SCOWLE

AND OTHER PAPERS WITH SOME DRAWINGS

BY

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'HOD' OF PUNCH

PENGUIN BOOKS

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Contents

AUTHOR'S NOTE

John Ruskin was born at 54, Hunter Street, near Brunswick Square, on February 8th, 1819. His mother and father were first cousins.

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SCOWLE

OR

THE STARS LOOK DOWN AND OUT

Scowle in the Nineties

IT was Hilaire Belloc, I feel sure, who once referred to my native Midlands as "sodden and unkind". He was right about the soddenness. Of course I am speaking of the Midlands as I found them somewhere near the turn of the century, and very much water must have percolated through the Carboniferous Limestone and Millstone Grits since then. But I have the clearest recollections of the perpetual quagmire that surrounded our poor dwelling and of the great moraine of mud inching its way year after year down the scarp face of Barlow's Pike and threatening to engulf us all.

And I can still see my grandfather, Ebby, crouched low over his beloved rain-gauge. More than once I have heard my mother chide him about it.

"Tha auld saftie," she would say, "tha'lt have yon gauge a-coomin' out of thy lug, like as not."

But grandfather Ebby took no more notice of such abuse than he did of the ridicule of my father and the girls. As for me, I felt very sorry for the old man, and whenever we were alone I would try to comfort him.

"My, gran'pa," I would say, "she's a-looking reight champion s'mornin', inner she?"

He would look up at the sky, his horny hand shading his eyes.

"Aye, lad, 'tis the leastest us'ns can do to check that which the Creator in His great goodness do send."

Grandfather Ebby never tumbled to the fact that his catchment jar was regularly doctored by my father and my brother Caleb—nor, for that matter, did the editor of the Ashbridge *Evening Star* who published grandfather's tables every Wednesday night. In the year of the great strike the rainfall of Scowle must have totalled at least 500 inches. Yet

in '05 when father and Caleb were back at the pit the figure slumped to no more than 36·3 inches.

My family came of good Huguenot stock, and but for two brief intervals had been respected in Scowle for two hundred years. Our surname, Avis, was common enough in the district and suited us very well. But when my sister Marion went off to work with Lawyer Fishwick in Ashbridge she put on airs and began calling herself Marianne D'avis. For a time we were the laughing-stock of the village.

Scowle is of course a mining village depending for its livelihood on the six-foot seam of coking coal known locally as "Dribben's Coal". In my time the built-up part of the village consisted of four chapels, four schools, two inns, a women's institute, two hundred and seventy-three cottages, a row of shops and an information bureau. The bureau was financed out of the proceeds of a levy on each ton of coal extracted and the miners regarded it as a very sound investment. Its chief purpose was to keep the two inns free from prying novelists. No fees were charged for the service, which was always in great demand.

I knew all about the bureau because my younger sister, Madge, was its first manageress. Her job was to collect statistical and descriptive matter pertaining to the village and to compile handouts for the novelists.

The information was classified under such headings as topography (including main drainage), geology, ethnology, social structure, disasters and tragedies, etc. Specimen answers to inquiries went something like this:

Topography.—Scowle perches uneasily on the south-seeking flank (limbs, face) of Barlow's Pike. Seven (eight) counties meet here in a tight handshake—the crooked streets forming the fingers and the heaps of mining rubble the knuckles. To the north across the bitter (sullen) fell the spires of Ashbridge are just invisible but can be guessed at

from the position of the new gas-holder. Down in the valley (vale, syncline, trough, but *not* strath) the cold marls show through the wet grass round the goal-posts of the Scowle A.F.C. The river Ash winds (meanders) without purpose like the silver-grey trail of a slug . . .

Geology.—Five faults, three longitudinal and two transverse, bring the deep-bedded Dribben's coal within striking distance of the miners of Scowle. The rich seam is capped (overlain) by 2,000 feet (667 yards) of shales, grits, conglomerates and calcareous sandstone mostly waterlogged. The coal is mined on the longwall-face system . . . (See also Reid Report, attached).

Ethnology.—The typical (representative) face among Scowle miners is long and lozenge-shaped. It is dominated by strong cheek-bones of Danish origin and a mouth generously full. There is the blood of Pict and Jute in these men, not to mention a minute admixture of Dr. Foskett's plasma. The coal-face workers have thick thews and powerful shoulders. The mortality rate from rheumatism and allied causes is disappointingly high . . .

Social Structure.—The people of Scowle cleave unto themselves (are ruggedly independent). In order of importance their recreations are whippet-racing, skittles, billy-can, jacks and Association football. Since 1912, the Scowle A.F.C. has played no away matches, so that the social structure of the village may be termed matriarchal . . .

Disasters, Tragedies, etc.—(Note: The following list is by no means exhaustive and is constantly being added to. Items marked (*) have already been treated very thoroughly in the works of Mallindale, Croney, Young, Smith, Cawthray, Disraeli and others.)

(1) Train derailed at Ashbridge ('05); nine casualties.

(2) Black damp in Orange No. 2 Pit ('02); five casualties.*

(3) Roof of Women's Institute caves in ('07); 58 casualties.*
(4) Deluge, three inches of water in main street ('01); casualties nil.
(5) Old part of village subsides ('98); 157 missing.*
(6) Alma Mortenson's shame ('03).
(7) "The Scowle Massacre" ('88); one killed.*
(8) Thunderbolt hits "Scowle Arms" ('08); no casualties.
(9) Conflagration in Turner's Emporium ('09); no casualties.

I have now introduced my readers to Scowle as I knew it. In the next chapter the keynote will be action.

Scowle in the Raw

LOOKING back on those early years I spent in the mining village of Scowle I often wonder whether there has ever been a social unit so completely matriarchal. I was then only a boy, not yet big enough to wield even the short-hafted pick which my grandfather Ebby made specially for me; but I was old enough to share with all males a nagging sense of subordination and servitude. The women of Scowle ruled their menfolk with iron ruthlessness.

To the visiting novelist these women seemed handsome (". . . in a raw-boned muscle-bound sort of way."—Chugworth), proud and eminently respectable, but scratch ever so lightly into the veneer of Victorian convention and gentility and you exposed stark passion, passion in all its primitive exuberance and with its quota of ugly incidents. Among themselves the women of Scowle fought like tigresses.

On Saturday nights the arena was the cobbled street in front of the "Half-Nelson Inn". The men, sitting on their

haunches in a rough semi-circle, would applaud discreetly as the battles took place. The grim fun would start when some woman, infuriated by a remark about the condition of her kitchen or curtains, would peel off a stocking, slip a beer-bottle into its toe and swing a quick blow at her critic. Soon the entire bevy would be at it, loaded hosiery flying in all directions. And as the struggle rose in fury the babies would be tossed to the ringside to be nursed by the men. It always amazed me that the numbers incapacitated for life in these conflicts never got out of hand. Nature herself seemed to connive in these orgies, for female births in Scowle steadily exceeded those of males by thirty-seven per cent.

In 1889 my mother was at daggers drawn with Mrs. Hunslett, the checkweighman's wife. It was during the annual spring strike that this Mrs. Hunslett accused my mother of harbouring a blackleg in the shape of my Grandfather Ebby. My mother could easily have explained that old Ebby's nocturnal trips to Orange No. 2 Pit were in connection with a fowl-house that he was constructing in the back-yard, but she scorned explanations and challenged Mrs. Hunslett to the *lutte à outrance* of the barrels.

It took place at night by the light of fifty pit-lamps. Two barrels were rolled into the street and set, according to the rules, one foot apart. Then the combatants cut cards for choice of barrel. My mother stood in the one nearest to our house so that she fought with her back to me in my grandstand seat in an upstairs window. I was glad of this. Mrs. Hunslett used the "Davy" opening, snatched at my mother's hair and missed. My mother countered with . . . but I will spare my readers the terrible details. Mrs. Hunslett was outscratched and outgnawed, and after a bare three hours she slumped into the bottom of her barrel, unconscious.

In the economic sphere female dominance in Scowle was very marked. On pay-day, Friday afternoon, the two inns

were picketed by "disinterested" members of the women's institute while wives and mothers queued up for their menfolk's wages. As the miners came out-by they were each given an ounce of shag tobacco and a leaflet about the perils of strong drink.

At our house the money was kept in a Coronation mug on the kitchen dresser. In good times—as, for example, when mother's brothers spent their holidays with us so that the number of breadwinners at the pit was increased—the mug would overflow with sovereigns. But there were times during the seasonal strikes and autumn lock-outs when it was bare indeed. There was no written system of book-keeping, but my mother knew instinctively when any sum, however small, had been abstracted without permission.

"Thomas," she would yell at my father, "tha's a-bin at thy thievin' tricks again, Ah'll be bound. Ah'll be troublin' thee for fo'pence ha'penny me lad."

And if father could not refund the money immediately his Sunday trousers or football boots would be taken immediately to Gildbern's pawnshop. Strangely enough, my mother never believed in putting anything away for a rainy day, maintaining that the habit only tempted Providence.

She was a most practical woman in every way and delighted in discovering ways of doing several jobs at once. When she put us to bed—my younger sister Madge and myself—she would sing us to sleep from the floor below while she massaged old Ebby's lumbago or mended the men's clogs. Her deep chest put such power behind her singing that the ewer in my room used to emit a sympathetic ringing note and shuffle round its basin. I usually got to sleep through being mildly asphyxiated with my head under the pillow.

If she had any soft spots in her heart my mother reserved them all for my grandfather. Old Ebby was always up to

something in his earnest pursuit of Science, and in spite of the mess and damage his experiments caused I never once saw him suffer more than a well-aimed clout on the head.

One summer he got hold of a geological survey map of the Midland Counties, and for a fortnight he forgot his rain-gauge and studied assiduously. Then, at breakfast one morning, he announced that he was going to make us all very rich. He took a spade and began digging in the trampled soil of the chicken run.

By nightfall he had made a hole about three yards deep. The next day's labours took him down to fifteen feet, and he was wildly excited, for his calculations showed that a fine outcrop of "Dribben's" coal lay only another spade's depth away. Unfortunately, my grandfather's frantic exertions were too much for his frail body, and the next day found him bedridden and in mental torture.

And now my mother showed her true greatness. She wrapped the old man in blankets and carried him to a chair placed only a few feet from his beloved hole. Then she commanded me to descend into the shaft and resume operations. My first delving blow brought to light a number of handsome nuts of the famous seam, and before old Ebby was returned to bed I was able to fill two buckets with the fuel.

Old Ebby was delighted of course.

Every night after dark for a month or more—until my mother announced that the outcrop was exhausted—I had to carry two bucketfuls of coal into the garden, and every morning I had to recover them in old Ebby's presence.

My mother bound me to an oath of secrecy.

The Scholarship of Scowle

UNLIKE most mining villages—and I have known them all,

I suppose—Scowle was fitful in its enthusiasm for education. At times the entire community would be overtaken by a violent paroxysm of learning and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake would be frenzied and relentless. All other occupations and pastimes would be forgotten. Old colliers, squatting on their haunches at street corners, would put away their dice and give themselves up to parsing and analysis. There would be poetry readings in the "Half-Nelson" and endless philosophical disputation at the Women's Institute.

During these periods, which recurred every eight or nine years, ignorance and illiteracy were regarded in Scowle as punishable offences; the records tell of men hounded from the village for unwarranted assumption and persistent pleonasm.

Unfortunately, my earliest and most formative years coincided with an era of depression when education was virtually taboo. My mother always managed to find some excuse for keeping me away from school, for she regarded Mr. Fowler's pedagogic efforts with deep suspicion. She had a theory that education stunted the physical growth.

"Only lookit what schoolin' done t' thy gran'father Ebby," she would say. "'Im an' 'is Science. Whyfore, 'e's nobbut a maggot."

And every morning she would massage my biceps and thews with hot embrocation and make me swing my little pick at the old oak dresser.

"Sithee," she would sneer, "tha 't as weak nor a kitten. Tha could'st no more stand up t' Dribben seam than a babby. Dinna tha' spake to me o' Mr. Fowler. I'll Fowler 'im!"

Then she would set me some futile task like shovelling water from the puddles and pot-holes before the door, or carrying the hens up Barlow's Pike in search of dandelion.

But one night in my tenth year my father came home with his face flushed and his eyes sparkling to announce that Jem Clewlow had written a sonnet which he had read to the packed vaults of the "Scowle Arms". My mother protested bitterly for several days, but she knew well enough that tradition and psychical forces too strong to resist were against her. Education had returned to Scowle.

The new era began with a clean sweep. Mr. Fowler was sacked and replaced by a Mr. Martlett, a young student-teacher from Birmingham. He was an intelligent youth who realized the importance of first impressions and appeared for his first public lecture dressed soberly in black with string tied round his trousers just below the knees.

He began his talk with a reconstruction of the basic geology of Scowle and for a time the miners listened intently and respectfully. But suddenly, and without the slightest warning, an accusing finger shot out from the back of the hall and a voice which I recognized as the checkweighman's thundered in denunciation.

"The mon's nobbut a neathen. 'Tis the Creator in His great goodness did put Dribben's coal in Scowle—not this yere chology."

A chorus of "Ayes" and "Ahs" greeted the interruption and the audience began to shuffle forward menacingly towards the platform. Mr. Martlett raised his arms in an appeal for silence, but the gesture was mistaken for some oriental obeisance and the sullen mass roared into action. They stoned the poor fellow out of the village and made a bonfire of his paltry belongings outside Turner's emporium. Not until the last charred pages had been trampled to dust did Scowle feel itself cleansed of heresy.

A new advertisement now appeared in the columns of the Ashbridge *Evening Star*. It read:

WANTED.—God-fearing schoolma'am to teach Latin, Greek

and Political Economy to university standard. Dissenting forbears a recommendation. No geologists. . . .

Before she was selected from a short list of three, Miss Danvers had to submit to a gruelling examination before a committee of the Women's Institute. First they let down her hair and combed it through with minute scrutiny. They removed her earrings, lengthened her skirts and extended her corsage. Then, when they had shown her how to resole a clog, how to defend herself with the special Scowle brand of female ju-jitsu, and how to make "lobby" or hot-pot, they introduced her to her future husband.

It was a condition of their acquiescence in the choice of a female teacher that she should be betrothed and, since the appointment was temporary, it was generally felt that my grandfather Ebby was the man for the job.

Miss Danvers was an immediate success. Her classes were overcrowded every night. In my mind's eye I still see my father and my brother Caleb just as they sat forty-odd years ago, the pit dust still clinging to them as they struggled with supper and homework at the kitchen table—while my mother rubbed away at their backs with a flannel.

Caleb was one of Miss Danvers' brightest students and she had high hopes that he would win scholarships to Cambridge, Yale, Heidelberg, Princeton and Oxford. No trouble seemed too much for her. Even when her long day's work was done she still found time to hear Caleb's irregular verbs as they walked on the fells. Old Ebby hated these nocturnal tramps, for he found it difficult to keep pace with the young couple. It was a wise move on my mother's part to buy him a tricycle and so still the wagging tongues of the women of Scowle.

The Ashbridge and District Colliery Co. were already alarmed by the developing æstheticism of their employees. For some time the miners had taken to working at the coal-face in gloves; now sandals were beginning to appear. As the

number of matriculation candidates increased, the tonnage of coal mined from the Orange No. 2 Pit steadily declined.

But the efforts made to wean Scowle from its culture were crude, unsuccessful and costly. The directors constructed a cockpit. It was destroyed by fire at the opening meeting. They tried to bring a travelling "wakes" to the village. The bridge over the Ash collapsed while the caravans and trailers were crossing. They tried a score of distractions and they all failed. Miss Danvers and the new movement went from strength to strength.

In the summer of 1899 the formation of a Shakespearean Society was announced and the village joined as one man. Miss Danvers suggested that their first play should be *Romeo and Juliet*, with herself and my brother Caleb in the title rôles. It was her first false move. For a few days the situation was ugly; anything might have happened. Then Miss Danvers climbed down and bowed to the inevitable with old Ebby as Polonius and Saul Crabb as Hamlet. So bitter was the competition for the other parts that it was decided to fill them by ballot.

The count took place at the Institute. I was in bed when my father came home, but his curses were so vehement and full-blooded that I heard and remembered every word.

"Thirty-eight brasted year Ah bin diggin' Dribben's," he yelled, "an' now arter all me schoolin' Ah'm set t' diggin' graves wi' me auld pick. What they think Ah'm? An income poop?"

What had happened was that he and Jem Clewlow had been elected as grave-diggers—a decision that they regarded, with some justice, as a calculated insult.

My mother was sympathetic for once and urged my father to resign. It was the beginning of the end. Repeated ballots failed to find a single miner who would accept the rôle of manual labourer, and the society broke up in confusion.

It was like the first crack in an icefield. Soon, shattering reports were heard on every side. The eurhythmics class split into rival factions, the Greek Drama group dispersed, the raffia set disbanded.

And then, one day, my father went over to Ashbridge market and returned with some whippets. It was enough. Miss Danvers was given three weeks' pay in advance and twenty-four hours in which to leave the village. My grandfather Ebby carried her suitcase to the station.

Deadlock in Scowle

On Tuesday, August 4th, 1901, at four o'clock in the morning, my mother rose, as was her wont, to prepare the men's "snapping" or "doggo". I heard the clatter of her clogs, first on the stairs and then against the ribs of my father's whippets asleep before the kitchen fire. Then, as usual, she began to hum "Rock of Ages". She hummed fervently, stressing those words which happened to synchronize with her jabs at the butter and cheese. Upstairs in my little bed I used to imagine during these recitals that I had one ear pressed against the floor of a tram travelling at speed.

My mother reached a triumphant "amen". It was the men's cue to get dressed for the pit. Further sleep was impossible. I lay staring miserably at the stars wishing myself old enough and big enough to take my place at the Orange No. 2 Pit.

Until I heard my mother bellowing from the foot of the stairs I was not aware that routine had been broken for once.

"Caaay-lub! Maaas-ter! Tha'lt be at yon pit when t'coal's all picked, like as not. Up wi' thee! If Ah 'ave t' coom up t' thee . . ."

I listened intently for the sounds that would announce

my father's and Caleb's rising—the creaking and harping of bed-springs, the grunting and yawning, the coughing as my father lit up his first pipe of shag. But none of these came. There was silence.

Then I heard my father's voice unctuous and soft.

"Rosie, lass, coom 'ere, luv," he said.

My mother clattered up the stairs two or more at a time and my father muttered his explanation.

"So tha's struck, as tha?" my mother roared. "Tha great saftie, tha'lt let yon union do owt wi' thee. 'Tis coom t' summat when tha' strikes outa season."

So that was it. I was elated. It meant fun and spectacle in the village. There might be bloodshed even, or arson.

Conditions at the Orange No. 2 Pit had been growing steadily worse for weeks. I knew all about them, for I had been given a penny by Jem Clewlow, the secretary, for keeping a sharp look-out for stray women.

The men's grievances were genuine enough. A break-through of water from an old shaft had flooded most of the working galleries so that the journey to the coal-face had become extremely difficult and trying. My father and my brother Caleb had to wade nearly three miles and swim under water a good two hundred yards to reach their stall. This was not all. Black damp was so prevalent that a man could hardly take three puffs at his pipe before it went out. And explosions had become so frequent in some galleries that intelligent conversation was out of the question. Added to all this was the fact that the plans for the new pit-head baths had been further delayed. To my immature mind the strike certainly seemed justified.

By noon the village high-street was crowded. Men were digging up cobblestones and carrying them to dumps at the colliery gates. There was a rumour that blacklegs were at work.

I shall never forget the excitement as we stood watching those gates. At twelve-thirty when the day shift ended each miner took a cobblestone and raised it to shoulder-height. Every eye was on the little door in the wooden gate.

Suddenly the latch clicked and a nervous silence spread through the crowd. The door opened slowly and a large sheet of corrugated tin was pushed through it into the street. Then a face appeared, the face of my grandfather Ebby. He took quick anxious looks to left and right before he realized that more than five hundred pairs of eyes were on him. Then, with one leg through the opening he stopped abruptly like a rabbit caught in the glare of powerful head-lamps. The waiting mob burst into a roar of laughter and old Ebby hopped back through the doorway, leaving behind what would otherwise have been a roofing section for his new photographic darkroom.

The strike dragged on week after week and the women of Scowle grew more and more bitter towards their menfolk. In October our last remaining source of income dried up, for as soon as she heard of the stoppage my sister Marion (who worked for Lawyer Fishwick in Ashbridge) decided to strike in sympathy. She made a seventh mouth round our poor table.

But there was always the pawnshop. Each morning, after breakfast, my mother made a tour of the house and examined every movable object. On some articles she would chalk a cross. My father and my brother Caleb were responsible for the haulage.

One day my father found his pick among the branded goods. It was a terrible shock to his pride. I shall never forget the forlorn figure he presented as he sat on the kitchen floor, sobbing, with the cold steel of the pick pressed against his cheek. I sobbed with him.

My mother's cruelty not only shocked my father, it

shocked the whole village. Even Mrs. Hunslett, the check-weighman's wife, said that my mother had gone too far.

"Deprivin' a mon on 'is pick's like robbin' 'im on 'is self-respeck," she said.

Until this incident occurred some substitute for affection had always existed between my parents. Now the rupture seemed complete. My mother was asked to resign from the Women's Institute while my father was made a life-member of the Scowle Amateur Football Club.

But the deadlock showed no signs of breaking. The owners were quite ready for conciliation, but there was not one among them who dared venture into Scowle to discuss terms. Daily bulletins were still being issued about the conditions of the two Ashbridge policemen who had been sent to Scowle to reinforce old Chalmers.

In the end it was my grandfather Ebby who saved the situation. For two days and nights he walked alone on the fells wrestling with the problem. Then on the third day he descended wild-eyed and wind-blown into the valley where he immediately called a meeting of the union. At first his proposals were treated with derision, but his persistence and tact eventually secured him minority support and backing for a ruse unexampled in the history of industrial relations.

On the following Saturday the Ashbridge *Evening Star* carried a remarkable photograph on its front page. It showed a barge drawn up at the Scowle wharf of the Midlands and Grand Trunk Canal, a barge packed from stem to stern with a cheering waving mass of people. The caption read:

"The first hundred and fifty of the 2,973 inhabitants of Scowle who have decided to emigrate to America. The happy party in the above picture left by canal for Bristol yesterday."

On Sunday, at the end of morning service, eight directors of the Ashbridge and District Colliery Co. were waiting at

the door of the Scowle Mission Hall. In less than ten minutes a new agreement was drawn up. It reduced hours of work by thirty per cent. and raised wages by threepence an hour. The company agreed to recognize the union and the men decided to recognize the company. On Monday Scowle was back at work.

My grandfather Ebby was made a freeman of the village, and at the ceremony he announced that work on the extension of the Midlands and Grand Trunk Canal from Scowle to Bristol had been indefinitely postponed. That got a big laugh.

The Sportsmen of Scowle

THE mining villages are traditionally the nurseries of our greatest performers in the world of Association football. Scowle as I knew it some forty years ago was no exception. Yet Scowle's football was unique in many ways. For one thing the playing season was of an indeterminate length, varying according to the success of the team. If the opening matches were lost and the club had no chance of figuring in the struggle for the championship of the Mercian League a sudden halt would be called in the programme, all remaining fixtures would be scratched and Saturday afternoons would be given up to whippet-racing or ratting.

This practice earned Scowle an unenviable sporting reputation and on the few occasions their womenfolk permitted them to play away from home the team had a very hostile reception.

It is often said jokingly of the Scots that they can recruit a new centre-forward merely by shouting for one down the shaft of any Lanarkshire colliery. That story is almost literally true of Scowle. More than once, as a boy, I have

seen my father, the trainer-manager of the club, race to the pit-head just before the kick-off and scrawl a message on a descending coal-tub:

"Left-back, centre-half, two inside-forwards and a linesman, immediately. *Floreat* Scowle" — and inside five minutes the gaps in the eleven would be filled. The only position in the team that could not be filled in this way was the goalkeeper's. A player's risk as a moving target was serious enough; it was practically suicide to gamble with the demonstrative ire of the spectators of Scowle by standing relatively immobile between the goalposts.

In 1901 Scowle A.F.C. enjoyed one of its most successful seasons. A fixture-list of twenty-eight matches was completed without a single defeat, and the team won the championship and the League cup. In a way there was an element of luck about both achievements, for several of the strongest visiting teams had to forfeit points for failing to appear at the Scowle ground. Cannock Rovers were particularly unfortunate, perhaps, for their loaded brake disappeared down a disused pit-shaft and was never recovered. My grandfather Ebby was greatly upset by the news of this disaster, for it was his route across the fells that the Cannock driver has been following.

I will now tell what I know of the famous and oft-discussed semi-final of that same season. Like all women in Scowle, my mother detested football and she did everything in her power to prevent my brother Caleb from playing in the match. On the Friday night it became obvious that she had seized and secreted his football boots, and the combined pleading of my father, Caleb and myself failed to soften her attitude.

In the still hours of Saturday morning, while my mother was still asleep, my father and my brother Caleb arose and by candlelight and in stockinged feet began to hunt for the

missing boots. They had just completed their search of the parlour when my father stubbed his toe against one of old Ebby's gadgets for preventing draughts. He stifled a groan and listened. Upstairs, my mother was already moving. My father and Caleb blew out their candles and crouched low behind the harmonium.

My mother came downstairs in her clogs and nightdress. She collected the poker from the kitchen and ran into the parlour. Then holding her taper aloft she tiptoed to the old oak chest, lifted the lid, gasped at the disorder of the heirlooms within, ran to the front door and yelled for help.

" 'Elp, 'elp, 'elp!" she screamed. "We'n bin robbed!" My father and my brother Caleb darted upstairs, held a brief consultation and darted down again.

The street was now fully awake and men were running to and fro swinging their pit-lamps and cursing. From the window of my room I saw my father rush out into the night. I saw the lights converge and form a circle about him. For a few moments there was silence. Then the group broke up and the men ran bellowing to our cottage. They swarmed in through the front door and soon filled every room with uproar and commotion. And as they searched for the burglar they shouted to my mother who made frantic efforts to restrain them.

"Dinna tha fret, missus," they said, "we'n find th' divil if 'e be rightly 'ere."

In their excitement they looked into the oddest places—into drawers and boxes, under piles of linen, into saucepans and earthenware receptacles. And, at last, when they had made every room a shambles, the five o'clock hooter sounded and they trooped off to work at the Orange No. 2 Pit.

My brother Caleb played against Dudley Wanderers that afternoon; and he played in his own boots, which were

handed to him by Jem Clewlow shortly before the kick-off. The strangest thing about this episode was that my mother never referred to the boots and Jem Clewlow would not divulge where he had found them or what they were wrapped in.

Saul Crabb and Ephraim Tellwright were less fortunate than my brother Caleb. During the morning shift a light explosion occurred in the Dribben seam and several tons of roof caved in, cutting off five men, including the left half and outside-right. A rescue party soon made contact with the trapped men and offered to start digging them out there and then. But Saul Crabb and Ephraim Tellwright signalled that the match must go on, that they had enough oxygen to last for at least eight hours. Two comparatively raw recruits were drafted into the eleven to fill the vacancies.

We now come to the match itself. Dudley won the toss and kicked with the wind, grit and smoke from the "Disaster" end. They were a very fast team and inside ten minutes had obtained a lead of three goals. The spectators bided their time with complete confidence in Scowle's recuperative powers.

At half-time Dudley led by seven goals to nil and the referee, a man of considerable experience, was taken ill. Mr. Chalmers, the village constable, agreed to deputize for him.

The game continued to go badly for Scowle after the interval and with only twenty-five minutes left for play it became obvious that Dudley's losses—they now had only seven effective men—were not going to prove serious enough. I was standing near my father and Dr. Warburton at this critical moment. I saw them retreat from the touch-line and stand with their backs to the game in earnest conversation. I saw the doctor open his bag. Then they returned to their former stations but almost immediately my father ran on to the field to assist a fallen Dudley player. I saw him

press the man's head between his knees and dab at his face repeatedly with his sponge.

My father was on the field for practically the whole of the next five minutes and whether they were injured or not the Dudley players received persistent attention from his sponge.

After this Scowle ran their opponents off their legs. Dudley seemed helpless. Their remaining men staggered and lurched round the field like drunkards while Scowle scored goal after goal. And when the final whistle blew the home team were victors by three clear goals. My brother Caleb scored a double hat-trick.

The Dudley club lodged a number of protests, some of them, like the one relating to my father's sponge, being quite ridiculous. The League committee very properly dismissed them all.

As soon as the match was over Doctor Warburton raced to the colliery with the rescue party. For hours on end he worked gallantly tending rescued and rescuers alike, and when one man wielded his pick carelessly he performed a delicate operation on the victim by the light of a single pit-lamp—and what was even more remarkable perhaps, without using chloroform.

The Cleansing of Scowle

Dr. Warburton came to Scowle with high ideals and a bundle of prejudices. Forty years ago the science or art of healing (call it what you will) was tentative and empirical. There were no cures then for many of the diseases which the modern doctor just laughs at. The medicos of the period ranged themselves against squalor and disease armed with scientific half-truths and old wives' tales. And poor Dr. Warburton was no better than the rest.

His appointment at Scowle included the portfolios of doctor, dentist and sanitary inspector, and he was granted no assistance. He began badly of course. His numerous innovations and his outspoken condemnation of many of Scowle's oldest customs and practices made him very unpopular. He produced statistics to prove that more deaths occurred from poisoning contracted by chewing cheap shag tobacco than through accidents at the coal-face. He told the miners that their whippets carried tick and pestilence and that drinking even in moderation rotted the valves of the heart. He even tried to stop the women of Scowle from jettisoning their slops from bedroom windows.

The first time Dr. Warburton visited our cottage was when my sister Madge had influenza. He came uninvited, for my mother was deeply suspicious of " 'ealing from t' book," as she called it, and preferred her own herbal remedies. We were all at home at the time; as a precautionary measure my mother had dosed us all with a vile concoction known as "Black Jonto", which kept us more or less *in situ*.

My father opened the door and tied up the doctor's pony while my mother came running from the back-yard where she had been feeding the hens. When she saw the doctor my mother stopped running and walked forward slowly, her hands on her hips. Dr. Warburton scented his danger.

"What a pleasure it is, to be sure, ma'am," he said, "to see such a beautifully-kept house. Why, I do believe I could eat my meals off this floor."

"Aye, Doctor Warburton," my mother said, "but t' will be a mortal long time afore tha 't invited, lad, floor or no floor. Ah'll 'ave no truck wi' thy kind i' this house."

And although my father protested she opened the door and handed Dr. Warburton his hat. But just as the miserable fellow was swinging himself into the saddle she opened the door again.

" 'Ere," she said, "Ah'll tell thee what Ah'll do wi' thee. If tha'st th' mind tha can 'ave a go at ol' Ebby 'ere. 'E's 'bout as much as Ah can afford t' lose."

My mother's strange concession pleased us all. The doctor accepted the challenge very willingly; he realized, of course, as did my mother, that his future in Scowle depended on what he made of his new patient.

Old Ebby himself was less happy about the experiment. Over the years he had grown to respect his chronic lumbago. It was his sure shield against bond-service; it left him the freest man in Scowle. Without his lumbago my grandfather would have had no time for his rain-gauge or his gadgets.

As soon as Dr. Warburton began his treatment old Ebby took to his bed and announced that he was sinking. My mother pulled down the blinds and aired our mourning clothes.

I was only nine years old at the time, but I can still recall every line of the doctor's haggard face. And I can still hear my grandfather's thin voice as he called repeatedly to my mother.

"Rosie, luv," he would whine, "th' mon's killin' me, slow but sure. Sen' 'im 'way, luv, sen' 'im 'way!"

But my mother hardened her heart and stuck to her bargain. She put her duty to Scowle first. The village might never again have so good a chance of getting rid of the interloper. It was all very complicated.

Once, Dr. Warburton sat up with old Ebby all through the night. He intended, I think, to use violence, to strangle the old man in his bed if he refused to admit the efficacy of the treatment. But as he sat brooding, listening to the jabberwocky of old Ebby's simulated delirium, Dr. Warburton had a new idea. He leaned over the bed and put his mouth to my grandfather's ear.

"How would you like to be my official dispenser, you rascal?" he said.

Old Ebby opened his eyes and a big grin spread across his face. At five o'clock in the morning the pact was sealed with a handshake. At seven-thirty old Ebby came down to breakfast and announced himself as fit as a fiddle.

And so it was that Dr. Warburton came through his probationary year with flying colours. From the moment of his patient's recovery he was respected and obeyed. He developed a bedside manner that suited Scowle admirably. He called a spade a spade and a heart a heart—never a "ticker." He pronounced judgment in long scientific words that sounded ominous and fatal, so that the women of Scowle felt they were getting full value from their weekly contributions to the Frobisher Mutual Benevolent Society. And, more important, he made himself really useful on his rounds. Mrs. Hunslett, the checkweighman's wife, swore that he flannelled a back as deftly as anyone in Scowle.

And what of old Ebby? He was blissfully happy down at the dispensary. He loved the bright colours of the medicines. He loved to hear the liquids gurgle through the funnel as he made up his tonics. He made them up well too—but then he had been doing much the same sort of thing for years with his rain-gauge.

Dr. Warburton put a foot wrong only once, and that was over the sorry affair of the drains. A series of dreadful epidemics that swept through the village, decimating the population with remarkable mathematical precision, convinced him that the drains of Scowle were defective and he appealed to the Council for permission to uproot them. The Council rejected the appeal on the ground that the drains in question were the only ones they had. About a week later old Ebby paid a nocturnal visit to the colliery and returned to the dispensary loaded with sticks of gelignite.

At four o'clock on the morning of April 4th, 1898, Scowle was awakened by a terrific explosion. Men, women and

children rushed barefoot to the pithead, fear clutching at their throats. Rescue parties descended to the Dribben seam, and the crowd waited in awful silence.

At first light I was standing with my mother in the street near the colliery gates. Suddenly I felt her grip tighten on my shoulder. The crowd shuddered and parted to make way for a grim procession. It came, unexpectedly, from the direction of the lower end of the village. I saw two stretchers and the tattered figures of two men whom I recognized as Dr. Warburton and my grandfather Ebby. They were both very pale. Then the colliery hooter sounded the long continuous blast of the "False Alarm."

Scowle was without its medical advisers for more than a week, but the village's largest cesspool suffered practically no damage.

Courtship in Scowle

My mother always said that nothing but sin and shame would come of it when my sister Marion took a job in the office of Lawyer Fishwick in Ashbridge. To my mother Scowle was a corner of decency in a large and vicious world. She regarded everyone born outside Scowle not only as foreigners and heathens but variously as "the unrighteous", "the afflicted" and "the lost"—everyone, that is, except the Queen and the late Mr. Gladstone. In her view there was no really respectable occupation for a man but coalmining, none for a woman but housewifery. Her great sorrow was that she had brought only two girls and two colliers into the world.

In a vague groping kind of way my mother anticipated much of the modern theory of heredity; she thought that genes and chromosomes were minute organisms that some-

how got into the blood-stream through the prolonged inhalation of coal-dust.

"Certain sure," she would say, "nowt o' good can coom o' this 'fatuation. What isna there i' first place canna coom out, by my reck'nin'."

She referred of course to my sister's *affaire* with Mr. Wallace Worboners, a young ledger clerk whom Marion had met while roller-skating in Ashbridge. The fact that my sister Marion refused to invite her lover to Scowle merely confirmed my mother's worst convictions and made her opposition to the match more vehement.

My sister Marion was a foolish girl in some ways. Her head had been turned by the phantoscope shows and lantern lectures which were then all the rage in Ashbridge, so that she grew dissatisfied with our humble cottage and our rude way of life. She was determined that Mr. Worboners should never discover her origins.

Meanwhile my mother did everything she could to break the liaison. She invited Saul Crabb to supper almost every night and placed the parlour and the best set of dice at the young couple's disposal. And when Saul Crabb got engaged to Jessie Clewlow with commendable speed my mother turned her attention to Ralph Hunslett, the checkweighman's son.

The family was seriously incommoded by these stratagems, for when my grandfather Ebby was turned out of the parlour he transferred the impedimenta of his scientific studies—his gadgets and chemical apparatus—to the kitchen. The long winter evenings thus became so unbearable that my father and my brother Caleb sought refuge in the billiards room of the "Scowle Arms." We suffered financially too, for Mrs. Hunslett insisted that the sweetmeats and baubles with which her son wooed my sister Marion were chargeable to our account. During these anxious months the

Coronation mug on the kitchen dresser was always empty.

It was a chance word overheard in the vaults of "The Half-Nelson" that made my father realize at last that the family reputation was at stake. One afternoon as she was mincing along the cobbled High Street in her high-heeled boots my sister Marion was hissed by a gaggle of women outside Turner's Emporium. That night my father thrashed her within an inch of her life and ordered her to produce the missing Worboners.

The most careful preparations were made for the inspection. Our clogs were polished until they shone like glass and their soles were freshly creosoted. Old Ebby practised wearing his shirt tucked inside his trousers and my mother promised not to flannel any backs during supper. I enlarged the small hole in the floor of my bedroom, my window on to life in the parlour.

Mr. Wallace Worboners was disappointing. We had expected some monocled scion of the nobility, faultlessly groomed and attired. He was merely short and pimply. My mother held out her hand and eyed him critically, appraising his thews and biceps.

"Well, Mr. Worboners, lad," she said "tha't welcome, Ah'm sure. Tak' th' jacket off an' sithee down."

Supper was an uncomfortable meal. The "lobby" or hot-pot was good, but so anxious were we to take our cue in the matter of table etiquette from Mr. Worboners that it was lukewarm and greasy before we really got going.

We had been eating, virtually in silence, for about five minutes when it happened. Suddenly we heard someone yell just outside the window and a large stone shattered a pane and hit my grandfather Ebby on the temple.

We sprang to our feet cursing and ran to the door. In the street before our cottage a crowd of some fifty or sixty men and women had gathered. In the forefront stood Ralph

Hunslett and his mother. The explanation was simple. Infuriated by Mr. Worboners' appearance in the village—it had robbed them of their latest scandal—the worst elements in Scowle had rallied to the support of Mrs. Hunslett, who realized that her income would suffer if Ralph were supplanted as suitor to Marion.

We knew of course what the demonstration meant, and though we all felt sorry for Mr. Worboners we knew that there could be no backing out. My mother parleyed with Mrs. Hunslett for a few minutes, making the necessary arrangements for the contest. Mr. Tellwright was sent to "The Half-Nelson" to keep watch over Mr. Chalmers, the village constable, and the rest of the mob moved off up the scarp face of Barlow's Pike to prepare the arena.

Poor Mr. Worboners was bewildered. As we marched up the hillside my mother massaged his arms and shoulder blades with embrocation while my father poured a stream of advice into his left ear. And as the grim future began to unfold before him Mr. Worboners grew more and more pale. By the time we had reached the little platform of rock on which all Scowle's duels were staged he was trembling like a mechanical drill. Once or twice he tried to speak in protest, but he was silenced at last when my mother pushed a thick wad of cotton-wool into his mouth to protect his gums.

Now the arena was cleared. It was a cold night and the pit-lamps cast a bluish frosty light on the faces of the spectators who were yelling for blood and shouting their odds. From the shoulders of my grandfather Ebby I had a good view, and I was so excited that I hardly noticed the bitter wind that blew through my thin nightdress.

My mother and Mrs. Hunslett were in their corners pressing flint chippings between the clenched fingers of the contestants and pouring brandy down their throats. Suddenly Jem Clewlow jumped into the ring and held up his arms.

"On my right," he shouted, "Wallace Worboners Esquire of Ashbridge. (*Booing*); on my left, Ralph Hunslett of Scowle. (*Cheers*). There will be forty-eight rounds of . . ."

At that moment Mrs. Hunslett rushed into the ring and struck the referee across the face.

"Wha's tha' mean," she shouted, "Wallace Worboners 'squire. My Ralph's as good nor 'im, onyday. This scum o' Ashbridge . . ."

I saw my mother leap and the next minute both women were locked in battle. My father hurled himself upon Alec Thorogood who tried to separate the two women and my brother Caleb tackled Ralph Hunslett. That was all I saw. My grandfather Ebby suddenly threw me to the ground and joined the mêlée. I ran home as fast as I could to find my sister Marion sobbing in the rocking-chair.

It was a bad night's work. They came home in driblets just before dawn in varying states of disrepair. My mother had a piece missing from her left ear.

The opposition got off rather lightly except that Mrs. Hunslett had considerable difficulty in digesting my mother's earring. Nothing was seen or heard of Mr. Wallace Worboners either during or after the struggle, and several months elapsed before my mother allowed old Ebby to wear the youth's jacket and gold watch and chain.

Music in Scowle

THERE are many people who deem Nature careless and inequitable in her benefactions. Such people are ignorant apparently of Schwerpunkt's great work on the Substance of the Natural Law*—in particular of his fifth law of com-

*The Universe—Order or Chaos? By W. Stopworth Schwerpunkt.

pensation and betterment. In a dramatic passage Schwerpunkt points out that:

"The dog animal is low in stature so that its visual range, its effective horizon, is severely limited; but this dreadful handicap is mitigated by a compensating refinement of its olfactory organ. The dog animal is relatively myopic but has a keen sense of smell. The domestic bat is similarly handicapped but its tactile perception is remarkably sensitive. . . ."

I mention all this because I want to explain an important characteristic of the people of Scowle as I knew them some forty years ago. The isolation of their village and their preoccupation with manual toil had robbed them of opportunities for literary expression. Few of them could speak more than a dozen or so monosyllables and fewer still could write more than their own names. Yet how those people could sing! Singing was in their very blood. As a boy I used to imagine I could hear it murmuring and trilling from vein to artery, artery to vein. Their music was spontaneous, completely unorganised, and they were quite unaware of its superb quality.

I cannot help laughing when I compare the modern attitude to music with that of Scowle. Take this "Music While You Work" idea, for example. The miners of Scowle sang at their work not as an aid to efficiency but because they liked the acoustics of the Dribben seam. As a matter of fact they usually downed their picks the moment a song started up. The glorious sound would race from gallery to gallery, gathering volume as it went, until the whole company underground had joined in. It took several seconds (the Dribben seam is 3,687 feet deep if you would like to work the thing out exactly) for the sound to ascend the upcast shaft where it would be taken up by the surface workers—screening or hauling. The great wheel over the

Orange No. 2 Pit would whine to a standstill, the trucks would stop and production per man-hour and ordinary share dividends would begin to decline.

My grandfather Ebby once told me very proudly that the music of the underworld could be heard quite clearly by a man ten miles from Scowle if he pressed his ear close to the ground.

My mother's voice was one of the loudest in Scowle and the number of gas-mantles destroyed by the vibrations it set up was a constant source of anxiety to my father. Her tone was pleasant enough but her vocal chords were unable to cope with the enormous pressure generated by her deep chest, so that the greater part of it emerged without being converted into sound and merely produced a muffled soughing accompaniment. She was at her best perhaps in chapel on Sunday mornings. I used to sit next to her watching the pages of her hymn book riffle before the storm of her vibrant contralto.

We had no choir at our chapel and no organ. We took our key-note and time from my grandfather Ebby. He would strike his tuning fork against the pew-door, tap out two or three bars with his clog and lead off with a fine sweep of the arm. Old Ebby had a very pleasing voice and was one of the few people who sang the actual words of the hymns; the rest of the congregation made do with a repetitive "lah" or "hm".

In 1904 Scowle was visited by the Bad Ogleheim "Meistersingers", one of the most famous of itinerant German bands. The Meistersingers had been acclaimed in London, but this was their first appearance in the Midlands and a great crowd from neighbouring towns and villages assembled to greet them.

The Germans arrived in Scowle on the eve of the concert and were entertained in typical Scowle fashion. Each member of the band was received into the bosom of some miner's

family and was given the very best in "lobby" or hot-pot, drink and linen. At our poor dwelling we had Herr Friesmann, a bass singer. He was a man of immense girth and capacity.

The first sign of discord between Scowle and the Meistersingers was the premature closing, at seven o'clock that evening, of "The Half-Nelson" and the "Scowle Arms." As the men on the afternoon shift came out-by from the Orange No. 2 Pit to find their wells of comfort run dry, low murmurings of disgust and disapproval were heard.

The concert took place in the Mission Hall before a record audience. I sat with my mother, my brother Caleb and my younger sister Madge right in front of the stage on a seat marked "Reserved for Scowle". The programme opened with a selection of songs by the Scowle Male Voice quartet conducted by my grandfather Ebby. The singing was good and the applause generous. Next came a selection of light operatic airs played by the German band and then a group of rag-time tunes sung by the Meistersingers. Each piece was accorded a tremendous ovation and the sweating Germans grinned from ear to ear.

I was watching old Ebby rather closely. With each burst of cheering his expression grew more and more glum. I looked at his compatriots on the stage and then at the Scowle section of the audience: it was clear from their gathered brows and twisted smiles that the proceedings were proving a grave disappointment. To see its own quartet eclipsed in this way was a new and bitter experience for the village.

At the interval bottles of precious beer were handed up from the auditorium to the Germans on the stage and Scowle's uneasy resentment developed into a smouldering hatred of foreigner and visitor alike.

For the last item on the programme the two quartets were

to combine in the singing of "Drink Deep, Mariner Mine." I saw the men regroup themselves, throw out their chests and clasp their hands over their waistcoats. Then, quite suddenly, the silent, expectant Mission Hall was filled with uproar. I saw my grandfather Ebby in fierce altercation with the conductor of the German quartet. I saw the German snatch at the baton: I saw old Ebby snatch it back. Missiles began to fly. And then above the din a tremendous voice boomed out and everyone turned to look at Reuben Hunslett, the checkweighman. I cannot remember what he said in those few seconds but the word "spies" was repeated a number of times. Then all was confusion.

That night's work cost Scowle very dear. The smashed instruments had to be replaced of course, but much worse was the ridicule heaped on the village in the daily press. It took years to live that down. And yet I wonder . . .

The Scowle "Derby"

PRACTICALLY every article or White Paper on coalmining that one sees today is made unreadable by its persistent references to mechanization and nationalization—two ugly words that seem to drain the subject of its colour and spontaneity. These themes may be all right in themselves, but they need most careful handling.

Personally I am not at all sure about the merits of mechanization. On the whole it is a good thing, I suppose, that the pit-pony has been released from its bond-service, but I doubt very much whether the village of Scowle would think so. You see, the pit-ponies of Scowle, as I knew them forty-odd years ago, were no mere beasts of burden; they were a highly respected element of the village community. The miners loved them, treated them with infinite patience and

kindliness and even confided in them. Above all else, the animals were prized for their sharp hearing: they heard and recognized the straining of pit-props long before the men and so were able to give warning of imminent danger. When the ponies ran the men ran too.

These pit-ponies—there were twenty-five all told—were owned by the Ashbridge and District Colliery Company, bu. the village regarded them as the private property of the older coal-face workers. And so, in 1903, when old Ben Scrimmage fell to his death down the upcast shaft of the Orange No. 2 Pit, his pony The Tetrarch passed into the care of my father.

The whole family, with the exception of my mother, was delighted by this event. Like all women in Scowle my mother was intensely jealous of the animals. Strange though it may seem, these women resented the fact that the ponies had replaced them long ago as hauliers in the mines. I well remember how my mother used to abuse The Tetrarch whenever he committed some slight indiscretion—like tramping into the kitchen with dirty hooves.

"Work tha calls it, does tha," she would say, "settin' on thee backside i' yon pit? Why tha doesna knoo wha' work is. When Ah were a gal—least-ways me great-grandmother—us women was down t' pit twelve hours a day, 'ard at it on 'ands an' knees, like as not. Tha doesna knoo as tha't born, lad!"

And The Tetrarch would stand patiently, his ears pressed flat in simulated humiliation, until the ordeal was over. For The Tetrarch was afraid of my mother.

In the evenings my father used to ride home from the pit on his pony. My mother would be waiting in the kitchen with a hip-bath of boiling water, and because they were all so hungry my father, my brother Caleb and The Tetrarch would compete good-humouredly for the privilege of being the first to be flannelled.

I suppose it was inevitable in so matriarchal a society that the men's devotion to their dumb friends should have been so mawkish and intemperate. My father gave The Tetrarch the best of everything. He drank his tea unsweetened so that the pony should never lack lump-sugar, and spent hours sheering grass from Barlow's Pike so that it should have something green every day for its lunch at the Dribben seam.

There was, however, one important practical reason for this anxiety to keep the pony in tip-top condition—the Scowle "Derby". This great race was held every summer on the football ground and was very well worth winning. The prize itself—a cheque for five pounds presented by the colliery company—was small enough, but the sums wagered on the result were usually very heavy. My father entered The Tetrarch for the Derby of 1904.

Training began in earnest in March and output per man-shift rapidly declined. One reason for this was that the men took over the job of haulage. They could not afford to take risks with the runners. Another reason was that they dug hard into barren rock to lengthen the main, and so convert it into a practice track.

By the beginning of May The Tetrarch was in fine fettle. My father had taught him to take a left-hand bend very nicely and had lengthened his stride by several inches. My grandfather Ebby who, on account of his lightness, had been appointed jockey, spent laborious weeks among his scientific apparatus contriving and fashioning a pair of strong-lensed spectacles for the pony—for like most pit-ponies The Tetrarch was somewhat short-sighted.

As precautionary measures my father slept in the pony's stable on the eve of the race and old Ebby was sent to bed very early without his customary quart.

The Orange No. 2 Pit was closed next day: Scowle was *en fête*. In the morning we held a sort of party at our humble

cottage. A trestle-table was set up in the street before our door and loaded with the sausage rolls and jam tarts that my mother had made during the night. These refreshments were intended for the procession of villagers who came to examine The Tetrarch before placing their bets, but my younger sister Madge and myself managed to do quite well for ourselves.

At noon my mother grilled a large steak for old Ebby and talked seriously to him about tactics. Then, she too visited the stable. She stood before The Tetrarch and there was an awkward silence.

"Well," she said at length, "tha looks moer like 'n 'ospital case thon a race'orse, but tha'lt win yon race, lad, or tha con look elsewhere f' thee bed an' board."

And after that we all set off proudly for the football ground. On the way my father did a strange thing. He collected a handful of twigs, whispered earnestly with my grandfather Ebby and pressed them into his hand.

A great cheer greeted us when we appeared on the track, but there was louder applause for Jem Clewlow and his pony. Fancy Woman was now firm favourite at about three to one against. The Tetrarch stood at fifteen to two.

We had not long to wait. Dr. Warburton rang his bell to clear the course and the competitors lined up. My father patted The Tetrarch's flanks and wished old Ebby good luck. My grandfather was wearing the colours of the Scowle Football Club—as were the other jockeys—and he looked very handsome. At last everything was ready. Dr. Warburton raised his arm and they were off to a terrific yell of excitement.

Fancy Woman led from the start. She got away nicely, pulled over to the inside and established a lead of three lengths. At the first goal-post The Tetrarch was in the middle of a field of eighteen.

They started the second lap with Fancy Woman eight lengths in front of Dribben Girl and Smoking Ruin, and The Tetrarch nowhere. I looked at my father and there were tears in his eyes. My mother's face was livid with rage.

And then as they came round for the last lap I saw old Ebby take a twig from beneath his jersey and lean over The Tetrarch's neck. I saw him bend the twig until it broke against the pony's ear. For a moment I thought they were down. The Tetrarch shuddered violently with terror in his eyes. Then he bolted at a tremendous speed. Old Ebby repeated the performance just as they entered the final straight. Once again The Tetrarch heard the ominous creaking of timbers and fled in panic. He passed Fancy Woman thirty yards from the post and won comfortably by two lengths.

Scowle Wakes

On a map showing the hinterlands of Blackpool and Llandudno the village of Scowle would stand splendidly isolated in the zone of penumbral uncertainty—that is if the social set-up in Scowle has remained unchanged these forty years. You see, as I knew it, the village was divided very evenly in its allegiance to the two holiday resorts, and for a month or more preceding the annual wakes there was bitter rivalry between the two camps. Scowleans were much of a muchness in matters of wherewithal, education and birth, so that this somewhat artificial friction was the only really potent force making for social cleavage. As such it was welcomed as a substitute for class warfare in a community almost devoid of bourgeoisie.

For as far back as I can remember our family had journeyed to Blackpool every year on the first Saturday in

August; and every love-match in which we had been engaged had started on one or other of that famous resort's wealth of piers. Indeed, so rigidly was this holiday tradition upheld that intermarriage between Blackpool-goers and Llandudno-goers was unthinkable—until my brother Caleb startled us one evening in July, 1902, with his strange proposition.

"Ah'll no' be goin' wi' thee t' Blackpool at wakes," he said. "Ah've a mind t' 'ave a look on t' other place for a change."

My mother dropped her knife and spoon with a crash and stopped chewing. Her face had gone dead white.

"Say that again," she said.

"Ah've tould thee, Ah'm gooin' t' Llandudny wi' Dan Uskub."

"As tha' taken leave o' thee senses, lad?" my mother yelled. "Tha knows reight enough as we're Blackpool folk."

"Aye, mother," said Caleb, "but Ah've a mind . . ."

"Stubborn young fool!" said my father.

The altercation then developed along conventional lines, with my mother warning Caleb that his wilfulness would cost him a roof over his head and my father urging postponement of the wordy battle in the interests of peace and quiet.

Caleb had left his meal unfinished and was putting on his cap when my grandfather Ebby spoke for the first time.

"Ah s'pose Molly Turner's a-gooin' t' Llandudny, like as not?" he said with heavy sarcasm.

The effect was dramatic. Caleb swung round, his face flushing hotly. My mother jumped up, hopped round the table and, seizing my grandfather by his hair, jerked his head to within an inch of her own.

"An' wha's Turner's wench t' do wi' it, owd mon?" she said.

"Aye," said my father, "out wi' it, Ebby lad, if tha'st owt t' tell."

Then, with his head locked in my mother's vice-like grip, old Ebby told how, when he had been collecting fragments of dolerite for his geological studies, he had seen Caleb wheeling Molly Turner's bicycle over Barlow's Pike.

"Is this reight, Caleb?" my mother yelled.

And for answer my brother turned on his heel and strode out, banging the door so violently that the harmonium emitted a faint and discordant obbligato.

For the next few days life in the cottage became unbearable. My mother had set her heart on Caleb marrying into some good "coal-heaving stock", as she put it, and Caleb's waywardness shocked, infuriated and disgusted her by turn. In her view the daughter of the proprietor of Turner's Emporium was, *ipso facto*, an unprincipled baggage.

"The lad's made 'is bed," she said, "now 'e con lay in it."

And the family agreed that there could be no other solution. Only marriage could put a respectable face on the shameful intrigue.

The reader may protest, as Caleb did, that my mother was making a mountain out of a molehill, that there was no shred of evidence to prove his guilt; but it must be remembered that ever since the frightful case of Lorna Benskin's penny-farthing fifty years earlier Scowle had been ready to believe the worst of anything associated with ladies' bicycles.

Once my mother's mind was made up her course of action was clear. She forbade my brother Caleb to meet the Turner girl until the couple could be brought together again decently in Llandudno. It says much for my mother's strength of character that she was willing to break with a century-old tradition and incur the ridicule of the village in order that the proprieties might be observed. Old Ebby, now stricken with remorse for his untimely outburst, was sent off to Ashbridge station to book our tickets for the journey to North Wales.

In a way I suffered as badly as anyone from my mother's fury during the next fortnight. As soon as she had written Caleb off as a mining loss—it was taken for granted that once married he would eschew the Orange No. 2 Pit for a safe job at the Emporium and produce a family of shopkeepers—she turned her attention to me and my future. There was something rather pitiful about her desperate anxiety to fit me mentally and physically for life at the Dribben seam. She kept me from school altogether and put me through an intensified course of training with my little pick. The bucket and spade which she bought for me to use on Llandudno sands were full-size and the heaviest obtainable in the village.

On the Saturday before Bank-Holiday Monday we set off, a mournful party, across the fells for Ashbridge Station. My brother Caleb had my mother's engagement ring in his pocket and a look of abject misery in his eyes. The girls were irritable and cross. My father had the appearance of a martyr. For myself, I was reasonably happy, though the bucket and spade taxed my strength very sorely.

Somewhat sheepishly we joined the great crowd at Ashbridge station. The first train in was the Blackpool excursion and there were tears in our eyes as we watched our erstwhile colleagues clamber aboard.

Suddenly my father swore monosyllabically and explosively and pointed a shaking finger to the lower end of the platform where the Turners were filing into their carriage. We were so astonished at this strange development that we could only stand and stare.

The whistle blew and the Blackpool excursion moved. As it passed I saw the Turners gazing at us in complete bewilderment. Molly was crying.

As things turned out the misunderstanding was probably for the best, for by the end of the holiday Caleb had found a

new sweetheart—a girl of impeccable mining background of whom my mother warmly approved. She was the daughter of Bob Makinson the "butty".

The Chroniclers of Scowle

ABOUT ten years ago when Scowle once again became a Mecca for industrial novelists the Village Council issued a guide-book to the district. I have a copy before me as I write this penultimate chapter of my reminiscences and it is a veritable mine of information. On the inside cover there is a map showing the position of Scowle in relation to London, New York, Cape Town and Moscow and the probable and possible extent of the coal reserves. Danger spots such as disused pit-shafts, areas of chronic subsidence and the Women's Institute are marked by brown patches; crossed swords indicate the location of historic events. There is one on Barlow's Pike, where Charles Dickens is supposed to have sat while writing *Hard Times*, another alongside the football ground, where Simeon Maw began and abandoned his attempt to construct an open-air swimming-pool, and another on the spot where Ben Pilcher had his vision of Home Rule. And so on.

Then comes a statistical table showing wet- and dry-bulb barometer-readings between 1880 and 1910 compiled by my grandfather Ebby and reproduced by kind permission of the proprietors of the Ashbridge *Evening Star*. "Popular Walks in the Scowle District" comes next—the following are extracts:

1. Take the pathway leading from the Mission Hall and round the back of the Women's Institute until you reach what looks like a disused pit-shaft but which, since 1928 (by order of the Village Council), has been known as the

wishing-well. Take a stone, drop it down the well and listen. If you hear a muffled scream or an oath you have probably got the wrong shaft. Return as quickly as possible by way of Congreve's Folly and the lime-pits.

2. Follow the transverse fault running under Turner's Emporium until it brings you to the "Scowle Arms" (early closing day, Thursday). Then follow the crowd to "The Half-Nelson." Return via the "Scowle Arms."

3. Take the lane leading from the gas-holder through Mr. Branson's poultry-farm (market day, Wednesday), until you come to the derelict canal. Climb the further bank and push on up the scarp face of Barlow's Pike. Carve your initials on the meteorite on the summit and return by way of Leeds or Manchester.

The reader may be surprised to learn that Scowle is the original of the Coketown of *Hard Times*, for at least a score of northern towns have claimed that distinction and the author himself certainly gave no hint that he had Scowle in mind. Still, there it is. In the wordy battle of the eighties, Scowle had the last word in the correspondence columns of the *Northern Gazette* and assumed the title. And to this day in the market-place of Scowle there stands a magnificent statue with the inscription:

> Chas. Dickens, who was immortalized by Scowle in the novel *Hard Times*. Carved out of Dribben Coal by Emmanuel Uskub. Dribben Coal for coking and all industrial purposes—delivered free within twenty-mile radius.

But Scowle does not live on its past glories. Even in my time, forty-odd years ago, it was fully realized that trade follows the novelist. To keep abreast of the literary scene Scowle made itself as attractive as possible to the realist school of writers, kept them supplied with plots and local colour, and entertained them very lavishly. And there was never any friction

between Scowle and its visitors unless the two inns ran dry.

Almost every summer a batch of invitations would be sent off to a selected and seeded list of writers. It would read something like this:

> We are holding a little strike during the first week in July when we should be grateful for the pleasure of your company. A full programme of attractions, incidents, etc., has been arranged.
>
> R.S.V.P.

A special bureau was set up to cater for the novelists and a curfew kept the child population indoors every day between nine A.M. and twelve noon so that their labours should not be disturbed. The greatest care was taken to ensure that no inaccuracies crept into the writings, and throughout July and August a special committee of censors sat to consider the work submitted. The committee would not approve more than a few rows of asterisks in any one novel, or allow a writer to tamper with the local dialect. And they insisted that each completed work should be prefaced with the statement "The characters portrayed in this book wish it to be known that they are entirely fictitious."

Most of the novelists were helpful and co-operative, but others objected bitterly to the work at the Orange No. 2 Pit. They protested that they could capture the atmosphere of the coal-face without prolonged experience of it and imagined that a single visit would be enough. But the village thought otherwise and insisted on a full week's work being done by all. To add verisimilitude to the performance the strike pickets had instructions to let the novelists through to the pits only after a slight struggle.

And when the afternoon shift came to an end and the novelists came out-by they were shepherded into the schoolroom where they served as guinea-pigs for the domestic science class and had their backs flannelled.

In view of all this care and attention to detail it is not really surprising that Scowle has so many best-sellers to its credit. Do you remember *Going Down!* by Mason Gutteridge, *Valley of Disaster* by Eugene R. Taffety, *They Call It Coal* by F. Ridgworth Peek, and *The Cage* by Irwin Midge? There are scores of others.

I often wonder what Dickens would make of Scowle today with its gleaming pit-head baths, its automatic canteens, the neat rows of more or less permanent cottages, the extra-mural classes of Redbrick, the fine arterial road and the super-cinema. No doubt he would still find plenty of targets for his fearless pen, for though Scowle has changed it is still proud of its literary tradition and retains, I believe, its information bureau. I shall certainly back Scowle to be the venue of the first post-war industrial novel.

Farewell to Scowle

I have left until this last chapter the story of how, many long years ago, I left Scowle never to return. The reader will remember that my mother had high hopes that I should one day be man enough to take my place at the Dribben Seam of the Orange No. 2 Pit, and that my early years were spent in a protracted toughening-up course with pick and shovel. But my mother was a poor psychologist. Every human breast houses a defence mechanism that runs counter to impulses from without. In other words my mind rebelled against the imposition of my mother's will and I grew more and more determined that I would never, never go down the mine.

For as long as I can remember I have wanted to write. Every year brought scores of novelists to our village in search of local colour for their industrial romances, and it

seemed to me that their ways and means were infinitely preferable to those I seemed destined to accept. My mother read far too many of these novels for my good, for I am sure that she saw me as the hero of every one of them.

Escape was not easy. My health and strength were good. I was small for my age and had no hope of developing in stature beyond the recognized maximum height for coal-face workers. And here may I add that the optimum miner in Scowle stood five feet six inches in his clogs and weighed one hundred and forty-eight pounds. My mother employed traditional methods to control my inches. When my growth appeared retarded she would line my clogs with an aromatic substance gathered from the High Street; if it were too rapid she would allow me one pipe of strong shag tobacco with my bedtime story. She believed implicitly in the efficacy of this treatment.

I ran away from home three times. The first escapade ended rather dismally. Early one morning in my eighth year I set off up the steep scarp face of Barlow's Pike in the direction of Ashbridge Town. My intention was to make a false declaration of my age and join the Regular Army. After four hours of stiff climbing I reached the summit of the pike and the metalled road where I hid beneath the tarpaulin of a loaded farm wagon. . . .

I awoke cold and hungry to find myself surrounded by sprouts, an object of interest to a group of Scowleans outside Turner's Emporium in the High Street.

My second attempt was more successful. This time—in my twelfth year—I reached Ashbridge and got a job as boots at the "Black Lion". In an attempt to dissuade my mother from organizing a pursuit I wrote telling her that I had found employment at the Bittlesby Colliery (ten miles south of Ashbridge), where opportunities for promotion seemed brighter than in Scowle.

The weeks passed and it seemed that my mother had accepted my decision. But to maintain the deception I had to spend many weary hours in the reading-room of the Ashbridge Reference Library, for my letters—all from false addresses, of course—had to appear authentic in geological detail. "Dear Mother (I would write)—I hope you are well. The Bittlesby 'Main Coal' is of the long-flame, non-coking variety and has a relatively low sulphur content. In places it attains a maximum thickness of six feet, but elsewhere, as in the Grange area, is no more than three feet six inches. It is highly faulted and fractured but is nowhere unworkable. The cap-rock is a calcareous sandstone of extreme porosity. Your loving son, Josiah."

I wrote once a week.

And then one day, over-confident and careless, I forsook my usual trip to the library and wrote an imaginary description of a typical afternoon shift at the "Main Coal" seam. This proved to be my undoing. Three days after posting the letter my whereabouts were discovered and I was unceremoniously bundled back to Scowle by Ephraim Tellwright and Mr. Chalmers, the village constable.

My mother was waiting for me in the kitchen.

"So tha uses longwall face method o' minin' at Bittlesby, eh? Ah s'pose pillarin' and stallin' isna good enough for the likes o' thee," she said. "Tha mus' 'ave thy own personal method, like as not."

Her voice was heavy with sarcasm. I flushed for shame at my stupidity and bore the ordeal in silence. For several weeks my mother addressed me as "Josiah o'Bittlesby", but that was the full extent of my punishment.

My third and last attempt at escape occurred in my fourteenth year, a few days before I was due to begin my life at the Orange No. 2 Pit. This time I made my way to London where I began the long struggle to reach my

literary goal. It would be misleading to insert here a catalogue of my disappointments; for although my articles, poems and short stories were rejected by every editor and publisher to whom they were submitted, I was supremely happy in the knowledge that I had shaken the coal-dust from my feet for ever. I earned a precarious livelihood from a succession of menial jobs, but each one saw me a little nearer to Fleet Street. Between Hammersmith and Knightsbridge I was apprenticed to at least a dozen different trades and to five more in the mile or so to Hyde Park Corner. I got held up for several months in the region of Bond Street, where I worked as a pool-room attendant, and again near Charing Cross with a firm of interior decorators. But at long last I reached the eastern boundary of the Strand in the employ of Fuller the auctioneer. And now, with "the Street" at my elbow as it were, I returned with renewed zest to my literary labours. A succession of poems, historical novels, Westerns and detective yarns poured from my pen. They were all failures.

I wrote *Black Damp* in a fit of depression. It was accepted immediately and became the first of the trilogy that brought me fame. My only regret today, thirty-four years after leaving Scowle, is that I cannot return to the fountain of my inspiration. Some day, perhaps, when passions have had time to cool. . . .

S T. M O R B I D ' S

(*With apologies to staff-rooms everywhere and in particular to those which squirm under the despotism of the Pringle-Watts.*)

Fairly Unsatisfactory

WE had a little excitement in the staff-room the other day. The indigestion and the lack of sleep which always accompany the end-of-term exams. and the feverish marking which follows them had frayed our tempers so that they "flapped" wildly at the least breath of criticism.

At break on Tuesday morning the room was a hive of industry. Suddenly Pringlé-Watt broke the unnatural silence with a hollow laugh. "What on earth do you mean by this, Charteris—'Fairly Unsatisfactory—Can do better'?"

Charteris looked up and swore. "That's the *fourth* time I've tried to add Jenkinson's marks. What is it?"

Pringle-Watt repeated his question.

"Well, what's the matter with it?" said Charteris.

"How can anything be *fairly* unsatisfactory?" said Pringle-Watt. "Either it *is* unsatisfactory or it isn't. You can't qualify it."

"Oh, can't I?" said Charteris. "Don't be a pedantic fool! Anyway, I am not aware that I asked *you* to vet my remarks."

"If you *will* write your miserably inaccurate geography comments in the space clearly marked 'Mathematics' what do you expect? I'm afraid I must ask you to scratch your stuff out and do it again in the proper place. But don't put 'Fairly Unsatisfactory'—please!"

Charteris swore again, rather more vehemently.

"Poor—Can do better," said Pringle-Watt, doing his best to annoy.

"Shut up, will you?" said Charteris.

"Disappointing—English needs care," said Pringle-Watt.

"Blast you!" said Charteris.

"Fairly Unsatisfactory," said Pringle-Watt.

This distraction had caused me to write my French marks

for 2A in the space reserved for "Next Term Commences . . ." and I was busy with my penknife when a demoniac scream of triumph came from Charteris.

"So *that's* what it is," he said, addressing Pringle-Watt: " 'Writing needs attention.' It has taken me five minutes to make out what your shocking scrawl means." He held up the page for our inspection.

Pringle-Watt turned red, snatched at the report-sheet and tore it into small pieces.

"Fairly Unsatisfactory," said Charteris.

The atmosphere was electric. Both men held their penknives in a grip ominously tight. They glared ferociously at each other for a few minutes while the rest of us sat tense, waiting to intervene. I tried to remember where the first-aid box is kept. Then they resumed their writing and there was silence again.

At length there was an exclamation of disgust from Cartwright. "Who the devil has given that little imbecile Cranmer eighty-five per cent. for geography?" he said.

Pringle-Watt chuckled. "Our friend Charteris, no doubt," he said. "Only Charteris *could* understand the little nincompoop."

Charteris put down his pen determinedly. "I've just about had enough of your impudence," he said. "One more crack and I shall lose my temper."

"Tries hard—but still very weak," said Pringle-Watt.

"Look here . . ." said Charteris, his eyes blazing.

"Tends to lose his head at times," said Pringle-Watt.

"You—you——" Charteris spluttered.

"Moderate—cannot express himself," said Pringle-Watt.

At this point Charteris jumped to his feet and was about to launch a provoked attack when the door of the staff-room opened and the Head looked in. We stood respectfully.

The old boy smiled sympathetically at our labours and said, "Well, how's it going, gentlemen?"

"Fairly Unsatisfactory, Sir," said Pringle-Watt.

The Presentation

Most schoolmasters have two voices —one made deep and vibrant through the full employment of the resonant facial cavities, and the other merely labial and very precise. The former is reserved for use against boys and argumentative family relations: the latter is used among professional colleagues. When Pringle-Watt employs his class-room voice to herald an announcement in the staff-room, private conversation ceases as abruptly as the traffic in "In Town Tonight." Men who have grown old in the profession wince from the very shock of that voice and involuntarily straighten their backs and put their hands out of sight.

"Gentlemen," said Pringle-Watt, after a careful inspection of the scene, "as you know, Miss Daglish is leaving us at the end of the term and we have not yet reached a decision concerning the presentation."

In matters like this P.-W. always takes charge. He has an undoubted flair for finance.

I should explain that Miss Daglish joined the staff only a short eleven weeks ago. A young lady of prepossessing appearance and infinite charm, she quickly won the esteem and indeed the affection of her colleagues. Her somewhat "modern" teaching methods earned sympathy and kindly advice rather than ridicule, and under our benevolent tutelage she was rapidly forgetting what she had learned at the university. We had thought that a mixed staff would prove a mixed blessing, but we were wrong. Miss Daglish brought more than her charm to St. Morbid's. She brought

a new atmosphere of gallantry and heartiness. She introduced "elevenses." Punctually at 10.55 A.M. Cartwright and Charteris tussled good-humouredly for the privilege of priming the primus, fetching the milk and handing the first cup of coffee to Miss Daglish. We became less secretive about our supplies of tobacco. Miss Daglish had only to ask "Any of you guys got a smoke?" and cigarette-cases flashed like the guns of Texas Dan.

And now Miss Daglish was to go and the miserable business of the presentation was under review. If Miss Daglish had been leaving us to join the Women's Forces all would have been well. Unfortunately she was taking up an appointment under the Service of Youth scheme. Some considered that the move was unpleasantly significant. Evans (supported by Biggott, Cartwright and Homer) felt that it was a calculated slight which automatically excluded any possibility of a presentation. Hawksworth (supported by Matthews, Sethcote and Lemon) thought that such an obvious exhibition of our affection for Miss Daglish would look odd after our vehement protestations against the introduction of petticoat government. He would remind us that Miss Daglish was merely the exception that proved the rule that women and St. Morbid's do not mix.

Pringle-Watt went into the economics of the business very thoroughly. He was opposed to all presentations as inequitable. Were we to dig deep into our pockets for every slip of a girl who chose to remain at St. Morbid's for a week or two? This would be a dangerous precedent. He himself, during his long association with the school, had contributed to no fewer than thirty-six such presentations, representing a total outlay of £8 15*s*., yet he had no hopes of recovering any part of that sum. On the other hand Pringle-Watt knew of some people (and here he looked fixedly at Charteris, who was married last year), practically newcomers, who expected the

staff to defray the expenses of their nuptials *and* to send them on their way from St. Morbid's with a handsome nest-egg. Pringle-Watt maintained that a minimum period of twenty years' residence should be the first qualification of all candidates for presentations. He wound up an impassioned speech with an appeal to the President of the Board of Education to come forward with some official ruling in the matter so as to remove the intolerable burdens of those who did their duty and stayed put. P.-W.'s eloquence was decisive. We resolved that Miss Daglish should leave us empty-handed.

Now, throughout these deliberations I had purposely remained silent. I have a special interest in Miss Daglish. Perhaps it is because her uneasy discipline reminds me of my early struggles to reach pedagogic distinction: perhaps it is because I remain æsthetically more sensitive than my colleagues. I have always striven to avoid that warped and soulless mentality which is so often the bane of the profession. At all events I was determined to make a private presentation to Miss Daglish as a mark of my particular esteem.

The opportunity occurred about a week before the end of term. I managed to confront her in the quadrangle. She accepted my little gift without that embarrassing profusion of thanks which so often spoils such ceremonies, and she invited me to tea.

I rather wish she had not. Miss Daglish was, of course, her usual charming self and the comestibles were most appetising, but what I saw did much to undermine my faith in the high ideals of the scholastic profession. On a table in Miss Daglish's drawing-room were assembled the gifts she had received from the staff of St. Morbid's. They were numerous and costly. Easily the most ostentatious was a large grandfather's clock fitted with a brass plate, inscribed:

"To Miss Jean Daglish on the occasion of her departure

from St. Morbid's School. *Tempus Edax Rerum.* Francis Pringle-Watt."

The Short List

"I SEE from *The Times Educational Supplement* that they are advertising the Upgrove job," said Charteris. "Anybody applying?"

Biggott shook his head. Pringle-Watt sneered. Cartwright and Harrison continued their game of chess against Evans. Charteris looked hurt.

"I don't *think* so," I said. "Not much in my line, you know. What is it worth?"

"Oh, about nine hundred," said Charteris. "Not half enough for a job like that. I wouldn't have it at any price."

After school I went along to the reading-room to obtain full details. The advertisement stated that applications were invited for the post of headmaster of Upgrove School; that the salary was £900, rising by annual increments of £25 . . . etc.; that application forms could be obtained from the undersigned . . . stamped and addressed foolscap envelope . . . fifteen copies of three recent testimonials . . . not later than May 1st . . . and that canvassing directly or indirectly would be deemed a disqualification.

I had purposely refrained from appearing interested in the job before my colleagues. Good fellows though they are, they are apt to ridicule any attempt to climb the ladder of fame.

Biggott, I believe, applied for the post of Principal of Cowlick many years ago. The affair is never mentioned today, but the poor chap was called "Mr. Principal" for years after his application had been rejected, and came near to committing suicide.

To become headmaster of an English school was my fond-

est ambition. The financial gain would be nothing compared with the joy of commanding attention and discipline merely by my presence. I had always longed to interview parents, to develop idiosyncrasies and to be able to stroll majestically into class half-way through a lesson and demonstrate the inexperience of the master in charge.

One thing troubled me. I had only two testimonials. The first was from my old school and ran: "John Sopwhittle has been at this school for eleven years and now leaves with the Cambridge School Certificate. He has been regular and punctual in attendance. . . ." The other was from my professor at the university. Very diffidently I approached the Head with my request for a third. He seemed faintly amused.

"So you are leaving us at last, Sopwhittle," he said.

"No, no, sir," I said hastily; "merely a precaution we must all take in these days. One never knows, does one, *when* testimonials will be needed, sir?"

"Well," he said, smiling broadly, "if you go, you go. We shall be sorry to lose you."

His testimonial was, I must say, extremely flattering—especially the part which said: ". . . I feel that Mr. Sopwhittle will be comfortable on any staff and I cordially commend his application." My wife typed out the fifteen copies and I sent in my forms. For a week I was a bundle of nerves. Then I received a note requesting me to attend for interview on the following Saturday.

I was elated. I have always held the theory that my personal appearance and deportment are my chief qualities. An M.A. (Hons. French) looks well enough on paper, but when associated with a clean-limbed, middle-aged English gentleman in a neat pin-striped suit it becomes a factor of paramount importance. I was very confident.

When I arrived at Upgrove I was dismayed to find

Charteris, Evans, Pringle-Watt and another man already seated in the waiting-room. My three colleagues wore pin-striped suits and their neck-gear was faultless. Pringle-Watt held his hat and umbrella in a manner to suggest a speedy departure from an unpleasant duty.

"My gawd," said Charteris, looking me up and down rather rudely, "what a pantomime!"

"Well, Sopwhittle, old boy," said Evans, "it looks like the job's yours."

"I don't see how you make that out," I said, "there are five candidates—by the way, you might introduce me."

I shook hands with Mr. Sidefoot of Rotherham.

"You needn't worry about me," said Evans. "I only applied because the place is near to St. Morbid's and I had nothing to do this afternoon."

"And I wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole," said Pringle-Watt. "They got me here on false pretences."

Just then a door opened and Charteris sprang to attention, fingered his tie and marched into the committee-room.

I turned to Mr. Sidefoot to ask if *he* wanted the job.

"Not particularly," he said, "but I suppose somebody will *have* to take it. How about you?"

"Well," I said, "I can't say I do. I only applied to use up some old testimonials."

Charteris came out. He seemed even more anxious than before not to become headmaster of Upgrove.

"The place is a veritable Chamber of Horrors," he said. "Four women on the staff! No, thank you!"

Sidefoot was next. Then Pringle-Watt and Evans and me. Finally we were all seated again waiting for the final recall. It was all rather terrible. Charteris was laughing harshly and trying to pull the heel off his shoe. Evans had beads of sweat on his brow. Pringle-Watt was nonchalant and Sidefoot was looking through the window.

Suddenly the door opened and a voice asked for Mr. Sidefoot. My colleagues laughed nervously. I swallowed hard and tried to keep back a flood of tears.

"Thank heaven for that!" said Pringle-Watt. "A close shave, you know. I could have had it like that" (snapping his fingers)—"I refused it, of course."

We all hastened to add that the job had also been offered to us. We were leaving the building when the porter stopped us.

"'Ard luck, gents," he said. "I could 'ave told you the result a week ago. Unfair, that's what it is. They only called you chaps up to save expenses, being as St. Morbid's is so near. Red tape, that's what it is—'aving a selection committee when the bloke's already selected."

The committee may have saved *something* on travelling expenses, but the applicants from St. Morbid's did not lose. Indeed they gained enough to spend a pleasant hour in the Upgrove Arms where cynical toasts were drunk to the headmaster of Upgrove. Pringle-Watt was in excellent spirits.

Making Geography Live

REALLY, Charteris is too bad. The Staff Room is seething with discontent. Although Charteris has more or less been sent to Coventry he persists in his efforts to teach geography realistically or, as he so often proclaims, "to make geography live." Why the blighter has not been called up we cannot find out. Certainly he looks little more than forty and his behaviour suggests a quarter of that age. This week, for instance, he is "doing" North Africa—he has been "doing" it since last August. He has converted his room into a sandpit in an attempt to reproduce the Libyan campaign in miniature. Naturally the sand does not remain in his room.

It is mostly in my French readers, in my ink-wells and in the pencil-sharpener (sabotage).

On Wednesday afternoon (as on so many Wednesday afternoons) I was waiting to teach Lower Threes the rudiments of the verb "faire" causatively. They were already five minutes late when Migson Minimus burst in to say "Mr. Charteris's apologies, Sir, and would you mind if we're two minutes late as we're shelling Benghazi?"—and to depart on the instant. Soon afterwards the whole school was made forcibly aware of the heavy barrage that our fellows were putting up to cover an infantry advance on Benina aerodrome. There were loud reports from pop-guns and paper bags, and a continuous bedlam which I presume was meant to represent the sound of shells passing overhead. The whole school stopped work. It had to. At long last cheers broke out, the Union Jack was hoisted over the Government Buildings, the door opened and Lower Threes and a lot more sand came pouring out. I said nothing to Charteris on that occasion.

I had given him a piece of my mind only the previous week after the fiasco of the French exam. You see, not content with covering the floors of the school with the clay mountains of Abyssinia, the sands of Libya and the snows of Norway, he has the effrontery to decorate the walls of every room with hideous maps and posters. In my French room he went to the extreme limit of impertinence in pasting a gaudy futuristic travel poster of St. Moritz *over* a notice which I had carefully drawn in Indian ink to emphasize the importance of such points as "After 'after' use compound infinitive," "me, te, se, nous, vous, . . . etc.," and "Pronoun object goes before the verb except in the imperative affirmative."

Question 5 of my French Examination Paper for Remove A read "Write an essay of 200 words on Paris." When I

marked the answers I was astounded to find that without exception they began—"*Paris est situé sur les deux rives de la Seine, à une altitude variant de 26 m. à 218 m. . . . .*" and continued for 200 words in each case exactly the same. Of course I realized what had happened. The boys had copied unashamedly from one of Charteris's tom-fool P.L.M. posters revealing the glories of France. He had ruined my exam. and I told him so in no uncertain terms.

Perhaps his worst fault is in connection with the Staff Room newspapers. As soon as Bagworthy, the old porter, places them on the racks (at 9.20 A.M.) Charteris bounds up from his chair brandishing a pair of editorial scissors and calmly relieves every newspaper of its maps. These he distributes to the group captains of his geography-room campaigns. Quite naturally we resent this mutilation of our reading-matter, particularly in these days of paper shortage. It is most disconcerting to be unable to verify your interpretation of Joseph McLeod's or Wilfred Pickles's war news, and a few weeks ago I lost sixpence in a small bet with Cartwright, the chemistry man, who held the view that Hong Kong is insular. My own opinion that it was peninsular was directly traceable to Charteris's misdemeanours with the newspapers.

Still, if I have anything to complain of, poor Wilkinsummer has more. Wilkinsummer tends the school garden, which was last year growing excellent crops of potatoes, spinach and onions. I forgot to mention that for his major attempts to make geography live, Charteris has utilized the playing-fields. Across the Second XI cricket-pitch there now runs a stream loaded with silt which it deposits beneath the goal-posts on the hockey-pitch. Nailed to the cross-bar runs a notice in the neat calligraphy of Charteris: "Alluvial fan —delta conditions." However, I began with Wilkinsummer. *Revenons à nos moutons.* Charteris and his playmates dug real-

istic trenches and constructed earthworks to illustrate a lesson on "The Geography behind the Fall of France." These trenches and earthworks ran alongside Wilkinsummer's cabbage patch. Imagine his horror when one day he sees Monitor Whigmore's head pop up in the middle of his onion bed and (the next moment) watches the greater part of his garden disappear into a maze of human warrens. Charteris, in apology, merely said "Perhaps we did sap a little too far."

Charteris plans to "do" the Russian campaign shortly. In that case he will almost certainly turn off the school hot-water system, and I shall hand in my notice to the Governors.

The Pen Hospital

HOMER'S suggestion was surprising enough in itself. That it should have been received without cynical disputation, adopted promptly and unanimously and put into immediate operation were facts of immense significance for the future of education.

Like any other staff-room, that at St. Morbid's is a hotbed of individualism. It is natural enough, I suppose. Consider the schoolmaster's background. From the moment when he is first left alone before his class of jesting hooligans he is (in the ethical sense of the word) an egoist. Somehow the raw graduate must discover for himself the formulæ for complete authority and easy discipline. He must acquire sleight-of-hand, the rudiments of amateur detection and the knack of blotless registration. If he succeeds he may look forward to forty years of valuable service to the community: if he fails he is adored by his students and respected by all. The English are ever ready to ascribe a lack of the common touch to an overdose of academic genius. However, whether

he succeeds or fails the schoolmaster does so by his own hand. That is the point.

I mention all this because I want to stress the novelty of any *corporate* activity by the staff of St. Morbid's. The air of suspicion which envelops all its internal dealings has hardly been stirred by the years of war. . . .

Homer's suggestion deserves, I think, the widest publicity. "Each one of us," he said, "almost certainly possesses a hoard of defective fountain-pens. They are tucked away somewhere —forgotten. If our resources were pooled we might well discover enough components to make a dozen or so new pens."

We displayed our stock after lunch on Wednesday afternoon. It was an amazing collection. The number of spare parts totalled 146. What surprised everyone was the large number of pens that carried advertising matter. Pringle-Watt's hoard, for example, contained four presentation models from brewing companies and one from a table-salt manufacturer. It made lasting peace seem very remote, somehow.

Charteris thought it would be unwise to proceed with the tasks of assembly until some agreement had been reached about eventual ownership. Cartwright suggested a points system (ten for a nib, five for a barrel, three for a feeder, two for an inner tube and one for a cap*) whereby ownership became a matter of proportional representation. It was rejected. We felt that the infinite variety of the spare parts would make any such system inequitable.

A deadlock seemed inevitable until Pringle-Watt proposed that contributors should relinquish all rights in the assembled products, which should be offered for auction—the proceeds to form the initial capital of a fund to be called "Fire-Guards' Refreshments Pool." The only objection came from Biggot, a strict teetotaler. It was swept aside.

*Two points for a cap with clip.

With all the zeal of the back-room boys we bent to our task of repair and assembly. As general secretary to the venture (the appointment was unanimous) I was excused technical duties. I busied myself with the preparation of accounts.

Half an hour's labour brought disappointing results. Several pens lay in a state of near-completion but not a single working model was ready. A brisk exchange of components went on. I watched, fascinated.

At last a shout of triumph from Pringle-Watt announced that our operations were proceeding according to plan. A complete break-through followed. When work ceased five good pens had been assembled. By pre-war standards they were crude. Their contours were unusual. Their joints were painfully obvious. But they were strong and efficient.

Pringle-Watt began the auction. The first pen fetched fifteen shillings after hectic bidding by Homer and Lemon. The second went to Charteris for twelve and sixpence. Pringle-Watt secured the third at six and fivepence. The fourth. . . .

It was at this point in the proceedings (I was about to make a record of the transactions) that I missed my pen.

Pringle-Watt's argument was sound. "Admittedly," he said, "you have been the victim of an unfortunate mistake, but the five sections of your pen are now scattered among *five* pens. Unwittingly you have assisted the production drive. Your pen has converted a mass of useless rubble into five useful tools. Enforce your undisputed rights; insist on the reconstitution of your pen and you destroy the whole of our work. And that, if I know anything about you, Sopwhittle, you will not wish to do."

I bought the fifth pen for thirteen and sixpence. Its barrel (in mottled green) is marked: "With the Compliments of Roscoe's Sparkling Ale."

The Invalid

FOR the past week the atmosphere of the staff-room has been much more cordial. One may now attempt a joke or quote a tag without fear of ridicule. A new camaraderie has sprung up. This is not entirely due to the passing of the vernal equinox but, in a measure, to Pringle-Watt's influenza. No one, I think, would question Pringle-Watt's professional efficiency. His "first" at Oxford and his ruthless discipline give him a certain pre-eminence at St. Morbid's. It is the man's unrelenting cynicism, his overbearing preciseness and his tendency to borrow cigarettes which account for the coolness of his colleagues.

It was partly from motives of natural sympathy and partly from a desire to estimate the probable duration of our new era of goodwill that I decided to visit Pringle-Watt on Wednesday afternoon. I found him much worse than I had expected. The hypercritical sneer had gone and his voice was low and wheedling—rather like that of an invalid. He told me between raucous coughs that he thought he was finished. I was much affected and cancelled my intention to tell him of the extra work which his absence had caused me; of the many free periods I had lost.

After a painful silence, punctuated by gusty sighs, Mrs. Pringle-Watt appeared with a tray bearing a generous helping of cold pudding. Pringle-Watt waved it aside, nauseated. When pressed, however, he consented to try a spoonful and my fears for his ultimate recovery diminished rapidly as each successive mouthful gave him renewed strength.

I was able to perform several little tasks for him as he lay there so helpless. At his request I wrote letters of apology to the Collector of Taxes, to James McNairn, Wine and Spirit Merchant and to his golf club. He rallied sufficiently to play a game or two at chess.

My visit was almost at an end when his voice quite suddenly became hollow and rather terrifying.

"Will you do me one more favour, old chap?" he said.

I nodded.

"Do you mind slipping down to Simpkin's for me for my cigarettes? I can't smoke them, of course, but you know how it is—if you are not regular they cut you out. I would ask the missus to go for me but they don't serve women since they started using pipe-cleaners for hair-curlers."

I said that I would collect them and keep them at school until his return.

"No, no," he said, "bring them back, there's a good fellow. I have a lot of callers and I like to offer them a smoke."

I was at the door when he added: "By the way, you don't smoke yourself, do you? No harm in asking for a packet for yourself, though, is there? I would be very grateful—very."

It is at least four miles down to the village and there are no buses on Wednesday afternoons. Mrs. Simpkins seemed unfamiliar with the name of Pringle-Watt, but after a lengthy and humiliating altercation I succeeded in my mission. By the time I had tramped back to "The Cedars" my sympathy for Pringle-Watt had been superseded by a bitter resentment of his arrogant assurance. He looked rather flushed and there was an unmistakable aroma of a scarce northern liquid in the room. He took the cigarettes and murmured something about a kind thought and a welcome gift.

Next day I learned from Charteris, Biggott and Cartwright that they had been entrusted with similar missions on Pringle-Watt's behalf to Willis's, Ashcroft's and The Corner Stores.

Observation

PRINGLE-WATT cornered me in the staff-room one morning. "Don't look at your watch," he said, "but tell me—are the numerals on it Roman or Arabic?" The question did not cause me any astonishment. I knew my Pringle-Watt. I told him that they were Roman if he wanted to know. He nodded. "Now another thing—is there a seconds finger on your watch?" I said that I supposed that there was. Then he ordered me to produce the watch and his eyes narrowed in malicious delight as he pointed out that the numerals were Arabic and that there was no seconds finger.

"I thought so," he said triumphantly, "complete lack of observation, unscientific mind, all muddle and complacency." I was, I confess, somewhat shaken by this unexpected attack, but I rallied. "Don't be an ass!" I said. "Why on earth *should* I know whether the figures are Roman or Arabic? Would it make me a better French master, father or citizen?" "No," he sneered, "careful observation and a retentive memory mean nothing — much. It's only that these things are supposed to distinguish human beings from apes and lunatics." "Look here," I said, "before you become abusive perhaps you will tell me how many buttons there are on your waistcoat and how many steps there are up to the chemi lab." He gave me the answers so promptly and with such assurance that I knew he was right, although I did of course check up on his figures. He then added to my humiliation by asking me what was the colour of matron's stockings that morning. I mentioned most of the colours of the rainbow and my face must have registered them, but he shook his head in supreme contempt and finally informed me that as a matter of fact matron had gone bare-legged for a month or more.

All that morning I was troubled. Was my mental ability subnormal? Could it be that my examination successes had

been horrible flukes? Was my M.A. (Hons. French) a mere mask to conceal a mind of singular ineptitude? I sought solace in Cartwright. I repeated Pringle-Watt's questions and received answers as woefully wrong as mine had been. Next I tackled Charteris, and Cartwright interrogated Biggott. Soon the whole staff was involved. For some weeks every break and every lunch-hour became an ordeal. Everybody questioned everybody else. The atmosphere was charged with suspicion. Sometimes we stared rudely at each other while our lips moved silently in the attempt to memorize the particulars of each other's dress. Against my better and more patriotic judgment I discarded for a time my comfortable but spotted flannels and my dicky front and wore the garments which I reserved normally for founders' days.

During this trying period my wife was tireless in her assistance. She would sit through the long evenings, paper in hand, ever ready to correct a slip as I recited the numbers of Johns and Williams in the various forms, the numbers of cracked tiles in the cloak-rooms, light-fittings in the hall, pictures in the corridors, etc. I made progress and acquitted myself well in innumerable engagements.

But not so well as Pringle-Watt. He remained incontestably the most observant of us all. He *reigned* in the staff-room and greeted his courtiers with a *moi je suis tout* look, infuriating to behold.

Yet how are the mighty fallen!

One day we heard that Pringle-Watt was in trouble with the Inland Revenue Commissioners. It appeared that there had been some slight inaccuracy in his income-tax return. The particular error has never been divulged, but it *was* said that P.-W. had been labouring for years under the delusion that he was supporting five children instead of three.

THE latest acquisition to the staff of St. Morbid's is a Miss Crabbe, a graduate of London University. Her youth and beauty would earn swift recognition in any company, but aided by the Morbidean back-cloth of dull senility these qualities shine forth like flares on a runway. Her advent has aroused mixed feelings. Like the sixth-formers, I find this colour and grace extremely diverting, but several of my colleagues contend that classroom efficiency is already on the decline. To Miss Wulfram's horror Miss Crabbe spent the first three "breaks" of her teaching career surrounded by an adoring crowd of prefects. Miss Wulfram is neither young nor beautiful, and psychologists would say that her presentation to Miss Crabbe of the library copy of *Young Woodley* with the words "You may find this useful, Crabbe," was due to something or other. Miss Crabbe received this innuendo unmoved.

Of course there may be nothing in it, and I should be the last person in the world to indulge in idle gossip, but Miss Crabbe has certainly taken a tremendous interest in young Connolly's work and young Connolly has certainly become less bohemian in matters tonsorial and sartorial.

If there *is* something in it I hope it will end more favourably than the last affair of the kind at St. Morbid's. Only Cartwright, Pringle-Watt and myself are old enough to remember the Simmons affair of 1914, and Pringle-Watt has tried hard to forget it, for he played the base of that dramatic eternal triangle. At that time we were all much younger than we are today and Pringle-Watt was mettlesome and unsoured. He first met Mrs. Simmons (the wife of the handicrafts instructor) at the school sports. Attired in spotless flannels, flamboyant blazer and a straw hat, Pringle Watt cut an extremely manly figure as he held the starting-pistol unflinchingly. Mrs. Simmons was impression-

able and that was that. The earliest stages of the misalliance were conducted through billets-doux secreted between the pages of library books. At first they employed the seldom-read *Manual of Hautboy Playing* for this purpose. Then, as love deepened, their missives were placed at appropriate and succinct passages in the *Collected Poems* of John Greenleaf Whittier. Finally, as their love reached twenty or more fathoms they chose the pages of McIntosh and Blaney's *Divorce—A Plain Man's Guide* as their literary rendezvous.

They became less covert in their movements. Pringle-Watt, hungry for the sight of Mrs. Simmons, once rented a room overlooking the Simmons' back garden and from this point of vantage took a photograph of his love as she pegged out the washing. When he had blacked out the hateful pants and vests Pringle-Watt had a picture which was henceforth his constant companion.

Pringle-Watt began by feeling sorry for Simmons. After all, it was pretty tough to have your wife fall in love with a younger, handsomer and better-qualified man. But Simmons was either blind or he ignored the blatant manifestations of the impending rift. Pringle-Watt was hurt. His annoyance developed into fury when Simmons unwittingly commented upon P.-W.'s lack of appetite and nervous mien with such remarks as: "You should get married, my boy—do you a world of good," and "We must see if we can find him a mate, eh, Sopwhittle."

Of course everybody knew how things were going: that is, everybody but Simmons. I had a fatherly talk with Pringle-Watt and was told to mind my own rubicund business.

The triangle was now firmly isosceles. Yet nobody was prepared for the next move—so cool was it in execution, so pregnant with drama. Pringle-Watt visited Simmons in his workshop and told him that as he was soon to be married he wanted to order a complete set of furniture. Simmons was

delighted. He was, I believe, genuinely fond of Pringle-Watt. He promised to pour out his soul in this work. Never again would there be such furniture as he would make. He would out-chip Chippendale. This touch of the macabre made the staff-room delirious with excitement.

Then war broke out and the triangle was forgotten. When the school reassembled after the summer vacation it was to learn that Mrs. Simmons had eloped with the Head and Pringle-Watt's furniture, and that Simmons had joined his regiment.

That was the last affair at St. Morbid's. Perhaps we are hoping for too much from Miss Crabbe.

Success Abounding

My performance has been received with enthusiasm. The Megthorpe *Sentinel* says: "Mr. Sopwhittle's cartooning reached unexpected heights of drollery. His 'turn' was superb entertainment." The Megthorpe Parish Magazine says: "We are deeply indebted to Mr. Sopwhittle. For fifteen all-too-short minutes he made us forget our troubles."

I cannot understand it. Either the British public is very easily amused or my skill is more pronounced than I had imagined.

Major Griffin was putting on a concert for the troops in the Parish Hall, and he asked me if I would help. Afterwards he laughingly admitted that he solicited my organizing ability rather than any histrionic talent that I might have, but he seemed quite pleased when I told him that I had only a moderate tenor voice, that I could not juggle or throw cartwheels, but that I had some slight skill with the pencil. After some discussion it was arranged that I should do a turn of fifteen minutes' "lightning cartooning."

I was very excited on the day of the concert—but full of confidence, for I had rehearsed my show to perfection. Each of the three cartoons was scheduled for five minutes, and I chose Coventry Patmore, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Robert Owen as my subjects. It was with regret that I omitted my favourite author Charles Kingsley from the list, but his nose defied all my efforts at *speedy* reproduction.

The first thing that went wrong was the easel. As I strode on to the stage I noticed that it faced the audience. Now I hate having people look over my shoulder while I am at work. I decided to turn the easel round. It was heavy and my exertions, in addition to making me very warm, lost two valuable minutes. I fixed a plain postcard to the board by means of a drawing-pin and began, in bold wristy strokes, to reproduce the physiognomy of Coventry Patmore. I was soon immersed in my task and remained completely oblivious of the audience until I stepped back a pace or two to measure my rough sketch. As I held my pencil at arm's length, first horizontally and then vertically, the first murmurs of approval broke from the throng. I was encouraged.

Soon the cartoon was completed. All that remained to be done was the erasing of construction lines (perspective, etc.), and as ill-luck would have it my rubber was in the very last pocket that I searched. By the time I had located it I was very flustered, for I was already four minutes behind schedule. At last the drawing was completed and I was about to present it to the audience when a horrible thought struck me. Would the people at the back of the hall be able to see the work? A postcard is not very large and my H pencil, while admirably precise, is not particularly bold. I realized that I should have to go over the sketch again and *press on*. This I had commenced to do when the point of the pencil snapped. For some reason or other the audience thought this funny. I left the stage to borrow a pencil-

sharpener or at least a penknife. The Major was able to supply me with the latter and I returned to the stage. I was a little upset at leaving the audience so abruptly and without apology, so I explained at some length the reason for my apparent but unintended discourtesy. Judging by the laughter which greeted my speech there were few who nursed their legitimate grievance.

A few more minutes and I was done. I unpinned the postcard and held it aloft for inspection. There was again much laughter—probably due to the Patmore subtleties recalled to mind by the likeness. The cheering became so vociferous that I blushed, and this caused me so much embarrassment that I bowed more and more deeply as I retreated to resume my work. Then an unfortunate incident occurred. As I bowed for the last time my seat struck a leg of the easel and knocked it backward. This upset the delicate equilibrium of the whole apparatus, so that the board tumbled forward to strike my head with an impact as noisy as it was painful. My number was up and the curtain descended.

Major Griffin has already booked me to repeat the performance in Lower Haddock, Chinton, Fripton and Soddy. I cannot understand it.

Equal Pay at St. Morbid's

LET me say right away that the Equal Pay for Equal Work controversy has not noticeably increased the friction in the staff-room at St. Morbid's. For one thing the masters outnumber the mistresses by seventeen to two: for another, Pringle-Watt has revealed unexpectedly feminist views on the subject.

Miss Dolby and Miss Horsepool joined the staff in August 1940. They came to us direct from the B.B.C. where, as

aunties Cora and Ruth, they had been known and loved by all East Regional children. From the first they were popular. They exhibited none of the lamentable characteristics of the schoolma'am of fiction. They spoke precisely, it is true, but the robust catholicity of their vocabulary was refreshing. Miss Dolby was a non-smoker not on principle but because she was suffering from a smoker's heart. Miss Horsepool favoured the same brand of cigarettes as Pringle-Watt.

But they had other, more positive, qualities. Miss Dolby's familiarity with the classics and her gift of ready quotation repaired a serious deficiency in the mental make-up of the staff-room and materially assisted our daily attacks upon *The Times* crossword puzzle. Miss Horsepool proved a willing and competent brewer of tea. More important still, they made no attempt to rationalize traditional procedure or to introduce disturbing novelties. In other words their presence at St. Morbid's did not damage our very favourable relations with the Head.

The national interest in the amendment to the Education Bill reached St. Morbid's rather late. Cartwright introduced the problem very tentatively over tea one Friday morning. His opposition to the principle of equal pay for equal work was couched in moderate language. "It may be," he said, "that the man-hours of teaching which I contribute to society are equal in number to the woman-hours of Miss Horsepool or Miss Dolby. But the units of measurement are not equal. I am teaching for a livelihood—not for a bottom-drawer."

Support for this line of argument was half-hearted but general. Only Pringle-Watt had any real criticism. He maintained that such an attitude was "appallingly unprogressive," "disgustingly selfish," and "unprofessional." Rather than preserve the present system in inequality he would raise women's pay even above that of men.

Pringle-Watt said no more; and he refused to amplify his views when (during the following days) his colleagues attempted to reopen the discussion. He made it clear that his final views on the subject would be reserved for his presidential address to the National Confederation of Senior Assistants.

In these circumstances suspicion and rumour were inevitable. It was variously suggested that:

(1) P.-W. was particularly anxious not to antagonize either Miss Horsepool or Miss Dolby—probably Miss Horsepool.

(2) He was hoping to retire as soon as his daughters had obtained teaching diplomas.

(3) He was a Trotskyite.

The truth, when it appeared, was very different. The April number of the *Schoolmaster's World* contained this extract from his speech:

"In our complex society we are all, in our separate trades and callings, competitors for a share of the national income. And only those of us are heard who can put forward an irrefutable case of injustice and victimization. Make the pay of women teachers equal to that of men and we have such a case. I am not a betting man but I am willing to wager that within six months of the adoption of the principle of equal pay we schoolmasters would be granted a handsome compensating improvement in salary scales. I ask you, gentlemen, to support equal pay for all you hope to be worth."

Misrepresentation

I AM in complete sympathy with those members of the Cabinet who have complained recently of the misrepresentation of their speeches in the popular Press. I too have

suffered in this way. As district secretary of the National Association of French Masters it was my duty to speak at the annual conference—held a few weeks ago. My subject was "Some Current Educational Issues." Nothing, I think, pleases pedagogues so much as a serious subject treated in humorous vein. Accordingly I wound up my discourse with the following words: ". . . and as for the question of the school-leaving age, I say, gentlemen, why sixteen? Why not eighteen, twenty or even twenty-five? I can assure you, gentlemen, that I should not be *entirely* comfortable about the irregular verbs even if my students remained with me until they were thirty." There was much laughter and I was well pleased.The next day the Megthorpe *Sentinel* published a report of the conference. I read with amazement: "Mr. J. Sopwhittle, M.A., of St. Morbid's, delivered a forthright speech in which he demanded the raising of the school-leaving age to twenty-five if not thirty." I wrote a very stinging letter to the editor requesting an immediate apology and a public refutation of the report. In the *Sentinel* of Tuesday a short note headed "Erratum" appeared at the foot of an advertisement column. It said: "In the report of Mr. J. Sopwhittle's speech (Saturday edition, page 2), read '15 or 16' for '25 if not 30.' " I was not entirely satisfied.

In the staff-room I sensed an atmosphere of hostility. Charteris suggested that I was angling for the job of President of the Board of Education. Biggott implied that my alleged suggestions would increase rather than diminish my problems of discipline. Evans asked whether I proposed to allow my students to marry, and if so—did I favour family allowances? Only Pringle-Watt, however, was really spiteful. He asked whether my views were dictated by my experience of teaching in what he rudely called "the indirect method." He asked how I intended to keep abreast of my ageing students. Did I propose to take a correspondence

course in French? Finally, he stated that my outburst was irresponsible; that it brought discredit on St. Morbid's and on him (Pringle-Watt) in particular, and that he intended to denounce my utterances at the next monthly meeting of the Megthorpe Dinner-Wagon Club.

Although I was deeply hurt by these characteristic sallies I was in no mood to retaliate, for I was meeting with even more objectionable criticism from the boys. A round robin with 275 signatures was sent to me. It said: "Masters who are trying to keep us out of the R.A.F. until the next war are not wanted at St. Morbid's." On top of this a wave of indiscipline sprang up. When I asked 2A what page we had reached in "Colomba" the whole class answered in unison "Twenty-five, if not thirty, sir." These numbers were chalked up on every blackboard, underlined in every text-book and repeated aloud for my benefit wherever I walked. When young Tipper came to my room after school to ask me for the meaning of "vingt-cinq, sinon trente," I could stand it no longer.

I asked the Head's advice, and the next morning after prayers he threatened to gate the whole school if there was any further mention of what he called "Mr. Sopwhittle's indiscretion."

I spent a very miserable week-end, but I brightened considerably when I read an account of Pringle-Watt's speech to the Dinner-Wagon Club. Large black headlines announced: "Local Schoolmaster Demands Raising of the School-leaving Age to Forty." Then followed this paragraph: "In a moving address on educational reforms Mr. Pringle-Watt, B.Sc."—(P.-W. is M.Sc.)—"spoke of irresponsible voices pleading for an extension of schooldays to twenty-five or thirty years. 'What moderation, gentlemen, what half-measures are these? Are we to force our boys out upon a cruel world,' said Mr. Watt"—(P.-W. is proud of

the "Pringle")—" 'at the tender age of twenty-five or thirty?' (Laughter.) 'Are we to deny them those fruits of learning which only the formative years of thirty or forty can give them?' (Proceeding.) A full account of this and other speeches will be published in tomorrow's issue."

Pringle-Watt had a bad cold during the following week and was absent from duty.

Staff versus School

IT is true that the School won the annual football match against the Staff by seventeen clear goals. It is true also that this result represents the most crushing defeat ever suffered by the masters of St. Morbid's in these matches. But, as I have reminded the more querulous of my colleagues, the game is the thing. My goalkeeping has been severely and sometimes unfairly criticized, yet this note is not written to defend myself but rather to place on record the difficulties which were faced *before* the match took place. I will only repeat Browning's dictum concerning goalkeepers in general: "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, Or what's a heaven for?"

Our first problem was the pitch. With the soccer field pitted with bomb craters, the rugby field diminished superficially by the agricultural exigencies of war, and the reserve pitches in constant occupation by the R.A.F., there were many who thought that the match should be cancelled. My suggestion that the hockey pitch should be used was thought by Charteris to be influenced by the comparative smallness of the goals and was promptly withdrawn.

Decision rested between the rugby and soccer grounds, and since Wilkinsummer the gardener was adamant in his refusal to transplant we were compelled to put up with the

bomb craters. These might well have been filled in but for the Head's sentimental request to keep the holes in a state of repair so that they might remain as post-war souvenirs.

In previous years two matches had been played simultaneously—one at rugby and the other at soccer. With only one field available and with the staff sadly depleted a compromise was necessary. The rugger men wanted fifteen a side, handling of the ball, and goals over the cross-bar. Soccer men voted for Association orthodoxy. Finally, we decided that there should be thirteen to a side, that the ball (spherical) could not be handled, that tackling *au rugby* should be permitted, and that goals could be scored only beneath the bar.

The appointment of the referee again caused difficulty. For many years the onerous task has been performed by old Schlesingstein the German master, whose interpretation of the international football code was felt by the Staff to be more catholic than the rigid rules favoured by the boys. Now that Schlesingstein was interned we must choose between Wilkinsummer and Mrs. Grool the matron. Wilkinsummer's rheumatism went against him and Mrs. Grool was appointed. Her known ability to emit a fiendish whistle by blowing between first and second fingers (a trick she acquired as group-leader of the Brownies) was a powerful factor in her candidature.

All our problems were not yet solved. The venue was fixed; what of the date? We consulted the fire-watching rota, for each one was anxious to give of his best and to appear fresh and waking on the appointed day. The difficulty appeared insuperable until I offered magnanimously to fire-watch on the eve of the match. I almost rescinded the offer a moment later when Charteris stated that some goalkeepers he knew scarcely needed to be fit since their play consisted merely in turning and picking things up.

In the days that preceded the match I was able to utilize the occasion to press home certain points which are the bane of all French masters. It may be of service to others if I mention at least one of the original hooks which I devised for use with football bait. Why not arrange the pronominal objects in the familiar formation of the football team?

me te se nous vous
le la les
lui leur
y
en

You see there are five forwards, three halves, two backs, a goalkeeper and a ball-boy (en). I have found this device so successful that I feel I have no right to keep it to myself.

Even so I may mention that this ingenious trick caused the disfigurement of the notice-board announcement of the teams. My name was scratched through and a large mark of interrogation substituted. A clever pun, maybe, and one revealing the admitted success of my teaching methods, but hardly a credit to the colleague whom I suspect of making it.

The day of the match was fine and warm—warm enough to permit me to abandon the idea of wearing hockey pads and protectors. Just before the kick-off the School XIII were greatly encouraged by an aerial visit from H. A. F. Whigmore Senior, D.F.C. (prefect and football captain two years ago). He appeared over the playing fields, did a victory roll, and came near to scoring in a power dive which made me lie as flat as my stomach would permit between the posts.

The game itself was interesting.

The Long Vacation

THE approach of the summer holidays has once more

caused friction in the staff-room at St. Morbid's. Although the war has brought no change in the duration of the long vacation, the governors have made it clear that the masters are expected to spend at least eight of the ten weeks in some form of national service. Most of the friction is caused by the different interpretations put upon the term "national service." The Head is the final arbiter of these problems, but so far he has proved himself as susceptible as ever to the wiles of unscrupulous shirkers, while remaining adamant before appeals for clemency and consideration based on the most reasonable and compassionate grounds. As a result the staff is now divided into two hostile camps—the shirkers and the workers. Of the workers, Biggott has been permitted to work as temporary unpaid barman at the Megthorpe Arms. While agreeing with the Head that such employment is somewhat unprofessional, Biggott avers that his magnanimous sacrifice of reputation will release a regular barman for more vital labours. Cartwright and Evans are to work on the land, Hawksworth will make munitions, and Sethcote and Lemon will demolish bombed property. My own position is still undecided. I should like to know more of Pringle-Watt's intentions before committing myself irremediably.

In 1940 I worked for six weeks and two days as a bus conductor for the L.P.T.B. and enjoyed myself immensely until P.-W. intervened. I soon established a reputation for repartee among my female comrades of the bell-punch, and my efficiency caused me to be singled out for rapid promotion. Then one day, while I was chaffing a lady passenger (after the manner of bus conductors) in the Cockney dialect I was shocked to hear a familiar voice asking for a fourpenny to Camden Town. Pringle-Watt seemed to find the situation amusing. "I'll spend the day with you, Sopwhittle, old man," he said. "This should be interesting." For several hours he studied my methods intently. It was most disturb-

ing. I was unable to indulge my ready wit for fear of ridicule, and I became involved in several unpleasant altercations over problems of change. I was already well acquainted with Pringle-Watt's malicious sense of humour, and it came as no surprise to me when he attempted to humiliate me by tendering a ten-pound note for a ninepenny ride, by sitting upstairs when the bus was empty and by pushing the bell-button to stop the bus with annoying frequency and suddenness.

"Would you mind leaving the bell alone?" I said quite sharply.

"Sorry," he said. "I was conducting an experiment to discover why conductors are able to defy the laws of momentum, but I see you have not yet acquired that distinction."

Pringle-Watt had now paid four-and-sixpence in fares, but he showed no signs of departure. To humour him I decided at some risk to let him travel free of charge. He accepted my gesture without a murmur of thanks. Later, however, when an inspector appeared, he became suddenly agitated and exclaimed in a loud voice, "I'm tired of travelling without a ticket—will no one allow me to pay my fare?" The inspector then examined my chart microscopically and warned me not to "try any funny stuff." Pringle-Watt left the bus shortly afterwards, taking my ticket-box with him. When I returned to the bus-depôt it was to receive my dismissal. The box had been returned by a gentleman who had found it in a saloon bar off Hammersmith Broadway. That is Pringle-Watt's idea of a joke.

Last year Pringle-Watt again crossed my path when I found employment with the Medthorpe War Allotments Committee as a volunteer gardener. By means known only to himself he succeeded in obtaining my services for his own plot, and I was compelled to work in blazing sunshine while

Pringle-Watt sat in his deck-chair criticizing my every move.

Pringle-Watt is of course the leader of the shirkers. Charteris is going to Scotland to collect geological specimens for highly important lectures to sixth-form military strategists on "Types of Terrain." Matthews is to attend a Summer School at Cambridge on Anglo-Soviet Relations. P.-W. himself is to spend the vacation in completing his important book, *Conics for the Million.*

Since the Head has refused me permission to act as temporary unpaid liaison-officer to the Commandos, I shall probably obtain employment in a coal-mine. Pringle-Watt should draw the line at that.

The Tournament

THERE is nothing that a schoolmaster would rather find in his post than a letter from a former student—unless it is a parcel from a former student. Last term Major L. P. Anstruther sent us a parcel containing four pounds of best Egyptian tobacco. The accompanying note read: "To the Masters of St. Morbid's who provided me with the happiest years of my life." On occasions such as this the tedium and nerve-racking responsibility of the profession seem worthwhile. Hero-worship based on respect and gratitude is a beautiful thing. When the parcel was opened there were cries of "Good Old Anstruther!" "Always knew the boy would make good." and "Makes you feel rather ancient, eh?" and we took out our pouches. Biggott was about to divide the tobacco into fourteen portions when Pringle-Watt intervened. He asked us to preserve a "modicum of decorum," and to stop behaving like "pool-room habitués." Major Anstruther was a sportsman and would prefer his gift to be awarded intact to the winner of some competition—say a chess tournament. Such opposition to this scheme as found

both a voice and a hearing was immediately nullified by P.-W.'s threat to hand over the entire consignment of tobacco to the Head.

The draw for the tournament took place. There were only seven entries:

(1) Pringle-Watt (bye)
(2) Biggott *v.* Lemon } (1) *v.* (2)
(3) Charteris *v.* Hobbs } (3) *v.* (4)
(4) The Head *v.* Homer

The first match to be played was the final. It happened like this. One afternoon Charteris and Pringle-Watt were alone in the staff-room. Pringle-Watt broached the subject of the tournament, commenting bitterly upon the apathy of the contestants (a week had passed and not one game had been played). He then suggested that as he (P.-W.) was certain to beat the winner of Biggott *v.* Lemon and since Charteris was far too good for Hobbs and the winner of the Head *v.* Homer they might as well play the final right away. Now these forecasts were quite reasonable, for P.-W. and Charteris are incontestably the best players in the school. Charteris (feeling rather guilty as he afterwards confessed) became an accomplice in the intrigue and the game was played. After a wordy struggle P.-W. triumphed.

Both men were confident that their duplicity would remain unmasked. After convincing Homer that his match with the Head was a foregone conclusion, Charteris met him in a secretive semi-final and won according to plan. Meanwhile Pringle-Watt had beaten both Biggott and Lemon after assuring each that he would triumph over the other. Two days before the end of term there was only one match outstanding—the Head's game with Homer. A victory for Homer was a "dead cert." The Head's chess was built round a feudal belief in the divine right of kings. Pringle-Watt's tobacco was almost alight.

We were all present on the last afternoon when the Head entered the staff-room with a gentleman of foreign appearance.

"Gentlemen," said the chief, "as you know I am extremely busy at the moment, I am sorry that I cannot fulfil my engagement with you. However, I shall not let you down. I know you will be pleased to allow my Czecho-Slovakian friend to deputize for me." He then introduced us to Mr. Hedzagoboj, who sat down to his match with Homer. The table was quickly surrounded by anxious spectators. Mr. Hedzagoboj opened uneasily with a most heterodox gambit, but after the seventh move he swooped suddenly with a bishop and emitted a staccato and very final "Mate!" Charteris took Homer's place at the board. This time Mr. Hedzagoboj seemed sadly at fault. By the sixth move Charteris had captured a bishop and a queen. Pringle-Watt looked more comfortable. Then, almost before Charteris had counted his booty, we heard again the unequivocal cry which marked a complete victory for Czecho-Slovakia.

We turned to look at Pringle-Watt. The master was very white. He took his place at the board and ruminated for many minutes before the first move. He was going to make a fight of it. His delaying tactics did not seem to embarrass Mr. Hedzagoboj who took up *The Times* and read with interest until he was informed of his opponent's progress. Then he would peer momentarily round the edge of the paper, dispatch a chessman to its appointed square and resume his literary studies. Pringle-Watt was ruffled. One by one his positions were overcome and his forces annihilated. Indeed Mr. Hedzagoboj seemed less interested in administering the *coup de grâce* than in relieving his opponent of his last pawn. It was more like strip poker than chess. Then, when Pringle-Watt's king lay utterly defenceless, it was chased mercilessly round and round the board. This

went on until Pringle-Watt, chancing to look up, noticed our wide grins. He resigned.

The Head was delighted to get the tobacco. He sent it to his son Charles, stationed in Egypt.

Open Day

ONCE a year at St. Morbid's we have what is called an Open Day when parents and friends are invited to see the school at work. It is a day which most of us would like to see removed from the calendar. There was a time when the schoolmaster was a respected member of society. That was before the size of his salary had become common knowledge and before the popular Press had developed the habit of giving away encyclopædias to registered readers.

All educational progress seems to be at the expense of the schoolmaster's prestige. Formal lessons are now regarded as obsolete. The scholar enjoys unlimited freedom to express himself, while the master has become merely a librarian's assistant and a dash of local colour.

On Open Day one feels that the parents are trying to discover just how far the development of their offspring is being hindered by the masters of St. Morbid's. It is a nerve-racking ordeal for everyone but Pringle-Watt. His long experience, his iron discipline and his cruel tongue have granted him a long immunity from the tyranny of parents. During the weeks that precede the fatal day Pringle-Watt watches our careful preparations with undisguised mirth. While we check our mark-lists, repair our gowns and compose what we hope will be our fool-proof lessons he mocks us in our misery with such comments as:

"I wonder if it will be Sheepshank *père* or Sheepshank *mère* this time, eh, Sopwhittle." (An oblique reference to an

unfortunate incident of a year or two ago when Mrs. Sheepshank fainted into my arms at the school sports.)

"You'll not forget to congratulate old Potter on his knighthood, gentlemen, will you?

"Rather late in the day to start marking last term's essays, isn't it, Charteris?"

It was not until Open Day 1943 had almost run its course that we learned that Pringle-Watt had fallen from grace rather heavily. My share of the inquisition had been particularly gruelling—four sets of parents had found errors in my mark-sheets, several had found reason to criticize my methods of maintaining discipline, and one had expressed herself "appalled" by my handling of verbs conjugated with *être*—so that I was feeling too depressed to join my colleagues for the customary symposium at the "Medlip Arms." I heard the story from Homer during prayers next morning, and he must take the blame for any inaccuracies it may contain.

Pringle-Watt, it appears, was racing* through *The Times* crossword puzzle, during the morning break, when he was interrupted by a man whom everyone recognized instantly as the father of young Stothert. There was no mistaking the puffy face and the tousled red hair. Mr. Stothert was angry.

"I believe you are responsible for my son's training in English," he said.

"That is so," said Pringle-Watt.

"Then be good enough to explain how it is that he is awarded no marks for a perfectly good essay on Double Summer Time."

Pringle-Watt filled in another word of the puzzle before answering.

"Because," he said, "it was just about the worst piece of journalese sob-stuff I have ever had the misfortune to read."

Stothert seemed to explode.

*A really gifted solver.

"I will have you removed for this," he said. "It may interest you to know that I wrote that essay myself."

The rest of the day was a nightmare for Pringle-Watt. The Head ordered him to produce his credentials of graduation for Stothert's inspection. He was harassed and heckled throughout his lessons by an indignant band of parents under Stothert's direction. Finally his unconditional apology was demanded.

It was later in the afternoon, when Pringle-Watt was crossing the quadrangle to the gymnasium-block, that the climax of the sordid affair was reached. P.-W. was beside himself with rage. He was striding along with his gaze fixed on the cobblestones when a slight noise, a timid cough, made him look up. He stopped. Not twenty yards away under the chestnuts sat young Stothert, and he was *smoking*. There was no mistaking that inelegant form. Pringle-Watt saw red. Breathing a word of thanks to his "Rubroid" soles and heels he moved up behind his quarry. And then, with a force not recommended in the best medical circles, he struck savagely in the region of the right ear.

Pringle-Watt's fate is still in the balance. He is still at St. Morbid's but Mr. Stothert is still in hospital.

THE GREAT PRODUCTION DRIVE

OR

KEY INDUSTRIES IN WAR AND PEACE

Black Diamonds

ALICE Wallace looked at the clock ticking inexorably towards final victory and gave a little nervous gasp. It was almost three o'clock. "There is a fine thing, surely,"she thought, "if Jim Wallace was to come out-by and him not having enough watter to rid himself of the grime of Vincent No. 2 Pit." More coals were thrown under the copper-boiler. They were good coals these—you could tell by the cleat. Then Alice ran to the little window, drew aside the print curtains and looked along the rough cobbled street. The slate-covered cottages looked like the toe-nails of some monster. Long black shadows, projected by the surrealist headgear of "Old Vincent," sprawled over the rooftops. The street was full of men—men heavy with responsibility and coal-dust. Once again the news had been bad. The Cairo *communiqué* had merely said, "The position is best described as not unsatisfactory." To these men the news of Britain's shortage of coal came as a shock to their personal pride. They were working as they had never worked before.

Jim Wallace, the whites of his eyes pinched and drawn and contrasting sharply with the macabre blackness of his face and garments, pushed open the little gate bearing the one word "Cartref," pushed open the little door of the scullery, pushed open the little door of the kitchen and threw out his arms.

"Don't ye dare touch me wi' your muck on, Jim Wallace," said Alice. "Ye be washin' t' precious coal from your poor body. An' don't be leavin' t' soap in t' watter." Alice spoke in the peculiar dialect of those who have lived a third of their lives in Motherwell, two-fifths in Wigan and about four-fifteenths in Llanelly. Then she went into the lounge to

add the finishing touches to the meal she had prepared.

"Wumman, d' ye not know tha' Jim Wallace's go' a back?" came a great voice from the kitchen.

"There is fine babby y' are and cannot wesh y'self then," said Alice. But she came running quickly enough and kneeling by the tin hip-bath she did what thousands of women were doing at that moment—what colliers' womenfolk have been doing for hundreds of years—she wiped her husband's back with the flannel.

That simple scene, readers, is typical. You may read a thousand books on coal-mining but you will never understand colliers until you have had a woman wipe your back with a flannel. Dr. Cronin and D. H. Lawrence both got theirs done through an agency, which is not the same thing at all.

But what are the collieries doing? That is what you will want to know. Listen then to the authentic voice of the miner. One manager reports: "We are getting out more coal than ever before. Next month we are starting a new scheme to recover the slack which the men take home in their ears and boots. All our miners will be dry-cleaned before leaving the colliery. It is estimated that some fifteen tons of coal will be saved for the nation each year by this innovation."

A shot-fireman said, "We are ready for anything. Our air-raid precautions are perfect. Our black-out, particularly in the lower seams, is most effective. There is, however, an acute shortage of pit-ponies. Most of them have been commandeered by the directors to replace their motor-cars."

An old collier of Merthyr Tydfil looked suspiciously at my notebook, spat neatly and accurately, wiped a wisp of anthracite from his moustache and complained: "All as they do is preach. Why the divil can't they do summat to

make minin' a bit more comfortable? Have you ever heard of a 'Colliers' Playtime' or 'Music While You Dig'? No, 'course not. They factory workers is mollycoddled wi' canteens an' celebrities until I reckon they're saft. We could do wi' a bit o' entertainment down t' pit, but t' stars don't look down, I reckon. We don't want fashionable leg-shows or what, but a troop o' nigger minstrels would go down a fair treat. Another thing—'bout this 'ere absenteeism—it's nobbut a lie. Why, us colliers work hundred per cent., not fifty-fifty. These blokes in factories and offices spends half their time polishin' their nails, suppin' in canteen, nippin' across the way for a chat or a quick un. Fancy Tom Evans, down in four-foot, sayin' to himself, 'I'll just go out-by and stroll over to Shuttleworth Seam an' read me paper for a bit.' Just fancy!"

There were tears in my eyes as I left the "Angostura Arms." I caught the first train back to London. As I write I am trying desperately to wipe my back with a flannel.

Near-Beer is Best

No young man should seek to become a journalist unless he is prepared to see his belief in the decency and brotherhood of man ruthlessly shattered. That was my mistake. I went to Fleet Street with a biography of C. P. Scott, a shorthand primer and great expectations. I began at the bottom of the ladder. That was my wish. The thought of starting to climb a ladder from half-way up was as odious to me as the practice of turning down the pages of library books. My progress was rapid. From the "Teams for Saturday" column I climbed to "Local Weddings" by way of "Livestock, Poultry, Eggs, etc.," and "Answer to Last Week's Crossword." My restless ambition drove me on. After a short engagement with *The*

Times as an allotter of box-numbers I took the step which was to prove as important to the nation as to myself. I began to pen these dramatic accounts of the war-time exploits of British industries. The work was nerve-racking. It entailed many discomforts and much travel but my will remained unbroken. That is my story. Nothing to grumble about, you say? Read on.

The time came for me to depart for Burton-on-Trent. This time it would be different. I should be happy in Burton. The article would write itself. As everyone knows, Burton is the Mecca of collectors of old crystal-sets. This would indeed be a holiday. My bags were already packed when I was summoned before the chief.

"Look here, Sprocket," he said, "about this trip of yours to Burton. I've decided to give you a rest. You are looking very pale."

"But, sir . . ." I began.

"No, no, Sprocket, I know you are conscientious and all that, but several, nay all, of your colleagues have offered to deputize for you. As a matter of fact I may go myself."

I will not describe the scene which ensued. I threatened to resign. My resignation was accepted. I was reinstated. I was accused of dipsomania. But I got my way in the end. I am sorry to wash so much dirty linen in public, but I feel that my grievances are legitimate.

Just outside the station at Burton there is a view calculated to make the mouth water. Row on row of neat semi-detached villas separated by broad, tree-lined thoroughfares—post-war Britain in miniature. There is nothing of melancholia in the anatomy of Burton. The whole town seems strangely uplifted. The very air is intoxicating.

But Burton is also famous for its breweries, and I was soon out upon my rounds of inspection and inquiry. At one establishment I saw millions of gallons of a colourless liquid,

packets of yeast and malt and several hops. From these simple ingredients the master-brewer concocts his appetizing beverages. It is skilled work to make so much out of so little. Unless you have been behind the scenes in a war-time brewery you will not know just how much effort is being put into the business of fitting the quality of beer to the nation's needs. I learned that in spite of the shortage of supplies there is now far more hydrogen and oxygen in beer than there was before the war. Actually there is twice as much hydrogen as oxygen. The brewers are doing their bit to preserve Britain's "stubborn good health."

How is the beer industry standing the strain? Brewing is not only an ancient craft but an exacting science. Just now the research chemists are trying desperately hard to remove a slight taste of the Trent from the mild and bitter ales. Apparently the recent increase in hydrogen and oxygen content has something to do with this, but it is obviously not a matter for the layman. The Ministry of Food is doing great work in Burton. Everyone speaks with praise of the many officials of the Ministry who are so zealous in their determination to supply the public with beer of the right quality. Nothing is too much trouble for them. They are forever testing, tasting and sampling. It is a fine example.

I would now like to refer to a problem of interest more to the psychologist than to the casual reader. It is sometimes said that the shabbiest hats are seen in Luton; that fish is never eaten in Billingsgate, nor tea drunk in Mincing Lane. If these items are correct they would appear to support the theory that most workers live too near and too much with their handiwork to enjoy it for its own sake. A good demonstration of this phenomenon occurs nightly in Burton. At about eight o'clock there is an orderly exodus from the town. Thousands of men move stolidly—like the fauna of the

savanna—towards the water. It is an unforgettable sight—the great river lined with men lapping thirstily. By ten o'clock all is over. From a keen sense of discipline the men rise from their water-holes and move back to the cold comfort of their hearths. Occupational familiarity soon breeds contempt.

As I left Burton I could not but reflect upon its great efforts to hasten the day of final victory. Grim posters urged the populace to use less fuel, to eat more potatoes and to ask themselves whether their journeys were really necessary. My last impression was of a large poster pasted to the wall of a brewery. It said: "Use Less Water."

Gun-Cottonopolis

My first reaction to the suggestion that I should review the present position of the cotton industry for this journal was involuntary. It was a quiver of excitement. To visit the County Palatine was my fondest desire. From my earliest days I had evinced a remarkably keen interest in the cotton industry. Apart from the fact that my Uncle Jethro had once been in the haberdashery business there appeared to be nothing to explain my mania. In desperation my parents put it down to pre-existence.

As my train sped northwards I was lulled by the gentle rhythm of the wheels into a deep reverie, and I sang over and over again the impressive couplet of my childhood:

To Lancashire, to Lancashire,
To fetch a pocket handkercher.

My background of knowledge gave me confidence. I recalled the saga of the first machines—Kay's "flying shuttle," Hargreaves' "spinning-jenny" (named after his wife), Crompton's "mule" (named after his mother-in-law).

Already I felt that I knew Lancashire and its meteorology like the back of my hand.

One should, I think, approach Rawtenstall from the sea to capture the real spirit of the town. Accordingly I hired a cycle and covered the last few miles along the towing-path of the Rossendale and Ramsbottom Grand Union Canal. In spite of the steady downpour the trip was exhilarating. As I entered the town the streets became thronged with mill-girls on their way to lunch. One was immediately reminded of the *midinettes* of Paris. If, instead of the *chic* costumes and stilted footgear of their Latin sisters, these girls wore shawls and clogs, there was the same insouciant mischief in their eyes. It gave me quite a start to realize how accurately I had portrayed these hard-working yet highly emotional girls in the novels of my nonage—*The Mill-Girl Mother*, *Love on the Loom*, *An Accrington Idyll* and *Flossie on the Mill*.

During the day I visited several famous mills. Scientific progress and the exigencies of war have produced many changes in the cotton industry. Take shrinking for example. You have never, I suppose, stopped to think of those who work to enable your garments to be labelled "Guaranteed fully shrunk"? Until quite recently shrinking was one of the most dangerous trades in the country. The death-rate from bronchitis was appalling among those who stood in the open while the rain contracted the cottons on their backs. Every fully shrunk vest or shirt was paid for with somebody's life. Now, some new-fangled process has displaced the shrinkers, but there are few who regret the change.

At one mill I watched the manufacture of "dhooties" or pantaloons for the Indian market. The prosperity of the textiles industries depends very largely upon the vagaries of fashion. Many manufacturers therefore make great efforts to induce the great sartorial leaders to popularize their products. Some years ago a Blackburn merchant approach-

ed Mr. Gandhi with this end in view. He was successful. From the moment that the great Indian Mahatma appeared in public for the first time wearing the daring Blackburn négligé loin-cloth a new and profitable fashion was born.

At another factory I learned something of post-war planning and saw something calculated to make the average man salivate: a huge store-house crammed with trousers "turnups." Only when the final whistle blows can these stocks be released, but I see no harm in mentioning their existence. There are many who will work all the harder because of it.

Of course nearly every mill is now engaged upon war work of some kind, and there are many interesting examples of industrial transfer. One noted firm, manufacturers of men's dress-shirts, is now making armour-plating for fighter-pilots. A firm which in peace-time enjoys a household reputation for the excellence of its hat-band linings now produces cotton-wool for utility petrol-lighters. Another Rawtenstall mill which once made boot-laces has been taken over by the Government and now works night and day to satisfy an immense demand for tape. It is this amazing resilience and adaptability that accounts for the prosperity and confidence of Lancashire. At "The Jolly Calenderer" they speak of Hitler and his confederates in harsh terms. To the Nazis they attribute all their grievances—the interruption of their ribbon-development towards Blackpool, the repatriation of Scottish footballers, the truce with Yorkshire, etc.

It may be injudicious for a mere commentator to take on the rôle of critic, but I should like to mention one industrial practice which appears to me to be prejudicial to the national interest. At more than one mill shirts were being shortened (according to the new regulations of the Ministry of Supply) by dipping their excess inches in concentrated

acid solution. Upon inquiry I was told that the shortage of scissors prevented the more economical removal of these inches for salvage. I am, of course, an outsider without full knowledge of the state of the industry, but it does seem that something is amiss here.

Plastics

"ANY one of our workers would rather lose a day's pay than hear a word of abuse levelled against the trade of Fellmongery." These words were spoken by a Mr. Samuel Tring, manager of the house of Carside and Pachet, fellmongers, before a Select Committee appointed by George IV to inquire into "The Present State of British Industry." I quote them in support of my contention that tradition is the most important asset of any industry. What do we mean by tradition? It is difficult to say. Tradition is something more than a reputation born of decades of forthright endeavour; something more than the unwritten code of ethics and business practice which is a concomitant of longevity. When tradition is in jeopardy men leap from their chairs in dark continents and rush instinctively to its succour. It recalls men from well-earned retirement. It makes men refuse all substitutes. It is the priceless heritage of industry. Fellmongery has it. So have:

Clay, sand, gravel and chalk pits
Glues, gums and gelatine
Fertilizers, dips and disinfectants
Canal authorities and conservancy boards
Brass and yellow metal goods
Tin boxes, canisters and containers
Saddlery, harness and other leather
Harbours, docks, piers, etc., lighthouses and
Other industries and industries not stated.

But plastics has it not. This fact becomes clear to anyone with penetrating vision who visits Thurso. Apart from the Baekeland Hotel, not one tavern in Thurso is named after its second largest industry. In the homes of traditional trades names such as "The Jolly Potters," "The Coopers' Arms" and "The Foresters' Rest" are found at every street-corner. Even Bosworth (Lincs.) has its "Slag-notchers' Arms" and its "Puddler and Furnaceman." Yet in Thurso you either stay at the grandiose Baekeland or at some inn with a sign as neutral and irrelevant as the title of a modern novel. There is much to be derived from a study of the nomenclature of hostelries.

There are no monuments in Thurso to the memory of men who grew old in the service of plastics, no common shrines, no beds that the captains and founders of plastics slept in. The industry is new, and its newness sits uneasily on the town like a first pair of long trousers. The workers are painfully aware of all this, but they have done little to improve matters.

Come with me to the humble cottage of a Derbyshire snuff-grinder. It is evening. Tom Clowes is finishing his meal. His schoolboy sons sit in an adoring circle at his feet. Mrs. Clowes looks nervously at her husband and speaks: "Tom, lad, there's summat I must tell thee an' tha'll not like it. Young Dennis, our first-born, is sayin' that he's a-not goin' to be no solicitor. He's a mind to follow his father to th' snuff-mill."

Tom Clowes pauses in the act of swallowing and reddens.

"So, it's come to this, eh! Seven generations o' Cloweses have served th' old mill. Isna seven enough, woman? I've set me mind on Denny goin' to solicitor Benson an' I'll have me way."

"But, Tom, lad, tha should think on th' lad's future. He'll

fret until he's snuff-grindin', an' tha knows it. I reckon 'tis in his blood."

You see? Tradition. It crops up in practically every social novel. But the plastics workers' wives of Thurso have no deep roots in the district. To the locals they are "foreigners," a synthesis of shameful latin gaiety and shameless Hollywood infidelity. These women, by their lack of interest in formaldehyde and phenol, herald the doom of the matriarchal system in industry. It is all rather depressing.

However, tradition or no tradition, plastics are doing fine work today. The same parent material which in peace-time gave us fountain-pen barrels, umbrella handles and those peculiar little studs they used to put into shirts at the laundry is now a vital sinew of war. It has largely replaced timber for most purposes. On account of its freedom from revealing annular rings it is generally preferred for women's wooden legs. Quite apart from services to the nation's armament, plastics are helping to keep up morale. Buttons made of plastics may be had in a variety of colours.

We live in an age of substitute or "ersatz" products—Buna (synthetic rubber), Lanital (synthetic wool), Bridcram (synthetic sausage-meat), Wyre-wool (synthetic razor-blades) and Pypklena (synthetic hair-curlers) will occur readily to most readers. Plastics have long since passed the "ersatz" stage. They will go forward inexorably towards their destiny in spite of the feeble whinings of the decadent democ—(sorry!) anti-substitute fanatics.

I hope I shall not be accused of "vista-mongering" when I say that my dream of post-war London includes a new billiards saloon, built entirely of plastics, on the site now occupied by Whitehall.

Cement

IT is impossible to remain in the great city of Leeds for very

long without discussing cement. Not that much cement is made there—it isn't—but everyone in Leeds is intensely and loquaciously proud of Joseph Aspdin the inventor of cement. You may begin a conversation by asking the difference between woollens and worsteds, about the origin of the celebrated rhubarb plantations, or about Herbert Sutcliffe, and by some subtle and apparently unpremeditated manœuvre the talk will turn to cement and Joseph Aspdin. It is remarkable. In Leeds they do not speak of Aspdin but of "Joe." The name is used with a familiarity to suggest a ubiquitous knowledge of a thousand biographical anecdotes. They will take you to the common shrine, "Joe's birthplace," to "Joe's museum" and to the innumerable marble effigies which are so largely responsible for the city's traffic problem. Unless you have the romance of industry in your blood the constant repetition of the name becomes irritating, even maddening. I had not been in the Aspdin Hotel longer than an hour before I decided to write an article on cement rather than on the clothing industry.

Joseph Aspdin was one of those men whom civilization has chosen to honour by making them the vehicles of her progress. His discovery of Portland cement in 1824 ranks as one of the most amazing freaks of coincidence. The story, shorn of all local embellishments, is roughly this. Aspdin, who was by trade a hodman, happened to have in his possession a specified quantity of finely pulverized chalk which he had once used to dress the coat of his fox-terrier, Nell. Mrs. Aspdin, a woman of unusual talents and a life-member of the Leeds United Guild of Women Craftworkers, happened at the same time to have in her possession a specified quantity of finely pulverized clay from which she was wont to model shepherdesses and borzois. What was more natural than that the two substances should be jettisoned simultaneously by their respective owners during

a spring-cleaning operation designed to make room for Mr. Aspdin's mother-in-law! And what more natural than that they should be consigned to the kitchen fire! That was on Friday, April 23rd. The next day, April 24th, was to see history made. Joseph Aspdin came downstairs to perform his quotidian task of making a cup of tea for his wife. He was about to rake out the ashes from the grate when his trained eye caught the clinkered remains of the overnight holocaust. It was then that he uttered the memorable words "Here is a hydraulic binding material far superior to any other product known up to now." Aspdin was right. Portland cement (he had a brother living in the South) is even today one of the stickiest substances used by man.

Aspdin was unaffected by his triumph. He remained the same unassuming, comradely and generous hodman he had always been. Therein lay his greatest charm. Leeds took him for her own. He was fêted and idolized. He became a Buffalo.

Today the cement manufacturers and concrete mixers are happy indeed. "What if prices *are* controlled?" they say. "We are making good money and doing work of national importance." The new prosperity of these people is reflected in their faces, in the spick-and-span impeccability of their little cottages nestling among the lime quarries. But you will see their faces cloud with remembered anguish if you should mention the dread word "Maginot." For Maginot meant concrete and concrete means cement. The collapse of France came as a tragic blow to these men.They saw in it not only the breakdown of the Balance of Power in Europe but the death-knell of the Amalgamated Union of Cement and Concrete Mixers. You will not get these men to talk easily of their trials—the density of beer being what it is and Yorkshiremen being what they are — but I have been able to piece together the incoherent fragments of their tale. The careless criticism of those bitter days wounded them very

deeply. They walked as outcasts among their fellow countrymen. Everybody blamed concrete and cement. Then, like a bolt from the blue, the Home Guard came to the rescue. Immense quantities of road blocks were demanded for the purpose of stopping motorists or making them turn back. Cement was exculpated and rehabilitated. The quarries smiled again.

Joseph Aspdin would be happy if he could see Britain today.

Before I left Leeds I climbed a hill to the east of the city and looked down upon a little quarry and its adjacent works. The slurry tanks, kilns and "navvy" excavators seemed part and parcel of the rural scene. Nature's own camouflage. Here men were struggling with grim primordial things as their ancestors had done. I felt ashamed of my mean little notebook and slick self-propelling pencil, and put them away.

I too have caught the infectious bonhomie of cement. Back in London I am looking with less disfavour upon my stucco, for is it not a sermon in stones by Joseph Aspdin?

Reeking Tube and Iron Shard

ONE of the areas most seriously hit by the war has been the North-east Coast with its huge bridge-building and tunnel-manufacturing industries. Twice in as many as eight hundred and seventy-three years Yorkshire has felt the full weight of a Continental tyrant. The people of these parts have short memories, but they remember the savagery of William the Norman and they will not easily forget how Hitler the Hun has knocked the bottom out of the bridge and tunnel markets.

From Leeds it is but a short journey through the lovely dales immortalized by Maurice Spendelow (the younger) to

the towering derricks of Middlesbrough. I made the pilgrimage on foot except for one short lapse (in the manner of Hilaire Belloc) when a rumour of foot-and-mouth disease compelled me to ride for a few miles with some coals that were going to Newcastle. The engine-driver was himself a man of Middlesbrough and drove with a devil-may-care assurance that gave the lie to those who condemn correspondence courses. From time to time he would relax his grip upon "the rod" and take a long pull at a flask of Chianti. When I had explained my mission he handed over the controls to the fireman and talked rapidly.

"So you're going to The Borough," he said. "You'll find it sadly altered. The disreputable night-life of the estuarine wharves has gone. The streets, once so full of prattling taxis and football-pool promoters, are now strangely quiet. And no wonder."

The engine-driver paused to correct the fireman's steering and then looked at me with a new interest.

"Have you ever heard of industrial inertia?" he said. "I thought not; few do. Well, take Middlesbrough. It makes bridges and tunnels. Then a war comes and ruins the business. But from force of habit Middlesbrough goes on making them. That's industrial inertia. It may interest you to know that Middlesbrough has enough bridges and tunnels in stock to last the world for years and years."

"But surely," I said, "they are not still producing bridges and tunnels?"

"No, not now," said the engine-driver. "The Government had to step in to break them of it. But if you're asking me what they *are* making you can go on asking." And on this emphatic note he pulled the communication-cord and the train shuffled to a standstill at No. 2 platform.

So this was Middlesbrough.

I picked my way through innumerable blooms, billets,

angles and tees to the nearest blast-furnace. The men were working deftly but sullenly. It was a moving sight. Gigantic heaps of scrap-metal reared up on every side. Thrown into fantastically vivid relief by the dancing light of the furnace, the old bedsteads and railings writhed like Martian centipedes. What deeds of devotion and sacrifice were symbolized by that mundane metal! Here were the railings that had imprisoned some urban urchin by the ears. Here were wrought-iron balconies beneath which Oldham and Warrington lads had twanged their guitars and ukeleles. Bedsteads which had been the last resting-place—of how much chewing-gum? I tell you, there was tragedy in that sordid salvage. But the men who tossed it with fine Pennine limestone and best Durham coke into the smelting pot did not think on these things.

I moved on to the rolling-mills, where a dozen secret weapons were under construction. Here too the men looked listless. It was clear that their Holidays at Home had proved disappointing. I watched one man closely. He was a typical "tyke." He was rolling cold steel for the manufacture of bayonets. Every few minutes he would trap a finger between the rollers. Then he would lose his temper and take a flying kick at an ingot. It was clear that something was amiss.

It was at the Hôtel des Stevedores that I discovered the truth. As the ironworkers sipped their "smilers" with true Yorkshire relish there was a noise like a rushing mighty wind. It was the sound of grievances being aired and problems being ventilated.

One man spoke of the sweets-ration scandal. Our desires are inexplicable. They may be controlled by blind prejudice or irrational habit. Yet these desires must be satisfied if mind and body are to function harmoniously. The psychological dangers of frustration are legion. Legislate against the chewing of twist tobacco or Caerphilly cheese by colliers,

against the sucking of straws and nails by agricultural labourers and boot-repairers respectively, against the *staccato* champing of spearmint by typists, and what is the result? You would succeed only in destroying the will to work of these people. A great longing for the forbidden fruit would gnaw at their vitals and their output would decline. And so it is with the ironworkers. Lord Woolton's measures to eliminate cross-freights in the sweetmeats trade have robbed them of their traditional "bulls'-eyes." It is nothing to the ironworkers that there is a glut of Pontefract cakes in the North Riding—nothing. The Minister of Food should act quickly.

Another man spoke bitterly of the threat of inflation and of apathy in Threadneedle Street. Another complained of the rapacity of middlemen, and yet another of the B.B.C.'s dictatorial attitude in regard to crooning. But somehow these grievances did not ring true. One felt that the men were hiding something; that their unrest went deeper than mere captiousness. And then I recalled what the old engine-driver had said and I understood. These men were frustrated bridge-fiends. Industrial inertia had claimed them.

Bottoms Up

IT was the evening of my return from Middlesbrough, and I was dog-tired. My chair had been drawn up to the gas-cooker and my slippers were warming under the grill. The telephone bell rang.

"Hello," I said wearily, "Sprocket speaking."

"Cover the 'Scottish Kaiser' affair and go to it." It was the editor.

" 'Scottish Kaiser' affair?" I said. "Never heard of it." I could hear the Chief biting hard on his briar and rattling

his cuff-links—a sound more dreaded perhaps than any in Fleet Street.

"Come round," he barked.

I went round and was immediately handed a cutting from the *Evening Klaxon*. It read: "Scottish Kaiser Solves Shipping Problem. Hush-hush on Clydeside. It is reported that Mr. Ian Carruthers, the Scottish shipping magnate, has now begun production of his secret freighters. His methods, like those of Kaiser, the Pacific Coast shipbuilder, involve prefabrication. That is all that is known. Interviewed today the genial Caledonian said, 'All I will say is that so far as Hitler is concerned the game is up. There will be no sinkings among my freighters.' It is understood that the 'Carruthers Coracles' will each take six days to complete."

The prospect of a journey to Scotland did not appear unpleasant. Surely, I thought, I could do myself no disservice in that land dotted with distilleries. I caught the Night Mail.

However hush-hush might be the Carruthers plan, there was nothing hush-hush about Clydeside itself. The noise was stupefying. Hundreds of thousands of riveters chattered like all-steel magpies, like the cicalas of Provence. Above the noise of hammers, mallets, winches, "scuffles," drills and punches rose the whine of ships being launched. To the creaking of blocks and the spread-eagling of spars was added the viscous squelch of millions of tons of slipway grease. The cacophony was appalling to the sensitive ears of one accustomed only to the scratching of a fearless pen. As convoy after convoy slipped out to sea I felt a sudden glow of pride in the knowledge that there is just a hint of Scottish blood in my veins (from my father's side). I watched one huge grey leviathan ride smoothly from its yard to its destined element, and somehow I felt that if the children, the inheritors of our great democracy, could witness such a

spectacle they would realize the truth more easily than by application to their text-books. For here was proof positive of the Principle of Archimedes.

It was in this vaguely nostalgic mood that I watched the busy scene below. Suddenly a ship's hooter sounded the hour for lunch and immediately, so excellent is the discipline of our workers, the ship became a hive of activity. Black figures poured through portholes and down gangways. They emerged from funnels and air-shafts. They swarmed down ropes and cables. Their objective was the "Provost's Nest," and thither, after a final exhilarating inspection of the panorama, I repaired.

Fortunately the sole topic of conversation seemed to be the Carruthers case, and I was able to learn all I needed without the customary gambit of uneasy palaver and the ruinous standing of drinks.

"There's nae mystery aboot it,"* said one young man. "I hearrrd todee tha' it's merely a revi'alization o' th' auld 'Q' ship idea. Mister Carruthers is buildin' his ships to appearr upsie'doon. At least tha's wha' i' looks like. In reali'y the upper parrt o' th' ship is fashioned wi' a keel (which disguises th' funnels) and th' U-boats do think th' ship's awready a to'al wreck. Canny, is i' no'?"

Another man ventured the suggestion that the hush-boats were submarine freighters of ten thousand tons capacity, and another (rather late in the evening) declared that they were mercantile monsters bred and tamed in Loch Ness.

Eventually I did get into conversation with a man who paints Plimsoll lines. He would not speak of his own work, but he was a mine of information regarding other problems of shipbuilding. He it was who told me how near to complete success the U-boat campaign came in the dark days of

*By some curious coincidence this man, like all my interlocutors, happened to speak bastard Scottish. The B.B.C. has an enormous influence in these parts.

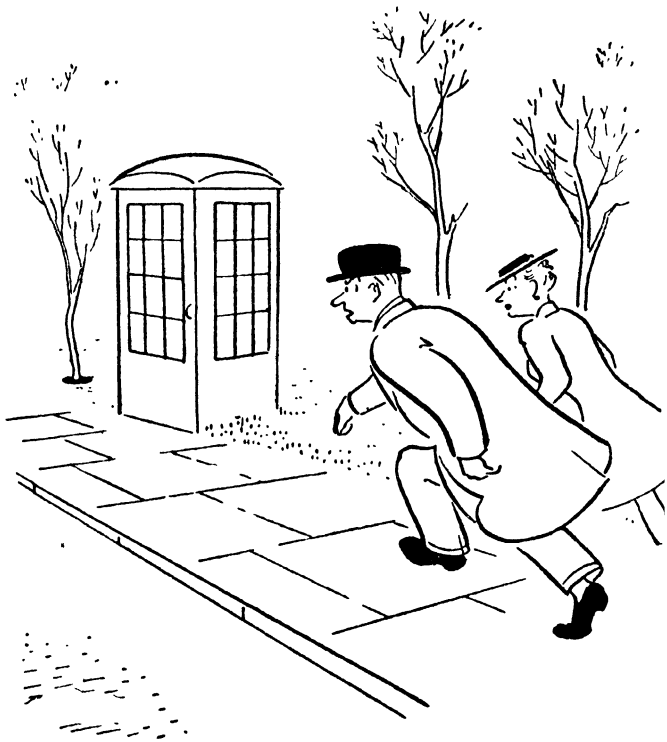
1941. In May of that year the position (it appears) was so serious that ships were going to sea in the most unseaworthy condition. They went unfinished and unfitted to meet the foe—some without fo'c'sles and poops, some with the ship's carpenters' wood-shavings still in them, and some with no more than the most perfunctory of launching ceremonies. I learned with pleasure that the workers of Clydeside are happy and contented. With them there is none of the nagging and fault-finding that is so common with the keyhole-fittings manufacturers of Battersea, none of the wordy lamentation that we hear so often among steam-hammer operators. The equanimity of the shipwrights does not rest with rates of pay or hours and conditions of work. It is something inborn, like their shortage of "change." The Glaswegian is heart and soul in the war effort. He would never, I feel sure, spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar. Not him! Not a ha'porth!

Before I left Glasgow that night I also learned how to manœuvre a full-rigged ship into a glass bottle, but the Editor may feel that an account of this would be superfluous and irrelevant.

CARTOONS

or The History of the Human Race in Black and Near-White

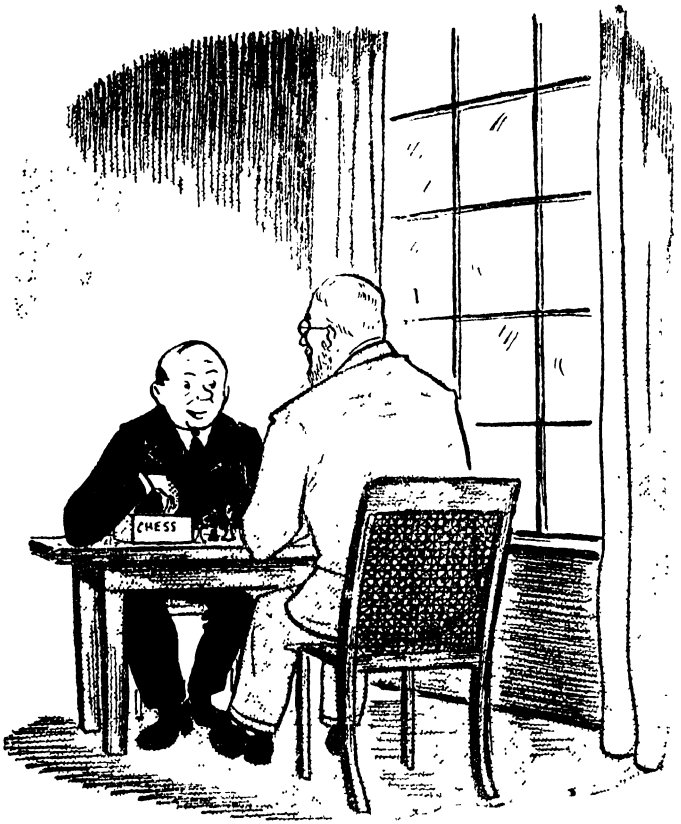
"Yes, yes, of course—I see now that I've been holding the wrong political views all these years."



"To save time, you go through A to K and I'll do L to Z."

"And let's hope this teaches you that crime doesn't pay."

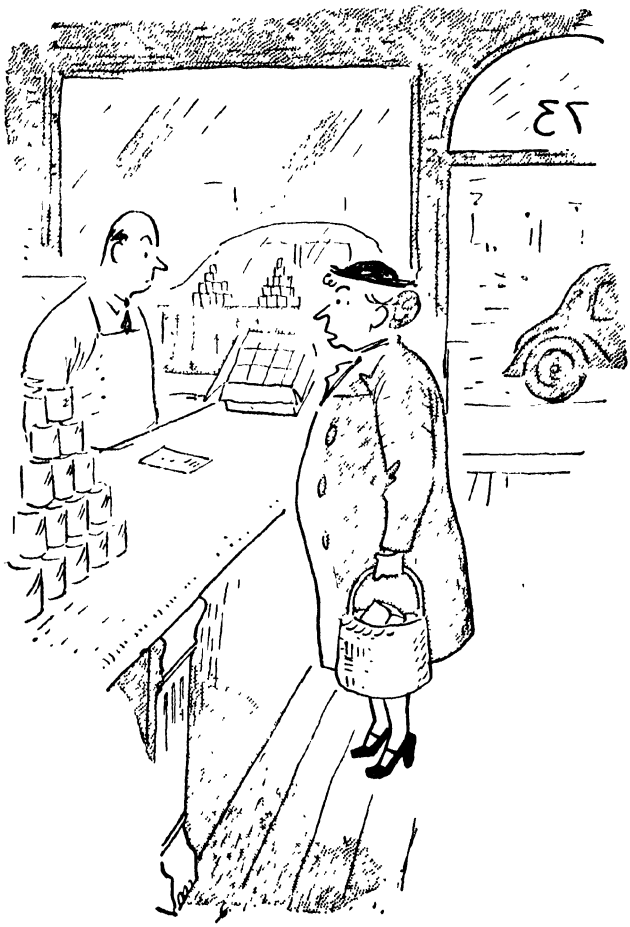

SHOE REPAIR SERVICE
NEXT
PERFORMANCE
3·20



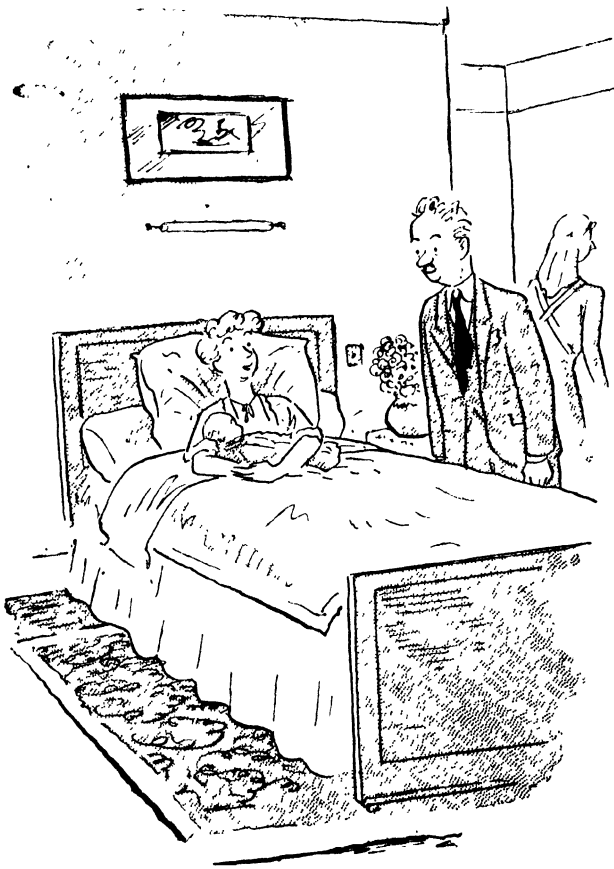
" . . . *and then that terrible winter of '07 when you took my pawn 'en passant'.*"

"Third floor—hardware and gardening tools and tail of queue for stockings on sale in basement."

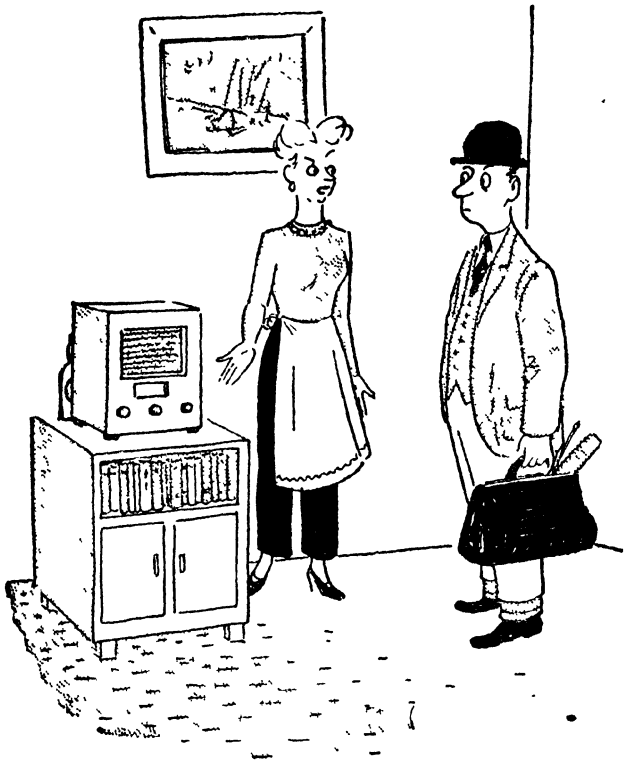
"Those are for salvage; these are for the Forces; but these we'd better keep—they're not ours."



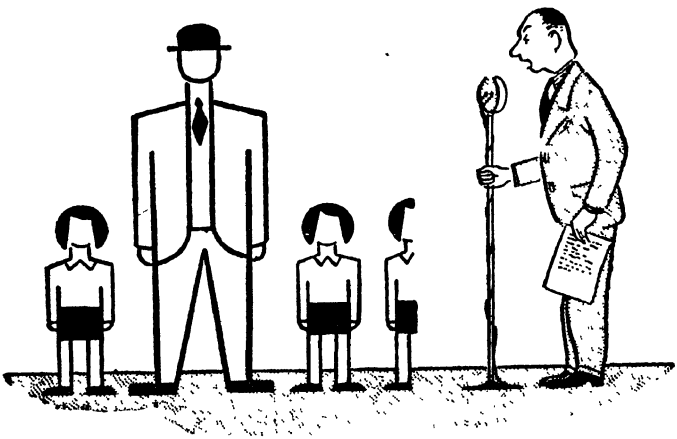
"Another ha'penny on fuelighters, Mr. Mossley, and another regrettable step in the direction of uncontrolled inflation."



"Promise me you'll ring up straight away, darling, and get his name put down for a Falcon Fourteen Saloon."



"It gets Dobson, but not Young."



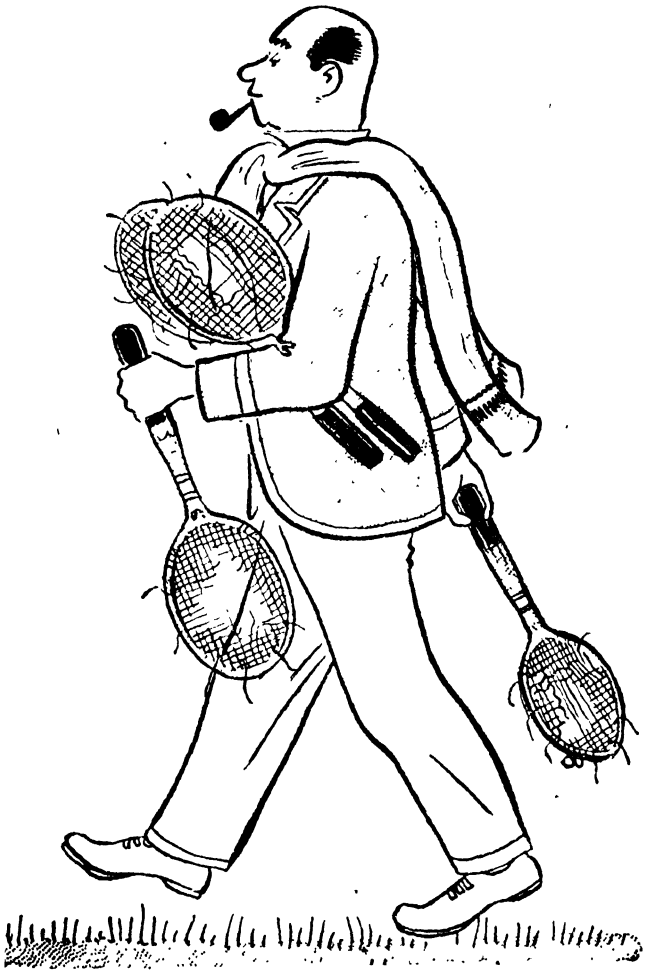
'Tonight's postscript is given by an average father.'

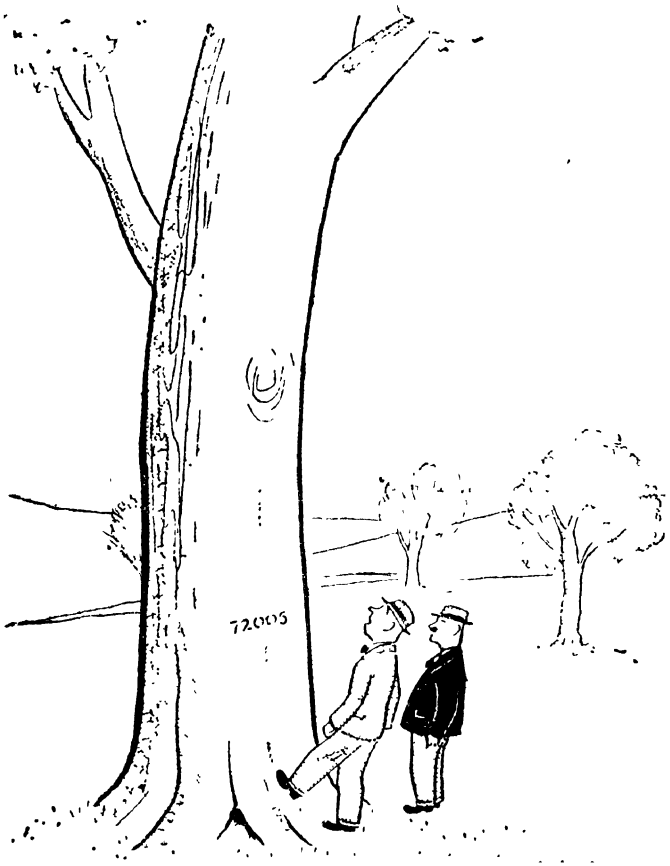
"I say there's no 'heavy water' in Buckinghamshire."

"And then, just before they get to your company they seem to stop nationalizing altogether."

"Dear Sir,—I wonder if one of you readers could tell me the author of the following lines . . . ."

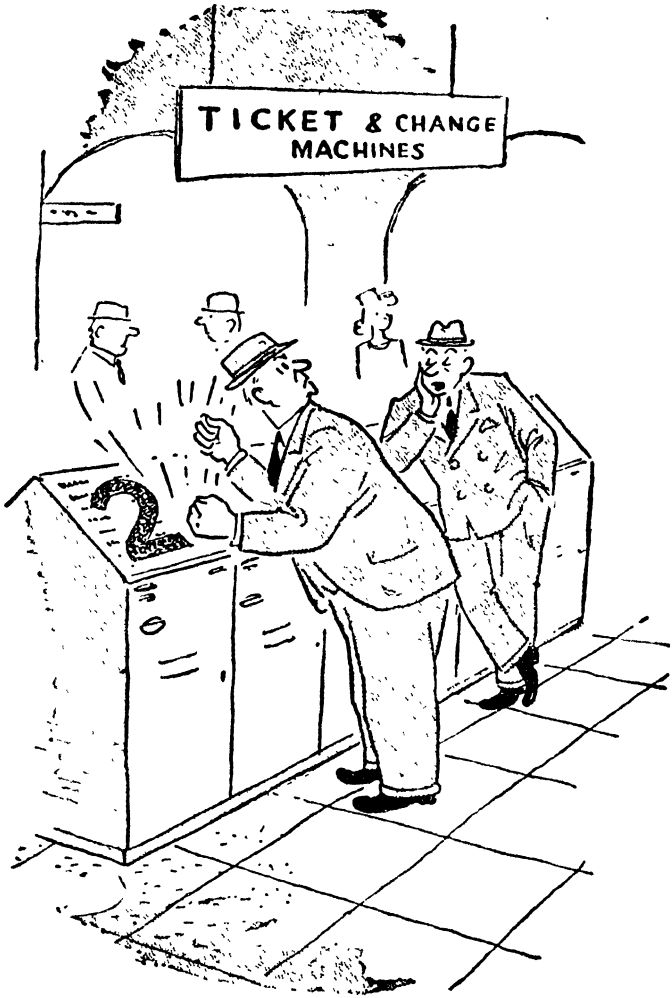
"Have you the same sort of thing in leather with the quotations attributed to Bacon?"





"This one's been earmarked for a White Paper on reconstruction."

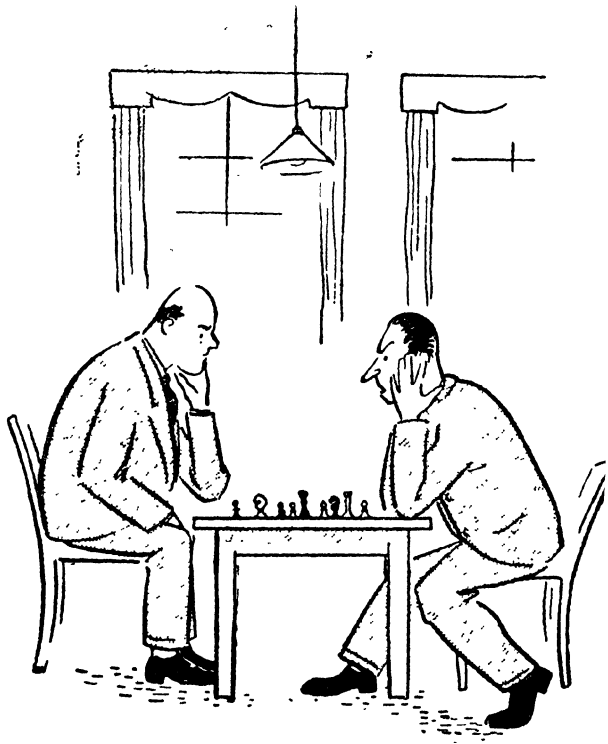
"It now appears that the one you thought was Bradman and I thought was Barnes is not Brown after all but Miller."



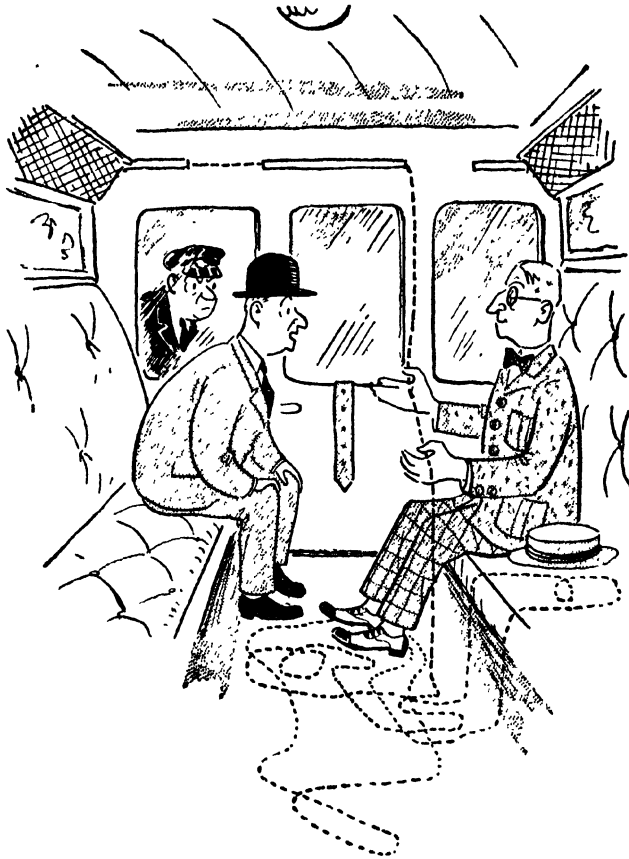
"I understand the really interesting thing about these machines is that they print the ticket AFTER you've put your money in."

"Excuse me, could we have our pawn, please"

"Wilson, the Rovers' centre-forward, has the ball at the moment. He seems to have mended the puncture and is now looking round anxiously for a pump."



. *"Oughtn't we to be playing on a squared board or something?"*

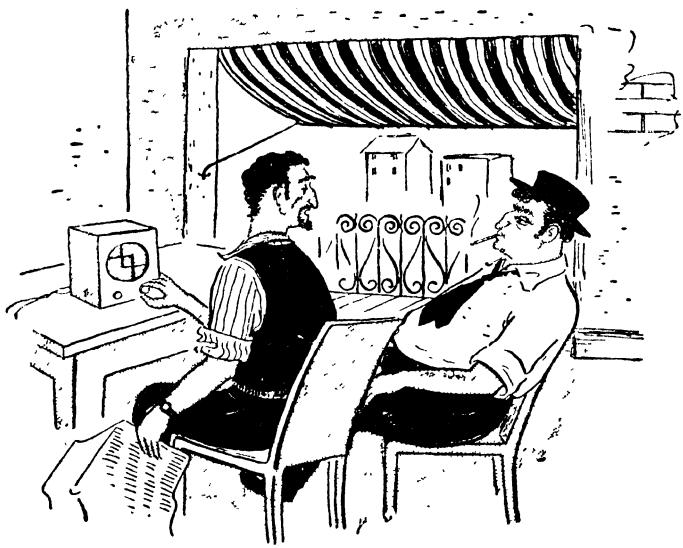


"No, I said the train would be sixty-five yards long without *the loco."*

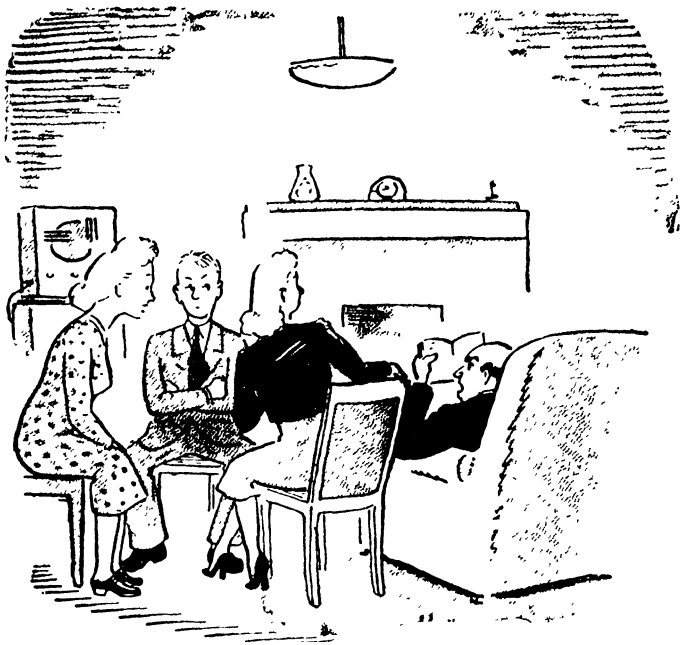
"The Globe's nap selections for today are 17 Timson Street (semi-detached), a flatlet in Oak Avenue and a derelict pre-fab in Wilmington Crescent."

"In another two minutes I shall have spent exactly six months in queues."

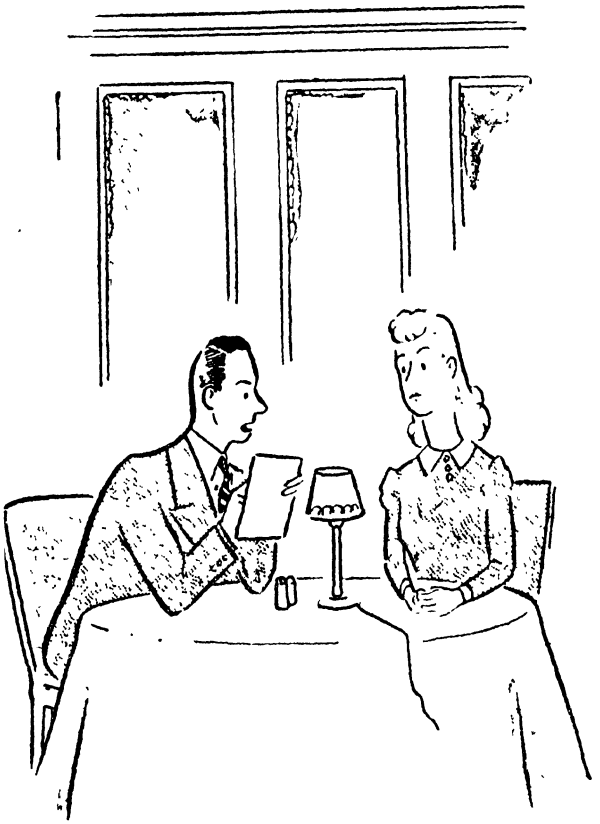
"Yes, mother."



"Listen, Pedro, 'Music While You Work'."
"Mañana, Sebastian, mañana."

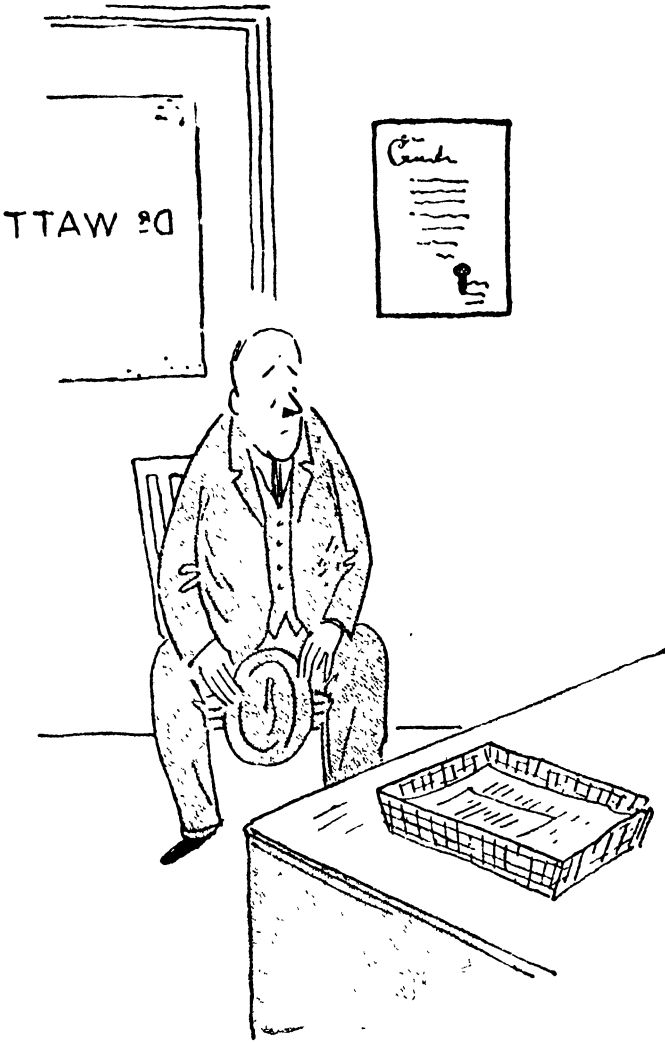


"If they had a programme called 'To STOP You Talking' there'd be some sense in it."

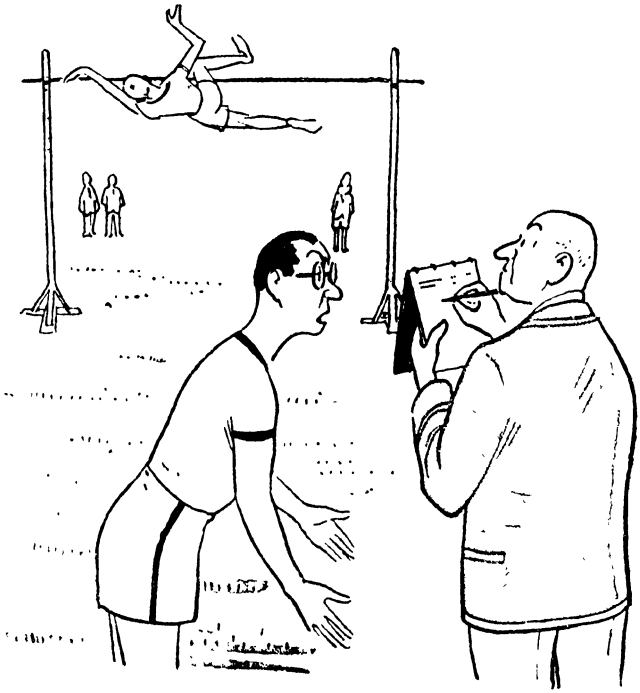


"Let's try the savoury pie—we can have 'To-day's Special' any time."

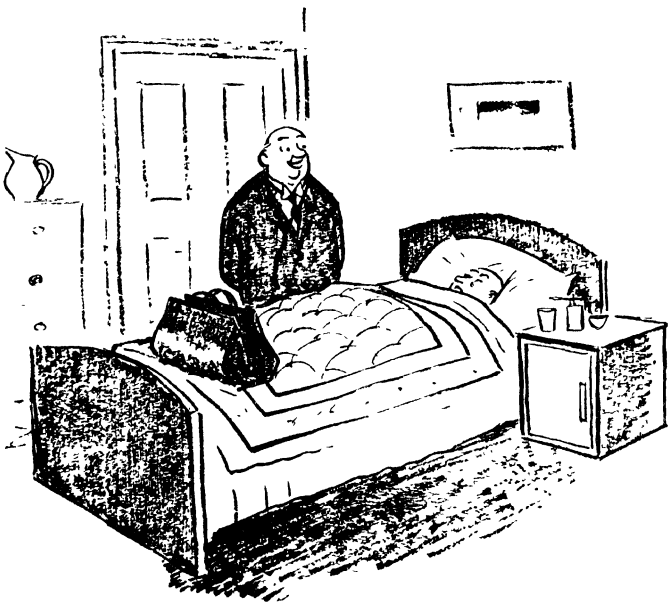
"But if it's any comfort to you, madam, you can rest assured that the worst of the export drive is over."



'What you need, my dear man, is a visa."

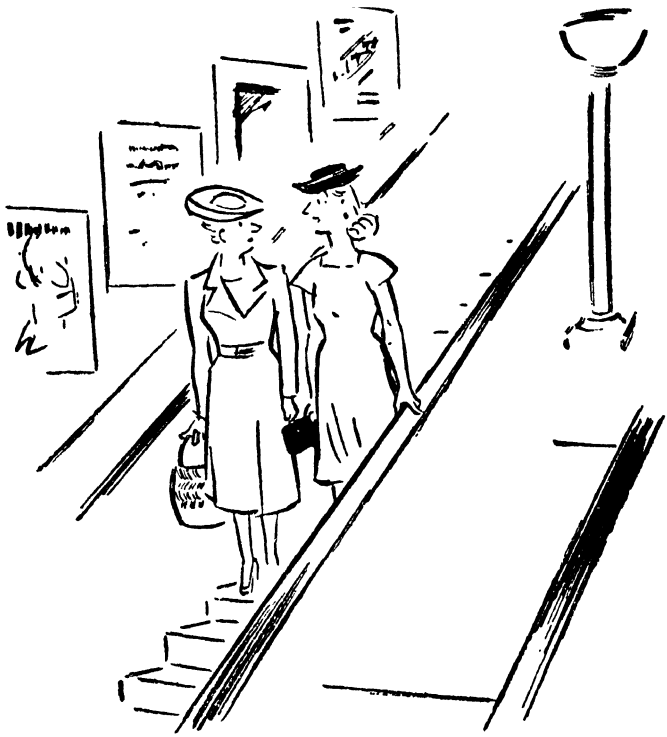


"It's an optical illusion, I tell you. He's going under."

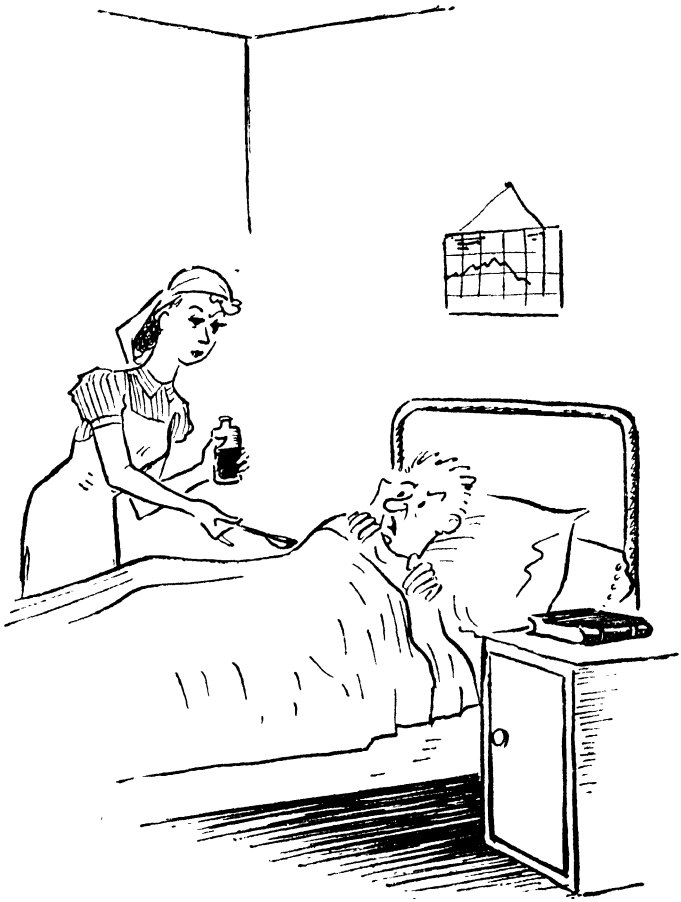


"There were fewer deaths than ever last week from your complaint."

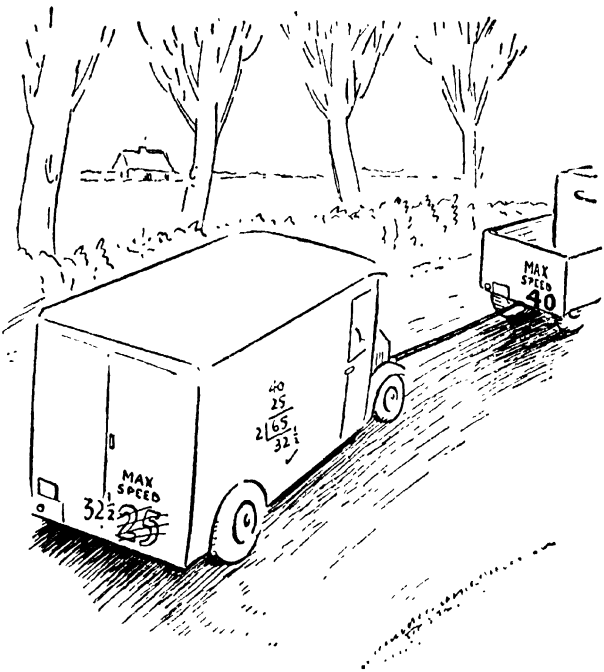
"*I'll be round in ten minutes, sir, if you're really QUITE sure it's a TAXIDERMIST you want.*"



"Mind you, the courtesy you get in the rush-hour is of an altogether rougher and more forceful type."



"I thought this was supposed to be a voluntary *hospital!"*


MAX SPEED
40
MAX SPEED
32½
40
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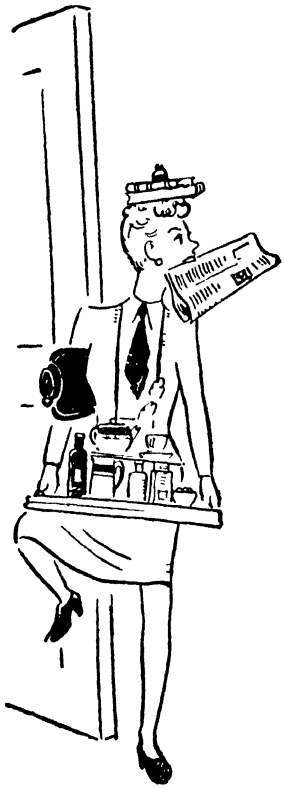
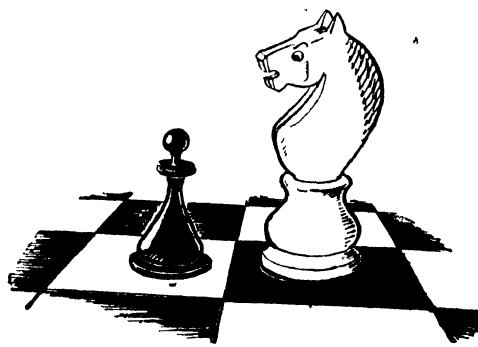
32½

"Game and first set to Bokj . . . Bokjyl . . . Bok . . . any way Crabtree loses it."



"Just put Auntie's pen behind my ear, dear—it will save me a special journey."

"Dear Mother . . ."



"All right—you tell me anything they've mechanized that can go two spaces forward and one sideways in one move!"

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

A Case-Book Compiled from the Records of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928) Ltd.

Industrial Relations

I

THERE is a green letter-box on the door of my office bearing the notice:

EMPLOYEES' SUGGESTIONS
COMPLAINTS AND QUERIES

I propose to open this box in the presence of the layman reader; to prove, in my capacity as Scientific Management Consultant and Welfare and Industrial Relations Officer of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928) Ltd., that production problems lie deeper than a quantitative analysis of man-hours and supply.

I select five papers at random.

The first is typical: "I am an ex-Serviceman, married, with seven children (three in the Forces). I have collected three hundredweights of paper salvage, put twenty-five quid in Savings Certs., joined the Home Guard, given up smoking and have four evacuees billeted on me. I work in 'C' Shop, making hub-caps angle for boom ladle fittings (Size 9), and I work hard. Every five minutes or so the shop manager comes up behind me, bends over my shoulder and whispers in a sinister fashion in my ear: 'There's a war on!' Is this absolutely necessary?"

The second note is somewhat cryptic. It asks: "What about the *Daily Worker?*" and is signed with a hammer and a left-handed bill-hook.

The third comes from a Mr. D. E. ("Granfer") Creppitt: "We older workers, recalled from a well-earned retirement, strongly resent the maudlin treatment we are compelled

to endure. Breaks for what passes for music are bad enough, but for a man entering his eighty-third year the suggestion of a workers' 'playtime' is humiliating and abhorrent. When I was a young man we thought nothing of a twelve-hour working day followed by four hours at night school."

"I have been employed here," states the fourth note, "for only three weeks, but quite long enough to see the shocking inefficiency on all sides. Take Shop 'B' for example. We arrive at 8 A.M. and stamp our cards with the day-before-yesterday's date (a fine way of keeping up to schedule!); we are not allowed to smoke, although it should be obvious that smoking means more taxes for the war-effort, and we spend hours and hours quarrelling about the mottoes that we chalk on guns and tanks. "Berlin or bust" is hackneyed. We all realize the importance of new and catchy captions, but too many cooks . . . What is wanted is a specialist for the job, and you need look no further than your correspondent. Four times prize-winner in the *Sunday Adjudicator* 'Maka-word' Contest and runner-up in a spelling bee last Christmas are my qualifications."

The last note is set in a scholarly hand. It reads: "Before taking up war work I was a missionary in the Lualaba country. The natives in these parts work long hours, filling coconuts with lead shot for English fair-grounds. The reduction of industrial fatigue with these people presents great difficulties, since they do not appreciate the jungle rhythms of our dance orchestras. However, I found that the reading of selected passages of *Henry Esmond*, *The Compleat Angler* and *Marmion* had a soothing effect on their nerves—though I am prepared to admit that they did not understand all they heard. You may find the idea useful."

II

JUDGING by the number of letters I have received from readers anxious to express their gratitude for my disclosures relating to industrial unrest it would appear either that my address is unknown or that the most profound apathy prevails. Once again, therefore, and with a heightened sense of my responsibilities I dip into the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., and extract a handful of human documents. I make these further revelations not because, as has been rather ungenerously suggested in some quarters, I wish to set myself up as a rival to Professor John Hilton, but because without them this article could never have been written.

"Is it not high time," writes Mechanic No. 7704, "that some consideration was given to the re-siting of the works canteen? Its present position is most inequitable, being forty or fifty yards nearer to 'C' shop than 'B' shop, in which I work. As a result the distribution of sweetmeats and cigarettes is also inequitable. A few months ago we workers of 'B' shop organized (in self-defence) a widespread system of espionage with reconnaissance units and patrols of young apprentices to note the arrival of tobacconists' and confectioners' delivery-vans. Only by these drastic measures, resulting in a considerable wastage of man-power, were we able to reach the canteen in time to compete effectively for such wares as are available. Unfortunately the workers of 'C' shop have now resorted to similar methods to restore their positional advantage, and the whole business is degenerating into bitter internecine warfare. I have taken the trouble to ascertain the true geographic centre of the works, and I find it to be occupied by the main boilers. These could be quite easily dismantled and erected elsewhere to make room for the canteen and to put an end

to a situation which is becoming daily more intolerable."

"Now that my sister has been called up," writes Thelma Bracegirdle, "there is no one to look after great-grandfather, and that is why I have been away from work this past fortnight. He is so feeble that he cannot be left. Do you think I could leave him in the crèche attached to the works each morning? He would be quite happy there with his bottles and would cause no trouble for anyone. I know it would be a bit irregular, but it would help the war effort and get rid of an awkward bottleneck."

The third note is irrelevant. It pleads: "Attack in the West—Now!" and is signed "Ardent Anti-Hitlerite."

"We girl workers of Fitting Shop 3A have done our level best to make our workroom as homely as possible—to mention only the antimacassars, the slippers, the lampshades and the aspidistra. We find that we work better in this comfortable atmosphere. Unfortunately the illusion is shattered by certain ill-mannered mechanics who actually wear their caps *indoors* and object to Tabby and the kittens. Can nothing be done to help us?"

"I have just been reading about Lawrence of Arabia," states another note, "and it appears that he had an excellent system for fixing the wages of his Arab recruits. Lawrence kept a sack of gold coins in his tent, and each Arab was allowed to take for his share only as much as he could grasp in one lucky dip. This system eliminated all book-keeping and costing-clerks, and saved paper that would otherwise have been used for ledgers, time-cards and wage-packets. I think it would go well here—for the duration. (Signed) Tom ('Kid') Upcart, Ex-Heavyweight boxing champion, South Suffolk."

The last note comes from Worker 2059 and reads: "Last week, as no doubt you are aware, the factory was visited by a Cabinet Minister, two Allied diplomats and several mem-

bers of the R.A.F. They were given every opportunity to inspect the interesting processes of glinting, soofling and aileron-fugging. How do you reconcile this with your refusal to permit the two hundred and fifty-three members of the Mawlish Glee Club, of which I am secretary, to make a similar tour of inspection? Is *this* sort of thing democracy? I felt pretty sore, I can tell you, when I was informed that after travelling many miles at my invitation they were all turned away at the lodge gates."

III

WHEN Horace W. Cupper, sometimes called "The Father of Scientific Management," provided kneeling-mats for the cleaners of his sail-cloth mill he started something. It is a far cry from the specious days of 1837 to the seemingly spacious days of 1942, but the technical efficiency experts of today would be the first to acknowledge their debt of gratitude to the pioneering genius of Horace W. Cupper. Kneeling-mats were but one of a stream of ideas that poured from the fertile brain of this benevolent industrialist. One recalls in particular his efforts to abolish office-fatigue by the provision of lighter paper-weights, self-balancing ledgers, corkscrews and multiplication-tables. It is indeed fitting that this further series of documents extracted from the Suggestion Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., should be prefaced by some mention of the master.

"I think you ought to know," writes Mechanic 0723, "that your motion-study agent, Mr. Carper, is exceeding his duties. While we tolerate his stop-watch methods during working hours, we resent most strongly his attempts to dragoon us into what he calls 'Standard Eating Time.' He says that too much time is wasted in the canteen and he

believes that he can prove to the management that the lunch hour might well be cut to ten minutes. By means of a marked acceleration in the rate of chewing (the tempo is set by a metronome), by the scientific distribution and arrangement of cutlery and condiments, and by the elimination of conversation and the postprandial smoke, he claims that a common eating time can be established and 2,056 man-hours of production saved per day. So far Mr. Carper has not attempted to put his theories to the test, but if he does you may be certain that I, for one, shall object."

An interesting note from a Mrs. Sonnenschein comes next. She writes: "Last week my wage packet was short by five and ninepence. Naturally I made inquiries and was told that the deduction was due to income tax (I think he called it). This trumped-up excuse is sheer robbery, and unless the amount is repaid this week I intend to take the matter to court."

"I would so much like you to know how happy I am in my new job," writes Godfrey Nicholas, "and how I feel somehow *part* of the great effort which simply *must* bring us through these dark days to a future bright with hope. I used to think that manual toil was, shall we say, a *lower* form of service, but I know now that I was wrong. All the men are so wonderful. They have their little worries, I am sure—worries that I feel I could share if they would let me—but their personal troubles are not allowed to interfere with their simply marvellous efforts. When all is over I suppose I *shall* go back to my column in the *Daily Image*, but I shall go back with a very heavy heart."

Miss Peggy Junket, a canteen waitress, writes: "I think it would be a good idea to hold some sort of a beauty competition during the summer. The idea is that all the pretty girl employees parade in bathing costumes and the judges (Mr. Hudson and *our* Mr. John, for example) pick the

prettiest to be Tank Queen or Depth-Charge Queen for 1942-1943. I think such an event would stimulate production. Please do not think that I am making this suggestion because I was Railway Queen of Hashleigh Junction for three consecutive years."

The last note of this selection comes from Mechanic No. 7085. He writes: "I have now concluded my private experiments on the effect of music on production. They were conducted in my study under conditions identical with those found in the tank assembly sheds. My wife and I tested the whole of my extensive library of gramophone records with each and every operation. We find that operation 5 (counter-sinking 'release' rivets) is eurhythmically sympathetic to Moskwitzski's Toccata and Fugue in E (Allegretto ma non troppo); that operation 9 (sand papering) is best performed to a comparatively unknown Chinese arrangement of 'Full Fathom Five . . .' and that operation 17 (reverse-gear assembly) is closely related to the Italian National Anthem."

IV

THIS article may well be the ante-penultimate, the penultimate or even the last of the series. If so—the discerning reader will know that either the Ministry of Information or the Editor has intervened. My disclosures relating to industrial unrest have already caused something like a revolution in Government circles and guilty men are searching frantically for a scapegoat. At any moment the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., may be raided by armed bands of Civil Servants. If I am banished to the Grampians (I know that several members of the Cabinet are agitating for such a

move) my readers may rest assured that I shall find new media for the airing of their grievances. I have friends.

Here, then, is the authentic voice of Britain's war workers.

The first note comes from Mr. Charles Diplocket, managing director of the company. "I understand," he writes, "that my name and that of my Aunt Prunella are being sullied by the malicious gossip concerning our bombing policy. The gist of these libellous rumours is that the R.A.F. is forbidden to bomb the Hoi Polloi Dolls'-Eyes Factory at Tokyo on account of my influential representations on my aunt's behalf. It is true that my Aunt Prunella once held certain shares (8 per cent. Ordinary Deferred) in this business, but the increased duty on whisky compelled her to realize all her foreign holdings early in the war. If this whispering campaign does not cease—and I look to you to stop it—I intend to discover the ringleaders and prosecute."

"When the delegation of Russian workers visited the factory a short time ago," writes O. D. Hazlitt, a shop manager, "various methods of stimulating production were discussed. In the Soviet Union those workers who achieve an exceptional output are honoured by the exhibition of their portraits on the factory walls. The scheme was tried here but results were disappointing. It was ruined by characteristic British levity. The first portrait to be displayed was soon sub-scribed: '£50 Reward, Dead or Alive—Joe Smith alias Sex-Appeal Joe.' Two other workers, Mechanics 9904 and 0713, had their photographs mutilated by such vulgar aphorisms as 'The Lax-Tabs. Twins—before and after treatment.' While such examples of vandalism are regrettable they are indicative of the persistence of Britain's mental insularity. If some incentive is needed to draw the best from our workers it should appeal not to an alien hero-worship but to the traditional British team-spirit. My own idea is that the employees should be divided into four teams

or 'Houses,' each with a distinctive colour and name—say 'Churchill's,' 'Eden's,' 'Bevin's' and 'School.' The house gaining most points each week might be rewarded by a few minutes' start to the canteen."

The third note is obscure. It reads: "Malplaquet III, ten bob, win or place. Freddy."

"I wish to make a suggestion concerning the assembly lines in Shed 5," writes a Mr. Arthur Template. "You will probably be familiar with the method of production. The priority tanks 59/7A are built up on the 'moto' belt system and are complete in every detail when they arrive at Shop 41 on the third floor. At this stage the tanks are dismantled so that their parts may be lowered through the window to the ground. If the production flow began in Shop 41—that is, if the assembly lines were reversed—the completed tanks could leave the building via the canteen and much time and labour would be saved. My plan is simple enough, but I think that such details are often overlooked by the efficiency experts."

The last note comes from a Mrs. O'Brown of Ipstock. She writes: "Have you any part-time vacancies in your overtime department? With seven children (three under five) I can not do full-time war work, but I should like to feel that I was doing my bit. Our curate, Mr. Feckless, has been good enough to promise to look after the children for three nights each week so that I could do a little overtime, which I understand is paid at a higher rate. If I am engaged I shall have to leave about 9.30 P.M. as the curate says he has to make another call before 10 P.M."

THERE is today an alarming tendency to regard industrial production merely as a matter of machine-hours and

supply. The layman imagines that the human element has been eliminated; that the factory operative is an unthinking, unemotional robot. Nothing could be further from the truth—as any industrial psychologist without a private income will tell you. Every day the industrial welfare officers and the scientific management experts fight a thousand Battles of Britain. They and they alone must continue the equal struggle against the phobias and other mental maladies which so often afflict our war-workers. It is a never-ceasing vigil and one never more clearly defined than in this further series of unedited documents extracted from the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd.

Shop-foreman James Dolphin writes: "Please find enclosed a claim for £11 17*s.* 6*d.* (including Purchase Tax), being a sum disbursed by me in the purchase of one 3-valve radio set. A few weeks ago Mechanic L. 7710 complained that his work was suffering because he felt that the war would be over by August and that his tank fittings would never be used. I tried (as set out in Official Handbook for Under-Managers No. 5, New Series) to effect a cure by the frequent mention of fictitious news items such as: 'They've just sunk twenty-three more of our aircraft-carriers,' 'Chimborcagua is now at war with us,' and 'There's a surplus of butter in Berlin.' I regret to say that this method failed, whereupon I acquired the radio set and invited the sufferer to listen to Deutschlandsender DFA. While I cannot claim that his output has increased, he appears to be much happier and his health is improving."

"Owing to circumstances beyond my control," writes Mr. Noel Maltshovel, the well-known poet (now a cotton-waste collector in Depth Charge Dept. 3A) "I find myself in a condition of embarrassing impecuniosity. I have not much of a head for figures, but I understand that a sum of

£27 2*s.* 7*d.* stands to my account in post-war credit. If, sir, you would approach the Government about this matter on my behalf I should be extremely grateful. I am suggesting that the credit amount should be paid to me *now* and that my income-tax contributions should be deferred until after the war. The advantages of the scheme to the Government are obvious enough. The National Debt would be reduced and a new and reliable asset would be acquired."

The next note is rather pointless. It pleads, "Remember Marston Moor!" and is signed "Well-Wisher."

"I work a sixty-six-hour week," writes Arthur S. Sackbut, "and I am as keen as mustard on beating Hitler and his gang. Last Wednesday I left my bench for one minute on a perfectly natural errand and returned to find Mr. Diplocket standing by my machine with a face as black as thunder. He then said, 'Absenteeism is sabotaging the war effort.' This is to inform you that I am taking the matter up with the union."

Next comes a note from a Mr. Tom Brackett. He writes: "I have been working for some weeks in the new underground factory and I feel I must ask for a transfer. You will probably think me silly when I tell you the reason. My job is rather monotonous and my mind tends to wander. Last week I rode three full circuits on the conveyor-belt (and lost twelve hours' pay) under the impression that I was back at Sloane Square Station. If a transfer is impossible perhaps you would be good enough to paint a few names of tube stations on the walls and let me go the whole hog."

"I am voicing the opinion of the majority of my colleagues," writes Mechanic 07211, "when I ask the management to allow us to return to the original timetable. We are aware that the decision to introduce five breaks of five minutes each instead of one break of twenty minutes was made from generous and scientific motives, but we doubt whether the

effect on cigarette consumption has been considered. With prices as they are we feel that one break a day is as much as we can afford unless the management is prepared to make an allowance for additional tobacco consumed."

VI

THE extreme reluctance of our workers to shed their reverential attitude towards tradition constitutes a most serious obstacle to the progress of scientific method. Patriotism and a belief in final victory are not enough. The factory workers hammer out their planes; the transport workers pull their weight; the office workers file their forms—all with exemplary zeal. But they prefer to hammer, to pull and to file in the outmoded and inefficient manner of their forbears. As Mr. Diplocket himself has so wittily put it, "Our workers have big hearts, but hearts are not trumps." Time and time again my work as Scientific Consultant and Welfare and Industrial Relations Officer has been nullified by the hidebound obstinacy and blimpish conservatism of the employees. This fact is clearly demonstrated in a further series of unedited extracts from the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd.

"This is to inform you that I have been unable to carry out your instructions regarding nails," writes the foreman of Packing Shop K. "All box-makers have now reverted to the practice of keeping a reserve of nails, tacks and screws in their mouths. The younger workers were quite willing to try your suggestion of a small satchel strapped to the waist, but, led by Packer 103, the older men were recalcitrant from the first. The ringleader, who has been nailing packing-cases for sixty years, informed me that nail-sucking had kept him free from rheumatism all his life and that if he was to be

prevented from sucking the firm's nails he would have to bring his own supply. I await your further instructions."

The second note comes from Miss Melba Williams, an automatic-fettler-minder. She writes: "While I appreciate the sentiments which prompted you to put up the new poster in our shop, I must say that a little help is worth a deal of pity. That notice, 'Keep Your Hair On—by wearing your cap to cover it,' is all very well, but it does not take my thirty-shilling 'perm' into account. If you had given me some inkling of your intentions a week ago it would have been all right and I would have had a 'bun' instead. As it is, the best thing you can do is to provide wire hair-guards—like the ones that cover the fly-wheels—or refund me the thirty shillings."

Note 3 is rather disturbing. It is written in deep slashing strokes—almost in cuneiform—and reads, "After Heydrich —Shop-foreman Weatherby, the butcher of Snacker and Diplocket's."

"I wish to lay a complaint against the clerk who makes out my time-card," writes No. 10523. "My job (riveting clamp-cap plates on tank rejects) is officially classified as 'semi-skilled.' I am not quarrelling with this but with the recent tendency to place the words 'semi-unskilled' after my name. You may think I am splitting hairs and I admit that it comes to the same thing, but it makes all the difference in the world to my self-respect. Will you, therefore, see that the approved official designation is restored?"

"May I quote a few words of Professor John Hilton's," writes Mechanic 0295, "in support of my appeal for improved working conditions? They are these . . . 'in one corner was a pump, serving some general works purpose, that erratically made a resounding "boom, clack, zizz." I asked whether this was not likely to be a distraction to those doing fine and accurate work, but my inquiry evoked no

response, so I did not press it. Yet the noise of that pump, I'll be bound, was on the nerves of everyone in that tool-room and was substantially lowering the rate and the quality of the output.' Well, it is just the same with me if you substitute Jim Handrail's catarrhal snuffles for the pump. Anything which makes a resounding 'boom, clack, zizz' would be a blessing to me and to the war effort. Would it be possible to keep the factory hooter at full blast for a few hours of relief each day?"

The last note comes from a Mr. Tom Kavanagh, who writes: "I have a somewhat unusual request to make. Would you please raise my wages by one shilling and threepence per week so as to make them equal to those of my son Clifford (aged sixteen)? He is getting far too big for his boots and informs me that he is shortly to demand a rise of three and fourpence so that he may receive as much as his sister, whose earnings are nearly half those of her mother. Any such request should be refused in the boy's own interest, whereas the small increment for which I am asking would restore my prestige and reunite a family of war-workers."

VII

THE reader will forgive me, I hope, if I begin on a serious note. I am dealing with a subject so complicated, so crammed with erudition and so utterly uninteresting that I feel I have no right to expect a following through the labyrinthine corridors of my mind unless I resurrect the signposts. Very well then. This is an age of monsters. Leviathans plough the oceans; gigantic factories disgorge their teeming millions. Even trout are reported to be doing well—but I am dealing primarily with factories. Have they reached the limit of their growth? In every age there are

men who say (with Dioclivitus), "Enough—this is the true summit of human achievement. From now on—nothing is new." Yet Dioclivitus and his watering-can are almost forgotten. It was the same with Mrs. Harriet Boddy and her thumb-screws, with Potiphar Cheam and his patent oboe-cleaner, with Kay and his flying-shuttle and with George Eliot and her set.

Technically, I suppose, it is possible to construct a liner to reach from New York to Southampton or a train to extend from London to Edinburgh, but such contraptions would defeat their own purpose. Similarly the engineers *could* give us larger cricket bats, telephone kiosks and factories. That they do not is due to the managerial difficulties inherent in all large-scale activities. It is foolish, therefore, to regard our present problems only from the viewpoint of the technician or operative. Administration and clerical routine play a vital rôle in our war effort. In publishing this selection of documents from the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., I am revealing for the first time that everything is not well with the British costing clerk.

Mr. Lambert Wharfinger writes: "On behalf of my colleagues in the Accounts Department I wish to complain against the unequal treatment of manual and clerical workers in this factory. Quite apart from the fact that our rates of remuneration are markedly inferior to those of cleaners and canteen assistants, we are subjected to a form of discrimination which daily becomes more oppressive. The operatives enjoy excellent music while they work: we have to put up with the cacophonous medley produced by Miss Springe's version of 'How Green Was My Valley' and the boy's sibilant repetition of 'The Sailor With the Navy Blue Eyes.' The workers breathe air which is pre-heated and filtered: we must foul our lungs with a substance laden with carbon

monoxide (from the coke-stove), Miss Springe's face-powder ('Evening in Runcorn') and the boy's aromatic mixture of shag. The workers are equipped with tools that are models of accuracy and efficiency: our request for a new rubber has been ridiculed, and only by resorting to well-timed raids on the post office can we provide ourselves with pens and ink. Now, all this is not good enough. The clerks of the works are united. Unless they are afforded reasonable treatment the pen-pushers will stop pushing and then where will you be?"

"The under-manager, Mr. Craven, threatens to dismiss me for what he calls downright idleness," writes Miss Elspeth Chubb, "but I know that if I can only explain my dilemma everything can be straightened out satisfactorily. My typewriter has a bell which rings when I get to the end of a line. It makes a sweet note reminiscent of the delicious tintinnabulations produced by the cow-bells of the Bernese Oberland. At the end of each line, therefore, I fall into a deep reverie when I live over again the golden hours of my Chef's Conducted Tour of 1937. It should be an easy matter to substitute a klaxon or something for the bell, but I should be very grateful to receive the latter as a memento."

The next note is a satirical reminder of the new attitude towards petty officialdom. It is anonymous and reads: "To reach Promotion quickly—take the Underhand route and follow the red tape."

"Although the firm is now under Government control," writes Mr. Charles Diplocket, "I believe I am still its titular chief. That being so I should welcome duties more commensurate with my position. When I remonstrated recently with the adding-machine girls for their criticism of my tea-brewing methods I was told to: 'Pipe down, brother. Times are not what they were.' I should be grateful for a transfer to the Costs Office, where I understand the taste for tea is less epicurean."

"I am a warm admirer of our Russian Allies and I appreciate their gallantry," writes Mr. Osbert Sonnet, "but I am also a member of the Primrose League. During the past few weeks the hostility of the 'redder' workers has become open and bitter. Yesterday, for example, being pay-day, a constant stream of abuse was directed at me through the guichet-window. I regret having to take this line of action but I feel I must report Mechanics 05289 and 7224 to the management. The former used the phrase 'ruddy Threadneedle Street profiteer' and the latter described me as a 'black-coated parasite', a term as inaccurate as it was malicious since I was wearing a drill golfing-jacket at the time."

VIII

I AM a democrat to my finger-tips and I believe that the British public should be told the truth, however unpleasant. But I do feel that announcements of defeats, evacuations, strategic withdrawals and losses at sea should be "staggered" somewhat. While every military catastrophe increases the tempo of production in the armaments factories, it also sharpens the critical faculties of the war workers. They become intolerant and bellicose. They revive the class-struggle and they hunt for scapegoats among their industrial leaders. A coincidence of defeats rouses in them a cold hatred of authority. The Libyan reverses coupled with serious losses at sea have filled the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., with denunciations and threats, and scenes have been witnessed that can only be described as ugly.

"Would you be good enough to remind Mr. Diplocket, the managing director, that rubber is a vital sinew of war," writes Miss Beaupeep. "I was shocked this morning to see

him ride into the works on his wife's bicycle at a very high speed, so that he was forced to brake hard to avoid a consignment of torpedoes. Later when I examined his tyres I found them to be flagrantly under-inflated. This is a fine example to set the war workers, I must say. Rubber supplies must be conserved even by a Mr. Diplocket."

Mechanic 10528 writes: "Is this factory being run by fifth-columnists or what? Why are we so slow to learn from our Allies? In the U.S.A. scientific management experts and production engineers are earning their money. In one shipyard the output of cargo-vessels has been doubled by building them upside-down. In Britain we are in chains while conservatism gnaws at our very vitals. Why cannot we build our tanks upside-down if this method is so efficacious?"

The next note is merely cynical—another jibe at the noble army of shop-foremen and under-managers. It reads: "Napoleon called the English 'a nation of shopkeepers.' 'Shopwalkers' is more like it." The effort is signed "Student of History."

"Where are our dive-bombers and human torpedoes?" asks Mr. Amos Crewe, a rigging-shop fitter. "As long ago as 1940 I submitted my designs for a dive-bomber to cost no more than £217 15*s.* 6*d.* (excluding tax). The idea was rejected presumably because it allowed an insufficient margin for profit. My improved human torpedo is now ready. We (my colleagues and I) have agreed to allow an elastic interpretation of the term 'human' and have decided that the honour of making the initial test shall be yours. We are meeting at the reservoir at 2.30 P.M. on Saturday next."

But enough of this. I do not wish to give the impression that the war workers are mere fault-finders. Two further notes are reproduced to demonstrate how widely the factory front is identifying itself with the war effort.

"I enclose a photograph taken on the beach at St. Malo in 1897," writes Mr. Olaf Robinson, "and I am wondering whether it might be useful to the military authorities. There are two reasons why I do not wish to surrender the snap unless it is really necessary and I should be grateful for your guidance. My wife (marked X) feels rather diffident about the R.A.F. seeing her in that particular bathing-costume, while for my part I have no desire to provide free advertisement for Madam Betterave's *pension* (the red building on the left), where the food is (or was) execrable."

"Although we work in the same factory and live in the same house," writes Mechanic 7717, "I have been unable to speak to my wife since the 3-shift system was introduced in 1940. Of course we write to each other and show our affection in a thousand little ways, but we feel that our case is exceptional and a little trying. We are both in need of a holiday and we should be grateful if you would arrange for us to work together in the same shop for a week or a fortnight. We are both confident of final victory."

IX

I AM a happy man. My work as Welfare and Industrial Relations Officer has been recognized by the selection of Miss Gladys Longbotham, a machine-tool fettler, as "the week's outstanding worker on the war front." Miss Longbotham is, of course, one of my protégées. She will receive the plaudits of the B.B.C. and the Ministry of Supply while I shall remain discreetly in the background. I would have it so. The award is timely, for my energy and zeal were beginning to flag for want of encouragement. For many months my efforts have been negatived by blind ridicule. This new triumph will restore my prestige and equanimity.

The bare details of Miss Longbotham's triumph are worth recording. When war broke out she was still at school at St. Maud's, Cheltenham, but although she was a prefect and a contestant for a place in the hockey XI, she decided immediately to enter an armaments factory. Joining the firm of Snacker and Diplocket as canteen waitress she attracted so much attention by her good looks and inability to give the correct change that she was transferred to Shop 'L', where officers' canes were being produced. Within a fortnight she had introduced pre-fabrication and belt-conveyors and had revolutionized the system of production to such an extent that the War Office had to admit its inability to supply enough officers to keep pace with her output. When Gladys left Shop 'L' its organization was fool-proof and responsible for a steady two million canes per week.

In the tank-assembly sheds Gladys found more scope for her individuality and fervour, but it was heavy work for a mere girl. Day after day, week after week, Gladys toiled at her self-imposed task of packing completed tanks in corrugated containers and stacking them in pleasing patterns round the atelier. It was not until a visit from the sanitary inspector revealed that she was suffering from "bends" and a temperature of 102·5° that Gladys agreed to rest. She is now working two and a half shifts a day as a fettler in the machine-tools department. She has been bombed out, taken in, browned off and sat on, but she refuses to go under. All her clothing coupons are intact and she has resisted the advances of several foremen. This then is the record of Gladys Longbotham. St. Maud's and the Empire are proud of her.

Uplifted as I am by these glad tidings I can open the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., without the usual foreboding.

"I have a suggestion to offer," writes Mechanic 7273,

"concerning the treatment of absenteeism. It is based upon an American example. Aeronautical Products, Inc., of Detroit, placed German milliard-mark notes of the inflation period in the delinquents' pay-rolls with the explanation: 'The extra pay enclosed is your reward for failing to report for work one day last week.' Now this is rather too mordant and perhaps too abstruse for use over here, and I have devised the following modification. A large heart printed on the absentee's wage-packet is subscribed 'Absenteeism makes the heart grow fonder.' Only when the offender sees the tiny swastika engraved upon the heart does the full realization of his shame break upon him. It is, I am sure, a method worth trying."

Mr. Maxwell Thrush, the canteen manager, writes: "The position with regard to canteen cutlery goes from bad to worse. Yesterday the shortage was so acute that many workers were compelled to use sections of dowelling-rod (requisitioned for his emergency) after the manner of chop-sticks. Others, less nimble, employed files, gimlets, drills and other unhygienic makeshifts. My suspicions that the metal-scrap department is responsible for these pilferings is confirmed by independent witnesses. While agreeing that those responsible are acting from high-minded motives, I must ask you to put a stop to their high-handed misdemeanours."

The next note is signed "Old Salt." It states: "Re figures of shipping losses—publish and be dam'd."

"As you are probably aware," writes the Rev. Morgan Blatt, "we are to have a so-called mass-wedding on Saturday morning next when three mechanics and a check-weighman are to be joined in holy matrimony to four female riveters. I have been asked to apply on behalf of the betrothed for permission to hold the breakfast and reception in Shop 'C'. They undertake to interfere as little as possible with

production-flow and to see that tanks and depth-charges are not damaged or tampered with. The honeymoons will be spent in the canteen so that the happy couples can return to work on the afternoon shift. I feel sure that you will accede to these requests."

X

MR. Jack Tanner, President of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, recently delivered an important speech the gist of which must be quite familiar to readers of these columns. "Hundreds of reports," said Mr. Tanner, "tell in identical terms the same stories of inefficiency and mismanagement . . . the Union is in a strong position to rebut the foolish charges of absenteeism and slacking against the workers." These words (with a little literary polish) might well be my own. Time and time again I have reminded my critics that I am fully aware of grave inefficiency in our other war factories and my sympathetic attitude towards absenteeism is common knowledge. It is upon this latter subject that I wish to discourse. As Scientific Management Expert and Welfare and Public Relations Officer I have opportunities to study the problem closely. My findings are appended. Minor causes of absenteeism include:

1. Prostration after hearing the seven o'clock news.
2. The necessity of staying put to prevent enthusiastic salvage collectors from exceeding their duties.
3. Indisposition after Home Guard mock-battles.
4. Pique due to statements by irresponsible M.P.s.
5. Detention at the works crèche by a voluble Dr. Groanin (believed by many to be the "Radio Doctor").

Chronic absenteeism is most common among those

suffering from ill-health, those who have been called to the Services and have neglected to inform the office staff, and those who cannot tolerate "Music While You Work."

In none of these cases is there any hint of a desire to hinder the war effort. Occasionally, however, something does occur to suggest the machinations of a Fifth Column, but our suspicions have never been substantiated. A few weeks ago, for example, an unusually high percentage of male workers absented themselves in the belief that a consignment of American lease-lend, dehydrated beer had arrived in the district. I was able to prove only that the rumour was without foundation. On another occasion I suspected sabotage when a poster mysteriously appeared to announce that "Chuck" Peabody and his Cacophonous Six would entertain the workers during the morning. Absenteeism was again abnormal, but I could prove nothing.

No, the real problems of war production are not revealed by the fire-brands of Westminster or the know-alls of Fleet Street. They are to be found in the humble notes which fill the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd. I have space for a few examples.

"Last week," writes the Canteen Manager, "I informed you of the acute shortage of cutlery in the canteen. I must now reveal that the workers are becoming restive about the lack of crockery. This is due entirely to normal depreciation and the difficulty of obtaining replacements. Enough dinner-plates are left only to supply about one-third of the diners. The rest have their meal served within circles chalked on the tables. This expedient is most unsatisfactory unless the gravy is highly viscous. Milk-puddings are a nightmare. Until replacements are forthcoming will you be good enough to sanction the use of fire-watchers' helmets? It would ease matters considerably."

"My husband, Simon, is a sick man," writes a Mrs. Ruth

Lee, "but he refuses to allow his infirmities to hinder his war effort. He suffers dreadfully from rheumatism and the more he works the more do his weak ankles swell. In spite of his age (he says he is three score and ten, but others say he's eighty) he can handle a mattock with anybody. All I ask is that he should be provided with a foot-rest and be dissuaded from taking part in the 'Holidays at Home' seven-a-side football matches that have been organized."

The next note refers, I suppose, to the fact that I am a subscriber to *The Times*. It asks, "Is your journal really necessary?" and is signed "Daily Worker."

"I claim to hold the world record for speed in shell-filling," writes Miss Mona Tandem, "but my colleagues maintain that a Miss Krupp—a Miss Bertha Krupp—is at present holder of the title. Will you be good enough to put me in touch with this dame and to issue her with a challenge on my behalf. Shell-filling or all-in wrestling—it's all the same to me."

XI

I WONDER how many of my readers have noticed that the recipients of the weekly "Award for Industry" of the Ministry of Supply are mostly women workers. It is a phenomenon of the utmost significance. It means *inter alia* that Victorianism is dead. We must agree with Mr. Ivor Brown that man has lost his dominance and privilege. The Victorian male opened doors for women with unctuous servility and slammed the portals of the professions in their faces. He raised his hat with every show of courtesy and gallantry and refused to raise a finger to relieve the domestic drudgery of his womenfolk. The war has swept away the conventional superiority of man. It is no use closing our

eyes to the fact: women have come to stay. I am not giving away vital secrets when I announce that at least one of our munitions factories is "manned" entirely by women. How do women compare with men as mechanics, engineers, executives? Are they more, or less, reliable, zealous and skilful? As yet there are insufficient data to provide positive answers to these questions, but my observations may not be entirely useless. I find:

1. That women are less emotional than men. A sharp reprimand will often produce a tearful apology from a male labourer whereas with a woman one succeeds only in resuscitating all the painful and protracted arguments of the suffragettes.

2. That women are less impressionable than men. An attempt to promote collaboration by the subtle employment of one's manliness is invariably greeted with ridicule.

3. That women are more fanatical in their hatred of the Nazis than men. I have never heard a man wish the German Leader a worse death than by boiling-oil, but many women have expressed, in my hearing, their intention to remove his optics by digital excavation prior to indulging a cannibalistic instinct to make mincemeat of his dismembered parts.

4. That women perform repetitive jobs such as tea-drinking and crooning with less fatigue than men. One operative (a coil-winder) found no difficulty in remaining deep in the heart of Texas throughout four vocal days.

5. That women are more adaptable than men. As Mr. Diplocket says, "They are great stickers." They will stick any pace, however breath-taking, provided that it leaves them with a few gasps for vituperation and scandal. Given a definite objective they will stick at nothing to achieve their purpose.

These findings may not be particularly illuminating, but they will serve as a prologue to the following extracts from

the Suggestions Box of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd.

"I am again having trouble with the female operatives of Shop 'L'," writes foreman McBrewster. "Their work (which is excellent) makes increasing demands on their environment. Last Wednesday, for example, as if by common impulse, they ceased work and began to rearrange the apparatus and equipment of the workshop. There was no hint of sabotage in their action; it was merely, as their ringleader Mrs. Blackamoor said, that they wanted 'a change round.' The Diesel engine is now in the centre of the room festooned with aspidistras, and work has been resumed. What course would you advise if a repetition of this kind of thing is threatened?"

"On what grounds does the B.B.C. justify the selection of last week's 'Outstanding Worker on the War Front'?" writes Mrs. Fillip. "I agree that Miss Albemarle-Stutter's record is impressive, but how does it compare with mine? I am seventy-three and have been shell-filling under five sovereigns. Four of my ex-husbands are in the Forces. I cycle five miles to and from work every day and have never been late. Today I am making exactly the same type of shells that I made forty-two years ago. Those responsible for the design of these instruments of death should remember that variety is the spice of life."

The next note is rather alarming. It is signed "Franchetireuse" and states: "A woman's place is in the Home Guard."

Miss Sylvia Crosspatch writes, "While women are making superhuman efforts to hasten the day of final victory it would appear that men are more concerned about the future restoration of the master-slave relationship between the sexes. Can you deny that the wholesale removal of iron railings is a move to prevent post-war suffragette demonstrations?"

XII

THIS article, avid reader, is something of a busman's holiday for me—a Scientific Management Expert's and an Industrial Relations and Welfare Officer's holiday, if you will excuse the clumsiness of the phrase. I am attempting to answer a number of questions which, according to my senior statistician, Miss Chives, are on the lips of 83·42 per cent. of thinking males and females in the 1880-1920 classes. I cannot claim to speak for all the munitions industries of Great Britain, for my conclusions refer specifically to conditions in one factory—the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd. This firm is not entirely representative, since it is exceptionally fortunate in its key personnel, but for the most part it will be safe to generalize from my findings. Very well, then, that is the preamble and here are the questions:

1. *The Deputy Chief Industrial Commissioner in a recent broadcast said, "Community of interest in war aims has made employers and workers more ready to co-operate." Does this mean that all possible causes of friction have been removed?*

Relations between manager and worker are generally good. A recent note, anonymous of course, which appeared in the Suggestions Box calling upon me to "Give Joe a break—and quit" must be taken as exceptional. Workers today are more tolerant and considerate than during the last war. There is very little bullying. Much of the credit for the new understanding must be given to the scientists who have struggled ceaselessly to combat fatigue in directors, managers and shop-stewards. The barriers of class distinction have been broken down and the workers are more approachable. It is now quite common to see a worker stop courteously to give a perambulating director a "lift" to work on the cross-bar or back-step of his cycle. Sometimes,

though not of course so frequently that discipline and decorum are jeopardized, the workers invite certain officials to share in their lunch-hour concerts. These timely concessions have had important results. Management is recovering its self-respect and poise. One minor problem awaits solution. Their appetites whetted by a taste of income-tax, the workers are now clamouring for the privilege of paying super-tax and E.P.T. At a time like this the regulations might be waived and the point conceded.

2. *Is it true that the provision of factory crèches has had a stimulating effect upon the birth-rate by encouraging early marriages?*

I am glad to have an opportunity to destroy this popular misconception. The nurseries are suffering from an entirely false view of their *raison d'être*. They exist primarily to enable mothers of young children to enter the war factories. That is, they are intended for children *already in existence*. Every war brings its crop of monstrous and malicious rumours. The idea that the British Government would stoop to the Hitlerian ideal of human cannon-fodder factories is a fit companion for the legendary corpse factories of the Kaiser's Germany. It would perhaps be advisable to withdraw Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* from circulation for the duration.

3. *What exactly are bottle-necks? Are they really numerous?*

The term bottle-neck is a useful Americanism. It means a temporary stoppage of production caused by a shortage, a surplus or a sufficiency of supplies. It is such a useful Americanism that journalists can always find a suitable excuse for its use. If, for example, there is a sufficiency of supplies it is quite easy to maintain (with Mr. Hodson) that the workers like to have supplies piling up behind them or (with Mr. Greenbaum) that the workers like to feel that supplies are piling up behind somebody else. Bottle-necks can easily be eliminated if one takes the trouble not to read the newspapers.

4. *I have heard that young workers (mere boys and girls) receive as much as eight and nine pounds a week for making tea in our war factories. Is this correct?*

Definitely not. The great majority of our workers (Miss Chives will have the exact figures) drink coffee.

5. *We hear a great deal today about the effects of music on production. What are the facts?*

Music *has*, by and large, had a beneficial effect on production, but a great deal of research will be needed before the attendant disadvantages have been eliminated. It is not generally realized that large numbers of workers attend the war factories for the sole purpose of sharing in the available entertainment. It is all too often a case of music while you shirk. Cases have been known where women have sat right through the programme well into the second shift. Such people seem incapable of understanding that their seats are required for other workers. According to Miss Chives, 73·012 per cent. of the workers prefer "Deep in the Heart of Texas." The other tune has less verve.

XIII

THIS article is addressed to women—in particular to those women who, with the Pennine Chain, form the backbone of the country. I refer of course to the married women who master our ménages and minister to our progeny. The truth is (it is always better to speak the truth to women—it saves wear and tear on the inside pockets) that women are urgently needed for part-time work at the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd. As Scientific Management Consultant and Industrial Relations and Welfare Officer of the firm I am brought face to face with most of the problems

of labour recruitment. I feel, therefore, that it is my duty to publish representative items from my case-book. Nothing is valueless that helps to remove the obstacles that are hindering the enrolment of married women in our war factories.

"Will you please inform me whether the time I can spare for war-work would be any use to you?" writes Mrs. Heathcote Porringer. "On Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays I am free between 8.30 A.M. (when I finish my milk rounds) and 9.05 A.M. (when I join the fish-queue). I am also free from 2.30 P.M. (Mondays excepted—wash-day) to 3.15, when I attend the Reconstruction Committee meetings of the Moddersley Ladies' 'Inner Circle.' I need not go to the meetings on Tuesday *and* Friday, but if I miss *one* I *ought* to go to the *other*, if you see what I mean. I am afraid that I am quite unable to work at the week-ends, being tied up with jam-preserving for evacuees and Christmas parcels for local members of the W.A.A.F. You will see that my time for armaments production is strictly limited, but I realize that even one more tank per week would be something and I am ready and waiting. I should be pleased to receive a prospectus containing details of rates of pay."

"Anxious as I am to serve," writes Mrs. Agnes Dephmut, "I feel that you ought to know the conditions upon which I would accept office. From what I hear, these crèches of yours are pretty good, but are they equipped with collapsible grandfather's clocks? If not, I am afraid that they would be no use to my three-years-old son, Jimmy. He takes after his father for that. If he isn't taking our clock to pieces he's yelling blue murder. You can tell how bad it is, we had to take it (the clock) with us on our holidays last year. This year, of course, was another thing. Again, little Gwendie, aged two, is very susceptible to wasp stings, so that I could not let her come to your crèche if there are any fruit trees handy. Apart from this I am quite willing to serve every

morning between nine and eleven providing that I am not bossed about too much and providing I receive a priority badge for vegetable queues. Perhaps you will let me know by return."

Mrs. Harry Racket writes: "I should like so much to work in your nice factory but I am a little worried about the problem of costume. Do I have to wear the uniform overalls and dust-cap? Coupons being what they are, I feel that the expense to me and to the country if I had to obtain a new rig-out would be quite out of proportion to my armaments contribution. Now I have a very neat little two-piece beach *négligé* with *appliqué* work on the back and flounces which I should imagine would be just it. It is self-coloured in orange, the *appliqué* being a Florence Mills shade. Perhaps you would let me know whether this would be in order. *P.S.*—In regard to the dust-cap it has just occurred to me that my husband's 'Old Cowliensian' cricket-cap would be the very thing."

Let me answer my correspondents. Yes, Mrs. Porringer, you are wanted. Come to the factory by all means, if only to draw your pay. And bring your Reconstruction Committee with you. And you, Mrs. Dephmut, need have no fears about our crèches. If a grandfather's clock is really necessary it will be indented for immediately. Remember that there is still such a thing as priority, Mrs. Dephmut, and that plenty of lease-lend grandfather's clocks are coming into the country. To you, Mrs. Racket, I can only answer in the negative. The word "flounces" would never get past a Government inspector. Although your life is your own we cannot have valuable machines lying idle while odd torsoes and scalps are being removed. The cricket-cap, though, is an admirable suggestion. By the way, Simkin and Burgoyne, in the Strand, have a particularly attractive "Go to it" suit in beige and amber and dirt cheap at only five coupons.

XIV

Now that Mass-Observation has published the results of its inquiry into British war production I see no reason why I should continue to withhold my findings relating to the health of our war workers. One trained observer may often see and interpret more than the mass. Without in any way belittling the work of my contemporaries I would point out that what they observe is so obviously a set-up designed for their inspection. The mass cannot be furtive or subtle—the individual can. Hence the poignancy and point of my contribution. My reluctance to publish was not so much due to a widespread editorial stupidity as to my inborn squeamishness. Even now I hesitate to draw back the veil and to reveal the macabre horror of industrial disease. To those of you who cannot stand the sight of blood I say, "Enough! No more: 'Tis not so sweet now as it was before." Is there a doctor in the periodical?

I propose to confine my attention to those diseases which are responsible for the small amount of absenteeism at the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd. Diseases flourish when resistance is poor, and the marked increase in malnutrition due to the continued dilution of beer must be considered as one of the greatest evils of our times. Experiments made with ants (for reasons of economy mice were not used) have convinced me that modern beer is an unsuitable diet for manual workers. My researches prove that the energy expended in the effort of drinking is greater than that derived from the liquid, so that there is a cumulative loss. I recommend that manual workers be compelled by law or induced by propaganda to forgo the use of beer and that supplies be diverted to clerical and managerial personnel. In a crisis it is always the black-coated workers

who pull the nation through. They would, I feel sure, suffer atrophy gladly in the national interest.

Readers who were able to see the Chaplin film *Modern Times* will already be familiar with the distressing symptoms of the disease known as *Ado agitato* or "Fitters' Jitters." The constant repetition of a series of manual operations sets up a reflexive system of muscular rhythms which continues to operate even though the original impulse (work) is withdrawn. Of course we are all sufferers from this ailment in a more or less mild form. We draw up our chairs to empty fires, stir our sugarless tea and try to knock the tops off dried eggs. But with the workers the complaint assumes more serious proportions. I will quote one example from a letter which appeared recently in my Suggestions Box: "My husband operates an overhead trolley-crane in your factory. When he arrives home in the evening he is terribly restless. He takes the milk-jug and oils the radio, the sideboard drawers and Van Gogh's 'Cypresses.' Then he throws himself into the arm-chair, grabs the poker and levers it backwards until the chair topples over. Shouting 'O.K. Bill, let 'er go,' he leaps at the chandelier and swings across to the book-case. Every few minutes he stumbles over to the tallboy and mumbles something about a second front and workers' control. By ten o'clock he is completely exhausted and must be carried to bed. Now this is not at all natural and I am very worried. What do you advise?" Manual workers are not the only victims of "Fitters' Jitters." It is prevalent among politicians. Under the strain of war many of them may be heard talking long after the original stimulus (having something to say) has left them.

We come next to the malignant disease, *Auricular Neurosis* (sometimes known as "Welders' Bonus"). It is most common among riveters, capstan-minders and crèche attendants—a fact which seems to suggest that excessive noise may be the

primary cause. As the victim becomes inured to the factory din more and more decibels are demanded to satisfy the craving for sound. During working hours this can usually be arranged, but the extra-mural activities of the victim are painful indeed. Anything less noisy than a siren, a Wurlitzer organ or a Post-War Reconstruction Committee meeting seems to occasion acute discomfort. In particular, noises made by scratching the finger-nail on frosted-glass, by the flapping of loose wall-paper, by squeaking shoes and by meticulous shop-foremen induce a state of *malaise* bordering on frenzy. B.B.C. requests to turn down our wireless sets and the continued apathy of the *Luftwaffe* in the West have made night-time almost unbearable for sufferers from this disease. Early treatment is essential. At the first hint of head-noises (not to be confused with income-tax computations and Music While You Work) a doctor should be consulted.

Lastly, I wish to mention one of the latest yet most pernicious of industrial maladies. It is not so much a disease as a whole genus of diseases due entirely to the activities of black marketeers. These undesirables peddle their wares in factories where the gregarious instinct looms large and where fatigue and zeal preclude too close an inspection of the wares. The traffic in cosmetics, unguents and foodstuffs is considerable and goes on right under the noses of indolent officials. Without exception these shoddy goods are harmful to their users. When analysed, black-market nail-varnish is seen to consist of ninety-nine per cent. fish-paste (red herring), while mascara appears to contain nothing more than powdered torch-battery. I have seen damson stones masquerading as halitosis pastilles and ground-glass as an aperient. I have myself been offered motor-tyres manufactured from ear-plugs. The most insidious of these concoctions are the subtly-scented soaps which are sold exclusively to labourers and haulage operatives. Here surely

is the hand of the Fifth Column. These cunning odours make strong men dreamy-eyed and maudlin, as emasculated as Ferdinand the Bull, and quite useless to the war effort.

XV

It takes a long time for the Government and the leader-writers of our great newspapers to catch up with enlightened public opinion. Some time ago *The Manchester Guardian* (without its tongue in its cheek) said: "The United States is not afraid of the unconventional, the daring, and by old standards, the slightly vulgar, so long as incentives are given to production. If we nationally took the same sporting interest in production that we used to do in horse-racing we should be all the better for it." To say that these words surprised me would be a cynical understatement. I was deeply shocked to think that three years of unremitting toil as Scientific Management Consultant and Welfare and Industrial Relations Officer of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., should have caused no ripple of recognition on the broad flood of war production. That is why this article has been written. I owe it to my fellow workers and its proceeds to Mr. Gladgrind, the petty-cashier.

Four years ago I realized that while wage-increases would go a long way towards stimulating production, something more was needed to get the last ounce of effort from our workers. In those far-off days our ideals were too lofty. We were too optimistic. Looking back I realize that our early appeals—"Employees! Do not let down the Ordinary Shareholders this year," and "Workers! Help us to build up our Sinking Fund"—were quite inadequate. A lot of water has flowed through the beer-engines since those days and we

have learned our lesson. The United States can teach us (S. & D., Ltd.) absolutely nothing in the provision of incentives. The following extracts from the firm's Suggestion Box will prove, I think, that in "the unconventional, the daring, and by old standards, the slightly vulgar" we are miles ahead of our Transatlantic allies.

"I wonder if you would mind if I transferred to Shop KL, Torpedoes Department," writes Miss Heather Prawn. "You see, I have already been to Cologne twice and it is beginning to pall." This note refers to our practice of allowing exceptional workers to enjoy a short holiday with the Forces in order to see their handiwork put to the test. Easily the most popular of our departments is Shop T, where piano-wire and cosmetics are made for Commandos. Extreme zeal and proficiency are rewarded by day-trips to the Continent. It is a source of great pride to me, personally, that Snacker girls were on some of the nicest raids.

"When a worker is transferred during the season, surely he should not be eligible to compete against his old shop," writes Mechanic 02179. "There is no doubt that Mechanic Maltravers, with his output of twenty-seven tank treads, turned the scale in favour of Shop K last week—yet as all the works knows he was until recently the backbone of Fitting Shop Y. Apart from the fact that I consider the transfer-fee excessive it is coming to something when a man does not know whose side he is on until the first shift on Monday morning." This is an old problem. For some time now we have utilized the "sporting interest" of our male workers in the great armaments drive. Our scheme is now on the lines of bump-races and has proved, with qualifications, very successful. In recent months, unfortunately, the spectre of commercialism has reared its ugly head. As this letter shows there is now a widespread traffic in key-workers. Machine-setters will no longer use the same dressing-rooms

as ordinary operators, and (worse still) there is a growing tendency to question an arbitrator's decision.

Mr. Horace Nimrod Jones, a ledger-clerk, writes: "On behalf of my colleagues and myself I wish to say that it is not equitable for a man to be monitor and fuel-watcher at the same time. Furthermore, it appears that the system of allocating awards is controlled by seniority rather than ability."

This latter allegation is too base to require an answer. Our Clerical Staff Incentive System was not devised for ledger-clerks such as H. N. Jones. It seeks to appeal to the noblest ideal of the black-coated worker—honour and responsibility without pecuniary gain. Every week a sub-committee meets to decide which employees are to fill the coveted posts of monitor, salvage-collector, fuel-watcher and tea-maker. The monitor distributes pens and blotting-paper every morning and is entitled to seize any unfranked stamps in the week's post. It is a position of trust reserved only for those whose book-keeping is infallible.

With a little imagination the Government could improve upon our impressive record. Financial rewards mean very little in these days of rationing. I recommend that all war-workers should be eligible to compete for concessionary prizes such as the right to change one's registered butcher for a week or two, to travel unnecessarily, to dine beyond the five-shilling limit, to offer loose coupons and to gate-crash in bus-queues. But after all, the best incentive is probably the realization that our work is bringing us nearer to our post-war credits.

Industry after Hitler

FOR five years we at the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., have succeeded in keeping our

workers at concert pitch largely through the excellence of our anti-Nazi propaganda. Every tank, gun and mulberry harbour that we have produced has been regarded as another nail in Hitler's coffin. Every improvement in the average product per man-hour has been interpreted as a crushing defeat for the Wilhelmstrasse. Two months ago it became obvious not only that Germany was on her last legs but that her certain defeat could no longer be counted an adequate incentive to feverish activity at S. and D.'s.

In this predicament we decided to switch over the full power of our propaganda to the Japanese menace. Believing, as I do, that other firms will shortly find themselves in a similar dilemma, I have decided to make public the details of our campaign.

Mr. Diplocket himself produced a number of striking posters:

THE JAPANESE LACQUER
planes will be decisive.
Keep it up!

* * *

Give Us the Tools and We Will
Finish the Jap!

* * *

Don't Let Up—
It's a Shinto Tell a Lie.

Mr. Snacker thought out a clever series of posters dealing with the "Yellow Peril," but he contracted jaundice just before it was due to appear.

Many workers were at first unable to realize the importance of the Japanese menace—largely, I suppose, because of the tremendous distance that separates the two countries. But a few lunch-hour lectures on the Great Circle Routes supplemented by pamphlets in support of the "round earth"

theory brought them back to the full appreciation of the nation's danger.

I was personally responsible for the preparation of the pamphlet *Japan Explained* which appeared in every wage-packet a few weeks ago. It dealt factually with Japanese history, geography and culture. Its cover was made gay and attractive by a coloured reproduction of a Low cartoon. The following are extracts:

"Many still think that the ruling stock is of north-eastern Asiatic origin; certainly the main structure of the language is Ural-Altaic. . . . Other Eastern peoples arrived after the dawn of authentic history and the old Japanese culture was a complex fusion of insular, Chinese and Buddhistic factors . . . into this have been blended the elements of Occidental civilization. . . . The language is an agglutinative tongue distantly related to Korean and perhaps to the Ural-Altaic system of languages. . . . Chinese ideographs are used and characters of a syllabary called *Kana* for agglutinatives and inflectional endings. . . . The Japanese are rather hot at blow-football."

(This last sentence was added, with my approval, by Mr. Crawden, a shop-steward.)

A few of these pamphlets are still available for Works Managers and Welfare Officers—sixpence each, or twenty guineas per hundred thousand.

The New Order in Industry

IF an apology is needed to readers who found my last article dull, it is gladly offered. The truth is that when I wrote "Are We Slipping Into Peace?" I was unsure of my facts, had no dictionary handy and was just a little, perhaps, out of my depth. But please do not invite a devastating counter-attack

from my vitriolic fountain-pen by criticizing what follows. It is straight from the horse's mouth.

Early in May of this year the Minister of Production asked me, as Welfare and Industrial Relations Officer of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., to try to step down production in three of our largest departments. The invasion preparations were completed, huge stocks of equipment had been collected, and to ease the problem of post-war disposals the Government were anxious that every effort should be made to curb our productive activity. I immediately called a meeting of the Joint Production Committee and made the following suggestions:

1. That hours of work should be reduced forthwith.
2. That night-work should be abolished except for those who could produce a doctor's certificate providing proof of albinism.
3. That the canteen should stop doctoring tea and coffee.
4. That "Music While You Work" should be suspended and whistling barred.
5. That the workers should be lulled into a sense of security and encouraged in wishful thinking.

This programme was received enthusiastically and adopted unanimously. Within a week I hoped to be able to report to the Ministry that our output was falling rapidly and that we were well behind schedule. For five years I had striven ceaselessly to keep every man on his toes and every woman on her mettle. My task was done. I smiled as I had not smiled since 1939. I felt that a great weight had suddenly been removed from my shoulders. It was the end of an epoch.

I tried to recapture the spirit of the pre-war years and one by one my little self-indulgences crept back. I resumed my chess contests with the cashier; I went across to the "Four Bells" for morning coffee; I caught the early train home.

And then on the fourth day I realized that I was living in a fool's paradise. On my first tour of inspection under the new order I became aware that the workshops were uncommonly crowded. Every other face seemed new or only vaguely familiar. Absenteeism had become a thing of the past. There was a new spirit abroad. The works doctor reported a clean bill of health and a complete absence of industrial fatigue. The statistics department announced an alarming increase in the tempo and total turnover of production. Things looked black.

It was a moment for swift decision. I called an extraordinary meeting of the J.P.C. and placed the facts before them. There were glum faces when I announced the drastic revision of our programme. Hours of work were to be doubled and perhaps trebled (even if it meant exceeding the normal duration of a day); "Music While You Work" was to return with a new and stronger supply of decibels; more vitamins were to be put in canteen meals. . . . .

The Ministry of Production was delighted with the results and would have rewarded the workers with a week's holiday had I not vetoed the idea in the national interest.

I have taken the trouble to make this case-study known to a wide public because I believe that it holds the key to the solution of many problems. We have discovered a great truth. That work is not all that it is sometimes cracked up to be. In short we have discovered that so far as work is concerned a little goes a long way. Put that in your pipes and smoke it!

An Industrial Case-Book

(*Written in collaboration with the Welfare and Industrial Relations Officer of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd.*)

I

FROM ——, —— and Sons, Ltd., comes a request for guidance in the administration and organization of crèches. The spate of reports and blueprints on educational reform has somehow made the workers of the company hypercritical of existing services. It is said, for example, that the curriculum of our crèche is hopelessly inadequate and positively anti-social. At a recent meeting of the Workers' Welfare Society a crane-operator, Morgan Thomas, delivered a vitriolic address in which he analysed the activities of the infants and tried to prove that their training was purely vocational.

"It is the old, old story," he said. "The capitalist usurers have seen the writing on the wall: they know that changes are imminent and they seek to safeguard their further supplies of semi-skilled manual labour by moulding the minds of our children to their own selfish designs. Can they deny that jig-saw games are merely a form of specialized training for machine-tool assembly? Can they deny that peg-fitting and 'Turn-a-ball, Mary,' lead to blind-alley occupations?"

We have passed the letter on to Mr. Butler.

II

"Can you tell us where we can obtain the sheet-music of the new national anthem of our Russian Allies?" writes the Industrial Relations Officer of the Empty Box (Corrugated) Co., Ltd. "Our operatives are getting very restive and assign the basest motives to our genuine inability to furnish the works band with the complete score. Do you think we should do better to write direct to Moscow?"

III

"Tell me," writes the General Manager of Snacker and Diplocket, Ltd., "where is rumour bred? In the packing-

shop or in the foundry? We *have* had our hands full these last few weeks and no mistake. Talk about discontent! In swift succession amazing rumours (all of them completely unfounded, of course) have swept through the works.

The canteen tea is being doctored with harmful stimulants in an effort to lash us into a frenzy of production for the Second Front. This was the first assault of the whispering campaigns. Within twenty-four hours the mythical drugs had been identified as heroin, trioxybenzamethylophosasalacylica, and tannin. Output has not, so far, suffered in the least, but the management is gravely concerned about the future. Faced with seemingly insoluble problems of reconstruction the directors were looking to the catering side of the business to recover losses on production. If the workers persist in boycotting the canteen after the war the outlook will be black indeed.

Workers who have directors billeted on them are having their faith in the working-class movement steadily undermined. It is said, for example, that aspidistras are disappearing from bow-windows, that aitches are being dropped, that the off-licence business at 'The Four Horse-Shoes' is improving at the expense of the turnover in the tap-room, and that absenteeism due to gout is on the increase. The wickedness of these falsehoods is very apparent when it is remembered that every director of the company has at some time or another spoken warmly of many of the Beveridge proposals, and has even advocated the drafting of a bill to give effect to some of them—in a modified form, of course.

The slogans and messages that we patriotic workers chalk on our bombs are paled into insignificance by the advertisements stencilled across them by Mr. Diplocket. Rumour number three originates from the hysterical chatter of a castings-fettler, Miss Eunice Moot. She claims that her brother, in Italy, has actually handled bombs marked 'BOMBS BY SNACKER AND DIPLOCKET MADE THIS WAR POSSIBLE.'

Mr. Diplocket has challenged any worker to produce a bomb so marked, and has expressed his willingness to submit the case to a handwriting expert. The rumour, however, continues to circulate in an anti-clockwise direction."

Five-Year Plan

FROM time to time the B.B.C. brings to the microphone men or supermen who know what Germany is thinking. Very often, we find, the Nazi propaganda-machine gives itself away by saying the exact opposite of what we, in Britain, do not expect it to try to make us disbelieve the opposite of, or (again) by saying precisely what we should not want it to think we knew it intended not to have us disbelieve. It is all very ingenious, and I applaud the work of our experts in psychological warfare. But as an executive of the Snacker and Diplocket Small Things Co. (1928), Ltd., I sometimes wish that they would extend their interpretative activities to the pronouncements of the British Government.

Most of the trouble at our factory has been caused by the uncertainty and ambiguity of ministerial directions. Only the other day, for example, Lord Woolton said something that caused me to call an extraordinary meeting of our joint-production committee. Speaking of reconstruction policy he said that every wise industrialist should plan production for from two to five years ahead. Did Lord Woolton mean that the war will end in from two to five years' time? That would seem the obvious deduction—and yet. . . . I decided to take no chances. If peace is going to descend upon us suddenly I am determined that S. and D.s shall not be caught napping.

The various recommendations put forward at this meeting are outlined below. They may prove helpful to indus-

trialists who find themselves faced with the same difficulties.

Mr. Oswald Thirk (Labour Manager): "Once the Essential Work Order is lifted our labour problem will become acute. Upwards of ninety per cent. of our workers (about nine per cent. are non-English-speaking refugees) have intimated that it is their fervent desire and irrevocable decision to quit our premises immediately on the cessation of hostilities. Moreover, their unsolicited statements have been couched in such strong terms that I am bound to take notice of them. Many workers have received tempting offers of long-term contracts to appear on the variety stage. Others, as demobilization from the forces proceeds, will wish to leave us in order to rejoin their wives. If our labour force is to be assured we must plan now. I suggest that we launch an immediate recruitment campaign and I seek the committee's permission to enclose the following handbill with every wage-packet.

WORKERS ! ! !

Have you considered what S. and D's can offer you in the post-war years?

(1) Liberal attitude towards absenteeism.

(2) Special 'Pay-as-you-earn' advisory bureau.

(3) Unobtrusive foremen, managers and directors.

(4) Meg Winterblossom and her Girls' Band (Daily performances A.M. and P.M.).

(5) Up-to-date Canteen (Qualified medical practitioner in constant attendance).

(6) Holidays with pay staggered on sliding scale.

Comparisons are odious!!!"

Mr. Snacker: "As I see it the future of our firm is tied up with the declining birth-rate. We must switch over from bulldozers to bath-chairs, from flamé-throwers to night-lights, foot-rests and ear-trumpets. At the same time, of

course, we must be prepared to spend lavishly on advertisements drawing the attention of the public to the perils of over-population."

Mr. Drydig (Canteen Manager): "As soon as supplies become normal we must provide really tasty dishes for our workers. Our preparations include the careful collection of 'Kitchen Front' recipes. Our chief problems will be educational. We must instruct our workers in the correct use of tea-spoons and fish-knives and in wise methods of tipping. At the moment our army of workers is marching on its stomach-powders. If the canteen is to play its part in reconstruction it must guarantee freedom from flatulence."

Mr. Smelt (Shop Steward): (*Censored*).

VIVE LE SPORT!

OR

I KNEW DON BRADMAN'S AUNT CORA

Indoor Cricket

WHEN my Uncle Wilfred died he left me a book. It is labelled "W. Snell—Statistics, 1899-1933." There is no need to inquire within for the nature of these calculations—my uncle's every thought and action ministered to his life-force, cricket. It would be idle to deny that my uncle worked for forty years with exemplary care and zeal in the office of a cattle-food manufacturer, that he rode a cycle every Saturday afternoon during the winter months, or that he ate and drank like other men. But he regarded all these activities as means to an end, as necessary ancillaries of his cricketing industry.

Wilfred Snell played for the Rushworth club in the Saddleback and District League. His play was mediocre. He was a useful change bowler of the round-arm school, an indifferent fielder at mid-on or mid-off, and a batsman of moods. Of native talent he had none—his achievements were due to his unrelenting application to the game and to the law of averages.

Pages 1-70 of his book are devoted to diagrammatic representations of the seven hundred and sixteen innings he played for Rushworth. Radial lines from each wicket are intended to mark each scoring stroke. As in diagram No. 23 (the first to show any markings) herewith.

On page 45 I find my uncle scoring in front of the wicket for the first time. The lines are in red ink. A gala day!

Next come two pages headed "Average runs scored in matches where W. Snell wore the cap of Tynbone Grammar School Old Boys" and "Average runs scored in matches where W. Snell wore the cap of Rushworth C.C." The final averages were 3·17 and 2·82 respectively. My uncle was convinced that what is called "the glorious uncertainty" or

"the luck of the game" could be resolved and controlled mathematically. Then come several references to my uncle's inquiries into the occult. In the years 1908 and 1909 he appears to have been out of form completely. His attempts to justify averages of 0·75 and 1·33 are tabulated: "Runs scored by W. Snell after a meatless lunch," "Runs scored by W. Snell after omitting to clean his teeth," "Runs scored by W. Snell after passing a funeral procession," etc. The list is endless.

I will not weary the reader with my uncle's catalogues of catches missed at mid-on and mid-off between the hours of four and five, of wickets taken with balls made by Munn and Gore and balls made by Braddidge, of the runs he had made which were signalled as leg-byes and of the leg-byes with which he had augmented his scores.

On page 92 my uncle's individual scores are repeated, but this time they are followed (each one) by a list of all the county cricketers who made identical scores on that same date. May 26th 1930 reads: "W. Snell, 2 (l.b.w.)—Also T. Davis (Glamorgan), R. Tyldesley (Lancs.), M. Tate and S. Smith (Sussex) . . ."

The last dozen pages made rather sorry reading. As my uncle's long innings draws to its close, the entries become more and more fantastic. Under the heading "Records" there are such monstrous falsehoods as "Three hat-tricks in both innings of a match—W. Snell (twice)," "Ten catches in an innings—W. Snell," "Biggest hit—W. Snell (728 yds.)," "Most centuries in a season—W. Snell (43)," "Highest score in Test Cricket—L. Hutton and W. Snell (364)."

That is all. No! On the inside of the back-cover there are such fruits of my uncle's researches as may be of value to others. They read: "It is established beyond all doubt that players whose surnames begin with 'H' are strongly susceptible to run-out decisions, that second sons invariably

become bowlers, that left-handers seldom pay for their teas, and that batsmen who take guard on the leg stump have their flannels cleaned by their wives."

The Tie

I HAVE witnessed my first cricket match of the year. It was played between seven of Medlip and nine of Ixtholme last Saturday afternoon. I discovered the pitch fortuitously while cutting across a meadow to avoid an uninteresting detour in my journey. The tall grass had been cut down over a patch about thirty yards by ten and in the depression shiny yellow stumps and broad limy creases marked the rendezvous. There was nobody in sight so I lay down and waited in the hot sunshine.

At length an old man appeared. He made for each wicket in turn and set bails upon them with great deliberation. Then he came over to me.

"I'm Medlip's umpire," he said. "Finch is playing again for us. A good bat—but he *will* put his legs in front mostly."

The players began to arrive. They were already attired for the contest—that is, each one carried some single garment to signify his cricketing intentions. One wore a red-and-white cap; another a pair of white boots; another merely a decorative belt, and yet another (rather guiltily) a pair of whitish flannels. Serious efforts were made to put in some belated practice, and there was much unsophisticated banter. Eventually the captains decided to make a start. Medlip could muster only six men, but the old umpire was conscripted for the seventh place. Ixtholme counted nine. As I was the only spectator I was asked to umpire at both ends and to score for both teams.

The game began with a no-ball. I had no intention of

insisting upon a rigid interpretation of the laws of Marylebone, but I could not overlook a ball delivered with both feet well on the wrong side of the popping-crease. When the second, third, fourth and fifth balls were delivered in an equally faulty fashion I began to wonder when the over could possibly come to an end. However, after the sixth ball the batsmen leaned on their bats and the fielders changed over. Observing my bewilderment the Medlip captain informed me that in these parts the six-ball over was still adhered to. I ambled to the other end.

I tried to give a man out for obstructing a fielder who was about to make a catch, and I tried to prevent a bowler from delivering over and round the wicket unannounced and according to the whim of the run-up. I failed lamentably. My decisions were disregarded.

I was about to abandon my post in disgust when the serenity of the scene and the profound humility of the game reasserted themselves in my mind. My anger left me and I shared in the magic of the game. From that moment I enjoyed myself immensely. I refused every legitimate appeal; I gave wildly inaccurate batting-guards; I fixed the bails so that they tumbled at a breath of wind, and I even joined actively in the proceedings by taking two smart catches and by tripping the fast bowler as he swept past to attack.

During the tea interval (there was no tea but plenty of beer in bottle) I decided to engineer a spectacular finish. Ixtholme had made twenty-three runs all out. In thirty years I had never witnessed a county or Test match that ended in a tie. This was my golden opportunity.

When play was resumed Medlip scored at a great rate. The redoubtable Finch certainly had a good eye. His end came unexpectedly. He sliced a ball which bounced twice before entering second slip's hands. I appealed ventriloquially and promptly gave him out. By neat but unobtrusive

fielding I kept the score as low as possible, and although I dismissed the last four batsmen with monstrous run-out decisions, Medlip amassed a grand total of forty-one.

The players gathered round me as I distorted my features to give credence to my imaginary computations.

"Well, 'ow've we gone on?" said the old umpire (one of my run-out victims). "An 'ollow victory, I reckon."

I put my pencil back into my pocket and looked round at the anxious faces.

"It's a tie," I said. "Twenty-one apiece." The expected did not happen. I remained unmolested. There were a few grunts from Ixtholme and a few grumbles from Medlip. Then the stumps were tied up with string and both teams moved instinctively in the direction of the Plough and Horses.

After drinking to the future success of both teams I ventured to refer again to the remarkable contest.

"Curious," I said, "that game ending in a tie, isn't it?"

"Oh, I dunno," said the Medlip captain, "we mostly finishes up with ties hereabouts."

Captaincy, 1945

I HAVE just been looking over our fixture-list for the coming season. It reads:

May 29th *v.* Ixtholme (Home)
June 12th *v.* Ixtholme (Away)
June 26th *v.* Ixtholme (Home)
July 3rd *v.* Ixtholme (Away)
August 14th *v.* Ixtholme (Lord's)

It is not a particularly attractive card, but one (in these difficult times) that reflects great credit upon the secretary. Of course the last match will be played only if the previous matches end with honours even. If the necessary permission

from the M.C.C. is forthcoming—we have offered ten per cent. of all gate receipts as a bait—some such arrangement will no doubt be made.

We who are left to keep cricket alive have an enormous responsibility. If during this painful interregnum we allow any of the finer points of the game to slip through our fingers we fail in our duty. That is why our stocktaking should be mental as well as material.

I believe that the most important part of a captain's work is done before the season commences. First of all he has to decide upon the batting-order. This should be written but inflexible, and should be published as soon as possible after last year's subscriptions have been collected. The captain's own position in the list should reconcile various contingencies. In my case these are:

(1) The likelihood of Jones being out in time for me to use my own bat.

(2) The inadvisability of being left to play a captain's innings.

(3) The desirability (or otherwise) of being run-out by young Congreve.

(4) The position of the tea-interval.

The batting-order should never be upset. Once the season is under way any demand for revision will lack statistical support and will appear rather ridiculous.

The placing of the field should cause no trouble. It is purely a personal problem for each member of the team. The captain himself should be close enough to the wicket to reprimand the bowler for making rude comments to an adamantine umpire, but should of course be far enough away to see the game whole. May I suggest two positions which I have always found useful? One is at point (the square-cut is a lost art) and the other immediately behind the square-leg umpire.

The next thing is to decide upon the four bowlers. These should be worked with unfailing regularity in shifts of four overs each. Precision in the manipulation of the attack is most important. If the speed merchant (who bowls medium-paced long-hops) takes wickets on his shift and is kept on, the googly merchant (who bowls medium-paced long-hops) will protest bitterly that he too *could* have taken wickets, and will not stand his round. Quite apart from all this there is nothing quite like the taking-off of a successful bowler to add a *cachet* to the captain's work.

Some captains believe in having an over or two themselves when leather-hunting becomes unpleasantly perpetual, but the practice is not to be recommended. It causes friction among team-mates and stiffness between the shoulder-blades. The only point in its favour is that it relieves the captain of a certain amount of leather-hunting.

While in general conditions are very satisfactory at Medlip this year, there are two items of news which will cause regret among our supporters. The first is that we have lost those towers of strength the poplars at the Vicarage end. No one will mourn the loss of these fine trees more than P.C. Tubb, who has tended and nursed them for many years. Without the poplars for a background the high trajectory of his deliveries will be pointless. The vandalism is all the more regrettable since it is the work of a highly respected Dominion. It is a pity that cricket is not played more often in Canada.

The second misfortune arises from the committee's generosity and misinformation regarding the future of the Ixtholme Club. Last December it appeared certain that our nearest rivals would be unable to raise a team in 1945. With the rest of our fixtures cancelled by problems of transport we felt bound to contribute our roller to the Medlip Salvage Drive. Its absence will cause still further deterioration in our

wickets, but the contretemps is not without its compensation. It means that I shall be excused what is undoubtedly the principal duty of captains of Medlip.

Winning the Peace

THERE are still some people who regard planning as a waste of time. Have they forgotten the lessons of the period 1914-1918 and its dreadful aftermath? Have they forgotten the England to which our victorious heroes returned? It was an England scattered like chaff before the whirlwind deliveries of Gregory and Macdonald; an England wholly deceived by the subtleties of Warwick Armstrong. "A land fit for heroes to live in," was the promise: a land of rabbits and bowlers of "none for plenty" was their only heritage.

The other day I came across this alarming howler in a Yorkshire newspaper: ". . . and it was at this moment that he ordered the Eighth Army to hit Rommel for seven."* I know: I know—you don't believe it. Well, perhaps it was a misprint. Or perhaps the writer's experience of cricket is limited to Lancs *v.* Yorks matches. But the printed stain remains and we are fools if we ignore its warning. Cricket is in mortal danger. In this crisis it is for each of us to act according to his conscience. The shades of William Caffyn, Julius Cæsar, Fuller Pilch and Alfred Mynn are at my elbow as I write this

GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

PART ONE—THE ART OF BATTING

(1) A wicket has fallen and it is your turn to bat. Walk very slowly to the wicket in order to accustom your eyes to

*I must apologize to Yorkshire. A reader in Sheffield reminds me that the figure 7 has a deep emblematic significance. It is supposed, in Yorkshire, to consist of 3+4 (three from a hit to deep square leg and four from an overthrow). The "overthrow" of Rommel is implicit.

the sunlight and/or protract your innings. Make a mental note of the route as you proceed so that your return journey will be as free from embarrassment as possible.

(2) When you arrive at the wicket play for time in order to accustom your eyes to the sunlight, etc. Have the sight-screens moved, rebuckle your pads, wave to somebody in the crowd and slap the turf thoroughly all over with your bat.

(3) Next, take guard. To do this you hold the bat upright and look inquiringly at the umpire (the one at the bowler's end for preference). When he is quite satisfied with your general appearance deepen the communal block-hole with a few wristy strokes and move backwards a pace or two in the direction of square leg.

(4) You are now almost ready to receive the first ball. Familiarize yourself with the position of the fielders. First, check their number. Then, swinging the bat at arm's length, clear a space for yourself in the neighbourhood of the wicket. Look for and remember any gaps between the fielders through which you might run should you achieve a scoring stroke.

(5) Place the bat to earth and wait. If you hear a strange death-rattle behind you followed by a cry of "Oh, well bowled, sir!" you should follow the course set out in (1) above. If, however, you feel a slight jarring of the biceps and recognize a cry of "Run, you fool, run!" you will know that you have glanced the ball to fine leg or third man.

(6) We will suppose that you have survived the first ball. You are now supremely confident. You are anxious not only to make runs but to exhibit the strokes of the true cricketer. In order of importance these are the cover-drive, the hook, the late cut and the leg-glance. These strokes should be interspersed among repetitions of the scoring stroke. This takes the form of a sweep beginning at point and ending just

short of the wicket-keeper. This is perhaps the most dangerous stroke (to wicket-keepers) in the batsman's repertory, but at times it is very effective.

(7) Remember that a good batsman does not allow his concentration to be destroyed by thoughts of suffering humanity.

(*Coming Shortly*: "TRUNDLING AS A FINE ART.")

And Now for the Ashes

THE train from Manchester was bounding across the rich plain of the Midlands. Standing snugly in a corner of the corridor I asked myself over and over again what lessons could be learned from the series of unofficial or Victory Tests played in England during this momentous* summer. I cannot claim to have studied every ball bowled in the five matches but I have taken a number of representative samples and my views are just about as scientific, I think, as is immediately necessary.

The next series, the Security Council permitting, will be played in Australia. And next time, remember, the Ashes—the real Ashes, that is, not some synthetic substitute—will be at stake. We cricketers have had our Munich. Now is the time to prepare the blue-prints of successful reconstruction. Planning—oh, can't you see the need for it, friends?

Here are some facts. This year's matches were remarkable for their low scores. The highest individual score was 118. Four of the five matches were completed in three days. For all this we have to thank "natural" wickets. Now in a manner of speaking all wickets, except those made of matting, are natural. They consist of turf—an organic compound of soil, grass, weeds and worms. But if a wicket is

*Quite unintentional—good, though, don't you think ?

prepared too thoroughly, if it is drained so carefully, cut so close and rolled so hard that the surface becomes only too true it is said to be unnatural. Then a batsman's innings becomes a career and bowling becomes forced labour.

All this has been said before—though seldom better, I think—but of remedial action it has provoked practically none. Groundsmen are only human. They are the victims, as much as any of us, of this senseless urge for perfection. Economics are at the root of the matter.

Two solutions to the problem commend themselves. First, after making adequate provision for their retraining and eventual reabsorption into industry, we might sack all existing groundsmen and replace them with unenthusiastic amateurs. Alternatively we might deprive the professional groundsman of his tools, his rollers, covers, weeding machines and so on. Without his roller he is practically impotent.

The M.C.C. should establish a new set of rules about wickets. A basic standard of twenty-five to thirty worms to the cubic foot should be made obligatory; and umpires should be empowered to scatter a prescribed quantity of grit and small pebbles before the start of each innings. There should also be provision made for leather-jackets.

The laws of cricket, manifold though they be, are still inadequate under the heading "A batsman is out . . ." In other words, and in spite of this year's resuscitation of the decision "Out—handled the ball," the ways in which an orthodox batsman can be dismissed are still distressingly few. In their pre-war agony bowlers used to suggest all kinds of innovations. Some wanted verdicts in their favour when the batsman

(1) failed to meet the outgoing batsman at the gate.
(2) failed to meet the outgoing bowler's needs in the bar.
(3) failed to score off a no-ball.
(4) jerked his head out of the way of a rising ball.
(5) put his pads behind his bat in such a position that

had the ball—whether it pitched on or off the wicket or not at all—missed the former and hit the latter the umpire would have been unsighted by the bowler and the batsman given the opportunity to commit any number of offences.

—and many, many others, varying from county to county and village to village.

Personally I should pin my hopes for the future on a new multilateral interpretation of the term "obstruction." This summer I have experimented with appeals in this category and have enjoyed a certain amount of success. Try a sudden "Owzat?" or "How would that be?" (according to umpire) at odd moments during the game—preferably while the ball is motionless. There are umpires who react favourably, anxious to prove their knowledge of the game's finer points and perhaps their wakefulness.

A week or so ago I appealed violently from cover-point while a sight-screen was being moved. The umpire shot a quick look at me.

"I see what you're after," he said, "but you're just a little too previous."

I let him see that I was disappointed.

Four balls later, while the batsmen were running a sharp single, I appealed again. There was no mistake this time. As the outgoing batsman was outgoing I strolled over to the umpire and congratulated him on his powers of perception.

"You're a sharp 'un, sir, you are," he said, "an' no mistake."

See what I mean?

The Approaching Season

THE 1946 cricket season promises to be the most successful

in my career. I can look forward with confidence to an improvement in my batting average, a reduction in my fielding fatigue, and a marked diminution of my post-tea-interval dyspepsia. These changes will be due almost entirely to reasons beyond my control. I will explain.

To begin with, I still have my favourite bat—the one with the clicking handle. It has served me well in the past. It will, no doubt, rescue me many times in the future. Bats which click are usually considered dangerous in the extreme. County cricketers quake at the prospect of a near-miss being construed by the umpire as a touch. In my case it is just the opposite. As I walk to the wicket, eighth down, I direct my steps so that I pass both umpires—it is of course only a courtesy call with old Hoggett—and as I approach them with a devil-may-care grin I swish my bat through the air so that a repetition of clicks is heard all over the ground. An umpire then says "I should change that bat, my lad. It will get you out!" "It always does," I laugh. "Still, it's only a game, and I *can* trust *you*, Sir." I take my guard relatively immune from caught-behind-the-wicket decisions.

Now for many years my favourite shot has been a leg-glide played in the Ranjitsinhji style with legs crossed. Unfortunately the stroke has seldom brought me more than a single, for the boundary at Chagworth is deep and I am not particularly fast between the wickets. This year, however, the leg-glide should be more profitable, for the boundary-line is now thirty yards—or two allotments—nearer the wicket.

You know how it is—every batsman at some time or another gets out in a manner which to him appears unaccountable. Sutcliffe, I believe, is often caught at long-leg: my weakness is on the middle stump. When I say weakness I certainly do not mean that there is a technical flaw in my cricketing armour, but that a fast ball pitched on my

middle stump tends to find my blind spot. Every cricketer knows what that means. Inquiries addressed to the secretaries of the clubs in the district reveal that every fast bowler of note has now been called to the colours. Slow bowlers are seldom able to locate my blind spot, so that my innings should be long and fruitful.

When to all these satisfactory items is added the fact that I have consumed vast quantities of carrots and other foods rich in Vitamin C during the winter months, it should be fairly obvious that I shall see the ball as big as a barrage balloon.

Turning to the question of fielding, I can face the future without the customary foreboding. I am not a light-weight, and the journey from long-stop at the church end to long-stop at the pavilion end has for many years proved a sore trial of my temper and stamina. Our captain now informs me that he is prepared to lease the position at mid-on for the duration, since he is moving to take Corporal Hackett's place at second slip.

I shall be much happier at mid-on. I shall be able to talk to the umpire between the overs, and my proximity to the captain will give greater weight to my mute appeals to be given an over or two with my off-spinners.

Finally, there is the mixed blessing of the decision to cancel the tea interval. The Ladies' Committee has announced that owing to the extension of food rationing it will be impossible to provide solid refreshments this year. While I shall certainly miss the delicious doughnuts of Mrs. Crabtree and the Eccles cakes of Mrs. Spiffins, I shall also miss the pangs of flatulence which invariably follow their consumption.

Yes, 1946 promises to be an eventful season, whatever the military situation.

Chess

CHESS must be played according to rules. These may be official and international or unofficial and local. Most people, including my brother-in-law and I, use the latter. Our rules are these:

1. The player who is not in play when my sister comes in to tell us that the fire has gone out is responsible for relighting it.

2. No breaks are to be made for meals. All sustenance is to be brought alongside the board in sandwich form and consumed noiselessly during the play.

3. A piece is deemed to be moved irrecoverably once the finger has lost contact with it, unless that piece is a queen, in which case the opponent is expected to indicate any impending doom and is then allowed one sneer.

4. It shall be the duty of the person not in play to answer onlookers' questions regarding the peculiar movement of the pieces. If demonstration is necessary (for example, "a knight goes like this . . .") only those pieces already removed from the board may be used.

5. If, before the game, certain pieces cannot be recovered from the baby's play-pen, pipe-bowls may be substituted.

6. It shall be the duty of the player not in play to nod when the onlooker says "I suppose it's rather like draughts?"

7. If a war or a wife intervenes and the game is left unfinished, the board and its pieces shall be placed on the top of the bookcase and instructions shall be given that no dusting is to be done.

8. In regard to "castling", the rule is somewhat elastic. Unless any one of the players has mastered the official ruling within the past twenty-four hours and can prove that no unfair advantage is obtained by adhering to that ruling, then a player may "castle", provided that he has not been

"in check", or (sometimes) provided that neither the rook nor the king has been moved, or (sometimes) provided that the game is young.

The unwritten part of the constitution is equally important. For example, it is considered the thing for the owner of the chess-set to preface each game (or series) with a selection from the following remarks:

"I really must get these knights' heads stuck on."

"White to play and mate in three," or, facetiously," . . . in three thousand."

"See, which way does the board go—is it the black square on the right?"

"Are you sure you are quite comfortable there?"

"I'm going to experiment in this game."

All this relates of course to the domestic game. Chess is even more complicated when played in staffrooms and offices. Two players (called the principals) set up the board and play the opening moves. The "extras" arrive and divide themselves roughly into two sides which stand behind the principals and blow into their ears and down their necks. The extras then play out the game, allowing the principals to move the pieces. Sometimes one of the extras will play on both sides and is thereby enabled to prove his theses. At the end of the game neither the principals nor the extras put the chess-men back in the box.

Some years ago I was fortunate enough to play against a chess champion. His eyes were blind-folded and he played twenty games concurrently. I was so amazed by this performance (he won nineteen games and drew the other) that I invited several friends to allow me to conduct a similar experiment. I am afraid that they regarded the experiment too flippantly, for after three hours' play, during which time I had made the move P-K3 on each board, overturned the coffee-pot and cracked my shins more than once, I

became conscious of an uncanny silence. When I had torn away my handkerchief I found a note on the mantelpiece which read "See you in 'The Grapes', Dr. Alekhine."

There are other things about chess, such as its awful fascination and the way it wrecks homes, but there is no time to go into that.

I regard the Russian system of government—the conception of a Socialist-Soviet-Chess-Nationalist Republic—as ideal, and that is why I am a communist.

Ping-Pong

I AM glad that the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* supports my use of the term Ping-Pong, for there are some who regard it as effeminate or *passé*. The upstart Table-Tennis, which appears to me to smack of exhibitionism, is rightly relegated in the *C.O.D.* to the Addenda, along with a few of the meaner crossword puzzle devices and words like bodyline, yo-yo and nazi.

Very little equipment is required for this ancient game. The intending player should furnish himself with a ball, two bats (not even the table-tennisites call them rackets), a table, a net, and a walking-stick.

The ball is made of celluloid and is spherical until someone treads on it. It is then sucked alternately by the players until this method of restoration has failed. Then one of the players produces a match or a petrol-lighter and holds it near to the ball. This may cause a conflagration and the abandonment of the game. If not, the ball remains dinted, but both players are satisfied that Science has had her say and the game resumes with luck playing a rather more important rôle.

The net consists of a row of someone else's books, arranged (by the knowledgeable or unscrupulous) in descending

order from forehand to backhand. If the books are of unequal height the depressions become points of strategic importance. If a book collapses during play it is considered right and proper for both players to manœuvre their play well away from the aperture.

The bats are curious. If official bats are used (many players prefer a slim Latin primer or a copy of *The Mill on the Floss*) the player has a choice of two very different playing surfaces. One side is coated with congealed glue originally placed there in an effort to affix a sheet of corrugated or pimpled rubber; the other side is bare and, on account of its production of the authentic ping or pong when in contact with the ball, is favoured by most ordinary players.

Play begins with the service. To serve, a player strikes the ball in such a way that it bounces over the books from his side of the table to ricochet from a crack on his opponent's side. This is not as easy as it sounds: for one thing, the crack may have been filled in with chewing-gum. Another method of serving is to stare hard and long at the opponent's backhand and then to dispatch the ball swiftly to the forehand, or vice versa. This method should be used with discrimination, particularly against left-handers, as its chief merit lies in its element of surprise.

When the aggregate score of points has reached twenty the players change ends (and if the bats are of unequal dimensions, bats too) so that the other player may (1) test the toughness of his lumbar regions against the corners of the bureau, (2) fish the ball from beneath the piano with the walking-stick, (3) aim at the crack.

Contrary to the general belief, ping-pong is one of the few games not of oriental origin, though the Chinese, it should be said, have honoured the game by naming fifty-six towns after it. The game is British to the core, having been invented

by the Rev. Simon Theepfield during a wet afternoon at Lord's in the seventeenth century. In recent years British players have had to bow the knee to experts from Central Europe, but the decline is purely temporary. In the nineteenth century the game suffered through over-refinement. It was adopted enthusiastically by the night-clubs of Cheltenham, where it was known as Vingt-et-un. Tennyson, as poet laureate, was one of the game's greatest supporters and made frequent though covert references to the sport in *The Princess*.

In conclusion it should be noted that one school of thought avers that the game played by Sir Francis Drake at the time of the Armada affair was ping-pong and not bowls. If this theory is true the game of ping-pong may be said to have altered the whole course of British history.

Whither Soccer ?

I AM very worried about soccer. My paper tells me that the new secondary schools (envisaged in the Education Act) will favour rugby football on economic grounds. The reasoning is interesting. The rugger team is fifteen strong: the soccer team only eleven. On ten acres of playing field three hundred boys could play rugby football; only two hundred and twenty could play soccer. Rugger exercises 36·3 per cent. more boys than soccer. But the rugby game lasts only seventy minutes against soccer's ninety, so that . . . Oh gosh! Well, in round figures rugger is at least fifty per cent. cheaper to education authorities than soccer.

The inferences are clear. Soccer, latterly the sport of the masses, will soon become the indulgence of the privileged few. Rugger will be capitalized by pools-promoters and will

go professional. Soccer, like yachting and polo, will be reserved for millionaires.

But wait—all is not lost. Two things can be done.

We might reduce the area of the soccer pitch.

We might increase the number of players.

There is much to be said for both suggestions. Clearly the soccer field is at present far too large. The only area that really matters is the bit near the goals. The half-way line could be abolished and the corner flags brought within the penalty area.

The soccer team should consist of sixteen players—as in chess. The five new positions should be:

1. Public Relations Officer—to keep an eye on the crowd and make snappy ripostes.

2. Liaison Officer—to keep an eye (at least) on the referee.

3. Propaganda Expert—to submit appeals for "penalties" and to incite the team to kick, charge or trip.

4. Decoy—to wear the jersey of the opposing side.

5. Player-accountant—to arrange the terms of a player's transfer to the other side while the game is in progress.

If these suggestions are adopted soccer has nothing to fear from rugby. We live in an age of revolutions. Now is the time to put soccer's house in order.

Memories of a Sporting Life

BY "OLD INTERNATIONAL."

ONE of the queerest incidents in my long experience occurred in 1882 during a match between twelve of Sheffield Amalgamated and fourteen of Cudworth Town. I was playing in my usual position at outside-right when I was unfairly tackled by Bolsover, the Cudworth left-back. While

taking the resultant free kick I had the misfortune to uproot a large piece of turf and sprain an ankle. The turf was never replaced, for immediately beneath it lay an outcrop of the famous "Silkband" coking coal. At least a dozen of the nearest spectators ran across the ground to the directors' box. After some hectic bidding the land (and mining rights) was sold to a Mr. Smurthwaite of Pontefract. The game, of course, was abandoned. In the following season the Amalgamated moved to the Pebblewick Road ground and played in red-and-green jerseys and black shorts.

Does anyone remember Bob Menchik, the old left-half of Nairn? He was one of the most devout footballers I have ever met. With a copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* in the hip-pocket of his voluminous "shorts"—he never played without (the book, I mean*)—he trotted about the field quoting extracts from Mildew's *Select Sermons* to all who came within earshot. It would go something like this:

"O prepare ye, all ye that are uncouth and sinful—*Slip 'er through, Tom, lad*—for the time of fearful reckoning, when the trumpets of doom shall blast—*Right, lad, leave 'er to me*—and filthy sinners shall kneel in righteous repentance . . ."

A young and impressionable opponent must have found Bob a terrible man to tackle. His ceaseless flow of lugubrious rhetoric seemed to hallow the ground about him, so that his lack of speed was more than neutralized by the awed inactivity of his opponents. Although he is no longer with us we are still able to hear him playing the game he loved so much. An Edison-Skinner phonographic recording, 1889, has recently been reconditioned and reissued.

I am often asked whether I agree with the contention that football has been ruined by "pool" betting. My questioners seem to imagine that betting was unknown in my day. To me the present practice of gambling on five "homes," four

*Or, of course, the "shorts"

"aways" or three "draws" appears very innocuous stuff after the wild punting of the 'eighties and 'nineties. Huge sums of money used to change hands every Saturday at the Pebblewick Road ground. Would the referee leave the field in an upright position? Would Masters (the Sheffield centre-forward) be too drunk to play? On these and similar questions spectators held decided views—views which they were prepared to back up to and beyond the limits of their financial resources.

Early in the season of '84-'85 the future of the Monmouth Street stand became a subject of acute and well-wagered controversy. The structure was fragile and ill-balanced, and from time to time emitted unmistakable sounds of approaching disintegration. The truth is that its main supports, fashioned from the salvage of the s.s. *Calomel*, were rotten through and through. As the season advanced the betting increased to enormous proportions. Each match saw the stand packed with those hoping and working for its collapse. The game itself became a secondary interest. Week by week the ancient timbers survived the bucketings and synchronized stampings of its occupants. Indeed, it survived the season. But on April 20th, 1885, there was a heavy fall of snow and without an occupant or a single witness of its end the Monmouth Street stand surrendered unconditionally.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

OR

YOUR MIND, DOUBLE-SIX OR DOUBLE-BLANK

Through the Window

THE sudden roar as an express train flashed past the windows made me jump. I looked round the compartment. A fat woman opposite regarded me with an expression of mingled pity and horror. And of course I knew why—my old weakness. I cannot sit in a railway carriage without entering into serious competitive games with the kaleidoscope of the windows.

On this particular occasion I had been engaged in the task of making every telegraph pole pass directly beneath the lower edge of the "No Smoking" notice. This feat demands great watchfulness and foresight. The eyes roll in their sockets, the neck cranes, the body shrivels and elongates itself by turn. One must be ready for instant action on emerging from tunnels, for the slightest unevenness in the track can prove fatal to one's purpose.

The spectator is of course unaware of the significance of such subtle gestures as are necessary, and invariably assumes madness in the performer.

My best achievement with telegraph poles occurred on the L.M.S. line between Nuneaton and Tamworth. I was able to travel the whole distance without once allowing a pole to pass through the letter K, but my success was not earned without extraordinary exertions. Twice I was compelled to throw myself flat on the floor and for part of the journey I perched precariously on the luggage-rack.

A more common form (with me) of this window gaming is the attempt to manœuvre a smut or stain on the window so that it rides the heavens without interference from trees, buildings, embankment or any other wayside obstruction. I am now of the opinion that dead flies make the most suitable motifs for this enterprise, and I have on occasion

resorted to catching and affixing the insect when inorganic stains have been absent. I recall too my *fiancée's* unreasonable tirade of abuse when at the Gare de Lyon I inspected half a dozen compartments of the Blue Train before finding a window of satisfactory dirtiness and, in consequence, lost our seats.

In omnibuses my mind is occupied with mathematical rather than with two-dimensional problems. More often than not my efforts are involuntary. I begin to count doors, shops, men with moustaches, soldiers, inns, fire hydrants or bench-marks. It must be the mass-observer in me. The computations are accompanied by jerks of the head which become more and more frenzied as the vehicle accelerates. However, it is quite easy, should these motions excite the interest of fellow passengers, to simulate a frowning disapproval of the chaotic state of British roads or of the waywardness of the driver.

The fat woman was still staring. I wondered what she thought of me.

Why on earth was she making those idiotic faces? It looked to me as though she were trying to make the embankment railings run through a patch of steam on the window.

How to Grow Old Gracefully

THE discovery of five grey hairs on my temples (three left facing, two right) has given me a profound shock. It has made me take stock of myself— made me review my past in the plight of the present and my present in the blight of the future.

Stocktaking was easy enough. Limbs and joints were marked down rather heavily for depreciation. Fixtures and fittings (one upper plate) were found to be as good as new

but without exchange value. Hidden reserves were difficult to identify and more difficult to assess. The stomach lining seemed to be wearing thin; arteries needed a softening-up treatment and the digestive tract, for want of a publisher, was fit only for scrap.

The completed figures showed that I was down on my previous estimate (1938) by more than fifteen per cent. At the existing rate of decay and disintegration I had no more than forty years to go.

You will want to know how a man who has heard sentence of death passed upon him really feels. I can tell you. He feels momentarily stunned. Then his entire future rushes across his field of mental vision like the first fifty or so pages of the average thriller. He reaches for the bottle and curses. Then he sits down (or stands up if he was sitting) and thinks things out. He decides there and then to serve humanity during his remaining days. For a few minutes, maybe, he toys with the idea of living riotously on a feast of sensations. There may be an interim decision in favour of an immediate week-end at Brighton or Southend with a turn at the pin-tables thrown in. But the better man soon rises to the surface. The bacchant in him subsides with the first financial computations and he decides to eke out his allotted span in the service of mankind.*

That is how I figured things out. I made a vow that I would grow old gracefully, and I set down a programme—a code of behaviour to be forever at my elbow. It may well prove useful to others grown old ere their time.

1. I will utilize my remaining leisure by reading the classics, unless there is war or a threat of war—in which case the books will be put on one side for salvage. A threat of war shall be said to exist whenever two or more countries are considering it necessary to preserve peace.

2. I will complete the family photograph-album by

pasting in the five hundred and sixty snaps from Kenya. *And every snap shall be given a witty caption. The only valid reason for abandoning this project shall be my inability* to recover the album in good condition from the attic where it was last used as a shield against incendiaries.

3. I will develop a number of idiosyncrasies that will endear me to the young. A tentative list is appended·

(*a*) Twiddling my index-fingers.

(*b*) Closing my eyes while brooding on politics and economics.

(*c*) Drinking before and after meals as well as *with* meals.

(*d*) Saying that *Punch* is not as good as it will be.

(*e*) Shaving only on alternate days (Sundays excepted: not stopping at Easter).

(*f*) Eating heavily between meals.

(*g*) Being irresponsible in matters of finance.

4. I will never cramp the style of youth when I am in its company. I will suffer the pangs of regret and flatulence rather than discourage the natural ebullience of the young.

5. I will take my medicine like a man.

6. Finally, I will remodel my past so that it sparkles with anecdotes and salty sayings.

I ask no more than to be given facilities for carrying out this programme—except that I should like to have my batting average for 1928 engraved on my tombstone.

The Sound of our Own Voices

ANNOUNCER: This morning we have in the studio the distinguished economist Laddie Proglow, who is going to talk to you about exports and such. Mr. Ladgrove.

Laddie Proglow. Exports! Let us look at this word "exports" for a moment. What does it mean? Well, can you see

anywhere we might try and break it down a little? No? Don't you think it looks just a wee bit weak after that first syllable "ex"? Yes, I am quite sure you do. Now you've done it, haven't you? Instead of the single word "exports" we've now got two smaller words "ex" and "ports," haven't we? We *are* getting on, aren't we? No, *I* didn't do it—you did, all by yourselves. I was only trying to help a bit, that's all . . .

Announcer. We are interrupting the talk to announce that Joe Pooley's "Swingtars" are performing on the other programme.

Laddie Proglow. Well, now that we've got the two wee words "ex" and "ports" instead of the larger word "exports" we can really get down to the business of finding out what "exports" means or—er—mean. What about "ex"? Ex-haust, ex-periment, ex-treme, ex-plosive, ex-husband. Does that help? Yes, you've got it first time—"ex" means "out of." Experiment, out of a periment; ex-haust, out of a haust, and so on. And exports? Yes, quite right—out of the ports. Well, strictly speaking, etymologically and all that, ha-ha, it's not really "out of the ports"; but, by Jove, it's jolly near the truth, so let's avoid pedantry and leave it at that, eh? Yes, I think we might be forgiven for once if we stretch a point in the interests of clarity.

Right-o. So exports—there's no need for me to break it up any longer, is there?—are things going out of the ports, out of the ports. Actually, I see no reason why we shouldn't call them "things going out of the ports" throughout this talk; after all we're not trying to be real economists, are we? So why use their lingo? Now the Government have repeatedly told us that things going out of the ports are vital to our economic stabil—oh, I'm sorry, I really *am.* I should have said "vital to our very existence." "Things out of the ports or die," they say. And how do we pay for "things going out

of the ports"? Think. Take your time; I'd much rather you got it yourselves. Well? Any ideas? Yes, I knew you'd have it this time—we pay for "things going out of the ports" with "imports" or "inports" . . . "in," "in," "in." But I suppose we'd better call them "things coming into the ports," hadn't we?

Well, now, if things coming into the ports are greater in value than things going out of the ports the country is said to have an adverse trade balance. I've tried very hard to find an easier way of putting that but I can't—I'm sorry. So we'll have to leave it. I don't think it will matter much, anyway . . .

Announcer. You have been listening to Mr. Prollie Gadlove talking about exports and such. We must apologize to listeners for a break in transmission between "ex" and "ports."

(B.B.C. Recording)

The Practice of Journalism

THIS article might well have been called "The Very Frequent Use of Coal-Cutters on Inclined Seams." It might even have been given the promising title "A Plea For Staggered Sundays." But in journalism it is a golden rule that second thoughts are not best. (Please overlook that hideous ungrammatical superlative.) The sensible journalist never reads what he has written: neither does a stupid journalist. They both read what the sub-editors have to say on the same subjects.

It should never be forgotten that literature and journalism are poles apart. When I joined the staff of the *Diurnal Tidings* (Incorporating the *Ceramist's Courier*) I had big ideas. I shall never forget my first brush with the editor. I was

methodically revising an article I had written on the decline of Australian cricket when he asked me what the blank I thought I was doing. "I am kicking out the geese," I said, echoing the words of the poet Tennyson. "There are too many 'Ss' in my last paragraph."

The chief's face blackened with rage and a squiggly blue vein on his left temple started to vibrate.

'Say that again," he barked.

I said it again.

"Listen, young fellow," he said, "you are here to write articles, not *belles lettres*. Cut the cackle and get to the Aussies."

It was a lesson I never forgot.

Reporters should never be confused with leader-writers. The latter are people who write in the left-hand columns of the middle pages what reporters have written on other pages. Leading articles lie half-way between literature and journalism. One of the most successful men I ever knew was a leader-writer called Dooms of the *Reliable Source* of Worcester. His method was interesting and subtle. He used to sprinkle his articles very thoroughly with quotations from badly written reports so that his own words, by comparison, seemed to the reader to be the very summit of literary perfection. The marked improvement in the standard of Government publications (during the last decade) cost him his reputation and his job.

A "ghost" is a writer whose articles are published under the names of celebrities. The reasons for this are obscure. It may be that a celebrity is incapable of writing as well as the public thinks he ought to write; but it should be noticed that once a ghost becomes famous he seldom fails to employ the services of a junior ghost. Bacon was a successful ghost for many years but his later works were written by a young man named Tomlinson.

The paper for which I write has no war correspondent and is not likely to have one until there is a pretty clear indication that hostilities are about to cease. The editor seems to have no idea what false economy is, but his excuses are clever. I cannot be spared from the office; I am not accredited; I should get lost; I do not speak Breton . . . he has a new one every day. On July 20th I was told to pack my bag and to stand at the ready. On July 23rd I was sent north to interview a delinquent Bevin boy, and I knew that the revolt in the German Army had been suppressed.

Nothing, however, would induce me to divulge the name of the paper. Anonymity is a first principle of successful journalism.

Frontier Problem May Defy Solution

(*From our Post-war Correspondent*)

EUROPE, WEDNESDAY. I am writing this dispatch in the waiting-room of the small disused wayside station that used to mark the frontier between Czamjlk and Brdnok. The ground around the station is pitted, deeply scarred and criss-crossed with boundary lines—most of them comparatively new. Some are as deep as plough-furrows; others are merely superficial. Through the window, at this moment, I can see an elderly Czamjlk, thinly disguised as an U.N.R.R.A. official, walking backwards over the disputed territory and scraping a new line with the side of his boot.

The Brdnok "Appendix," as the area is called, is one of the storm centres of Europe. It is claimed by seven nations, three local authorities and the "Acme" Investment Trust, and every one of them makes out a fairly respectable case. Ethnically the zone presents few difficulties, for the only inhabitant, Mr. Aackch Wvsarp, is a pronounced Brdnok

type. His blood-group is 24A—Cope's International Scale (1941, revised). But if racial affinities are strong with Brdnok, Mr. Wvsarp looks, and has always looked, to Czamjlk for signs of approaching weather. He speaks Sljob tolerably well but tends to drop his Js.

Until a plebiscite can be held—one is promised for the autumn, when Mr. Wvsarp has learned to write—the Appendix will certainly be front-page news, and anything untoward will touch off the highly inflammable nationalisms involved and may produce an "incident." Rain on polling day would make all the difference in the world to the result, for Mr. Wvsarp is a martyr to rheumatism.

The surfeit of boundary lines in the area has already interfered rather seriously with spring sowing, but in the long run the soil should benefit from the constant aeration.

The chief figures in the dispute, apart from those already mentioned, stake their claims on the following grounds:

Zylzotti: "The Appendix is the logical outlet for our trade in cut flowers."

Amkrombia: "It was ours in 1560. It is our bastion against the East and our *cordon sanitaire* against the West."

Nmekij: "We regard Mr. Wvsarp as our blood-brother."

Ananagana: "Possession of the Appendix is essential to support our reparations claim for rolling-stock."

Panagrulia: "Lebensraum, Equality and a fair do all round."

As I write one of those little machine things that we use in Britain for marking white lines on roads has appeared on the scene. It is being pushed, rather excitedly, by a fat man in sun-glasses.

Bancor

I HAVE always been interested, deeply interested, in

currency. As a small boy I had an obsession for the stuff. While my school-mates busied themselves normally with model yachts, Freudian psychology and the registration numbers of motor-cars I was leading an unhealthy hot-house existence in the pursuit of currency. I used to stand for days at a stretch in the shadow of the buildings opposite the Royal Mint—watching. And every detail of what I saw was committed to memory. I went to bed at night, as I do now, with the words "In twelve hours they will be open again" on my lips. Even today I feel a profound nausea at the approach of a bank holiday—a day of lost opportunities, of frustration and gloom.

Manhood brought with it no change of interest or inclination. Always and insistently I felt the call of currency. The odd thing is that I have never really wanted it for its own sake; only for what I can buy with it.

The war provided an opportunity for escape. I plunged eagerly into astrology, but even the pure and detached sciences, I discovered, are inextricably bound up with currency considerations. Then with the publication of the White Paper on post-war currency stabilization I threw discretion to the winds, removed the ineffective shackles and allowed myself to drink deeply of the flood of fiscal reforms.

Reader, do you too feel the urge to share your happiest moments with your fellows? With my head humming with statistical abstracts I hungered for companionship. I looked for it diligently—but I found only apathy. A man studying an ironmonger's window turned his head slowly away from me at the first mention of "bancor." A dignitary of the church dismissed it with the comment "Some other time, perhaps: some other time." A tobacconist's assistant had not even heard of it.

The bank manager was my last hope. Enriched by the bank's marbled grandeur I felt better. I was in the presence

of currency. For a time I busied myself with a sheaf of paying-in slips. Then with the reason for my visit apparently established I asked to see the manager.

Mr. Houndslow's brows cleared as soon as I mentioned the Keynes Plan. We have had our little differences in the past but our mutual interest in currency keeps us together.

He was well-informed, and I listened attentively to his facile analysis. Soon terms such as equi-marginal credit-worthiness, self-equilibrium and multilateral mercantile interests began to bubble forth, and Mr. Houndslow became so excited that he offered me a cigarette. One of his remarks was so startling that I gave it the whole of my attention and allowed the rest of the discourse to by-pass my intellect.

When he had done I said: "Did I hear you say that the plan is an attempt to apply the ordinary domestic banking principle to the wider international field?"

"Yes," he said, "the granting of credits to debtor nations in the same way that we grant overdrafts to customers who are temporarily disabled, as it were, financially."

"And does that mean . . .?" I began hopefully.

"No," said Mr. Houndslow, "definitely not."

How to be Happy, Gloriously Happy

SCIENTISTS tell us that life is rhythmic. The entire universe pulsates constantly—like a giant heart. And man, it is said, is caught up in this cosmic jitterbug and cannot escape. Our emotions are mere oscillations of the Life Force. We must be unhappy to know happiness: we must hate to know love: we must be sick to know health.

Most people believe all this. Whenever some courageous enthusiast speaks out for sanity, rationalism, pacifism, socialism or better British films he is sure to find someone to

reply: "Ah, that's all right in theory, but you can't alter human nature—not human nature, you can't."

Rubbish! Of course we can alter human nature. We can take it by the scruff of the neck and shake it. We can get its face lifted. We can set it free once and for all from the hideous enslaving grip of rhythm. You—yes, *you*—can rid yourself of this vile mental switchback. You can destroy this trade cycle of the mind. . . .

At this moment I am supremely happy. Yesterday was a particularly good day. There were prunes for breakfast. There was an optimistic leading article in the *Echo*, a small rebate on last week's P.A.Y.E., a neat riposte to Wilkinson the cashier, a definite improvement in the all-the-year-round spinach and fair weather over the Channel. In other words there was enough potential happiness to cover immediate needs and to add substantially to my reserve.

Every important plan for reconstruction contains the recommendation that public authorities should have on hand schemes of work for adoption at the first sign of depression. We ration foodstuffs and clothing: we are about to ration work: is it too much to hope that we can discipline ourselves sufficiently to ration happiness?

Try to economize, now! However tasty your evening meal, eat it mechanically and without enthusiasm. Make eating a job of work—like a cow. Then, when despair rears its ugly head, when the pendulum of life sways towards the pit, ruminate and stabilize the current of your happiness.

When next you buy a packet of cigarettes hide each cigarette in a different place. Put one in each pocket, one behind the clock, one in the bathroom cabinet, and so on. Spread your happiness and watch it multiply.

Above all, try to dream of unpleasant things. The subconscious mind draws heavily and indiscriminately on your resources of good and evil, and the balance brought down

determines whether you get out of bed on the right side or the wrong side. Don't let your dreams be wasting assets. Eat heartily last thing at night and ensure a creditable awakening.

Finally, do not keep this advice to yourself. Let others learn how to be happy, gloriously happy.

Close-Up

ANY writer who calls his book "An ABC of——" or "An Intelligent Man's Guide to——" is fairly certain to increase my account at the bookseller's. I cannot resist things put into nutshells. Mr. C. K. Ogden's book *The ABC of Psychology* appealed to me immensely as soon as I saw it. The price was right (Pelican, 9*d.*), the title was right and the author was right—only a practical psychologist could think up such an effective title.

A first inspection of the book showed several photographs of apes and chimpanzees and one of Arnold Bennett. Anyone familiar with the brighter periodicals would assume, as I did, that the juxtaposition was intended and loaded with meaning. I was glad to find that it was not. The only thing at all remarkable about the novelist's otherwise homely face was the dotted line bisecting it down the middle. I learned that this face had been chosen as a good example of the asymmetrical—". . . the reader may imagine on the right-hand side of the dotted line the penetrating humorist who created *The Card* and on the other side the reflective artist whose *Old Wives' Tale* remains a landmark in literature."

I imagined for all I was worth but without success. Once, it is true, after a long study of the left side of the photograph, I *thought* I noticed a slight twitching of the eyebrow—but that was all. Except for the fact that the moustache was trimmed rather roughly in one place I could find no real difference between left and right.

From Arnold Bennett it was but a short step to the mirror. For a second I hardly dared to look at the picture before me, remembering that "insanity is often indicated by a cocking of one eyebrow." All was well, however. With my fountain-pen I marked dots from my old hair line down my nose to the point of my chin. Then I made a complete inventory of my blemishes. The wrinkles went like this:

Main Channels ..	*Left* 3	*Right* 3
Consequents ..	,, 2	,, 1
Obsequents ..	,, 3	,, 7
Subsequents ..	,, 11	,, 8
	19	19

Apart from an incipient tributary in the left cheek the parity was perfect. I was regrettably symmetrical.

Miss Bosworth, my secretary, distrusts statistics. She maintains that my right profile reveals a man who knows a good bit of docketing when he sees it and that the left profile hints at poetry and emotional starvation. Miss Bosworth is a clever girl.

What about you, gentle reader, are you a lop-sided genius? Or are you average and symmetrical? Obviously the opinion of your friends counts for something but it should not be relied on exclusively. There are several tests you can make yourself. Try these two:

1. Can you insert a finger between your hat and your head just above your ears? If so (on one side only) you are obviously asymmetrical and might well ask for a rise. If digital insertion is possible on both sides the hat is either a poor fit or it belongs to someone else.

2. Are you frequently mistaken for other people in the street? If so it may be that one side of your face is commonplace. That side, very obviously, should be the side for your pipe and for any cuts you care to make while shaving.

But even if every test and every opinion fails there is no need for gloom. Mr. Ogden's book goes on to say "A different type of genius is found, though very rarely, in unified personalities with complete facial symmetry . . ."

Yes, Mr. Ogden is a very fine psychologist.

Entente Cordiale

GARLAND MASON and Dora Pomfret were often described as perfect lovers. Their perfection lay in the mutuality of their views, tastes, habits and tendencies. They saw eye to eye, stood shoulder to shoulder, *tête-à-tête* and cheek by jowl. The jowl of course was Garland's. In other words—I have my fingers crossed—they were just like that.

Anyone who reads *Crimson Hearts* at all regularly will know exactly what I mean. This journal is conducting an inquiry into the absorbing problem of the ideal couple, and ten weeks of co-operative research have given no hint, so far, of the dangers of absolute compatibility. This is a serious omission. In writing this true-to-life story I am, as usual, looking much further than the nosegays of true love. I am examining the significance of compatibility in the infinitely more problematic world of international politics.

Do you remember, reader, the glowing terms once used to describe those trysts in the Brenner? Do you recall such reports as "entire agreement was reached," "complete accord prevails" and "the Axis partners are in perfect harmony"? Well, ought we not to regard the outcome of this ideal misalliance as a dreadful warning? I shall not be happy if the San Francisco Conference and subsequent parleys find the United Nations in perfect harmony. I want more "frank exchanges"; I want the *entente* to be *cordiale*, of course; I want,

say, "a measure of agreement," but I do not want a fool's paradise. . . .

Garland Mason and Dora Pomfret shared each other's thoughts so completely that conversation seemed superfluous. Their life together was a bundle of common impulses. Together they would listen to the same radio programme, share the same fire and the same critical convictions. Even their idiosyncrasies were in harmony. They both preferred electricity to gas, and gas to cocaine.

It was no surprise to their wide circle of mutual friends when, by a common impulse, they became engaged to be married. The due date was fixed for January 21st, with three days' grace on either side.

Of course they were very "sure" of each other. Garland was so sure of Dora that he could afford to put on weight and to stagger their holidays. Dora was so sure of Garland that she could afford to ignore cricket.

So perfect, indeed, was their compatibility that even their bouts of boredom were mutual. And they marvelled at this further sign of triumphant union. They took their sadness pleasurably. One thing that bored them above all was the collection of paraphernalia for the bottom drawer. They hated everything about it—the way it occupied space, the way the drawer stuck, the way they had to stoop to conquer it.

And then, one day, by a common impulse, they quarrelled. By mutual consent the tiff lasted precisely fifteen minutes. Then they made up with tears, smiles, hiccoughs and laughter. It was thrilling. They repeated the performance on the next night—and every night for months. It was the happiest period of their long courtship and there was only one thing to mar their joy. To produce the same conciliatory relief the tiffs had to be of steadily increasing duration. From a quarter of an hour they expanded to an

hour—then to a day, a week. Of course they did not *quarrel* for a whole week or month as the period soon became. It was enough that they should declare a state of estrangement. Their perfect compatibility did the rest. Sometimes to lend verisimilitude to the proceedings the opening exchanges were made violent and the bottom drawer was ransacked for missiles.

And so it was that the lovers saw less and less of each other. By the time their engagement had lasted six years they were meeting for one hour of delirious reunion every six months.

Years later they married—Garland, a Miss Dobell, of Perth, and Dora a Mr. Ralph Nixit—and now they never meet. But they are still the ideal lovers. Their telepathic communion is perfect.

Fewer Facts, Please

HAS the human brain a limited capacity? This question has puzzled mankind and schoolmasters for centuries; and we are still denied a reliable answer. Scientists have given their lives in daring attempts to rob Nature of one of her most closely-guarded secrets. There was Professor Klingenschlank, the mathematician, who locked himself into a small chamber, measuring no more than eight feet by six by five, with a copy of the N.A.L.G.O. Compendium of Modern Knowledge and a variety of stimulants. When, if you remember, his anxious assistants battered down the door of the chamber they found that their master had tunnelled his way to retirement through eight yards of solid concrete. The stimulants had disappeared but the book remained open at page five. Its margins contained the professor's last messages

to humanity. The top right-hand corner looked something like this:

$$\pi = 3{\cdot}614307$$
$$\pi = 6{\cdot}319447$$
$$\pi = 1{\cdot}94736$$
$$\pi =$$

The blank space told its own story. Professor Klingenschlank had been studying what was for him an entirely new subject—the Sun-Spot Theory of the Trade Cycle. But he had acquired his knowledge at a terrible price, as his feverish computations revealed.

Sigmund Walker's work on the brain produced the first detailed estimate of what he called "Quantitative Fact-Limit Potential." He showed that the structure of the brain imposes a definite limit on its capacity for knowledge and he fixed this limit at 2,371,904 facts. If Walker's theory is sound it means that many of us are struggling against impossible odds. It means that our whole attitude to education needs revising; that we must discipline ourselves to acquire facts in moderation. Walker's theory would explain the inconsistent behaviour of our professors. Many men of genius are quite ignorant of the simpler facts of life. They cannot fill in football-pool coupons or income-tax returns; they have no knowledge of swing music or stock-exchange prices. They become anti-social. They forget to leave tips in cafés: they question an umpire's decision; they walk around without their identity-cards.

But Walker's theory is not proven. His work must be supplemented by that of thousands of independent research workers. Everyone can help. When next you acquire a new fact check up immediately on your earlier knowledge. Find out whether you still know who Jack Horner and Bo-Peep were. If everything is intact you are still short of your 2,371,904 quota and can go on reading and thinking without

any fear. Remember, however, that your balance is shrinking every day. Make a habit of asking to see your cerebral pass-book once a month. After all, what profiteth it a man to win a knowledge of relativity and yet lose his seven-times table?

Reading Time

IT is odd, is it not, that a chance glance at a magazine should alter a man's future. For years I have been consumed by an ambition to make a lasting contribution to English Letters, but apart from my popular index to the Rev. T. R. Pipe's *Flora and Fauna of Megthorpe and District* I have achieved little or nothing on which to base my claims to immortality. Now, however, I see my remaining years rich in promise. I dedicate them to the service of literature.

The magazine in question was American. I happened to read one of its short stories while waiting for an interview with my dentist. The story itself was quite unremarkable—a slight thing of amateur detection—but when I was about to turn the page my eye was arrested by an unusual sub-title: "Reading Time—Eight Minutes." Rather foolishly, I suppose, but excusably in view of my literary training, I took this direction as a variation of such clichés as "Time—the present" and "Ten Years later". . . and read through the story again thinking that I had omitted some subtle chronometrical point. After all, you never know with detective fiction writers.

I was so engrossed in the problem that I cancelled my appointment, borrowed the magazine and returned home. My atlas told me that there are several Readings in the United States. By allowing fifteen degrees of longitude to one hour I worked out the deviations from Standard Time

at each place, but I was still unable to account for the eight minutes. Now it is a marked trait in my character that, my interest once aroused, I will move heaven and earth to arrive at a satisfactory explanation. Accordingly I put the problem to my wife.

"You silly!" she said. "It means that it takes eight minutes to read the story."

I saw immediately what she meant and returned to my study to put the thesis to the test. It was correct. The novelty of the idea soon overcame my conservative distaste of commercialism in the arts and I realized that fate, acting in the interest of literature, had directed my unwilling steps to the dentist that day.

Already in my mind's eye I could see the title-pages of the classics:

Vanity Fair (*or something*)
by
W. M. Thackeray (or somebody)
Reading Time assessed by
J. Sopwhittle
14 hrs. 15 mins. (or something).

If the plan already taking root in my brain should come to fruition the great treasures of literature would be revitalized. The English love of races and records might well be guided by a healthy competition into the serener pastures of learning. I had a new world in the making—a civilization where men were idolized not because they ran a hundred yards in May, because they made a thousand runs in ten seconds or because they made terrific breaks at golf, but because they read Dickens in "evens," Trollope in bus queues or *Ulysses* before breakfast.

There were other advantages too. The statisticians would

be delighted and the libraries would be run on efficient lines. A borrower would no longer be expected to read *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* and a novel by Beverley Nichols in the same length of time.

I began the monumental task immediately. Clearly the official Sopwhittle reading time must be average time—happy medium between that of the illiterate and that of the blasé reviewer. I invited the co-operation of my gardener and he began with *The Pilgrim's Progress*. When he died, four years later, I found from the discoloration of the pages that he had reached page 13. Other assistants have proved equally unsuitable. The scheme involved a considerable outlay of capital for the purchase of books—very few of which have so far been returned.

Six months ago I took stock of my position and decided to continue the work single-handed. There was only one disadvantage in the new decision—it meant that I should have to read the classics.