, but of... well, just sailors.

Fashions have changed in the past fifty years, and they who go down to the sea in ships nowadays wear almost anything except plus fours. The swagger liners may carry a few sailorish-looking men with caps and jumpers and bell- bottomed trousers complete, but no more than a toastmaster would go to the races in a scarlet coat would they appear in their off duty moments wearing the uniform of the sea. A passion for mufti is a curious complex in all who are expected to wear uniform. Have I not seen the respectable first officer of a coasting passenger steamer taking his watch on the bridge in a bowler hat and a golf jacket?

So it is that no sooner is the ship's company paid off than vanishes the honest blue serge of the sea, and there enters a natty line in gents' suitings.

But the sea remains the same, its wonder and its awe-compelling majesty.

And the age-old talk of the sea...?

I was down in a southern port the other day—a port not a thousand miles from Southampton. In fact, it was Southampton, and I loafed round with an eye for Sailors' Homes.

Sailors' Homes, says the cynic, are dull places, designed to keep the sailor out of the nice, bright public houses. There are some which are run upon purely denominational lines, where, in return for a certain mechanical cheerfulness of greeting, you are expected to give a few moments' thought to your soul's salvation.

And there are Sailors' Homes which are very cheerful places indeed, and which do not wind up the night with a service of praise and song.

For this is a fact which must be painful to many—that no sailor will ever regard a place as being homelike unless he, can get a glass of good ale.

Down in Southampton there is caravanserai where stewards meet; and a steward is a something between Lord Nelson and a maître d'hôtel, so that he may converse with you readily and. easily on the romance and magic of sea travel, and can switch, lightly to the relative merits of sole au bonne femmeand turbot au gratin. These men talk of the world as though it were High street, Islington.

"...I heard that song sung in Melbourne... No, it wasn't, it was up at old Dan's, in Colombo—"

"You're wrong," said his friend. "It was the night you and me went ashore at Singapore—you remember; it was the night young Carter was took ill through eating chop suey."

There was a deck hand present who remembered eating chop suey without any ill effects. He was ready to defend chop suey violently.

Now, I am not interested in Chinese foods, but I had gone a long way out of my track because somebody had told me that if I went to this establishment—I refuse to call it a club—I should hear real sea talk. So to this licensed house I came and settled myself in an old Windsor chair, and waited till the talk shifted in the direction of adventure.

"...her brother married old Tom's sister—"

"That makes him Poe's uncle," said a husky voice.

But the tale of the seas would out—stories of storm-driven windjammers, their canvases blown to rags; of high green seas that came thundering over the foc's'le...

"Now in Australia—" (Ah, here it was coming!)"-you have to show a rear light on your bicycle, or you're fined. There was a chap, a quartermaster of the Mooltan, who got pinched—"

"Not Australia," protests somebody. "You're thinking of Tasmania. I knew a chap who bought three tickets in a Tasmanian sweepstake, and took the second and third prize. He settled down in Australia and married the daughter of one of the biggest bugs in Sydney."

Somebody knew another man who had drawn a prize in a sweepstake—or was it a lottery?—and drank himself to death in a year. Everybody agreed that he ought to have put a bit by.

Did anybody remember that White Star steward who came into half a million dollars and "did it in" racing?

Everybody named him. He was one of the legendary heroes of the fleets. The end of the ruined steward was tragic. He had been found drowned in a pond; it was only two feet deep at its deepest part.

"I've known a man to get drowned in six inches of water..."

The conversation went naturally in the direction of George Joseph Smith, the infamous brides-in-the-bath expert. And from George Joseph Smith to hanging, and the advantages of electrocution was but a step.

I spoke to a steward, a man who had travelled round the world more often than he could recall, who had served in the Union Castle, the P. and 0., the British Orient, the Cunard, the Canadian Pacific (in both oceans), the Royal Mail, and other lines which I cannot remember.

"Yes, there's no doubt about it," he said, "sea life is the best life. It's healthy and open and free, as the song says... Storms? Well you get a bit of bad weather, especially in the Western Ocean round about October. And I've known it pretty bad in the Mediterranean and down in the Indian Ocean. I remember one day when 840 pieces of crockery were smashed! And talking of crockery, when I was in the old Lucania—and that goes back a few years—I made six trips across the Western Ocean, and we never had the fiddles off the table for a minute! We had to serve the soup in cups. One trip we never had more then eight people in the dining-room for breakfast, from the minute we left Sandy Hook till we went into the Mersey. Have you ever been in the Bight? That's the place for storms! It was so bad that our head steward cut down the dinner to three courses—soup, joint, and sweets. The ship didn't keep still enough to let the blancmanges set...!"

Later that night I met a typical salt; a man who gave you the impression that locked up in his bosom were stories compared with which Treasure Island made rather dull reading. I spoke to him of the sea, its charms and magic...

"Ah!" he said thoughtfully, knocking out his pipe, and shaking his head. "You're right there, guvn'nor. And I the mysterious thing is why they don't hang them fellows that started the shipping strike in Australia! My boy was on a ship that called to coal, and them larrikins and hooligans got him off, and said if he went back to work they'd murder him! He'd no money—nothing! Had to work his passage home. And now he can't get a ship for love or money. Is that right—I ask you? He's one of the best sailors that ever stepped aboard a ship. I got a fretwork frame of his at home that might have been done by a artist. And sing...! He's got a voice like that what's-his-name, the Eyetalian man. Lor' bless my life, I had it on the tip of me tongue..."

Before I left Southampton I would have given a fiver to hear somebody say "Yo-ho!" or "Heave he!" and any drunken sailor who had sung me a sea chanty I would have put beyond the want of beer for the rest of the year.

XIX. — ON THE JURY —CONSIDER YOUR VERDICT

It is a terrible bore being called at all. One opened the newspaper in the morning and looked at the Law Notices, hoping to find some such announcement as:

"The special jurors called at 10 o'clock for Court No.VII. are discharged from further duty." But the man responsible had forgotten to put that in. So we attended at Court No.VII.—or was it VI?—hundreds of us.

Nobody else was in Court except the Clerk and ourselves and a decrepit usher or two, and up in the gallery three or four mistaken young men who imagined they were in for a real spicy case.

The Clerk drew little strips of card towards him and read out our names, and we answered them. Of those present he selected twelve. The remainder were told we should not be wanted until the afternoon.

We weren't wanted that afternoon or the next morning. Somewhere around Wednesday my name was called and I entered the jury box with eight other gentlemen and three ladies. And then and there we called our Maker to witness that we would produce a verdict according to the evidence.

It was rather like being in church—sort of hushy, and all the wood smelt queer, just, as it does in chapels; and the seats were harder than the average pew. For three days I sat and listened to a story of a motor-cyclist who passed on the wrong side of the road and was run down by a motor mechanic who was driving a small car. It was rather an interesting experience; the complete occupation and absorption of the mind in trivialities so minutely unimportant that one found oneself straining to comprehend them.

It was obvious from the first that the motor-cyclist was right and the driver of the motor-car was wrong. Anybody with the brains of a chicken could see without the help of the magnificently coloured charts which were placed in the hands of the jury, that the motor-car driver hadn't a leg to stand upon. The evidence for the plaintiff was unshaken; though Mr. Norman Birkett, who combines the manner of an archbishop with the plausibility of a confidence man, did his best to shake it.

And there on the Bench sat a learned Judge, rather slim, precise of speech, his face frozen to an expression of agonised patience; and here were we, twelve jury people, our foreman a German Jew, with very little knowledge of English, but a kindly and a pleasant man, and entirely on my side.

And so we progressed through the days, until came the blessed moment when the Judge turned and looked in our direction, and became visibly aware of our existence. He seemed a little surprised to find us there at all, but when he had recovered from the shock he spoke to us, very gently, very precisely, about the road that led to Canterbury and the speed at which this car was travelling, and, that the motor-cycle was dawdling; and he told us how unreliable witnesses are, and how this man had contradicted that man, leaving to us the privilege of saying "Liar!" to either.

He showed us on his plan the "X" marking the spot where the cyclist was found by the motor-car (or, according to the testimony of the defendant, where the motor-car, was found, by the cyclist), and he left it to us to decide—twelve intelligent British citizens, old enough to judge the rights and wrongs of the case—and we consulted together in hushed whispers, and everybody was of one opinion except me, namely, that we should retire.

So retire we did through a mysterious panel in the wall which rather reminded me of Act II of The Ringer, and deep down into the dungeons of the Law Courts we filed, into a large bare room with a large bare table, and there we were left.

"I don't know what you think," said the first lady juror, "but these motor-cycles are a nuisance. Why, only the other day I was driving down to Alton to visit my sister, and just as we came out of the main road..."

I looked at her in horror.

"Do you mean to say you're going to give a verdict against the cyclist?" I asked.

"Why shouldn't I?" She was defiant.

The second lady juror came to the rescue.

"I think we ought to give a verdict for the cyclist," she said. She was rather a large, comfortable woman with unstable teeth. "My point is this—the motor-car driver won't have to pay; this is one of those insurance cases. It's only the insurance company that will have to fork out. Look at the money they've got. I could tell you something about..."

She mentioned an insurance company. But by now the argument was general, and it was impossible to hear her.

From time to time the large chairman threw his weight into the scale.

"Vell, vell, gentlemen!" he said in his bull voice. "Now I fink we ought to do somet'ing, eh!"

"If you expect me," said a very tall juryman, in a ponderous manner, to give a verdict against that motor mechanic, you're going to sit here all night! I'm

a motor mechanic meself, and I know just how they're put on! Now look at this diagram."

It was outspread on the table, and he struck it with his fist.

"There's the cyclist, coming from Margate, and there's the motor-car coming from Canterbury. If that cyclist had been in his place, wouldn't he have, been thrown over the hedge?"

"Which hedge?" I asked, searching the plan vainly. There wasn't any hedge, but that didn't affect the argument.

"Well, if there wasn't a hedge, he'd only have been thrown further. I say a verdict for the defendant!" He leaned back in his chair, triumphantly.

He was, as I say, a tallish man with a profound manner. He had already half influenced the small man who had declared himself on my side.

"Look here," said I hotly.

"Vell, vell, gentlemen!" boomed the foreman, "Let's do somet'ing, eh!"

Down came the usher to discover if we had agreed; Emphatically we had not agreed. He came again after half-an-hour's interval—we were less agreed than before.

"This is how I feel," said the lady juror who hadn't spoken before. "If this cyclist was oh the wrong side of the road, how could he have been coming from Canterbury...?"

Eleven urgent voices corrected her.

"It was the motor-car that was coming from Canterbury, "the cyclist who was coming from Margate."

She put on a pair of pince-nez and studied the plan. But her explanation that she bad been looking at the plan upside down seemed to me to be a little weak. She never told us what conclusions she had reached from, her error, but shrugging her shoulders, said contemptuously that some men were extremely thick-headed.

We took, a vote. Everybody except me was wrong. (One of the lady jurors afterwards admitted that she thought we were voting on the suggestion she put forward—that we should ask for tea to be sent in.)

Followed a furious argument between the eleven jurymen. I walked to the grimy window and looked out into a very bleak courtyard. When I came back I found that, the motor mechanic had lost adherents; a new vote showed seven for the plaintiff, five for the defendant. So far as I could observe, everybody except the motor mechanic and I changed sides twice. A third vote gave me eight adherents! But here we stuck.

A third time came the usher... "Is there any chance of your agreeing?"

We agreed on this; there was no chance. Back to the Court we filed. The Judge came in, looked at us sternly—I think it was scornfully—and asked if there was any possibility of our reaching an opinion, and we all said "No."

"Very well," he said. Evidently, he had dealt with people like us before.

One of the ushers paid us a pound apiece for our services to the country, and for my part I cannot imagine a greater waste of money.

The next morning I looked in the newspapers for an account. There was none, but under the heading "Law Notices" I saw one item which interested me immensely.

"For Trial Without Jurors, X. v. Z."

One of these days I'm going to see such a trial as this. I should like to see how justice is really administered.

XX. — COMRADES AND TITLES—THE NEW CULT

My Communist" friend sneers heavily at titles. The mention of those unblessed prefixes "Lord" and "Sir' does not arouse him to frenzy, but rather depresses him to a state of helpless despair.

"Titles, comrade!" he wails.

And yet, as I pointed out to him, there is no title quite so empty and meaningless as this same machine-made "comrade," of his.

"One of these days," he says darkly, "there will only be 'comrades' and nothing else. The bourgeoisie..."

"Shur-rup!" I said vulgarly.

And yet, strangely enough, I really believe that unintentionally and unknowingly he spoke the truth. But I do not believe that we shall ford to the great comradeship through rivers of bourgeois blood. The very idea that we shall is ludicrously inconsistent. But, then, Communists are not the only inconsistent people.

I know a man who never kills flies, because he hates the thought of taking life, and this man, being very badly bred, is rude to waiters and shop assistants and other people who would lose their jobs if they punched him on the nose.

I know another man who is never rude to anybody except his social and financial equals. When a lorry driver takes the middle of the, road and, despite his frenzied honkings, will not take the near side and give his car the right of way, he passes, the churl, with a grin and a wave of his hat. And he says that, as he didn't go to the war, and in all probability the lorry driver did, he dare; not be offensive for fear he is insulting a man who went over the top in the cold light of dawn, whilst my friend was in bed in Maidenhead Thicket.

He said he was once rude to a bricklayer, and that when he discovered afterwards, that this bricklayer had held at bay a Bulgarian battalion single-handed with a machine-gun he felt such a worm that he could not hold up his head until he had sought out the leisurely layer of bricks and had taken him up West. I believe they both got drunk together, which was very reprehensible conduct on the part of my friend, who is a Master of Arts of the University of Cambridge.

"So," said he, "was Major Armstrong, and he was hanged"—which was inconsequential, and a little foolish.

I find in this England a growing inclination towards loving-kindness and real comradeship. The classes of other days have merged one into the other, so that you are not sure where one ends and the other begins. And with this change certain definite bits of Old Englishness are crumbling and vanishing under our very eyes.

One of these is patronage. The patron has almost vanished. He lingers in the prospectuses of charities and on the cards of certain race meetings; but, generally speaking, patronage is a dying industry, and that is all to the good. One no longer pats an honest workman on the back and says, "My good fellow, you are doing splendidly. I will, send your wife some blankets at Christmas." You forward him a laconic notification that his salary has been raised. And you only slap him on the back if you are prepared to be slapped on the back yourself.

At the same, time, we must admit that, in Russia, where everybody is equal, there is no such thing as patronage either. If one comrade wants another to do a job of work, he says: "Go along and load that wagon, comrade," and, if he strikes, another comrade comes along with a rifle and bayonet and he is clapped into a friendly prison, where everybody is equally depressed. And perhaps some fine morning he is taken out to face a neighbourly firing squad, and that's the end of him. But he is never patronised, never made to feel that he is less than anybody else.

This brand of friendliness and equality has been introduced into England but has not been as successful as it might have been if our people were also stupid folks, who have been accustomed to do as they were told, and were ready to go mad with delight because they were now bossed as comrades instead of serfs.

The queer teachers of the new comrade cult are extremely interesting. They have always existed—they, always will exist. It is the job they do best. You have never met a violent friend of Russia who could get his living in any other way. I know scores—quite nice fellows—who have- worked their way up by dint of hard work to the position they now occupy. Think of the years they spent waiting their opportunities. The drab, little, unappreciative, often derisive audiences they haltingly addressed before they learnt the clichés that constitute their oratory. It meant work, a continuous course of study, for which they were ill-equipped. Think of it that way—it is their only job. Take Cook. (If you are a true comrade, you never call anybody "mister.") There is a lot in Cook to admire. For the past seven years he has been the hardest-worked man in England; his energy has been phenomenal,and if his speeches lacked grace they did not want in rough vigour.

Now, suppose, with the best intentions in the world—shut your eyes and imagine that you are a great friend and admirer of his—that you wanted to give him a job. What?

Obviously he hasn't the balance or foresight to run a successful business, as obviously he is a visionary who thinks in terms of destruction. You couldn't place him. He is a man of extraordinary gifts; as a revivalist his conversions would be sensationally numerous, but he is not a religious man, and somehow I can't imagine that he is a hypocrite. He is doing the job that he understands best—just as I am, just as you are. The mass spirit

which moves him is admittedly coloured by his own personal wrongs, real or imaginary.

He is unhappily situated. If he had been born in Russia, he would either have been as great a figure as—whoever is a great figure in that country, or he would have been shot out of hand. In this England neither real eminence nor martyrdom is possible.

Cook has to have his share of the new tolerance; most of us are better stabilised than he. We can be tolerant with him even if he cannot be tolerant with us, and I feel that spirit working all the time as it has never worked before. There isn't a Tory that hasn't been sorry for the, miner—not one who has not marvelled at the dogged loyalty they have given their leaders. It was the loyalty that Englishmen gave their officers in battle, even though they might not be confident in the leading of the men they followed. English workmen are English soldiers out of uniform, a fact of which nobody must lose sight. It is absurd to condemn in a labour dispute qualities over which we grew ecstatic in the grim days of war.

The British Army was the only army which did not mutiny in the dark days of war. The spirit that kept them true is the very spirit which makes revolution unthinkable. The very spirit, paradoxically enough, which exasperates you when it is expressed in terms of resistance to what is glibly labelled "capital."

You can't have it both ways. There's a lot of give and take in big families; it is any odds that sooner or later one of the brothers is going to be annoyingly naughty. It is our first job to understand him, and if he sulks a bit not to "sulk back."

I see so many people, I know so many grades of society, that I don't think it is possible that I can have got a wrong impression.

There is a wonderful spirit of tolerance abroad in this country to-day. A great breaking-down of the artificial barriers that separated man from man; an intense desire on the part of those most fortunately placed to make life tolerable for their harder-living fellows. And I think this fellowship is working from the other end. Who knows? We may become comrades after all!

THE END