Mr. Winkle, stooping forward with his body half doubled up, was being assisted over the ice by Mr. Weller, in a very singular and unswanlike manner, when Mr. Pickwick most innocently shouted from the opposite bank:

"Sam!"
"Sir?" said Mr. Weller.
"Here. I want you."
"Let go, sir," said Sam. "Don't you hear the governor a-callin'? Let go, sir."

With a violent effort, Mr. Weller disengaged himself from the grasp of the agonized Pickwickian, and in so doing administered a considerable impetus to the unhappy Mr. Winkle. With an accuracy which no degree of dexterity or practice could have ensured, that unfortunate gentleman bore swiftly down into the centre of the reel, at the very moment when Mr. Bob Sawyer was performing a flourish of unparalleled beauty. Mr. Winkle struck wildly against him, and with a loud crash they both fell heavily down. Mr. Pickwick ran to the spot. Bob Sawyer had risen to his feet, but Mr. Winkle was far too wise to do anything of the kind in skates. He was seated on the ice, making spasmodic efforts to smile, but anguish was depicted on every lineament of his countenance.

"Are you hurt?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, with great anxiety.

"Not much," said Mr. Winkle, rubbing his back very hard. "I wish you'd let me bleed you," said Mr. Benjamin, with great eagerness.

"No, thank you," replied Mr. Winkle, hurriedly.
"I really think you had better," said Allen.
"Thank you," replied Mr. Winkle, "I'd rather not."
"What do you think, Mr. Pickwick?" inquired Bob Sawyer. Mr. Pickwick was excited and indignant. He beckoned to Mr. Weller and said, in a stern voice, "Take his skates off."

"No; but really I had scarcely begun," remonstrated Mr. Winkle.

"Take his skates off," repeated Mr. Pickwick, firmly.

The command was not to be resisted. Mr. Winkle allowed Sam to obey it in silence.

"Lift him up," said Mr. Pickwick. Sam assisted him to rise.

Mr. Pickwick retired a few paces apart from the bystanders, and beckoning his friend to approach, fixed a
searching look upon him, and uttered, in a low, but distinct and emphatic tone, these remarkable words:

"You're a humbug, sir."

"A what?" said Mr. Winkle, starting.

"A humbug, sir. I will speak plainer, if you wish it. An impostor, sir."

With these words Mr. Pickwick turned slowly on his heel, and rejoined his friends.

While Mr. Pickwick was delivering himself of the sentiment just recorded, Mr. Weller and the fat boy, having by their joint endeavours cut out a slide, were exercising themselves thereupon in a very masterly and brilliant manner. Sam Weller, in particular, was displaying that beautiful feat of fancy sliding which is currently denominated "knocking at the cobbler's door," and which is achieved by skimming over the ice on one foot, and occasionally giving a twopenny postman's knock upon it with the other. It was a good long slide, and there was something in the motion which Mr. Pickwick, who was very cold with standing still, could not help envying.

"It looks a nice, warm exercise that, doesn't it?" he inquired of Wardle, when that gentleman was thoroughly out of breath by reason of the indefatigable manner in which he had converted his legs into a pair of compasses, and drawn complicated problems on the ice.

"Ah, it does indeed," replied Wardle. "Do you slide?"

"I used to do so, on the gutters, when I was a boy," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Try it now," said Wardle.

"Oh, do, please, Mr. Pickwick!" cried all the ladies.

"I should be very happy to afford you any amusement," replied Mr. Pickwick, "but I haven't done such a thing these thirty years."

"Pooh! Pooh! Nonsense!" said Wardle, dragging off his skates with the impetuosity which characterized all his proceedings. "Here; I'll keep you company. Come along!"

And away went the good-tempered old fellow down the slide, with a rapidity which came very close upon Mr. Weller, and beat the fat boy all to nothing.

Mr. Pickwick paused, considered, pulled off his gloves and put them in his hat; took two or three short runs, balked himself as often, and at last took another run, and went slowly
and gravely down the slide, with his feet about a yard and a quarter apart, amidst the gratified shouts of all the spectators.

"Keep the pot a-bilin', sir!" said Sam; and down went Wardle again, and then Mr. Pickwick, and then Sam, and then Mr. Winkle, and then Mr. Bob Sawyer, and then the fat boy, and then Mr. Snodgrass, following closely upon each other's heels, and running after each other with as much eagerness as if all their future prospects in life depended on their expedition.

It was the most intensely interesting thing to observe the manner in which Mr. Pickwick performed his share in the ceremony: to watch the torture of anxiety with which he viewed the person behind, gaining upon him at the imminent hazard of tripping him up; to see him gradually expend the painful force which he had put on at first, and turn slowly round on the slide, with his face towards the point from which he had started; to contemplate the playful smile which mantled on his face when he had accomplished the distance, and the eagerness with which he turned round when he had done so and ran after his predecessor—his black gaiters tripping pleasantly through the snow, and his eyes beaming cheerfulness and gladness through his spectacles. And when he was knocked down (which happened upon the average every third round), it was the most invigorating sight that can possibly be imagined to behold him gather up his hat, gloves, and handkerchief, with a glowing countenance, and resume his station in the rank with an ardour and enthusiasm that nothing could abate.

The sport was at its height, the sliding was at the quickest, the laughter was at the loudest, when a sharp, smart crack was heard. There was a quick rush towards the bank, a wild scream from the ladies, and a shout from Mr. Tupman. A large mass of ice disappeared; the water bubbled up over it; Mr. Pickwick's hat, gloves, and handkerchief were floating on the surface; and this was all of Mr. Pickwick that anybody could see.

Dismay and anguish were depicted on every countenance; the males turned pale, and the females fainted; Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle grasped each other by the hand, and gazed at the spot where their leader had gone down, with frenzied eagerness; while Mr. Tupman, by way of rendering the promptest assistance, and at the same time conveying to
any persons who might be within hearing the clearest possible notion of the catastrophe, ran off across the country at his utmost speed, screaming "Fire!" with all his might.

It was at this very moment, when old Wardle and Sam Weller were approaching the hole with cautious steps, and Mr. Benjamin Allen was holding a hurried consultation with Mr. Bob Sawyer on the advisability of bleeding the company generally, as an improving little bit of professional practice—it was at this very moment that a face, head, and shoulders emerged from beneath the water, and disclosed the features and spectacles of Mr. Pickwick.

"Keep yourself up for an instant—for only one instant!" bawled Mr. Snodgrass.

"Yes, do; let me implore you—for my sake!" roared Mr. Winkle, deeply affected. The adjuration was rather unnecessary—the probability being that if Mr. Pickwick had declined to keep himself up for anybody else's sake, it would have occurred to him that he might as well do so for his own.

"Do you feel the bottom there, old fellow?" said Wardle.

"Yes, certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick, wringing the water from his head and face, and gasping for breath. "I fell upon my back. I couldn't get on my feet at first."

The clay upon so much of Mr. Pickwick's coat as was yet visible bore testimony to the accuracy of this statement; and as the fears of the spectators were still further relieved by the fat boy's suddenly recollecting that the water was nowhere more than five feet deep, prodigies of valour were performed to get him out. After a vast quantity of splashing, and cracking, and struggling, Mr. Pickwick was at length fairly extricated from his unpleasant position, and once more stood on dry land.

"Oh, he'll catch his death of cold," said Emily.

"Dear old thing!" said Arabella. "Let me wrap this shawl round you, Mr. Pickwick."

"Ah, that's the best thing you can do," said Wardle; "and when you've got it on, run home as fast as your legs can carry you, and jump into bed directly."

A dozen shawls were offered on the instant. Three or four of the thickest having been selected, Mr. Pickwick was wrapped up, and started off, under the guidance of Mr. Weller—presenting the singular phenomenon of an elderly gentleman, dripping wet, and—without a hat, with his arms
bound down to his sides, skimming over the ground, without any clearly defined purpose, at the rate of six good English miles an hour.

But Mr. Pickwick cared not for appearances in such an extreme case, and urged on by Sam Weller, he kept at the very top of his speed until he reached the door of Manor Farm, where Mr. Tupman had arrived some five minutes before, and had frightened the old lady into palpitations of the heart by impressing her with the unalterable conviction that the kitchen chimney was on fire—a calamity which always presented itself in glowing colours to the old lady's mind when anybody about her evinced the smallest agitation.

Mr. Pickwick paused not an instant until he was snug in bed. Sam Weller lighted a blazing fire in the room, and took up his dinner; a bowl of punch was carried up afterwards, and a grand carouse held in honour of his safety. Old Wardle would not hear of his rising, so they made the bed the chair, and Mr. Pickwick presided. A second and a third bowl were ordered in. And when Mr. Pickwick awoke next morning there was not a symptom of rheumatism about him; which proves, as Mr. Bob Sawyer very justly observed, that there is nothing like hot punch in such cases; and that if ever hot punch did fail to act as a preventive, it was merely because the patient fell into the vulgar error of not taking enough of it.
FATHER WAKES UP THE VILLAGE

CLARENCE DAY
FATHER WAKES UP THE VILLAGE

ONE of the most disgraceful features of life in the country, Father often declared, was the general inefficiency and slackness of small village tradesmen. He said he had originally supposed that such men were interested in business, and that that was why they had opened their shops and sunk capital in them, but no, they never used them for anything but gossip and sleep. They took no interest in civilized ways. Hadn’t heard of them, probably. He said that of course if he were camping out on the veldt or the tundra, he would expect few conveniences in the neighbourhood and would do his best to forgo them, but why should he be confronted with the wilds twenty miles from New York?

Usually, when Father talked this way, he was thinking of ice. He strongly objected to spending even one day of his life without a glass of cold water beside his plate at every meal. There was never any difficulty about this in our home in the city. A great silver ice-water pitcher stood on the sideboard all day, and when Father was home its outer surface was frosted with cold. When he had gone to the office, the ice was allowed to melt sometimes, and the water got warmish, but never in the evening, or on Sundays, when Father might want some. He said he liked water, he told us it was one of Nature’s best gifts, but he said that like all her gifts it was unfit for human consumption unless served in a suitable manner. And the only right way to serve water was icy cold.

It was still more important that each kind of wine should be served at whatever the right temperature was for it. And kept at it, too. No civilized man would take dinner without wine, Father said, and no man who knew the first thing about it would keep his wine in hot cellars. Mother thought this was a mere whim of Father’s. She said he was fussy. ‘How about people who lived in apartments, she asked
him, who didn’t have cellars? Father replied that civilized persons didn’t live in apartments.

One of the first summers that Father ever spent in the country, he rented a furnished house in Irvington on the Hudson, not far from New York. It had a garden, a stable, and one or two acres of woods, and Father arranged to camp out there with many misgivings. He took a train for New York every morning at eight-ten, after breakfast, and he got back between five and six, bringing anything special we might need along with him, such as a basket of peaches from the city, or a fresh package of his own private coffee.

Things went well until one day in August the ice-man didn’t come. It was hot, he and his horses were tired, and he hated to come to us anyhow because the house we had rented was perched up on top of a hill. He said afterward that on this particular day he had not liked the idea of making his horses drag the big ice-wagon up that sharp and steep road to sell us fifty cents’ worth of ice. Besides, all his ice was gone anyhow—the heat had melted it on him. He had four or five other good reasons. So he didn’t come.

Father was in town. The rest of us waited in astonishment, wondering what could be the matter. We were so used to the regularity and punctilio of life in the city that it seemed unbelievable to us that the ice-man would fail to appear. We discussed it at lunch. Mother said that the minute he arrived she would have to give him a talking to. After lunch had been over an hour and he still hadn’t come, she got so worried about what Father would say that she decided to send to the village.

There was no telephone, of course. There were no motors. She would have liked to spare the horse if she could, for he had been worked hard that week. But as this was a crisis, she sent for Morgan, the coachman, and told him to bring up the dog-cart.

The big English dog-cart arrived. Two of us boys and the coachman drove off. The sun beat down on our heads. Where the heavy harness was rubbing on Brownie’s coat, he broke out into a thick, whitish lather. Morgan was sullen. When we boys were along he couldn’t take off his stiff black high hat or unbutton his thick, padded coat. Worse still, from his point of view, he couldn’t stop at a bar for a drink. That was why Mother had sent us along with him, of course, and he knew it.
We arrived at the little town after a while and I went into the Coal & Ice Office. A wiry-looking old clerk was dozing in a corner, his chair tilted back and his chin resting on his dingy shirt-front. I woke this clerk up. I told him about the crisis at our house.

He listened unwillingly, and when I had finished he said it was a very hot day.

I waited. He spat. He said he didn’t see what he could do, because the ice-house was locked.

I explained earnestly that this was the Day family and that something must be done right away.

He hunted around his desk a few minutes, found his chewing tobacco, and said, “Well, sonny, I’ll see what I can do about it.”

I thanked him very much, as that seemed to me to settle the matter. I went back to the dog-cart. Brownie’s check-rein had been unhooked, and he stood with his head hanging down. He looked sloppy. It wouldn’t have been so bad with a buggy, but a slumpy horse in a dog-cart can look pretty awful. Also, Morgan was gone. He reappeared soon, coming out of a side door down the street, buttoning up his coat, but with his hat tilted back. He looked worse than the horse.

We checked up the weary animal’s head again and drove slowly home. A hot little breeze in our rear moved our dust along with us. At the foot of the hill we boys got out, to spare Brownie our extra weight. We unhooked his check-rein again. He dragged the heavy cart up.

Mother was sitting out on the piazza, I said the ice would come soon now. We waited.

It was a long afternoon.

At five o’clock Brownie was hitched up again. The coachman and I drove back to the village. We had to meet Father’s train. We also had to break the bad news to him that he would have no ice-water for dinner, and that there didn’t seem to be any way to chill his Rhine wine.

The village was as sleepy as ever, but when Father arrived and learned what the situation was, he said it would have to wake up. He told me that he had had a long, trying day at the office, the city was hotter than the Desert of Sahara, and he was completely worn out, but that if any ice-man imagined for a moment he could behave in that manner, he,
Father, would take his damned head off. He strode into the Coal & Ice Office.

When he came out, he had the clerk with him, and the clerk had put on his hat and was vainly trying to calm Father down. He was promising that he himself would come with the ice-wagon if the driver had left, and deliver all the ice we could use, and he'd be there inside an hour.

Father said, "Inside of an hour be hanged; you'll have to come quicker than that!"

The clerk got rebellious. He pointed out that he'd have to go to the stables and hitch up the horses himself, and then get someone to help him hoist a block of ice out of the ice-house. He said it was 'most time for his supper and he wasn't used to such work. He was only doing it as a favour to Father. He was just being neighbourly.

Father said he'd have to be neighbourly in a hurry, because he wouldn't stand it, and he didn't know what the devil the ice company meant by such actions.

The clerk said it wasn't his fault, was it? It was the driver's.

This was poor tactics, of course, because it wound Father up again. He wasn't interested in whose fault it was, he said. It was everybody's. What he wanted was ice and plenty of it, and he wanted it in time for his dinner. A small crowd which had collected by this time listened admiringly as Father shook his finger at the clerk and said he dined at six-thirty.

The clerk went loping off towards the stables to hitch up the big horses. Father waited till he'd turned the corner.

Followed by the crowd, Father marched to the butcher's.

After nearly a quarter of an hour, the butcher and his assistant came out, unwillingly carrying what seemed to be a coffin wrapped in a black mackintosh. It was a huge cake of ice.

Father got in, in front, sat on the box seat beside me, and took up the reins. We drove off. The coachman was on the rear seat, sitting back-to-back to us, keeping the ice from sliding out with the calves of his legs. Father went a few doors up the street to a little house-furnishing shop and got out again.

I went in the shop with him this time. I didn't want to miss any further scenes of this performance. Father
began proceedings by demanding to see all the man's ice-boxes. There were only a few. Father selected the largest he had. Then, when the sale seemed arranged, and when the proprietor was smiling broadly with pleasure at this sudden windfall, Father said he was buying that refrigerator only on two conditions.

The first was that it had to be delivered at his home before dinner. Yes, now. Right away. The shopkeeper explained over and over that this was impossible, but that he'd have it up the next morning, sure. Father said no, he didn't want it the next morning, he had to have it at once. He added that he dined at six-thirty, and that there was no time to waste.

The shopkeeper gave in.

The second condition, which was then put to him firmly, was staggering. Father announced that that ice-box must be delivered to him full of ice.

The man said he was not in the ice business.

Father said, "Very well then. I don't want it."

The man said obstinately that it was an excellent ice-box.

Father made a short speech. It was the one that we had heard so often at home about the slackness of village tradesmen, and he put such strong emotion and scorn in it that his voice rang through the shop. He closed it by saying, "An ice-box is of no use to a man without ice, and if you haven't the enterprise, the gumption, to sell your damned goods to a customer who wants them delivered in condition to use, you had better shut up your shop and be done with it. Not in the ice business, hey? You aren't in business at all!" He strode out.

The dealer came to the door just as Father was getting into the dog-cart, and called out anxiously, "All right, Mr. Day. I'll get that refrigerator filled for you and send it up right away."

Father drove quickly home. A thunderstorm seemed to be brewing, and this had waked Brownie up, or else Father was putting some of his own supply of energy into him. The poor old boy probably needed it as again he climbed the steep hill. I got out at the foot, and as I walked along behind I saw that Morgan was looking kind of desperate, trying to sit in the correct position with his arms folded while he held in the ice with his legs. The big cake was continually
slipping and sliding around under the seat and doing its best
to plunge out. It had bumped against his calves all the way
home. They must have got good and cold.

When the dog-cart drew up at our door, Father remained
seated a moment while Morgan, the waitress, and I pulled and
pushed at the ice. The mackintosh had come off it by this
time. We dumped it out on the grass. A little later, after
Morgan had unharnessed and hurriedly rubbed down the
horse, he ran back to help us boys break the cake up, push
the chunks around to the back door, and cram them into the
ice-box while Father was dressing for dinner.

Mother had calmed down by this time. The Rhine
wine was cooling. "Don't get it too cold," Father called.

Then the ice-man arrived.

The old clerk was with him, like a warden in charge of a
prisoner. Mother stepped out to meet them, and at once
gave the ice-man the scolding that had been waiting for him
all day.

The clerk asked how much ice we wanted. Mother
said we didn't want any now. Mr. Day had brought home
some, and we had no room for more in the ice-box.

The ice-man looked at the clerk. The clerk tried to speak,
but no words came.

Father put his head out of the window. "Take a hundred
pounds, Vinnie," he said. "There's another box coming."

A hundred-pound block was brought into the house and
heaved into the washtub. The waitress put the mackintosh
over it. The ice-wagon left.

Just as we all sat down to dinner the new ice-box arrived,
full.

Mother was provoked. She said, "Really, Clare!" crossly.
"Now what am I to do with that piece that's waiting out in
the washtub?"

Father chuckled.

She told him he didn't know the first thing about keeping
house, and went out to the laundry with the waitress to tackle
the problem. The thunderstorm broke and crashed. We
boys ran around shutting the windows upstairs.

Father's soul was at peace. He dined well, and he had
his coffee and cognac served to him on the piazza. The storm
was over by then. Father snuffed a deep breath of the sweet-
smelling air and smoked his evening cigar.
“Clarence,” he said, “King Solomon had the right idea about these things. ‘Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do,’ Solomon said, ‘do thy damnest.’”

Mother called me inside. “Whose mackintosh is that?” she asked anxiously. “Katie’s torn a hole in the back.”

I heard Father saying contentedly on the piazza, “I like plenty of ice.”
THE REL

GEORGE RESTON MALLOCH
George Reston Malloch is chiefly known as a playwright and a poet. Several of his plays have been produced at the Scottish National Theatre. He is also a well-known short-story writer and contributes regularly to magazines both here and in America.
THE BEL

ABOUT ten o'clock on a glorious May morning, Andrew McTochie, of Windy Mains Farm, emerged from the lane and paused on the high road for a moment to contemplate the view. It was a beautiful prospect that lay before him, bathed in sunshine. The high road ran straight as a die down to the valley of the Wimple Burn. On its upper side it was flanked by the well-cultivated fields that spoke of Andrew's skill as a farmer, and on the lower by a slope of reedy pasture.

As he gazed with satisfaction at his two-acre field of oats on the bank of the Wimple, he was joined by Sandy McGrowther, the cattle-dealer.

"Ay, ye've done no sae bad there, Andra," said Mr. McGrowther, knowing what was most likely to be the object of the other's gaze.

"No sae bad," admitted Mr. McTochie.

"We micht just step alang tae the public and hae a wee hauf-yin," he suggested. Whereupon they turned their backs upon the prospect below and a few minutes later entered the local inn, where they spent more than an hour consuming successive "hauf-yins". Thus they missed such an exciting event as the passing of a stranger through the village.

Mr. Peter Grant, O.B.E., had walked five miles from the local station for the particular purpose of enjoying the view. He had not looked on it for thirty years, and it meant much to him, for it had been the scene of many boyish exploits and adventures.

Peter Grant had sought his fortune in the south, and had found it so abundantly that he now thought of retiring from business and buying an estate in the neighbourhood. But difficulties had arisen in connection with his purchase, owing to certain claims to mineral rights made by two neighbouring magnates, the Earl of Kilbagie and Sir John Blanecapple.

Grant had endeavoured to buy them out at a fair price,
but the lawyers' negotiations had been fruitless; and Grant
in his office in Lombard Street had thought them a couple
of bloodsuckers, while they on their part had been heard to
refer to him as a parsimonious moneylender who thought
he was going to put a smart deal over the local hayseeds.

But the same rights were also a matter of dispute between
Kilbagie and Blanecapple, and altogether it would have been
hard to find any three men on that fine May morning less
cordially disposed to one another. Grant had journeyed
from London to beard Kilbagie and Blanecapple in their
dens and thresh the matter out.

As he swung down the hill, Grant felt ridiculously young
and happy. He loved this bit of country. There was the
farm and there was the quarry on the hillside—still working,
by Jove! And there, best of all, there was the old Wimple
Burn still purling along as of yore, down the hill, under the
bridge, and away through the reedy pasture.

Grant stopped to look over the parapet into the stream
below, for was this not the stream of his boyish days in which
he had caught minnows in a net, trout with a worm, and eels
anyhow? But eels, he remembered, as he looked down into
the familiar pool, were most excitingly caught by the process
known as guddling, which consisted in wading up-stream
or stepping from stone to stone and dislodging the prey by
the hand or with a stick from under any likely stone or crevice.
Your skillful guddler was able to seize the slippery eel in his
hands and throw it to the bank. As his thoughts ran back,
a reminiscent look appeared in the eyes of this portly gentle-
man. He wondered—yes, he wondered whether eels were
still as plentiful in the Wimple. Why shouldn't one have a
look? Casting a careful glance up and down the road, he
satisfied himself that no one was in sight, left the bridge, and
walked down the bank of the burn.

Cautiously descending the steep bank, he found himself on
the scene of a hundred memories. Something stirred in the
pool, causing a slight swirl in the water, and an unwonted
tingle of excitement ran through the frame of Mr. Peter Grant,
O.B.E. He stepped cautiously on to a flat stone and gently
inserted the top of his stick into a likely crevice.

As he did so, he was startled by a voice which addressed
him from the opposite bank. It was a rich and fruity voice,
and it said quite pleasantly:
"Hello, what on earth are you after?"

Looking up with a haste which almost unbalanced him, Grant saw a stout figure in plus-fours surmounted by a highly coloured face, which in its turn was adorned by a fierce white moustache. He recognized, from the photographs in Society weeklies, that he had been taken at somewhat of a disadvantage by one of his enemies; by none other, in fact, than Sir John Blanecapple. He did not feel entirely dignified, balancing himself precariously on a flat stone in mid-stream. He answered with an affectation of carelessness:

"Oh—interested in natural history and that sort of thing. Studying eels."

"Eels, eh?" replied Sir John. "Suppose there are plenty there?"

"Used to be hundreds."

"You know the burn, then?"

"Rather. I used to guddle for eels and trout here when I was a kid."

"Eels, eh?" pursued Sir John reflectively. "Giddles for eels and trout, eh? Why, bless my soul, so did I, many a time. But," he added, "this wasn't the best place, you know."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Grant. "You see that crack in the rock there? There used to be dozens in that. Just you watch what happens when I put my stick in."

"Here, wait a moment," said Sir John hastily. "Let me get down." And he lowered himself down the bank in ponderous fashion.

Grant inserted the point of his stick. Nothing happened.

"I thought not," said the Baronet. "I'm pretty sure that's not the right place."

"I'm pretty sure it is," was the answer, "only this stick is too thick to get right back. Now if I had a long twig, that would fetch them out."

A curious look dawned on Sir John's face. Slowly he produced a pocket-knife and solemnly cut a willow wand from the tree against which he was leaning. A slight excitement marked his countenance as he handed it to Grant. Grant inserted the twig. An eel shot out.

"By Jove!" said the Baronet, and instinctively made a grab at the wriggling shape, only to stub his fingers on the
stone. Another and another followed until the lair was empty. Then both men laughed a little guiltily.

"Oh, I always knew there were some there," observed Sir John, "but I'd lay you any odds that there are far more in the round hole a little farther up. That's where I used to get them."

"Right," said Grant. "Suppose we try it? There's no one in sight," he added apologetically.

"Well, just out of curiosity," said the Baronet, who was really getting rather excited; and they clambered a little way up the bed of the stream till they came to a similar spot just below the bridge.

"I don't know this place so well," said Grant, "but I suppose it's that little pot-hole you mean?"

"Yes; look here, let me have the twig this time. I think I remember the trick of it," said the owner of Blanecapple, and, taking up his position on a stone in mid-stream, he proceeded to expel the tenants of the pot-hole.

Thirty years of London fell away like a cloak from the shoulders of Mr. Peter Grant, O.B.E., as eelers of all sizes began to dash from their place of concealment. His boyish instincts proved too strong for him, and, crouching down beside his companion, he made grab after grab at the slippery creatures and succeeded in tossing several to the bank.

Excitement is contagious, and Sir John, strangely delighted with his success, and at having demonstrated to the stranger his superior knowledge of the haunts of the eel in the Wimple Burn, leant forward to explore another recess with the twig. As he did so he disturbed a monster eel. With a splash and a wriggle it made its way up-stream to the shelter of the deep pool under the bridge.

"By gad, sir!" exclaimed the Baronet. "Did you see that?"

"A whopper," cried Grant.

"Four feet if it was an inch," said Sir John, who was not lacking in imaginative power.

"I should have said four and a half," contested Grant.

"Let's see where he's gone," said the Baronet, stepping cautiously from stone to stone, followed by his companion. Balancing himself carefully, he crouched down and, shading his eyes with one hand, peered into the murky depths of the pool before him. The Fourteenth Baronet of Blanecapple was a heavy man, and it was some forty years since he had
tried to balance himself in a crouching position on a small stone in the middle of a burn. His feet suddenly shot out from under him, and he sat down heavily in six inches of water.

Now it happened that some few minutes previously the ponderous gates of the domain of Kilbagie had been swung open to permit the egress of a Rolls-Royce car, at the wheel of which was seated no less a person than General the Earl of Kilbagie. By his side, in a respectful attitude, sat Turner, his trusted head chauffeur. The car swung into the high road and purred softly down the hill towards the bridge over the Wimple Burn. Its aristocratic owner was bound for a meeting of the local Territorial Association, and was in full uniform, plentifully be-medalled. As the car approached the bridge his lordship was surprised to observe two figures in somewhat peculiar attitudes in the bed of the burn. One of them seemed familiar.

"Looks like Blanecapple," said his lordship. "But who's the other?"

"I think, my lord," said Turner respectfully, "that it is undoubtedly Sir John Blanecapple. The other gentleman is, I think, a stranger."

As the car rolled silently up to the bridge the Earl's curiosity became too strong for him and, pulling up, he got out. He approached the parapet and, leaning over, was greeted by the astonishing spectacle of his dignified neighbour seated in mid-stream. The spectacle did not, however, displease him, for he considered that he had several little scores to pay off with Blanecapple; and he proceeded to take a mean advantage of his neighbour's situation.

"Why, what on earth, Blanecapple, are you doing in the middle of the burn?"

The Baronet, who was about to rise, suspended the difficult operation for a moment to glare at the interrupter.

"Confound it, sir," he said, with some acerbity, "it's my own burn, isn't it? A man may sit in his own burn if he likes, I suppose?"

"Quite, quite," responded the Earl of Kilbagie blandly, as the other heaved himself up. "Quite. I only wondered why you were doing it."

"Why I am doing it?" shouted the Baronet angrily, and then finished somewhat lamely, for the explanation struck
him, as he gave it, as somewhat unequal to the situation.

"We're after an eel."

"And what on earth," pursued the Earl with great interest, 
"do you want an eel for?"

"This isn't an eel," Grant put in, fearing that the Baronet 
was being tried too far. "It's not an ordinary eel—it's a 
monster!"

"A monster, eh?"

Now there must have been some magic bestowed by the 
invisible powers upon the word eel this bright May morning, 
for a reminiscent look, which by now was familiar to the 
Baronet and Grant, began to dawn in the eyes of Lord Kilbagie. 
Far, far away across the burning sands of India, across the 
Egyptian deserts and through the smoke of battle in France, 
General the Earl of Kilbagie caught a glimpse of a small 
boyish figure, clad in a velvet suit, with a white lace collar, 
who had once been in the habit of escaping from nurses to 
hunt for monster eels in the Wimple Burn. He was silent 
for a moment.

"A monster, eh?"

"Five feet at least," said Grant.

"I should say seven," said the Baronet. "More like 
a conger than a fresh-water eel."

"I must have a look at this chap," said Lord Kilbagie, and, 
coming round the end of the parapet, he descended the bank.

Meanwhile Fate was bringing another instrument upon 
the scene to aid in the perfecting of its design. A cart loaded 
with finely broken stone for road repair came lumbering 
slowly down the hill, the carter trudging by the side of his 
horse. As it reached the bridge, the carter, seeing the well-
known Kilbagie car at rest and hearing a murmur of voices 
from somewhere, decided that he might as well pull up. 
He did so.

Lord Kilbagie, despite his distinguished position in the 
eyes of the county, was after all a man; that is to say, a rather 
carefully disguised boy. He joined the other two on the 
stones under the shadow of the bridge. The Baronet was 
on his knees peering into the pool.

"There he is, by Jove!"

Following his pointing finger, the Earl saw with some 
excitement the head of an enormous eel protruding from 
beneath a stone some eighteen-inches under the surface.
"By gad!" said his lordship. "He is a big fellow!"

"How the deuce are we to get him out, though?" asked Blanecapple anxiously.

"You can't. You'll never budge him from that stone," said the Earl.

"Can't?" snorted the Baronet. "We must, and, by gad, we shall! Are you going to let yourself be defied by an eel?"

Lord Kilbagie weakened.

"I don't see how you are going to do it, though."

"Tell you what," said Grant. "If we only had a hook of some kind, we could bare-hook him—let it down under his chin, you know, and then jerk him out."

"That's a poacher's dodge," said the Earl doubtfully.

"And, anyway, you haven't a hook."

"Has anyone a tie-pin?" asked Grant. "We could twist it up, and I've got a bit of string in my pocket."

The Earl became suddenly aware that he was the only one of the three wearing a tie-pin. The others seemed to be looking at him with confidence. Reluctantly he undid the pin and handed it to Grant.

Grant had it bent into the shape of a hook and attached to his string in no time; so there was nothing for it but to kneel beside the Baronet and watch his attempts to beguile the eel into the belief that his chin was being tickled by a benevolent friend. Whether it was due to the lack of a barb or because it was too blunt, the operation met with no result.

It became obvious that the Baronet was a bungler.

"Let me have a shot at it," said the Earl of Kilbagie. And he had several shots with no better result.

"Ye'll no do it that way," said the voice of the carter, who had now joined the group. "Man, the ony way tae get him oot o' that is tae get a grup on him roond the gills wi' a finger an' drag him oot."

The Baronet considered this for a moment and then, rolling up his sleeve, made the attempt. But after a confused struggle the eel suddenly shot away into farther deeps.

"We'll have to give it up," said the Earl with a feeling of relief.

"Dashed if we do!" said the Baronet. "I'll get that eel if I spend a week here."
It was at this moment that Turner intervened with fatal advice.

"Begging your lordship's pardon, but I have observed that the stream comes to a very narrow point immediately above the bridge, between two rocks. If we had a few boards, a temporary dam could easily be made there and then the removal of a few stones at this end would practically empty the pool."

"Good idea!" exclaimed the Baronet. The Earl groaned. He knew Turner. Turner had served under him in the Royal Engineers, and Turner was never happier than when he was building a dam or inventing an excuse for some other engineering feat. Still, there it was. He couldn't desert Blanecapple at this crisis. General the Earl of Kilbagie took charge of the operations.

"Ye havena a board," objected the carter.

"What's the matter with the backboard of your cart, my man?" demanded the General.

"Ma load wad slip oot if ye took that aff."

"Nonsense! Unhitch the horse and let the cart down on its shafts."

Now the word of Kilbagie was law unto the carter. The horse was released, and the cart tipped forward as directed. Turner and the carter climbed down with the board and proceeded to fix it in the required position.

"That'll dae fine," said the carter, who was beginning to enjoy himself. "It's got kin' o' wedged in a bit crâck. Naethin'll stir yon." This was truer than anyone supposed. But the bottom of the burn was far from level, and it was soon evident that the bulk of the stream was escaping beneath the improvised dam.

"It wants backing of some kind," said the General.

"A load of macadam would serve the purpose very well, your lordship," suggested Turner tentatively.

"Here . . ." began the carter, but quailed before the light of battle in the General's eye.

"Take hold of the shafts and back the cart to the water's edge," rapped out the General.

Willing hands carried out the command.

"Tip it in!" They tipped it in. With a mighty splash the load of macadam descended on the water. It fell well and truly against the board; and in a moment the slackened
flow made it apparent that here was at least a temporarily effective dam.

The carter was told off to strengthen it by the addition of a layer of sods, and, well pleased with the result of their efforts, the rest of the party now returned to the other side of the bridge, where, by deepening the exit of the pool, they very soon had reduced the depth of water considerably. This operation took some little time, however, and then the eel had to be rediscovered. When it was at last located, Turner was placed at the now narrow exit to cut off any attempt at escape, while the Baronet and Grant, in their shirt-sleeves, began a long series of attempts to "get a grup" on the gills of the elusive and slippery fish.

From stone to stone, from end to end of the pool dashed the eel. Again and again eager fingers closed on a slimy body, only to feel it escape them. The combat was heroic, and the human combatants, egged on by the advice and direction of Lord Kilbagie, who had chosen a comparatively dry point of vantage, soon became almost as wet and slimy as the eel. The minutes flew unnoticed until the contest was interrupted at last by the appearance of the carter. There was something like a grin on the man's face.

"Man," he stammered as he joined the group under the bridge, "if you sight disna' fair ding a'!"

"What sight?" demanded the Earl.

"Weel, ma lord, the sicht o a wheen o' ducks sailin' aboot Andra McTochie's prize oats."

"What do you mean? Ducks in the oats? What's that got to do with us?" said the Baronet, looking up in astonishment.

"A'weel, ye see, Sir John," said the man with a chuckle, "ye're bit dam has made the burnie rin ower its bank intae Andra's oat-field."

"McTochie's prize oats!" gasped the dismayed Baronet. Andrew was his tenant.

"McTochie's oats!" said the Earl, who was president of the local farmers' association. "This must be stopped!" Hastily he led the way back to the dam. A terrible sight met their eyes. McTochie's cherished field was rapidly becoming a lake, and, to add to the horror of the scene, McTochie's ducks, no doubt attracted from the burn by the pleasing prospect, were sailing calmly about and grubbing up bunches of the young stuff with every sign of enjoyment.
The Earl groaned and the Baronet with him. They knew Andrew McTochie.

"We must shift the dam at once," commanded Lord Kilbagie.

"You'll hae a job tae dae that," said the carter as a man who knew.

However, he descended with Turner and endeavoured to dislodge the barrier. Their efforts were in vain even with the assistance of Grant and the Baronet.

"Ye'll never shift yon," repeated the carter.

"I'm very much afraid, your lordship," said Turner, "that the man is right."

"Something must be done," snapped the Earl despairingly.

"Yes, my lord," replied Turner respectfully. "If we only had a hand-grenade now, we might blow the whole thing up in a jiffy."

"But we haven't got one, damn it, man!"

Here the carter intervened.

"Am thinkin', ma lord, that Mr. Turner's richt. Noo, if we wis tae pit a bit stick o' blasting pouther aneath yin o' they big stanes, we might shift the whole thing."

"Quite, quite, my man," responded his lordship irritably, "but we haven't got any blasting powder; and, if we had, we should want a fuse."

"Maybe we've got baith," said the carter darkly. "The fac' is A borrowed a wee bittie frae MacAndrew up at the quarry for to blow up yon big tree on ma allotment. Noo, if nae questions are to be asked as to hoo A cam' by it, A wouldn't refuse it."

A light of relief dawned upon the faces of the Earl and the Baronet. They assured the carter that no questions would be asked and that the matter of a reward might even be considered, if he and Turner would quickly lay the mine and fuse. This did not take very long to do.

But unfortunately it was at this moment that the Fourteenth Baronet of Blanecapple remembered that he had been defied by an eel, and at his urgent entreaty the firing of the fuse was delayed in order to give him a last chance of getting "a grup" on the gills of his enemy, for which purpose he left the others and retired beneath the bridge.

We must now return to Andrew McTochie and to the kitchen of Windy Mains Farm, where he burst in upon his
astonished wife, pale and shaking and smelling strongly of the refreshment which he had been consuming in company with his friend the cattle-dealer.

“Mirren,” he cried, “am A seeing richt? For as sure as A’ve twa een in me heid when A come up the road to the hoose the noo, A saw a wheen of white duck swimmin’ aboot on the twa-acre oats.”

Mirren sniffed the air suspiciously.

“It’s well seen where you’ve been, Andra,” she replied, going on with her baking. “Ay, you’ll have got it at last just as the meenister has warned ye time and again. Ducks swimmin’ in the oat-field, indeed! Na, na, Andra—the ducks you’ve seen are swimmin’ in the whusky you’ve been drinkin’. It’s a judgment on ye.”

Andrew groaned, and staggered from the kitchen. He knew well that he had taken more than was good for him, and he asked himself with horror if the minister’s warning of delirium tremens might have come true at last. But in his half-drunken condition he conceived the idea of putting the matter to test, and, taking down his gun from the wall, he staggered forth and made for the two-acre field.

“Ducks,” he muttered to himself. “Ay, there’s ducks right enough and every yin of them a double duck, sae far as I can see. Ay, and there’s men there and every yin of them a double man. Double or single, A’ll test it. A’ll let fly wi’ baith barrels into the midst o’ them. If they’re ducks they’ll flee, if they’re men they’ll rin. If they dinna flee and dinna rin, then they’re no there, and Andrew McTochies’s got the D.Ts. at last. Ay, that’s what it comes to.”

So communing with himself, Mr. McTochies staggered deviously towards the phantom lake.

Such is the spirit of comradeship which all true sport inspires in its devotees, that Lord Kilbagie was chatting amicably with the carter, from whom he had just borrowed a wax vesta to light his cheroot, when the conversation was suddenly interrupted by Turner, who in the excitement of the moment fell into old military habits and, drawing himself stiffly to attention, saluted smartly as he addressed the General, the Earl of Kilbagie.

“Beg pardon, sir,” said Turner, “but I fear that we are about to come under fire from the field on the left.”

The startled Earl looked up and saw the drunken figure
of McTochie brandishing a gun and shouting what sounded like threats.

"Good Lord!" said the Earl. "The man's drunk."

"Ay, he's fou'," said the carter, "and he means mischief wi' that gun."

"Tut, tut," said his lordship. "He'd never dare to shoot."

"When Andra's fou' there's no sayin' whit he wouldn'a dae, ma loard," said the carter earnestly. "We's best all git aneath the brig till we see whit he does."

Now, his lordship had just struck the wax match when the carter thus addressed him, and as he listened and stared at the advancing figure of McTochie, he dropped it with a hasty exclamation. In the excitement of the moment no one noticed that it had fallen close to the end of the fuse, and Grant and Turner, adding their advice to that of the carter, half persuaded and half dragged Lord Kilbagie across the road and under the shelter of the bridge, where they were concealed from the advancing McTochie. That worthy, who had been engaged looking to the loading of his gun, saw with astonishment when he raised his eyes again that those figures which he had taken for solid men had vanished from the face of the earth. His knees shook beneath him with horror.

"Vanished clean aff the airth," he muttered. "Ay, maybe they wisna there, but they bluidy double ducks is still there, swimmin' aboot whaur me oats wis growin'. A'll test them at ony rate."

And raising his gun he took unsteady aim and discharged both barrels. The shots flew wide over their mark. The ducks remained undisturbed, but almost simultaneously with the discharge of the gun a dull roar smote upon McTochie's ears, and he saw rising, apparently out of the burn, a dark column of smoke and flame, mingled with flying fragments of stone and wood.

For the moment he stood transfixed. Then, casting down his gun, he gave a yell of horror, turned about, and fled. Running as fast as his condition would permit, he avoided his own house and did not stop till he burst through the gates of the manse and appeared before the astonished minister, imploring in a faint voice that he might be permitted to sign the pledge immediately. The minister did not pause to inquire into the cause of this signal act of grace. In two minutes Andrew had signed his name; and it may be recorded
here that from that moment he was a reformed character and never touched drink again.

We must now return to the group sheltering beneath the bridge. Their first impression was that McTochie had somehow contrived to fire a six-inch shell from his gun. Then they saw the dam go up in the air and a wave of yellow water descending upon them. It was just at that moment that the Baronet had at last succeeded in getting "a grup" upon the gills of the elusive eel; but before he or any of the others could collect their senses the wave hit the bridge, foamed through it, and emerged on the other side, bearing with it the struggling figures of General the Earl of Kilbagie, Sir John Blanecapple, Mr. Peter Grant, O.B.E., the eminent financier, Turner, and the carter.

As the others gradually stranded, they saw borne past them on the flood the form of Blanecapple, submerged save for one arm which brandished, like another Excalibur, a struggling eel, firmly gripped by the gills between finger and thumb. As the Baronet's dripping and portly figure arose from the subsiding waters, the eely mind apparently conceived the idea that now or never must a blow be struck for liberty. And as the Baronet began a triumphal shout of "I've got the beggar!" the eel with one dexterous twist fastened itself securely round his neck, choking further utterance.

"Holy Moses! Oh, holy Moses—for God's sake, you fellows, take this thing off!" shrieked Blanecapple, relaxing his grip in the horror of the moment.

But the others were now rolling about on the bank paralysed with laughter, which was not lessened when the eel, seeing an open mouth before its eyes, promptly sought refuge by inserting its head therein.

With a wild shriek Blanecapple cast the slimy thing from him, and it disappeared down the current of the Wimple, where it may be living happily to this day.

Peter Grant mopped his eyes at last and said, still weak with laughter: "What a day! I've enjoyed nothing so much since I was a kid, or my name is not Peter Grant."

Kilbagie and Blanecapple stared at him.

"Peter Grant!" they gasped simultaneously.

"Yes," said Peter. "Fact is, I came down here to talk it all over with you two!"

"To talk it over!" said the Earl of Kilbagie.

S.C.H.
"To talk it over!" said Blanecapple.
"Yes," said Peter, "to talk it over."
"Talk it over lunch at Kilbagie, you mean," said his lordship after a moment.
"Not a bad idea," said the Baronet. And Peter agreed.
THE DOG THAT BIT PEOPLE

JAMES THURBER
James Thurber is one of the leading spirits of that inimitable American magazine *The New Yorker*. He made his name as an illustrator when he did the drawings for *Is Sex Necessary*, and later increased his public by publishing *Seal in the Bedoom* and *My Life and Hard Times*, from which the following amusing extract is taken.
THE DOG THAT BIT PEOPLE

PROBABLY no one man should have as many dogs in his life as I have had, but there was more pleasure than distress in them for me except in the case of an Airedale named Muggs. He gave me more trouble than all the other fifty-four or -five put together, although my moment of keenest embarrassment was the time a Scotch-terrier named Jeannie, who had just had six puppies in the clothes-closet of a fourth-floor apartment in New York, had the unexpected seventh and last at the corner of Eleventh Street and Fifth Avenue during a walk she had insisted on taking. Then, too, there was the prize-winning French poodle, a great big black poodle—none of your little, untroublesome white miniatures—who got sick riding in the rumble-seat of a car with me on her way to the Greenwich Dog Show. She had a red rubber bib tucked around her throat and, since a rain-storm came up when we were half way through the Bronx, I had to hold over her a small green umbrella, really more of a parasol. The rain beat down fearfully and suddenly the driver of the car drove into a big garage filled with mechanics. It happened so quickly that I forgot to put the umbrella down, and I will always remember, with sickening distress, the look of incredulity mixed with hatred that came over the face of the particular hardened garage-man that came over to see what we wanted, when he took a look at me and the poodle. All garage-men, and people of that intolerant stripe, hate poodles with their curious hair-cut, especially the pom-poms that you got to leave on their hips if you expect the dogs to win a prize.

But the Airedale, as I have said, was the worst of all my dogs. He really wasn’t my dog, as a matter of fact: I came home from a vacation one summer to find that my brother Roy had bought him while I was away. A big, burly, choleric dog, he always acted as if he thought I wasn’t one of the family. There was a slight advantage in being one of the
family, for he didn’t bite the family as often as he bit strangers. Still, in the years that we had him he bit everybody but mother, and he made a pass at her once but missed. That was during the month when we suddenly had mice, and Muggs refused to do anything about them. Nobody ever had mice exactly like the mice we had that month. They acted like pet mice, almost like mice somebody had trained. They were so friendly that one night when mother entertained at dinner the Frizaliras, a club she and my father had belonged to for twenty years, she put down a lot of little dishes with food in them on the pantry floor so that the mice would be satisfied with that and wouldn’t come into the dining-room. Muggs stayed out in the pantry with the mice, lying on the floor, growling to himself—not at the mice, but about all the people in the next room that he would have liked to get at. Mother slipped out into the pantry once to see how everything was going. Everything was going fine. It made her so mad to see Muggs lying there, oblivious of the mice—they came running up to her—that she slapped him and he slashed at her, but didn’t make it. He was sorry immediately, mother said. He was always sorry, she said, after he bit someone, but we could not understand how she figured this out. He didn’t act sorry.

Mother used to send a box of candy every Christmas to the people the Airedale bit. The list finally contained forty or more names. Nobody could understand why we didn’t get rid of the dog. I didn’t understand it very well myself, but we didn’t get rid of him. I think that one or two people tried to poison Muggs—he acted poisoned once in a while—and old Major Moberly fired at him once with his Service revolver near the Seneca Hotel in East Broad Street—but Muggs lived to be almost eleven years old and even when he could hardly get around he bit a Congressman who had called to see my father on business. My mother had never liked the Congressman—she said the signs of his horoscope showed he couldn’t be trusted (he was Saturn with the moon in Virgo)—but she sent him a box of candy that Christmas. He sent it back, probably because he suspected it was trick candy. Mother persuaded herself it was all for the best that the dog had bitten him, even though father lost an important business association because of it. “I wouldn’t be associated with such a man,” mother said. “Muggs could read him like a book.”

We used to take turns feeding Muggs to be on his good side
but that didn’t always work. He was never in a very good humour, even after a meal. Nobody knew exactly what was the matter with him, but whatever it was it made him irascible, especially in the mornings. Roy never felt very well in the morning, either, especially before breakfast, and once when he came downstairs and found that Muggs had moodily chewed up the morning paper he hit him in the face with a grapefruit and then jumped up on the dining-room table, scattering dishes and silverware and spilling the coffee. Muggs’ first free leap carried him all the way across the table and into a brass firescreen in front of the gas-grate; but he was back on his feet in a moment and in the end he got Roy and gave him a pretty vicious bite in the leg. Then he was all over it; he never bit anyone more than once at a time. Mother always mentioned that as an argument in his favour; she said he had a quick temper, but that he didn’t hold a grudge. She was for ever defending him. I think she liked him because he wasn’t well. “He’s not strong,” she would say pityingly, but that was inaccurate. He may not have been well, but he was terribly strong.

One time my mother went to the Chittenden Hotel to call on a woman mental healer who was lecturing in Columbus on the subject of “Harmonious Vibrations”. She wanted to find out if it was possible to get harmonious vibrations into a dog. “He’s a large tan-coloured Airedale,” mother explained. The woman said that she had never treated a dog, but she advised my mother to hold the thought that he did not bite and would not bite. Mother was holding the thought the very next morning when Muggs got the ice-man, but she blamed that slip-up on the ice-man.

“If you didn’t think he would bite you, he wouldn’t,” mother told him. He stomped out of the house in a terrible jangle of vibrations.

One morning when Muggs bit me slightly, more or less in passing, I reached down and grabbed his short stumpy tail and hoisted him into the air. It was a foolhardy thing to do and the last time I saw my mother, about six months ago, she said she didn’t know what possessed me. I don’t either, except that I was pretty mad. As long as I held the dog off the floor by his tail he couldn’t get at me, but he twisted and jerked so, snarling all the time, that I realized I couldn’t hold him that way very long. I carried him to the kitchen and
flung him on to the floor and shut the door on him just as he crashed against it. But I forgot about the back stairs. Muggs went up the back stairs and down the front stairs and had me cornered in the living-room. I managed to get up on to the mantelpiece above the fireplace, but it gave way and came down with a tremendous crash, throwing a large marble clock, several vases, and myself heavily to the floor. Muggs was so alarmed by the racket that when I picked myself up he had disappeared. We couldn't find him anywhere, although we whistled and shouted, until old Mrs. Detweiler called after dinner that night. Muggs had bitten her once, in the leg, and she came into the living-room only after we assured her that Muggs had run away. She had just seated herself when, with a great growling and scratching of claws, Muggs emerged from under a davenport where he had been quietly hiding all the time, and bit her again. Mother examined the bite and put arnica on it and told Mrs. Detweiler that it was only a bruise. "He just bumped you," she said. But Mrs. Detweiler left the house in a nasty state of mind.

Lots of people reported our Airedale to the police, but my father held a municipal office at the time and was on friendly terms with the police. Even so, the cops had been out a couple of times—once when Muggs bit Mrs. Rufus Sturtevant and again when he bit Lieutenant-Governor Malloy—but mother told them that it hadn't been Muggs' fault, but the fault of the people who were bitten. "When he starts for them, they scream," she explained, "and that excites him." The cops suggested that it might be a good idea to tie the dog up, but mother said that it mortified him to be tied up and that he wouldn't eat when he was tied up.

Muggs at his meals was an unusual sight. Because of the fact that if you reached towards the floor he would bite you, we usually put his food-plate on top of an old kitchen table with a bench alongside it. Muggs would stand on the bench and eat. I remember that my mother's Uncle Horatio, who boasted that he was the third man up Missionary Ridge, was splutteringly indignant when he found out that we fed the dog on a table because we were afraid to put his plate on the floor. He said he wasn't afraid of any dog that ever lived and that he would put the dog's plate on the floor if we would give it to him. Roy said that if Uncle Horatio had fed Muggs on the ground just before the battle he would have been the
first man up Missionary Ridge. Uncle Horatio was furious. “Bring him in! Bring him in now!” he shouted. “I’ll feed the —— on the floor!” Roy was all for giving him a chance, but my father wouldn’t hear of it. He said that Muggs had already been fed. “I’ll feed him again!” bawled Uncle Horatio. We had quite a time quieting him.

In his last year Muggs used to spend practically all of his time outdoors. He didn’t like to stay in the house for some reason or other—perhaps it held too many unpleasant memories for him. Anyway, it was hard to get him to come in and as a result the garbage-man, the ice-man, and the laundry-man wouldn’t come near the house. We had to haul the garbage down to the corner, take the laundry out and bring it back and meet the ice-man a block from home. After this had gone on for some time we hit on an ingenious arrangement for getting the dog in the house so that we could lock him up while the gas-meter was read, and so on. Muggs was afraid of only one thing—an electrical storm. Thunder and lightning frightened him out of his senses (I think he thought a storm had broken the day the mantelpiece fell). He would rush into the house and hide under a bed or in a clothes-closet. So we fixed up a thunder machine out of a long narrow piece of sheet-iron with a wooden handle on one end. Mother would shake this vigorously when she wanted to get Muggs into the house. It made an excellent imitation of thunder, but I suppose it was the most roundabout system for running a household that was ever devised. It took a lot out of mother.

A few months before Muggs died, he got to “seeing things”. He would rise slowly from the floor, growling low, and stalk stiff-legged and menacing towards nothing at all. Sometimes the Thing would be just a little to the right or left of a visitor. Once a Fuller Brush salesman got hysterics. Muggs came wandering into the room like Hamlet following his father’s ghost. His eyes were fixed on a spot just to the left of the Fuller Brush man, who stood it until Muggs was about three slow, creeping paces from him. Then he shouted. Muggs wavered on past him into the hall-way grumbling to himself, but the Fuller man went on shouting. I think mother had to throw a pan of cold water on him before he stopped. That was the way she used to stop us boys when we got into fights.

Muggs died quite suddenly one night. Mother wanted to
bury him in the family-lot under a marble stone with some such inscription as "Flights of angels sing thee to thy rest", but we persuaded her it was against the law. In the end we just put up a smooth board above his grave along a lonely road. On the board I wrote with an indelible pencil, "Cave Canem". Mother was quite pleased with the simple classic dignity of the old Latin epitaph.
J. D. Beresford (b. 1873) has written, in all, forty-five books. The majority of his novels are touched by a sense of humour, but it is in some of his short stories that he exhibits at its best the irresponsibly light-hearted vein of humour displayed in the story selected for this volume. His first novel was published in 1911; his latest, so far,
ALLIED INTERESTS

JOE WHITLOCK was looked upon as being rather a mug by the members of the office fast set. He did not drink, he did not bet, never went to night-clubs or even a dance-hall, treated all the typists as if they were his maiden aunts, and—so it was rumoured—spent two evenings a week at a boys' club in the East End. Nevertheless, these failings were partly balanced by his athletics, seeing that he was an uncommonly useful member of the office cricket, rowing, and tennis clubs, and a good middle-weight boxer. Hilary West, who was the unquestioned leader of the set that did all the things Joe didn't, pursed his lips over him, shrugged his shoulders, and said that Joe probably had some rotten complex or other, but might be cured if some girl got hold of him—a suggestion that at least a dozen of the typists were always trying to carry into effect, without the least success.

And when one evening a girl did get hold of him, it was not at all in the manner anticipated by Hilary West or anyone else.

Everyone had been working late that evening. The City had been full of rumours all day—chief among them that "Allied Interests, Ltd.," was going phut—and the Stock Exchange had been suffering from a bad fit of nerves. As a consequence, Joe did not leave the office until after seven o'clock, dined lightly on a couple of poached eggs at a café in Leadenhall Street, and, seeing no chance of any other exercise, decided to walk home.

He lived with his mother and an unmarried sister in Willesden, and about a quarter past eight he was passing through one of those respectably disreputable streets that lie round about Marylebone Station. Many of the houses in this neighbourhood have been cut up into cheap but incommodious flats, and it was from the basement of one of these, by way of the area steps, that the figure of the "girl" rather curiously emerged.
Joe saw her head, when he was still some twenty yards away, pushed up just above the level of the stone kerb that supported the dilapidated iron railings, and watching his approach with an effect of nervous tensity. It was not, even at that distance, an attractive head, presenting as its salient features a shabby old cloche hat rammed well down, tortoise-shell-rimmed tinted spectacles and a very large nose—the sort of head that the gayest Lothario would have passed without a second glance.

Certainly Joe’s steady observation of this odd figure was not due to its attractiveness, his attention as he approached being held not by the lure of beauty but by the strangeness of the lady’s behaviour. She was obviously in two minds about something, looking first at Joe and then up and down the almost empty street, while she first came up a few steps and then hastily ducked down again, only deciding when Joe was within two yards of her to emerge finally and suddenly on to the pavement in front of him.

He was swerving to avoid her when she eagerly caught him by the arm. “Oh, I say!” she said, in a low, anxious voice. “Do you mind if I walk to the end of the street with you?”

Joe did mind. He didn’t like the look of the girl at all. He could see now that she was terribly “made up”, that great nose particularly being thick with powder. But he had never in all his life been rude to a woman, and was still hesitating in his search for a polite excuse when the grasp that was still being maintained on his arm spasmodically tightened, and the low, anxious voice continued, “Oh, please! Quick!”

The only cause Joe could see for this new urgency was the distant approach of a man in a bowler hat who was coming towards them, staring attentively at every house, and looking down into the areas with an effect of being in a great hurry that was tiresomely impeded by his fear of missing something or someone.

“Quick!” the voice repeated even more urgently; and Joe, still seeking the right words for a delicate refusal of the queer request, found himself a moment later being led at an unexpectedly deliberate pace along Upper Drake Street with a suddenly loquacious woman companion leaning intimately upon his arm.

“But, my dear old thing,” she was saying, in a voice that
had now sprung up an octave to an unpleasant shrillness, "there'll be nothing on earth to do if we go home. Why not look in for an hour or two at the Palace in the Edgware Road? They've got rather a good programme this week." By this time they were nearly up to the man in the bowler hat, who was staring at the strange woman with an intentness that her attractions did not warrant; and her voice was a trifle more strident even than before as she continued: "After all, I didn't marry you to sit at home seven evenings a week. And there's no reason that I can see why we shouldn't have a little pleasure now and then. It's no good pretending that we can't afford it, is it, now? Oh, do say something, instead of walking along like an I-don't-know-what. One would think I'd asked you to take me to the Ritz or something instead of..."

Her voice fell slowly in pitch after they had passed the inquisitive stranger, and Joe was aware that she was with great difficulty checking a strong impulse to quicken her pace. He had realized by now that the poor thing was quite mad and was wondering what he ought to do about it. Could one, for instance, go up to the first policeman one met, say, "This lady is dangerously insane," and give her in charge? He was rejecting that means of escape as at once cowardly and discourteous when she spoke again, this time on her lower register, which was distinctly pleasing and musical.

"I say, could you just look over your shoulder and see whether he's following us?" she said.

Joe felt that he was committing himself to an alliance into which he had no wish to enter, but did as he was asked. "He's standing still, looking after us," he reported.

"Oh, God! He's probably guessed. Come on," the strange lady commented, in that engaging lower voice of hers, and now very noticeably quickened her pace. "Look round again when we reach the Marylebone Road," she continued, "and if he's following us we must just bolt for the nearest taxi..."

All very well, of course; but if this fellow was her keeper or something, had he any right to aid and abet her in making an escape? Joe reflected. And the more he considered that, as with the madwoman still embracing his arm, they scurried on the verge of a run for the Marylebone Road, the more certain he became that he wanted to have nothing more to do
with her—which how he was to free himself without physical violence he did not know.

Unfortunately the luck was all against him, for as they reached the end of Drake Street he looked round again to find that the man in the bowler hat was coming after them at a run, and Fate—who surely should have known better—had stopped a taxi right in front of them at the near kerb.

“Quick, quick; get in!” the madwoman urged him; and Joe, momentarily hypnotized into sharing her fear of pursuit, dived into the taxi as if the police were after him, followed precipitously by the lady with the large nose, who hardly paused to fling the direction, “Anywhere, only go like hell!” to the cheerfully acquiescent driver.

Joe’s last hope of being rescued at that moment rested with the lady’s pursuer. He was coming up Drake Street at a fine pace, and when he saw the evidence of a proposed flight by taxi, cried out fiercely to the driver to stop, following that with what Joe understood to be a desperate though distinctly breathless appeal addressed to “Miss Harrison”. And if the driver had hesitated, all might still have been well for Joe—who would greatly have preferred the charge of being concerned in the abduction of a lunatic to the further prosecution of that repulsive task. But the driver, either because he was an accomplice posted there for the purpose or because he had some misguided notion of sportsmanship, got off the mark and into top gear with a despatch that spoke well both for his engine and his own skill.

After that there was for the time being not a solitary hope for Joe. The streets were comparatively empty at that time of the evening, and the taxi-driver—who had evidently entered into the spirit of the escape—got across the Edgware Road into Oxford and Cambridge Terrace without a check, and from there his way was clear to plunge at top speed into the desolate heart of Bayswater.

They were in the neighbourhood of Leinster Gardens before a single word was exchanged between the mad lady and Joe. Immediately on entering the taxi she had sat forward and buried her nose in her hands, and Joe was for a time too deep in the consideration of how to disentangle himself from this ghastly escapade to attempt conversation.

It was, indeed, the lady who first broke into speech. She dropped her hands, sat up, did something with a very small
handkerchief under the tinted glasses which so effectively concealed her eyes, and then said, "I'm sure I don't know what you can think of me."

There was, as a matter of fact, only one thing Joe could think; but he didn't care to say it—more particularly when his ugly companion spoke in that soft, appealing voice.

"Well, it's a bit unusual, all this, of course," he replied stiffly, turning his shoulder to her and gazing steadfastly out of the window.

"Unusual!" She gave a little sniff that had a sound of despair in it; but Joe did not turn round. He was afraid to give her the least encouragement. Heaven only knew what she might do next if he showed the least sign of friendliness. He had heard that these repulsively ugly women, who were debarred by nature from the love and admiration of men, sometimes . . . But never mind that.

"If you only knew how unusual," she continued, raising her voice a trifle to make herself heard above the multitudinous noises of the racing taxi, and added, "But you do realize, surely, that I must have been pretty desperate to accost a perfect stranger like that?"

Joe found that when he was not looking at her her voice and words sounded not only rational, but quite distinctly appealing. He knew that he could dispense that illusion at any moment by just turning round, but he preferred the dream to the reality. He had a queer feeling that if the lady with the nose had had an altogether different appearance, this horrible escapade might have been rather good fun.

"Oh yes, I suppose there must have been some reason for it," he admitted, with a weak inclination to persuade himself that she might not, after all, be so very mad.

"There was," she affirmed, with the suggestion of a break in that persuasive voice. "The truth is that I was—still am, I suppose—in a beastly mess—a jolly dangerous mess too, I'm afraid."

Joe stiffened slightly, and pulled himself together. This was obviously no time for dreaming. Before he knew where he was, she'd have made up some pathetic story and be dragging him into this dangerous mess, whatever it was. Well, there was an obvious defence against any temptation to become weak and sentimental. All he had to do was to look at her, and the sooner the better.
But when he applied this drastic remedy he did not find quite what he had expected. The cloche hat was in the lady’s lap with her tinted spectacles inside it, revealing dark hair that came back from a low forehead with a deliciously pretty wave; and her eyes were brown and bright, yet with an effect of tenderness that may have been due to the thickness of the curly black lashes.

Joe blinked and concentrated his gaze fiercely on that gaunt and shapeless projection of the nose, the only parallel to which, that he had ever seen, was in the case of an old man suffering from acromegaly.

The lady blushed brightly through her make-up and hid the horrid excrescence with her hands. “Don’t,” she pleaded. “I’m sorry,” Joe apologized, and dropped his eyes.

“And, after all, it didn’t work,” the lady lamented. “Miller must have known me. I suppose the truth is that I overdid it. Oh, curse the thing!” And with that the lady unhappily went mad again, starting most horribly to pinch large lumps out of her nose and throw them on the floor of the taxi.

Joe stared in a paralysis of horror and dismay, and with an expression of such utter bewilderment that the lady paused in her awful act of self-laceration, to say, with a little gurgle of laughter, “It’s only ‘nasanket’, you know. The wax they use on the stage and in the films for make-up. Oh, have you got such a thing as a decent-sized handkerchief? Now I’ve made a start I may as well get clean again.”

Joe had a handkerchief, proffered it, and then—with a strong presentiment that whatever mess this girl was in he was going to be in too, up to the neck—watched the final transfiguration of the repulsive figure that had accosted him in Upper Drake Street into quite the most attractive young woman he had ever spoken to. Even the gestures with which, leaning forward to examine herself in the narrow mirror of the taxi, she removed the last signs of theatrical make-up from her face, were deliciously feminine and thrilling.

“You see,” she explained, as she deftly pinched and then wiped away the last signs of the horrid disfigurement she had used to conceal a dear little nose that was admirably in keeping with the rest of her features, “the friend I’ve just gone to share a flat with is on the films, and if she’d been at home she’d have made me up properly. But I’m only a ghastly amateur; and I can see now that anyone as sharp as Miller is would see
through it—though it took him just long enough as it was to give us a start, didn’t it? I think my talk put him off; don’t you? I really did do that rather well, although I have made such a ghastly muddle of all the rest of the business. I lost my head, of course. But who wouldn’t?"

"Who wouldn’t?" Joe echoed helplessly, watching the now almost perfectly reconstructed Miss Harrison.

"You see," she explained, knitting her brows and apparently talking as much for her own benefit as for his, "my first idea was to make a bolt for home and talk it over with Nora—that’s the friend I’ve just gone to share a flat with. And when I found a note from her saying she’d been called to a rehearsal and probably wouldn’t be back until the small hours, I began to think. At first I kidded myself it would be all right, because I’d just moved in and they hadn’t got my new address at the office, and then I remembered that I’d pointed the place out to Clara Day—she’s one of our girls—about a week ago, and that though she’d almost certainly have forgotten the number she’d be sure to remember the sort of curtains we’d got and things like that; and it was a dead cert that Mr. Flescherman would get on to it as soon as he’d heard I’d done a bolt.

"And then," she continued, returning a very soiled handkerchief to Joe and looking appealingly in his face, "I got panicky. Frightfully panicky. (I shouldn’t wipe my face with that, if I were you; some of it may come off.) So I decided to disguise myself and go and tell the whole story to one of the directors. Really, I did think that out rather well—because, you see, if I’d just gone to Lord Flitmore’s house and Mr. Flescherman or someone from the office happened to be there, I’d probably be in the soup. You follow all that, don’t you?"

"Yes. Oh yes, I think so," Joe said. "Only what——"

"Only then, I must admit, my nerve went a bit," Miss Harrison went on, overlooking the suggestion of Joe’s tentative question. "And when I saw you coming you looked so solid and trustworthy somehow that I thought you wouldn’t mind coming with me to the end of the street. I felt, you know, as if I must have someone to protect me. Idiotic, of course, but I am a fool! I am, really Mr. Flescherman’s told me so heaps of times."

"I say, by the way," Joe put in, "is that Oscar Flescherman of——"
But his question was interrupted by the action of the taxi-driver who, looking dangerously over his shoulder, made a brief but pregnant gesture rearward.

"Oh God! We're being followed!" exclaimed Miss Harrison in a tone of anguish, looking out of the back window. "That's Miller, of course. I might have known he'd pick up our tracks somehow. Now what shall we do?"

Joe, getting one eye to the backflap in thrilling proximity to the dark hair that grew so prettily from Miss Harrison's forehead, had to admit that it certainly did look as if they were being chased. They were passing through the remote silences of Holland Park now, but heading straight for Shepherd's Bush, where even at this time of the evening there would inevitably be too much traffic to maintain their present headlong speed. But before he could proffer any advice there was at least one thing he must know.

"Look here, Miss Harrison," he said, "who is Miller?"

"The office sleuth," she said. "He does all kinds of dirty work for us, and he's most frightfully cute. I guessed they'd put him on to me."

"But why, exactly, are you running away?" Joe persisted.

"Oh, that's a long story!" was the evasive reply. "We shall be caught long before I could explain all that."

"But—but you haven't—done anything?" Joe stammered.

"Oh, haven't I just!" returned Miss Harrison with an expressive droop of her mouth.

"Dangerous?" Joe asked anxiously; but at that moment the driver of their taxi suddenly jammed on his brakes with a violence that threw the unprepared occupants on to the floor of the cab, and all the answer Joe received was the beginning of another grimace that hinted at something very dangerous indeed.

There was no accident, though there ought to have been, for one of those many idiotic people who ought to have their licences cancelled had swerved at twenty miles an hour out of a side-turning without even a solitary toot of warning, and by the time Joe and Miss Harrison had ruefully picked themselves up, Mr. Miller was alongside, had leapt out of his own taxi and opened the door of theirs.

"Now, really, Miss Harrison," he was saying, "what is the meaning of all this?"
For answer the lady addressed looked up at Joe, put her hand on his arm, and with a piteous look and something very like a whimper said, "You won't leave me, will you?"

"Rather not!" returned Joe valiantly. He had always before been horribly shy in women's company, but on this most unusual occasion he felt as bold as a lion.

"I don't think we've met before," Miller continued, turning to Joe. "Won't you introduce us, Miss Harrison?"

"My name is Joseph Whitlock," Joe put in promptly to save Miss Harrison the embarrassment of confessing that she didn't know his name. He was prepared, was in fact quite eager, to be rude to Mr. Miller, to whom he had taken a violent dislike. He had summed him up at once as one of those clever fellows who can never run straight—a type with which he was familiar in embryo at his East End boys' club.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Whitlock," commented Miller dryly. "And now, Miss Harrison, are you going to be sensible and come back with me to Mr. Flescherman's?"

"Oh, not likely!" returned Miss Harrison with a shiver of horror.

By this time the two taxi-drivers had got down and were listening with evident enjoyment. One or two casual passers-by had materialized out of what had been an apparently empty street, and the group was finally completed by a deliberate policeman, who strolled up as if he knew they were all waiting for him, and opened the new movement by saying: "Now, then, what's all this?"

It was Miller who answered him with just a hint of suavity. "Nothing serious, officer. Only an employee who has made a slight error of judgment and refuses to put it right."

"The man or the woman?" the policeman demanded, peering into the taxi in which Joe and Miss Harrison still sat side by side.

"The woman—Miss Eva Harrison—employed by 'Allied Interests' as stenographer and typist," Mr. Miller said. "She left the office early without permission this evening, and Mr. Flescherman, the chairman of the company, sent me to find her as she is needed in connection with a very urgent inquiry."

The policeman had automatically pulled out his note-book when Miller began his recital, and he now made a note by the light of the street lamp of the numbers of the two taxi-drivers
before putting his head again to the window of the taxi and saying: "Well, miss, why don't you go?"

"Oh, I couldn't!" Miss Harrison explained, and slipped her hand into Joe's with an entreatying pressure that said again quite clearly, "You won't leave me, will you?"

"And where do you come in, if I may ask?" the policeman continued, looking at Joe, who on the inspiration of the moment rose to heights that even Hilary West might have balked at and said: "Miss Harrison and I are engaged to be married."

What he was committing himself to he did not know. It might be to complicity in that dangerous something which Miss Harrison had done, a something that might, he was beginning to be sorely afraid, land her (and him) in a police-cell. But the sudden ecstatic squeeze of the little hand that applauded his splendid lie seemed to him just then a reward that would have braced him to face penal servitude without regret.

"Oh, are you!" remarked the policeman, with perhaps the faintest tinge of envy in his voice. "Well, I don't see as I can do anything."

But in the interval Mr. Miller had been thinking, and now took a fresh hold of the situation by saying: "Well, no, not perhaps at present, officer. All the same, unless this young lady comes to her senses pretty quick, I may need your help."

"How's that?" the policeman asked, reopening his notebook.

"Well, there is a pretty strong suspicion against her," Mr. Miller continued, looking very straightly at Miss Harrison, "of being involved in certain defalcations in the company's petty-cash accounts."

"Defalcations, eh?" the constable commented with a low whistle.

"Yes," Mr. Miller replied firmly, "and although I bring no charge against her at present, I can only repeat that she would be well advised, from every point of view, to come with me to Mr. Flescherman's private house."

"It's all lies, you know," Miss Harrison put in, addressing the policeman. "I've never had anything whatever to do with the petty cash."

"Then might I ask, Miss Harrison," snapped Mr. Miller in a very nasty voice, "why you disguised yourself in a false nose and spectacles, dashed into a taxi when I tried to speak to
you, and raced half across London before I could catch you?"

"Disguise!" murmured the constable, pushing his face right into the taxi. "That ain't a false nose you got now, anyway."

"Here! I call this man as a witness," said Mr. Miller, laying his hand on the policeman's shoulder in the effort to disengage his attention from Miss Harrison's nose.

"Where did you pick up the fare, then?" the policeman inquired, reluctantly withdrawing from the taxi to cross-examine Joe's driver.

"Top o' Drake Street," was the reply. "I'd just set down my last fare when I see the two of 'em comin' up the street in rather a 'urry with another feller, this one 'ere, I suppose it was, runnin' after 'em. Well, the young lady pushes the young feller—'im in there, and I don't blame 'im neither—into the cab and says to me, 'Get on, like 'ell, anywhere', or words to that effect, so I got on."

"And was the young lady disguised?" put in Mr. Miller sharply.

The driver took off his cap, scratched his head, gave a glance into his taxi, and then said with the air of one who is conscious of a slight disloyalty but does not want to have his licence endorsed, "Not 'alf she wasn't. She 'ad a beak on her like the old Dook o' Wellington, and naturally supposin' it was some kind of elopement, I thought to meself as if I were in the young feller's place I'd have let the husband or whatever he was catch me. 'Ad the surprise of me life when I see 'er first like she is now."

"Well, officer, are you convinced?" Mr. Miller demanded.

"It looks uncommon suspicious, I must say," the policeman admitted with a reproachful glance in the direction of the taxi.

"Well, now, Miss Harrison," Miller said firmly, coming back to the window, "don't you think that you'd better be sensible and come with me?"

But a change had come over Miss Harrison in the last minute. She had released Joe's hand. She was sitting forward with an effect of having seen her way out, and her eyes were very bright as she leaned boldly out of the window and said to the policeman: "Look here, you! What'll you do if I say that nothing would ever induce me to go with this man?"
“Might have to charge you, you know,” he said.  
“Take me to the police-station?” she demanded eagerly.  
“That’s it.”

“Oh God! What a little fool I am!” Miss Harrison exclaimed. “What a fool! Why ever didn’t I think of that before!” Then with an effect of making tardy reparation she turned back to Joe and added, “Of course you’ll come too?”

“Me? Oh, rather!” Joe assented in the cheerful voice of one who had been invited to a jolly party.

It was Mr. Miller only who seemed to disapprove of the new proposition. “Now, now, Miss Harrison, don’t lose your head,” he urged her. “If you’ll come with me, I can give you Mr. Flescherman’s guarantee that you won’t lose by it. You can guess what I mean,” he went on, thrusting his head right through the window and dropping his voice to a whisper. “Play your cards properly, you little fool, and you’re made for life.”

“What a hope!” returned Miss Harrison, shrinking away from Miller to the great advantage of Joe, who could not have avoided this delightful pressure even if he had wanted to do such an unlikely thing, and added: “No, thanks, Mr. Miller. I may be a fool, I’m always being told so, but I’m not such a fool as all that.”

“Well, you’ve damned well got to!” snarled Miller, who was fast losing his temper.

And then Miss Harrison had her second bright idea of the evening. “Hit him, Joe,” she whispered, being at the moment in an ideal position for whispering. “Hit him hard, and then they’ll have to run us in.”

To which instruction Joe, ordinarily the most peaceable of men, but just then in a condition of the wildest exhilaration, responded with a promptitude that did more credit to his physical training than to his good sense. He did not, it is true, hit Mr. Miller’s ugly face as hard as he would have liked to do, because he was considerably involved by the charming person of Miss Harrison, but he hit it hard enough to knock it completely out of the taxi.

It was the policeman who saved Mr. Miller from falling backwards on to the pavement. “Well, you got ’em now, all right,” he advised him, not without a hint of regret in his voice. “Charge of assault and battery, and I’m a witness.”

“Oh, all right!” Mr. Miller growled savagely, stanching the
blood that was beginning to flow from his nose. "Where's the nearest police-station?"

"Shepherd's Bush. Not more'n half a mile," the policeman told him. "I'd better go in the taxi with 'em. You can follow us in the other."

Whereat the two drivers awoke with an air of new alertness to the call of duty, and within thirty seconds the first taxi was under way again, obviously to the intense disappointment of the large crowd of onlookers that had been steadily accumulating for the past ten minutes.

The short drive to the police-station was accomplished in silence. The policeman, sitting stiffly erect on the lift-up seat, had no doubt official reasons for keeping quiet, and Joe, now that the inevitable goal of the evening's entertainment was in full sight, was just beginning to wonder if he had not after all justified Hilary West's opinion and proved himself rather a mug. Heaven alone knew what he had let himself in for, and what his mother and sister, not to mention his chief at the office, would say if he were charged with, at the best, an unprovoked assault on the innocent Mr. Miller, and at the worst, as being an accomplice to a young woman who had done, well, "something dangerous."

The taxi drew up on the off-side of the road and Joe was the first to get out. He had the taxi to pay, did it generously with a ten-shilling note, and received the driver's cheery blessing. Then he turned back to find the policeman and Miss Harrison standing on the pavement, but as yet no sign of Mr. Miller.

"Funny thing," commented the policeman. "I took it for granted he was follering."

"Following? Following us, do you mean?" ejaculated Miss Harrison. "Not something likely! He knows better than that. Come on. Let's go inside."

"But I can't take you into custody if there's no one to charge you," the policeman explained.

Miss Harrison's face fell. "Oh, but you must!" she implored. "I—we've given ourselves up."

"You can make a statement to the inspector on duty, of course," the policeman suggested helpfully.

"Oh lord, yes! I never thought of that. Come on. I'll make a statement all right. It's just what I've been wanting to do ever since five o'clock this afternoon."
Miss Harrison’s “statement” to the Inspector, made a few minutes later, had not, however, anything whatever to do with Joe’s assault on Mr. Miller. She prefaced it with the admission that she must be a fool because Mr. Flescherman was always telling her so, but her story did not fully confirm Mr. Flescherman’s opinion.

“I’m in ‘Allied Interests’, you know,” she began, “and this afternoon I had to attend the special Board Meeting that had been called to discuss the question of reconstruction. We’re on the rocks, of course—everyone in the City knows that; but the boss has got a way of pulling things off somehow, and we all thought he might do it again. Only he hasn’t. Well, I ought to tell you to begin with that the boss, Mr. Flescherman, always sits with his hands in front of him on the table when anyone else is speaking, tapping with his fingers, and this afternoon I suddenly noticed that he was talking Morse to someone. I went into the Post Office when I was sixteen, so I’m pretty quick at that game, and I’ll swear he’d never done it before or I should have spotted it. But today, while old Lord Flitmore was insisting that certain accounts of ours must be laid before the Board at the next meeting, I happened to be watching the boss’s hands, and suddenly it came to me that he was spelling out a message, right hand for dot and left for dash. It was as clear as anything if you’re used to Morse. I don’t know what he’d tapped out before I spotted him, but I got ‘All UP. Clear out sharp.’ And then I looked round the Board table and saw that Mr. Hackle and Mr. Parelos were watching his hands too, like cats at a mousehole.

“Well, I’ve told you what a fool I am, and I got so interested that I never thought what I was doing until, after a bit more tapping that didn’t make anything, I found the boss was spelling out my own name, Eva Harrison. Even then I just wondered what was coming until I realized how he was looking at me.”

She paused there and gave a short sigh of dismay. “Phew!” she remarked. “I went cold all over, and when the meeting was finished about half an hour later, and the boss told me to go straight to his room and wait for him there, I fairly got the wind up and did a bolt. Silly, perhaps, but if you knew what the boss is like, I expect you’d have got the wind up too. He’s so clever, I’m scared to death of him. We all are. And when
I realized that he knew I could give him right away if he didn’t do something pretty awful to stop me—well . . . .”

“What do you mean exactly by giving Mr. Flescherman away, Miss Harrison?” the Inspector inquired.

“My goodness, that’s clear enough, isn’t it?” she replied gaily. “He’s been playing hanky with the company and he’s going to clear out sharp for dear old Europe before the next meeting. Now then, please, Mr. Inspector, do you mind locking me up for the night, because, really, I don’t feel that my life’s safe.”

“Very sorry, very sorry indeed, Miss Harrison, but we can’t keep you here,” the Inspector returned sadly. “We’ve got nothing against you, you know.”

Miss Harrison’s mouth drooped, and then her eye fell on Joe, and she brightened up again. “Haven’t you got a mother or something you live with?” she asked hopefully.

“A mother and a sister,” Joe acknowledged.

“Well, couldn’t you . . . ?” she inquired elliptically.

And Joe, after five seconds of intensive thought, nodded his head.

“And if Mr. Miller gets after us again?”

“I’ll deal with him,” Joe said firmly.

Everyone knows, now, that Flescherman and his accomplices, deprived of the fortnight’s start they had hopefully counted upon, were arrested in Antwerp and after the usual delay brought to trial. But few people are aware of the fact that on the basis of allied interests a new partnership was formed that same summer, the two principals reciting the articles of their agreement before the Rev. Arthur Bateson and some fifty or sixty other witnesses at the parish church of St. Luke the Evangelist, Willesden.