“Naturally. He had Eileen to look after in the fog.”
“But he left the cabman behind. Oh, what the devil is all this about?”
“Hush!” said Cora. “You can’t be yourself. Come in and sit down quietly.”
“Shan’t we be going now?” suggested Eileen, emerging from the dining-room.
“Certainly,” replied Wincott. “Come, cabman; pull yourself together! And tell Jane that this time we really must go to the Beaux Arts.”

He glanced back into the drawing-room. Mr. Thurlowe had once more gained the welcome sanctuary of a sofa, where he sat with his ponderous cheeks buried in his hands. Cora raised her head from her ministrations and blew a good night kiss into the hall.

Wincott returned it; then took the waiting arm of Eileen. As he passed out he linked up the still completely staggered cabman with his free arm and bore him down the length of the mews to Jane.
JUST BETWEEN SHIPMATES

GUY GILPATRIC
In his first book *Scotch and Water*, Guy Gilpatric, with his rollicking creation “Muster Glencannon” of the *Inchcliffe Castle*, immediately jumped into a leading place among our younger humorous writers. In *Half-Seas Over*, his second book, from which the following story is taken, we meet that shrewd Scotchman again, and *Just Between Shipmates* will show how humorous he can be.
THE Italian Peninsula, as everyone knows, is shaped in the profile of one of those gilded wooden boots which identify shops of the Caesars' cobbting sons throughout the cities of the world. The heel of this boot is Cape Santa Maria di Leuca, its sole is the southern coast of Calabria, and its arch is the Gulf of Taranto, a body of water customarily churned to a lather by the Italian Royal Navy in its manoeuvres against fictitious hostile fleets, of which, with boundless verve and valour, it immolates as many as six at a time.

One sunny blue morning in November, a cargo steamer was wheezing along southwestward beneath the boot's great arch, serene as a bug which has just escaped being crushed on a pavement. This vessel was the Inchcliffe Castle, of London, but so altered was her appearance that you would scarcely have recognized her. Ever since leaving Pola, which is up near the tip of Istria, the Inchcliffe's crew had been scaling her with hammers, scrubbing her with soojie, and coating her with paint, until now she looked neat, clean, and to a tolerant eye, respectable. The finishing touches had just been applied, and the Bosun was escorting the Chief Officer over the ship with the flustered air of an academician towing a duchess around a vernissage.

"Well, it ayn't 'arf bad," declared Mr. Montgomery as he ran an approving eye along the immaculate white superstructure. "I'll tell yer wot, Hughes, if them stingy swine in the h'office wouldn't orl'wys go cutting our paint requisitions in two, we could keep the old 'ooker looking like a yacht."

"Ah, indeed we could!" sighed Hughes wistfully. "Oi'm only hoping now, Sorr, that t' paint'll droy before we strokes bod weather, or before them ash cats below go stoking her so's she'll get all sooted up, loike."

"Yus, soot would certainly ryse the deuce with 'er," agreed the Mate. "I'll 'ave to speak to Mister Glencannon about it."
“Aye, but I’ll speak to ye feerst, and that richt the noo!” came an irate voice from around the corner of the deckhouse. “Foosh, Muster Mate, and what hae ye got to say to this?”

The Engineer appeared in his shirt-sleeves, waving on high like a banner a jacket profusely smeared with white.

“Wet paint!” he fumed. “Wet paint here, wet paint there, wet paint all over the whole dom ship! Can ye ne’er lairn to let weel enough alone, Muster Montgomery, or must ye foreever hae a’ hands fuddling aboot wi’ paint pots, mucking things up? Look at the sorra state to whuch ye’ve brocht my brand new jacket!”

Mr. Montgomery surveyed the garment, and, having audibly collected his liquid resources, expectorated over the rail. “Well,” he said, “wot about it? ’Aven’t yer got wit enough to st’y clear of fresh paint? Yusu, and while we’re on the subjick, just wot the ’ell do yer mean by rubbing yerself agynst the ’ole ruddy ship and messing up my brand new paint-work?”

Mr. Glencannon dashed his jacket to the deck and shook his fist across it. “Oh, horns o’ the deevil!” he stormed. “Sae ye’re oot to add insoolt to injury, are ye, ye tin-chinned Cheapside cockney?”

“’Oo’re yer calling cockney?” demanded Mr. Montgomery, struggling out of his coat and hurling it down upon that of Mr. Glencannon. “Why, see ’ere, gor bylme, I’ll barsh the nasty fyce of any Scotch tinker ’oo dares to call me cockney!”

“Ah, so?” said Mr. Glencannon, thrusting out his jaw. “Weel, here’s one Scottish face ye’ll atteempt to bosh at yere deadly peril, Sir! Tak’ a guid look at it whilst ye may, for ’tis the last thing ye’ll see upon this airth!”

As the pair squared off, the delighted Hughes mentally offered himself seven-to-five on Mr. Montgomery; but chances to observed the handle of a monkey wrench protruding from Mr. Glencannon’s hip pocket, he hastily shifted the odds ten-to-one the other way. Well, any second, now, and the carnage would begin.

Suddenly, above the soft scuffle of feet, the swish of the breeze through the funnel stays, and beat of the engines below, there came a new sound—a head-filling drone which throbbed upon the eardrums like the surging pulse of apoplexy. On the bridge, somebody shouted. A great shadow
sped over the three hundred and fifty feet of the Incliffie Castle's length, and down to the water beside her swept a seaplane almost as large as the vessel herself. It landed in a series of bounces which threw white clouds of spray high into the air, and finally came to rest a quarter of a mile off the Incliffie's starboard bow. From one of the twenty motors arranged in pairs along the top of the huge wing, flames and black smoke were pouring; but even before way was off her, a dozen mechanics had scurried up from the wing hatches and were stripping the motor nacelle, squirting extinguishers upon the blaze, and beating it out with their kapok life-jackets.

Messrs. Glencannon and Montgomery, secretly much relieved by this interruption, exchanged a final salvo of horrid snorts; the mate went hurrying up the bridge ladder after Captain Ball, while Mr. Glencannon joined the excited group at the rail.

"Great swith!" he exclaimed. "Yonder floats the most munstrous bird o' its species I've e'er beheld!—An Eyetalian naval plane, judging fra' the red-white-and-green on the rudder o' it."

By this time the Incliffie Castle had swung off her course and was headed for the seaplane. Mr. Glencannon bethoth of his camera, and was turning away to fetch it when the two abandoned jackets caught his eye. The sight gave him pause. He picked up the Mate's spruce garment, bundled it into a wad, and with it scrubbed approximately two square yards of wet paint from the cowl of a ventilator. Then he spread it upon the deck and very carefully stamped upon its eight brass buttons until they were as flat as so many pennies, albeit a trifle lopsided.

"There, noo!" he chuckled. "Pairhops that will teach him the ruddiments o' etiquette, and wean him away fra' his spit-and-polish mania for destroying peace aboard ship!" And tossing his own jacket over his arm, he continued aft.

In his room, he went about loading his camera. He heard the Incliffie Castle's engines rung off, and the squeaking of the blocks as the starboard lifeboat was lowered. By the time he emerged upon deck, this boat, with Mr. Montgomery at the steering oar, had crossed the narrow strip of water that separated ship and seaplane.

With all its motors stopped, the flying giant was rolling
majestically in the swell, and the Mate and his oarsmen were
gazing in wonder at the massive wing, so new and shiny,
which hung above their heads like the roadway of Tower
Bridge. The fire was extinguished now, but the reek of
leaking motor-fuel was heavy upon the air.

"H'airyoplyne ahoy!" Mr. Montgomery hailed. "Do
yer need a 'and? Do yer want any 'elp?"

"No," snapped a voice from the streamlined conning
tower which jutted from the turtle-back abaft the great stubby
bow. "Go away at once."

Mr. Montgomery looked up and saw a swarthy gentleman
in a pale blue uniform, the left breast of which was graced
with gold pilot's wings and four rows of ribbons. There
were gold oakleaves on the visor of his cap. "Go away,"
this officer repeated angrily. "Do not to interfere. Go
away, I tell you!"

Mr. Montgomery's jaw dropped in pained surprise, but
he instantly recovered himself. "Oh, so that's yer gratitude,
is it? Why blarl yer eyes, look 'ere!" he retorted. "Yer
on the 'igh-seas now, you ill-mannered squid-eating Dago,
and Britannia rules the wyves, don't yer never fergit it! Fer
bleddy tuppence"—he thumped the resounding cork breast
of his lifebelt—"Fer bleddy tuppence I'd come aboard yer
ugly flying swill-barge and . . ."

He was interrupted by shouts and the pounding of feet
upon the wing overhead. The mechanics were pointing
toward the Incleliffe Castle, and raising indignant outcry. The
cause of their excitement was Mr. Glencannon, who still in
cap and shirtsleeves was levelling his camera over the rail.

The Italian commander leaned far out of his porthole and
waved his arms. "No photo, no photo!" he screamed.
"Photo prohibit! You officer weeth white shirt! Stop,
stop, I say you!"

Mr. Glencannon snapped the shutter and looked up with
an austere frown. "Oh, do be quiet, ye impairtenent gar-
licky barber!" he admonished.

With an oath, the commander ducked back into his
conning tower. The lifeboat crew could hear him shouting
orders. Another officer appeared and trained binoculars
upon Mr. Glencannon.

An excited voice within the cabin was repeating the same
words over and over again, like a formula.
“Why, ’e’s calling for ’elp by wireless telephone!” announced Mr. Montgomery. “Listen there—’e’s got through to ’em now, and is telling ’em ’is tyle of woe. Haw, strike me if I ever ’eard such chatter! It sounds like a zoo full of them gaudy purple-stered kangerangoutangs!”

There came a throaty blast from the Inchcliffe Castle’s whistle. On the bridge, Captain Ball was beckoning the lifeboat back to the ship. The oarsmen gave way, and Mr. Montgomery brought her alongside smartly. The painter was thrown, and the falls hooked on. “Set taut!” called Mr. Montgomery to Mr. Swales, who was in charge on deck. “Right-o, ’oist aw’y!”

The boat had scarcely been swung inboard on her davits when one of the deckhands swore and pointed astern. There, a few hundred yards to windward, six destroyers were charging in line-ahead formation. They were doing 35 knots, and as they sliced through the swell, sheets of white water came curling out from their concave bows like pine-shavings from a chisel.

“Ah, lovely!” murmured Mr. Glencannon, winding in another film. “If yon Dagoes will only trot oot their submarines and bottleships noo, I’ll hae snopshots o’ their whole dom navy!”

But suddenly, as the leading destroyer overhauled the Inchcliffe Castle, dense torrents of black smoke came crawling and tumbling out of her funnels, looking, in the instant, for all the world like bloated greasy worms. Abruptly the five other craft followed suit. As the wind caught their smoke, mingled it, spread it, and dragged it like a quilt across the Inchcliffe Castle, the sky vanished, the sun was blotted out, and lo, at high noon there was darkest night.

Mr. Glencannon stood his ground for a moment, and then, coughing and strangling, he groped his way to his room and slammed the door. Mr. Montgomery, still in his lifebelt, went storming up and down the decks, tripping over obstacles and screaming futile curses into the Stygian gloom.

“Our paint!” he raged. “Good lawks, yer’ve ruined the ’ole job, yer treacherous soot-slinging beggars, yer!”

His feet became entangled in something soft, and he went sprawling. Dragging the object close to his eyes, he saw that it was a paint-smeared uniform jacket.

“There!” he snarled, “It’s onl ’is fault, ’im and ’is blarsted
camera!—Get us caught in a smoke-screen, would he? Well, by cripes, I'll learn him!" and whirling the garment thrice above his head, he cast it far out into the smoke-smothered sea.

II

The Inchcliffe Castle, currently and by long odds the filthiest vessel afloat, was tied up alongside the Quai Papacino, in the Port Lympia of Nice. Her winches were grinding, and a gang of French and Algerian stevedores were working below as the derricks lowered great casks of wine into the holds. Endless ranks of these casks were arranged upon the wharf, and as the noon sun beat down upon them, they gave off a smell that was at once sour, stuffy and sickening, like the air in a Leningrad tramcar.

Mr. Montgomery, a picture of melancholy, was standing on the quai gazing up at the vessel. "Oh, wot a rotten shyme!" he groaned. "Not a clean spot on 'er the size of a chillblain. Yus, and the blarsted soot 'as 'ardened right into the paint!"

"—A charming little harbour, isn't it?"

Mr. Montgomery turned and saw a venerable English gentleman, red of face and kindly of eye, standing beside him surveying the scene. "The hills, the colours—" The stranger waved a gold-headed malacca stick, "The gem of all France, I'd call it."

"Oh, and would yer?" grunted Mr. Montgomery, his thoughts still on soot.

"I would indeed!" said the old gentleman, limping nearer and extending a morocco cigar-case with a crest done in platinum. "Yes, and this ship, this—er—Inchcliffe Castle, so perfectly rounds out the picture. A typical toiler of the sea!"

"Well," said Mr. Montgomery, melting a trifle and accepting a cigar, "she looks like a toiler in a 'Indu burning-ghat just now, if you should arsk me. I'm orlmost ashamed to h'admit that I serve on 'er."

"You serve on her!" exclaimed the other. "Ah, fancy! Well, well, how interesting! You're her, ah, captain, perhaps?"

"No," said Mr. Montgomery, "I'm the Chief H'O'fficer."
The old gentleman removed a grey silk glove and offered a cordial hand. "Mister Montgomery," he beamed, "my name is Forsythe-Connor, and I'm very happy to make your acquaintance."

"Yus, er, that is, so'm I," stammered Mr. Montgomery. "But see 'ere, Sir, 'ow does it 'appen that you know my nyme?"

Mr. Forsythe-Connor playfully tapped him on the shoulder with the ferrule of his stick.

"Well," he laughed, "it must seem most mysterious, Mister Montgomery, most mysterious—but before I explain, here's a bit more mystery for you. If you will drive back to the Ruhl and have luncheon with me, I'll take great pleasure in restoring to you your uniform jacket which you lost four days ago. Now, what've you to say to that?"

Mr. Montgomery gasped, swallowed, and pushed his cap to the back of his head. "Why, good lawks . . ." he began.

"Enough!" beamed Mr. Forsythe-Connor. "Follow me!" And with Mr. Montgomery at his heels, he limped shoreward between the rows of wine-barrels.

III

It was in the middle of the afternoon, and in the depths of the Inchcliff Castle's fireroom, Mr. Glencannon was drying several strips of newly printed photographs before a furnace door. As his countenance was illuminated by the glow of the smouldering coals, it looked like that of an alchemist engaged in the distillation of some unholy brew, or even—as Mr. Montgomery decided as he approached through the gloom—like one of those grotesque conceits which the Germans delight to carve upon the bowls of meerschaum pipes and the far ends of fiddles.

At the sound of footsteps, Mr. Glencannon looked up, but recognizing the Mate, he grunted and looked down again.

"See 'ere," said Mr. Montgomery, his voice tense with excitement, "I'd like to talk to you."

"Weel," said Mr. Glencannon, rustling his prints, "I regret that I canna return the compliment. In view o' the recent onpleasantness betwixt us, I . . ."
“Now wyle!” interrupted Mr. Montgomery. “Let by-gones be bygones, can’t yer? If yer’ll only ferget yer silly grudge, ’ere’s a chance fer you and I to myke a tidy bit of money.”

“How tidy?” inquired Mr. Glencannon, evincing interest. Mr. Montgomery advanced a step and leaned toward Mr. Glencannon’s ear. “Fifty pund h’apiece, that’s ’ow tidy I!” he answered in a stage whisper.

“Fufty poonds apiece!” exclaimed Mr. Glencannon. “Fufty ... why guid losh, my dear friend, ye can count upon my fullest co-operation! Ye surely didna think that I’d hold a groodge against an auld shipmate, did ye? Come, lad, dismuss yere fears and teel me all aboot it!”

“Right!” said Mr. Montgomery, with evident relief. “Now listen! I’ad lunch to-d’y with an old gimp-legged cove nymed Forsythe-Connor ’oo’s st’y ing at the ’Otel Ruhl. ’E’s a retired King’s Counsel from London, but ’e ’appens to ’ave stood as godfather to a Dago kid ’oo is now grown h’up to be a ’igh-ranker in the h’Eyetalian navy. It was ’im ’oo was in command of that h’airyoplyne the other d’y. D’yer begin to get the connection?”

“Aye, vaguely,” said Mr. Glencannon. “But gae on, gae on, dinna tontalize me!”

“Well,” Mr. Montgomery continued, “that there h’airyoplyne was something new and secret, and the h’apple of the Dago navy’s h’eye. If any news was to leak h’out h’about it, old Forsythe-Connor’s godson would be cashiered, or m’bye h’even get carst into the brig. That’s why ’e rysed such a stink when you was tyking them snapshots, and why ’e ’ad that smokescreen layed down and orl.”

“Aye, exactly,” nodded Mr. Glencannon. “And I suppose it’s also why he’s sae onxious the noo to buy yon snapshots at ony price.”

“’E’ll buy ’em for a ’undred quid, like I told yer,” declared Mr. Montgomery, licking his lips. “Fifty fer you and fifty fer me.”

“H’m,” mused Mr. Glencannon, “how vurra romantic! But teel me, Muster Montgomery, how did yere spy friend get i’ touch wi’ ye, and why did he no’ come direct to me?”

“Spy?” scoffed Mr. Montgomery. “Haw, he ayn’t no spy! ’E’s just a soft’-earted old dotard trying to get a lad out of a jam, and it’s really orl very simple. Yer’ll recall that
when yer was tyking them photos, yer didn’t ’ave no coat on. Neither did I, but I was wearing a lifebelt, so they didn’t notice it. Orl they saw through the glasses was a chap with an H’orser’s cap and a white shirt tyking h’eighteen pitchers of ’em. They kept count. Lyter on, when they picked h’up my jacket with some of my letters in the pocket, they naturally thought it was me.”

“Aye, naturly,” nodded Mr. Glencannon. “And did ye tell old Muster What’s-his-name that it wasn’t?”

“Of course I didn’t!” said Mr. Montgomery. “I let ’im go on thinking that I ’ad the pitchers, and I myde an h’appointment to give ’em to ’im in ’is rooms at h’eigh o’clock to-night. ’E’d to pay me the ’undred when I deliver ’em.”

Mr. Glencannon rose and laid his hand upon the Mate’s shoulder. “Muster Montgomery,” he said, with a catch in his voice, “I’ll mak’ no secret o’ the fact that there ha’ been times when ye’ve tried my patience sorely. But noo, but noo—weel, I must confess ye’ve won my deepest odmiration.”

“Er, haw, well, I ’aven’t done so badly at that,” admitted Mr. Montgomery. “After all, fifty quid apiece is a nice bit of oof!”

“It is i’deed!” agreed Mr. Glencannon. “But noo, if ye’ll excuse me, I must hurry ashore to the bronze foondry, about those new bushings. I’ll see ye at tea-time.”

A shrewd glint flickered in Mr. Montgomery’s eye. “Yus, but wyte a minute,” he said. “’Adn’t yer just better give me them prints and negatives before yer go?”

Mr. Glencannon sighed gustily, and his face was shadowed with sorrow. “Why, sairtainly ye can hae them!” he said. “Ah, but it grieves me sorely, my guid friend, to see ye suspect that I micht sell them elsewhere. Here, tak’ them, tak’ them wi’ my blessing!” And pondering the universal mistrust which pervades mankind, he disappeared up the ladder.

iv

At 7.45 that evening, Mr. Glencannon presented himself in the foyer of the Hotel Ruhl, told the clerk that Mr. Montgomery was calling upon Mr. Forsyth-Connor, and was at once requested to go up to the latter’s rooms.
As he walked through the scarlet-carpeted corridors of the fourth floor, he patted his hip to make sure that his monkey-wrench was readily accessible, and thrust his left hand into his coat pocket to conceal the fact that it was adorned with a spiked knuckle-duster of rather clever design. "Aye," he muttered, as he rapped upon the door of room 431, "'tis a'ways weel to be on the safe side, e'en wi' that jockoss Montgomery's fairy godfathers!"

He heard limping footsteps within. The door was opened by the beaming Mr. Forsythe-Connor, who stood leaning on his stick. "Come in," he invited, "come in, Mister Mont—er, oh, who are you, sir?"

Mr. Glencannon slid into the room and closed the door behind him. "Ne'er mind who I am," he whispered hoarsely. "It's aboot those peecutres. . . ."

With a fluid gesture, Mr. Forsythe-Connor's hand came up from the top of his stick and brought with it a twenty-inch stiletto, the needle point of which he pressed against Mr. Glencannon's ample Adam's apple.

"Put up your hands—higher, higher," he ordered, the paternal smile never leaving his face. "Now, who are you anyway? What pictures are you talking about?"

Mr. Glencannon gulped once or twice, but the blade scratched so uncomfortably that he decided to give it up.

"Muster Forsythe-Connor," he said boldly, "'if ye dinna tak' that sword away fra' my tonsils this vurra minute, ye'll be i' the domdest fix o' yere nosty spying life!"

"My good man, my good man!" the other protested incredulously. "Pray what in the world are you driving at?"

"Just this," said Mr. Glencannon. "That black hoond o' a Montgomery has robbed me and betrayed you. He didn' mak' those snopshots—I did. He was oot i' the lifeboat at the time, as the ship's log will prove. But he told me this afternoon aboot the bid ye made for them, and I told him to accept it. Then he tuk to wondering if he cudna get more money fra' somebody else. . . ."

"Who?" snapped Mr. Forsythe-Connor, momentarily forgetting to smile.

"Just who, I dinna ken," said Mr. Glencannon. "As a motter o' fact, I didna osk him, because I cudna accede to such a swundle. But just before I discovered that he'd stolen my
pectures, he did mention something about meeting somebody at eight o’clock to-night.”

“Where?” The voice was strident with alarm. “Where?”

“Weel,” drawled Mr. Glencannon, tilting back his head and smiling blandly at the crystal chandelier, “I’m a mon o’ few wurrs, so I’ll mak’ ye a proposection. Noo feerst, o’ course, there’ll be the amount ye agreed to pay Montgomery. . . .”

“Yes, two hundred pounds,” barked Mr. Forsythe-Connor. “Be quick, man!”

“Aye, twa hoondred poonds, I thocht so!” chuckled Mr. Glencannon. “He only mentioned one hoondred to me, but pairhaps he’ll be more accurate next time.—Twa hoondred for the pectures, and three hoondred for taking you to Muster Montgomery. I’ll gae alang wi’ ye, but ye can pay me the five hoondred i’ advance.”

“Yes, yes—here!” said Mr. Forsythe-Connor, unlocking a little steel drawer in his wardrobe trunk and feverishly counting the banknotes into Mr. Glencannon’s hand. “Now where is he?”

Mr. Glencannon hauled out a massive silver watch and consulted it sagely. “Just noo,” he said, “we’ll find our vurra guid friend stonding under the theerd tree on the richt as we turn into the Rue d’Alger fra’ the Boulevard Solferino.”

“Rue d’Alger!” gasped Mr. Forsythe-Connor, snatching up his hat and hobbling toward the door. “Good lord, there’re half a dozen consulates on that street! Come on, my car’s downstairs!”

There were chauffeur and footman in the car, and even as it pulled away from the curb, Mr. Forsythe-Connor was snapping instructions to them through the speaking tube. When he had finished, they were purring along the Boulevard Solferino.

“You and I,” he said to Mr. Glencannon, “will remain quietly in the car until this little affair is, ah, settled.—You, especially.” There was a faint click as the safety-lever of an automatic pistol was released within a pocket.

They turned into the Rue d’Alger. In the shadow of the third tree on the right, Mr. Montgomery was pacing back and forth. As the car slowed down beside him, the footman leaned out from the running board and beckoned.
Mr. Montgomery stepped eagerly to the kerb, and directly into the swishing downward course of a flexible rubber blackjack.

"Ah, losh, what technique!" breathed Mr. Glencannon.

In an instant the car was under way again. The footman passed back a wallet and a crumpled envelope. Mr. Forsythe-Connor, switching on the light, hastily examined its contents. "... Sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, yes, eighteen prints and eighteen negatives. Correct!" he announced with evident relief.

Again there came a click of the automatic's safety, but this time it was being moved the other way. "Everything, ah, seems to be quite in order," he smiled. "Shall I drop you at your ship? Right-o! By the way, sir, these are extraordinarily good photographs."

The car halted at the corner of the Rue Gauthier, and Mr. Glencannon descended.

"Well, au revoir and many thanks," said Mr. Forsythe-Connor. "If you ever happen to have any more pictures of, ah, technical subjects—ships, dry-docks, aircraft or what-not—I'd be awfully glad if you'd let me know."

"Aye, no doot ye wud!" chuckled Mr. Glencannon, as he watched the car disappear toward Ventimiglia and Italy—"Especially, the eighteen duplicate prints which are noo i' my room, but whuch will be somewhere i' the Rue d'Alger to-morrow!"

It was midnight when Mr. Montgomery returned to the ship, but Mr. Glencannon was waiting up for him.

"Weel," the Engineer greeted, "hae ye got the money? But whurra mon, what's happenned to yer head?"

"Oh, I've 'ad a 'orrible time!" wailed Mr. Montgomery, sinking into a chair. "I was slugged, I was, and everything stole off me. Lawks, but I've got a 'eadache!"

"But the money, mon—the snapshots! Ye dinna mean to say . . . ."

"Yus," confessed Mr. Montgomery. "They—they swiped the pitchers, too. Yer see, this afternoon, a 'all boy from the Ruhl brought me a note from Mr. Forsythe-Connor telling me to meet 'im in the Rue d'Alger, instead of coming to the 'otel. So to-night, I . . . ."

"Let me see the note!" thundered Mr. Glencannon, and his wrath was terrible to behold. "Great swith, ye gowk,
d'ye think ye can mulct me o' my richtful due wi' ony such cock-and-bull story as this? Ye've sold the peectures, that's what ye've done, and noo ye're holding oot on me!

"I ayn't, I ayn't!" protested Mr. Montgomery, his lip trembling. "Strike me green and 'ope to die, it o'rl 'appened h'exactly like I've told yer. They stole the note. Why, they even stole my wallet with three quid h'eighteen shillings in it!"

Mr. Glencannon sat back and contemplated him sternly. Then, gradually he seemed to relent. "Weel," he said at length, "I'm a mon wi' a trusting nature, and I've no alternative but to tak' yere wurrd fer it onyway. I bear ye no ill-will, Muster Montgomery—i' fact, if ye're financially emborassed alang toward the end o' the month, I micht even conseeder loaning ye a few sheelings, just between shipmates. The rate o' interest, o' course, will be steepulated i' advonce."
THE VESSEL OF WRATH

SOMERSET MAUGHAM
William Somerset Maugham, born 1874, physician and surgeon, author and playwright, officer of the Legion of Honour, based his first book *Liza of Lambeth* on his medical experiences in the poverty-stricken slums of London. He has had three plays running in London at the same time, and all were a success, and he has achieved equal popularity with his novels and short stories.
THE VESSEL OF WRATH

There are few books in the world that contain more meat than the "Sailing Directions", published by the Hydrographic Department by order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. They are handsome volumes, bound (very flimsily) in cloth of different colours, and the most expensive of them is cheap. For four shillings you can buy the "Yangste Kiang Pilot", "containing a description of, and sailing directions for, the Yangste Kiang from the Wusung river to the highest navigable point, including the Han Kiang, the Kialing Kiang, and the Min Kiang"; and for three shillings you can get Part III of the "Eastern Archipelago Pilot", "comprising the N.E. end of Celebes, Molucca and Gilolo passages, Banda and Arafura Seas, and North, West, and South-West coasts of New Guinea." But it is not very safe to do so if you are a creature of settled habits that you have no wish to disturb or if you have an occupation that holds you fast to one place. These business-like books take you upon enchanted journeys of the spirit; and their matter-of-fact style, the admirable order, the concision with which the material is set before you, the stern sense of the practical that informs every line, cannot dim the poetry that, like the spice-laden breeze that assails your senses with a more than material languor when you approach some of those magic islands of the Eastern seas, blows with so sweet a fragrance through the printed pages. They tell you the anchorages and the landing places, what supplies you can get at each spot, and where you can get water; they tell you the lights and buoys, tides, winds and weather that you will find there. They give you brief information about the population and the trade. And it is strange, when you think how sedately it is all set down, with no words wasted, that so much else is given you besides. What? Well, mystery and beauty, romance and the glamour of the unknown. It is no common book that offers you, casually turning its
pages, such a paragraph as this: "Supplies. A few jungle fowl are preserved, the island is also the resort of vast numbers of sea birds. Turtle are found in the lagoon, as well as quantities of various fish, including grey mullet, shark, and dog-fish; the seine cannot be used with any effect; but there is a fish which may be taken on a rod. A small store of tinned provisions and spirits is kept in a hut for the relief of shipwrecked persons. Good water may be obtained from a well near the landing-place." Can the imagination want more material than this to go on a journey through time and space?

In the volume from which I have copied this passage, the compilers with the same restraint have described the Alas Islands. They are composed of a group or chain of islands, "for the most part low and wooded, extending about 7½ miles east and west, and 46 miles north and south." The information about them, you are told, is very slight; there are channels between the different groups, and several vessels have passed through them, but the passages have not been thoroughly explored, and the positions of many of the dangers not yet determined; it is therefore advisable to avoid them. The population of the group is estimated at about 8,000, of whom 200 are Chinese and 400 Mohammedans. The rest are heathen. The principal island is called Baru, it is surrounded by a reef, and here lives a Dutch Contrôleur. His white house with its red roof on the top of a little hill is the most prominent object that the vessels of the Royal Netherlands Steam Packet Company see when every other month on their way up to Macassar and every four weeks on their way down to Merauke in Dutch New Guinea they touch at the island.

At a certain moment of the world's history the Contrôleur was Mynheer Evert Gruyter and he ruled the people who inhabited the Alas Islands with firmness tempered by a keen sense of the ridiculous. He had thought it a very good joke to be placed at the age of twenty-seven in a position of such consequence and at thirty he was still amused by it. There was no cable communication between his islands and Batavia, and the mail arrived after so long a delay that even if he asked advice, by the time he received it, it was useless, and so he equably did what he thought best and trusted to his good fortune to keep out of trouble with the authorities. He was very short, not more than five feet four in height,
and extremely fat; he was of a florid complexion. For coolness’ sake he kept his head shaved and his face was hairless. It was round and red. His eyebrows were so fair that you hardly saw them; and he had little twinkling blue eyes. He knew that he had no dignity, but for the sake of his position made up for it by dressing very dapperly. He never went to his office, nor sat in court, nor walked abroad but in spotless white. His stengah-shifter, with its bright brass buttons, fitted him very tightly and displayed the shocking fact that, young though he was, he had a round and protruding belly. His good-humoured face shone with sweat and he constantly fanned himself with a palm-leaf fan.

But in his house Mr. Gruyter preferred to wear nothing but a sarong and then with his white podgy little body he looked like a fat funny boy of sixteen. He was an early riser and his breakfast was always ready for him at six. It never varied. It consisted of a slice of papaia, three cold fried eggs, Edam cheese, sliced thin, and a cup of black coffee. When he had eaten it, he smoked a large Dutch cigar, read the papers if he had not read them through and through already, and then dressed to go down to his office.

One morning while he was thus occupied his head boy came into his bedroom and told him that Tuan Jones wanted to know if he could see him. Mr. Gruyter was standing in front of a looking-glass. He had his trousers on and was admiring his smooth chest. He arched his back in order to throw it out and throw in his belly and with a good deal of satisfaction gave his breast three or four resounding slaps. It was a manly chest. When the boy brought the message he looked at his own eyes in the mirror and exchanged a slightly ironic smile with them. *He asked himself what the devil his visitor could want. Evert Gruyter spoke English, Dutch and Malay with equal facility, but he thought in Dutch. He liked to do this. It seemed to him a pleasantly ribald language.

“Ask the Tuan to wait and say I shall come directly.” He put on his tunic, over his naked body, buttoned it up, and strutted into the sitting-room. The Rev. Owen Jones got up.

“Good morning, Mr. Jones,” said the Contrôleur. “Have you come in to have a peg with me before I start my day’s work?”
Mr. Jones did not smile.

"I've come to see you upon a very distressing matter, Mr. Gruyter," he answered.

The Contrôleur was not disconcerted by his visitor's gravity nor depressed by his words. His little blue eyes beamed amiably.

"Sit down, my dear fellow, and have a cigar."

Mr. Gruyter knew quite well that the Rev. Owen Jones neither drank nor smoked, but it tickled something prankish in his nature to offer him a drink and a smoke whenever they met. Mr. Jones shook his head.

Mr. Jones was in charge of the Baptist Mission on the Alas Islands. His headquarters were at Baru, the largest of them, with the greatest population, but he had meeting-houses under the care of native helpers in several other islands of the group. He was a tall, thin, melancholy man, with a long face, sallow and drawn, of about forty. His brown hair was already white on the temples and it receded from the forehead. This gave him a look of somewhat vacuous intellectuality. Mr. Gruyter both disliked and respected him. He disliked him because he was narrow-minded and dogmatic. Himself a cheerful pagan who liked the good things of the flesh and was determined to get as many of them as his circumstances permitted, he had no patience with a man who disapproved of them all. He thought the customs of the country suited its inhabitants and had no patience with the missionary's energetic efforts to destroy a way of life that for centuries had worked very well. He respected him because he was honest, zealous and good. Mr. Jones, an Australian of Welsh descent, was the only qualified doctor in the group and it was a comfort to know that if you fell ill you need not rely on a Chinese practitioner, and none knew better than the Contrôleur how useful to all Mr. Jones's skill had been and with what charity he had given it. On the occasion of an epidemic of influenza the missionary had done the work of ten men and no storm short of a typhoon could prevent him from crossing to one island or another if his help was needed.

He lived with his sister in a little white house about half a mile from the village and when the Contrôleur had arrived, came on board to meet him and begged him to stay till he could get his own house in order. The Contrôleur had
accepted and soon saw for himself with what simplicity the couple lived. It was more than he could stand. Tea at three sparse meals a day and when he lit his cigar Mr. Jones politely but firmly asked him to be good enough not to smoke, since both his sister and he strongly disapproved of it. In twenty-four hours Mr. Gruyter moved into his own house. He fled, with panic in his heart, as though from a plague-stricken city. The Contrôleur was fond of a joke and he liked to laugh; to be with a man who took your nonsense in deadly earnest and never even smiled at your best story was more than flesh and blood could stand. The Rev. Owen Jones was a worthy man, but as a companion he was impossible. His sister was worse. Neither had a sense of humour, but whereas the missionary was of a melancholy turn, doing his duty so conscientiously, with the obvious conviction that everything in the world was hopeless, Miss Jones was resolutely cheerful. She grimly looked on the bright side of things. With the ferocity of an avenging angel she sought out the good in her fellow-men. Miss Jones taught in the mission school and helped her brother in his medical work. When he did operations she gave the anaesthetic and was matron, dresser and nurse of the tiny hospital which on his own initiative Mr. Jones had added to the mission. But the Contrôleur was an obstinate little fellow and he never lost his capacity of extracting amusement from the Rev. Owen’s dour struggle with the infirmities of human nature, and Miss Jones’s ruthless optimism. He had to get his fun where he could. The Dutch boats came in three times in two months for a few hours and then he could have a good old crack with the captain and chief engineer, and once in a blue moon a pearling lugger came in from Thursday Island or Port Darwin and for two or three days he had a grand time. They were rough fellows, the pearlers, for the most part, but they were full of guts, and they had plenty of liquor on board, and good stories to tell, and the Contrôleur had them up to his house and gave them a fine dinner and the party was only counted a success if they were all too drunk to get back on the lugger again that night. But besides the missionary the only white man who lived on Baru was Ginger Ted, and he, of course, was a disgrace to civilization. There was not a single thing to be said in his favour. He cast discredit on the white race. All the same, but for
Ginger Ted, the Contrôleur sometimes thought he would find life on the island of Baru almost more than he could bear.

Oddly enough it was on account of this scamp that Mr. Jones, when he should have been instructing the pagan young in the mysteries of the Baptist faith, was paying Mr. Gruyter this early visit.

"Sit down, Mr. Jones," said the Contrôleur. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, I've come to see you about the man they call Ginger Ted. What are you going to do now?"

"Why, what's happened?"

"Haven't you heard? I thought the sergeant would have told you."

"I don't encourage the members of my staff to come to my private house unless the matter is urgent," said the Contrôleur rather grandly. "I am unlike you, Mr. Jones, I only work in order to have leisure and I like to enjoy my leisure without disturbance."

But Mr. Jones did not care much for small talk and he was not interested in general reflections.

"There was a disgraceful row in one of the Chinese shops last night. Ginger Ted wrecked the place and half killed a Chinaman."

"Drunk again, I suppose," said the Contrôleur placidly.

"Naturally. When is he anything else? They sent for the police and he assaulted the sergeant. They had to have six men to get him to the gaol."

"He's a hefty fellow," said the Contrôleur.

"I suppose you'll send him to Macassar."

Evert Gruyter returned the missionary's outraged look with a merry twinkle. He was no fool and he knew already what Mr. Jones was up to. It gave him considerable amusement to tease him a little.

"Fortunately my powers are wide enough to enable me to deal with the situation myself," he answered.

"You have power to deport anyone you like, Mr. Gruyter, and I'm sure it would save a lot of trouble if you got rid of the man altogether."

"I have the power, of course, but I am sure you would be the last person to wish me to use it arbitrarily."

"Mr. Gruyter, the man's presence here is a public scandal.
He's never sober from morning till night; it's notorious that he has relations with one native woman after another."

"That is an interesting point, Mr. Jones. I had always heard that alcoholic excess, though it stimulated sexual desire, prevented its gratification. What you tell me about Ginger Ted does not seem to bear out this theory."

The missionary flushed a dull red.

"These are physiological matters which at the moment I have no wish to go into," he said frigidly. "The behaviour of this man does incalculable damage to the prestige of the white race, and his example seriously hampers the efforts that are made in other quarters to induce the people of these islands to lead a less vicious life. He's an out-and-out bad lot."

"Pardon my asking, but have you made any attempts to reform him?"

"When he first drifted here I did my best to get in touch with him. He repelled all my advances. When there was that first trouble I went to him and talked to him straight from the shoulder. He swore at me."

"No one has a greater appreciation than I of the excellent work that you and other missionaries do on these islands, but are you sure that you always exercise your calling with all the tact possible?"

The Contrôleur was rather pleased with this phrase. It was extremely courteous and yet contained a reproof that he thought worth administering. The missionary looked at him gravely. His sad brown eyes were full of sincerity.

"Did Jesus exercise tact when he took a whip and drove the money-changers from the Temple? No, Mr. Gruyter. Tact is the subterfuge the lax avail themselves of to avoid doing their duty."

Mr. Jones's remark made the Contrôleur feel suddenly that he wanted a bottle of beer. The missionary leaned forward earnestly.

"Mr. Gruyter, you know this man's transgressions just as well as I do. It's unnecessary for me to remind you of them. There are no excuses for him. Now he really has overstretched the limit. You'll never have a better chance than this. I beg you to use the power you have and turn him out once for all."
The Contrôleur’s eyes twinkled more brightly than ever. He was having a lot of fun. He reflected that human beings were much more amusing when you did not feel called upon in dealing with them to allot praise or blame.

“But, Mr. Jones, do I understand you right? Are you asking me to give you an assurance to deport this man before I’ve heard the evidence against him and listened to his defence?”

“I don’t know what his defence can be.”

The Contrôleur rose from his chair and really he managed to get quite a little dignity into his five feet four inches.

“I am here to administer justice according to the laws of the Dutch Government. Permit me to tell you that I am exceedingly surprised that you should attempt to influence me in my judicial functions.”

The missionary was a trifle flustered. It had never occurred to him that this little whipper-snapper of a boy, ten years younger than himself, would dream of adopting such an attitude. He opened his mouth to explain and apologize, but the Contrôleur raised a podgy little hand.

“It is time for me to go to my office, Mr. Jones. I wish you good morning.”

The missionary, taken aback, bowed and without another word walked out of the room. He would have been surprised to see what the Contrôleur did when his back was turned. A broad grin broke on his lips and he put his thumb to his nose and cocked a snook at the Rev. Owen Jones.

A few minutes later he went down to his office. His head clerk, who was a Dutch half-caste, gave him his version of the previous night’s row. It agreed pretty well with Mr. Jones’s. The Court was sitting that day.

“Will you take Ginger Ted first, sir?” asked the clerk.

“I see no reason to do that. There are two or three cases held over from the last sitting. I will take him in his proper order.”

“I thought perhaps as he was a white man you would like to see him privately, sir.”

“The majesty of the law knows no difference between white and coloured, my friend,” said Mr. Gruyter, somewhat pompously.

The Court was a big square room with wooden benches
on which, crowded together, sat natives of all kinds, Polynesians, Bugis, Chinese, Malays, and they all rose when a door was opened and a sergeant announced the arrival of the Contrôleur. He entered with his clerk and took his place on a little dais at a table of varnished pitch pine. Behind him was a large engraving of Queen Wilhelmina. He despatched half a dozen cases and then Ginger Ted was brought in. He stood in the dock, handcuffed, with a warder on either side of him. The Contrôleur looked at him with a grave face, but he could not keep the amusement out of his eyes.

Ginger Ted was suffering from a hang-over. He swayed a little as he stood and his eyes were vacant. He was a man still young, thirty perhaps, of somewhat over the middle height, rather fat, with a bloated red face and a shock of curly red hair. He had not come out of the tussle unscathed. He had a black eye and his mouth was cut and swollen. He wore khaki shorts, very dirty and ragged, and his singlet had been almost torn off his back. A great rent showed the thick mat of red hair with which his chest was covered, but showed also the astonishing whiteness of his skin. The Contrôleur looked at the charge sheet. He called the evidence. When he had heard it, when he had seen the Chinaman whose head Ginger Ted had broken with a bottle, when he had heard the agitated story of the sergeant who had been knocked flat when he tried to arrest him, when he had listened to the tale of the havoc wrought by Ginger Ted who in his drunken fury had smashed everything he could lay hands on, he turned and addressed the accused in English.

“Well, Ginger, what have you got to say for yourself?”

“I was blind. I don’t remember a thing about it. If they say I half killed ’im I suppose I did. I’ll pay the damage if they’ll give me time."

“You will, Ginger,” said the Contrôleur, “but it’s me who’ll give you time.”

He looked at Ginger Ted for a minute in silence. He was an unappetising object. A man who had gone completely to pieces. He was horrible. It made you shudder to look at him and if Mr. Jones had not been so officious, at that moment the Contrôleur would certainly have ordered him to be deported.

“You’ve been a trouble ever since you came to the islands, Ginger. You’re a disgrace. You’re incorrigibly idle. You’ve
been picked up in the street dead drunk time and time again. You’ve kicked up row after row. You’re hopeless. I told you the last time you were brought here that if you were arrested again I should deal with you severely. You’ve gone the limit this time and you’re for it. I sentence you to six months’ hard labour.”

“Me?”
“You.”
“By God, I’ll kill you when I come out.”

He burst into a string of oaths both filthy and blasphemous. Mr. Gruyter listened scornfully. You can swear much better in Dutch than in English and there was nothing that Ginger Ted said that he could not have effectively capped.

“Be quiet,” he ordered. “You make me tired.”

The Contrôleur repeated his sentence in Malay and the prisoner was led struggling away.

Mr. Gruyter sat down to tiffin in high good humour. It was astonishing how amusing life could be if you exercised a little ingenuity. There were people in Amsterdam, and even in Batavia and Surabaya, who looked upon his island home as a place of exile. They little knew how agreeable it was and what fun he could extract from unpromising material. They asked him whether he did not miss the club and the races and the cinema, the dances that were held once a week at the Casino and the society of Dutch ladies. Not at all. He liked comfort. The substantial furniture of the room in which he sat had a satisfying solidity. He liked reading French novels of a frivolous nature and he appreciated the sensation of reading one after the other without the uneasiness occasioned by the thought that he was wasting his time. It seemed to him a great luxury to waste time. When his young man’s fancy turned to thoughts of love his head boy brought to the house a little dark-skinned bright-eyed creature in a sarong. He took care to form no connection of a permanent nature. He thought that change kept the heart young. He enjoyed freedom and was not weighed down by a sense of responsibility. He did not mind the heat. It made a sluice over with cold water half a dozen times a day a pleasure that had almost an aesthetic quality. He played the piano. He wrote letters to his friends in Holland. He felt no need for the conversation of
intellectual persons. He liked a good laugh, but he could get that out of a fool just as well as out of a professor of philosophy. He had a notion that he was a very wise little man.

Like all good Dutchmen in the Far East he began his lunch with a small glass of Hollands gin. It has a musty acrid flavour, and the taste for it must be acquired, but Mr. Gruyter preferred it to any cocktail. When he drank it he felt besides that he was upholding the traditions of his race. Then he had rystafel. He had it every day. He heaped a soup-plate high with rice, and then, his three boys waiting on him, helped himself to the curry that one handed to him, to the fried egg that another brought, and to the condiment presented by the third. Then each one brought another dish of bacon, or bananas, or pickled fish, and presently his plate was piled high in a huge pyramid. He stirred it all together and began to eat. He ate slowly and with relish. He drank a bottle of beer.

He did not think while he was eating. His attention was applied to the mass in front of him and he consumed it with a happy concentration. It never palled on him. And when he had emptied the great plate it was a compensation to think that next day he would have rystafel again. He grew tired of it as little as the rest of us grow tired of bread. He finished his beer and lit his cigar. The boy brought him a cup of coffee. He leaned back in his chair then and allowed himself the luxury of reflection.

It tickled him to have sentenced Ginger Ted to the richly deserved punishment of six months' hard labour, and he smiled when he thought of him working on the roads with the other prisoners. It would have been silly to deport from the island the one man with whom he could occasionally have a heart-to-heart talk, and besides, the satisfaction it would have given the missionary would have been bad for that gentleman's character. Ginger Ted was a scamp and a scallywag, but the Contrôleur had a kindly feeling for him. They had drunk many a bottle of beer in one another's company and when the pearl fishers from Port Darwin came in and they all made a night of it, they had got gloriously tight together. The Contrôleur liked the reckless way in which Ginger Ted squandered the priceless treasure of life.

Ginger Ted had wandered in one day on the ship that
was going up from Merauke to Macassar. The captain did not know how he had found his way there, but he had travelled steerage with the natives, and he stopped off at the Alas Islands because he liked the look of them. Mr. Gruyter had a suspicion that their attraction consisted perhaps in their being under the Dutch flag and so out of British jurisdiction. But his papers were in order, so there was no reason why he should not stay. He said that he was buying pearl-shell for an Australian firm, but it soon appeared that his commercial undertakings were not serious. Drink, indeed, took up so much of his time that he had little left over for other pursuits. He was in receipt of two pounds a week, paid monthly, which came regularly to him from England. The Contrôleur guessed that this sum was paid only so long as he kept well away from the persons who sent it. It was anyway too small to permit him any liberty of movement. Ginger Ted was reticent. The Contrôleur discovered that he was an Englishman, this he learnt from his passport, which described him as Edward Wilson, and that he had been in Australia. But why he had left England and what he had done in Australia he had no notion. Nor could he ever quite tell to what class Ginger Ted belonged. When you saw him in a filthy singlet and a pair of ragged trousers, a battered topi on his head, with the pearl-fishers and heard his conversation, coarse, obscene and illiterate, you thought he must be a sailor before the mast who had deserted his ship, or a labourer, but when you saw his handwriting you were surprised to find that it was that of a man not without at least some education, and on occasion when you got him alone, if he had had a few drinks but was not yet drunk, he would talk of matters that neither a sailor nor a labourer would have been likely to know anything about. The Contrôleur had a certain sensitiveness and he realized that Ginger Ted did not speak to him as an inferior to a superior but as an equal. Most of his remittance was mortgaged before he received it, and the Chinamen to whom he owed money were standing at his elbow when the monthly letter was delivered to him, but with what was left he proceeded to get drunk. It was then that he made trouble, for when drunk he grew violent and was then likely to commit acts that brought him into the hands of the police. Hitherto Mr. Gruyter had contented himself with keeping him in gaol till he was sober
and giving him a talking to. When he was out of money he cadged what drink he could from anyone who would give it him. Rum, brandy, arak, it was all the same to him. Two or three times Mr. Gruyter had got him work on plantations run by Chinese in one or other of the islands, but he could not stick to it, and in a few weeks was back again at Baru on the beach. It was a miracle how he kept body and soul together. He had, of course, a way with him. He picked up the various dialects spoken on the islands, and knew how to make the natives laugh. They despised him, but they respected his physical strength, and they liked his company. He was as a result never at a loss for a meal or a mat to sleep on. The strange thing was, and it was this that chiefly outraged the Rev. Owen Jones, that he could do anything he liked with a woman. The Contrôleur could not imagine what it was they saw in him. He was casual with them and rather brutal. He took what they gave him, but seemed incapable of gratitude. He used them for his pleasure and then flung them indifferently away. Once or twice this had got him into trouble, and Mr. Gruyter had had to sentence an angry father for sticking a knife in Ginger Ted’s back one night, and a Chinese woman had sought to poison herself by swallowing opium because he had deserted her. Once Mr. Jones came to the Contrôleur in a great state because the beachcomber had seduced one of his converts. The Contrôleur agreed that it was very deplorable, but could only advise Mr. Jones to keep a sharp eye on these young persons. The Contrôleur liked it less when he discovered that a girl whom he fancied a good deal himself and had been seeing for several weeks had all the time been according her favours also to Ginger Ted. When he thought of this particular incident he smiled again at the thought of Ginger Ted doing six month’s hard labour. It is seldom in this life that in the process of doing your bounden duty you can get back on a fellow who has played you a dirty trick.

A few days later Mr. Gruyter was taking a walk, partly for exercise and partly to see that some job he wanted done was being duly proceeded with, when he passed a gang of prisoners working under the charge of a warder. Among them he saw Ginger Ted. He wore the prison sarong, a dingy tunic called in Malay a baju, and his own battered topi. They were repairing the road, and Ginger Ted was wielding
a heavy pick. The way was narrow and the Contrôleur saw that he must pass within a foot of him. He remembered his threats. He knew that Ginger Ted was a man of violent passion and the language he had used in the dock made it plain that he had not seen what a good joke it was of the Contrôleur’s to sentence him to six months’ hard labour. If Ginger Ted suddenly attacked him with the pick, nothing on God’s earth could save him. It was true that the warder would immediately shoot him down, but meanwhile the Contrôleur’s head would be bashed in. It was with a funny little feeling in the pit of his stomach that Mr. Gruyter walked through the gang of prisoners. They were working in pairs a few feet from one another. He set his mind on neither hastening his pace nor slackening it. As he passed Ginger Ted, the man swung his pick into the ground and looked up at the Contrôleur and as he caught his eye, winked. The Contrôleur checked the smile that rose to his lips and with official dignity strode on. But that wink, so lusciously full of sardonic humour, filled him with satisfaction. If he had been the Caliph of Bagdad instead of a junior official in the Dutch Civil Service, he would forthwith have released Ginger Ted, sent slaves to bath and perfume him, and having clothed him in a golden robe entertained him to a sumptuous repast.

Ginger Ted was an exemplary prisoner and in a month or two the Contrôleur, having occasion to send a gang to do some work on one of the outlying islands, included him in it. There was no gaol there, so the ten fellows he sent, under the charge of a warder, were billeted on the natives and after their day’s work lived like free men. The job was sufficient to take up the rest of Ginger Ted’s sentence. The Contrôleur saw him before he left.

“Look here, Ginger,” he said to him, “here’s ten guilders for you so that you can buy yourself tobacco when you’re gone.”

“Couldn’t you make it a bit more? There’s eight pounds a month coming in regularly.”

“I think that’s enough. I’ll keep the letters that come for you, and when you get back you’ll have a tidy sum. You’ll have enough to take you anywhere you want to go.”

“I’m very comfortable here,” said Ginger Ted.

“Well, the day you come back, clean yourself up and
come over to my house. We'll have a bottle of beer together."

"That'll be fine. I guess I'll be ready for a good crack then."

Now chance steps in. The island to which Ginger Ted had been sent was called Maputiti, and like all the rest of them it was rocky, heavily wooded and surrounded by a reef. There was a village among coco-nuts on the seashore opposite the opening of the reef and another village on a brackish lake in the middle of the island. Of this some of the inhabitants had been converted to Christianity. Communication with Baru was effected by a launch that touched at the various islands at irregular intervals. It carried passengers and produce. But the villages were seafaring folk, and if they had to communicate urgently with Baru, manned a prahu and sailed the fifty miles or so that separated them from it. It happened that when Ginger Ted's sentence had but another fortnight to run the Christian headman of the village on the lake was taken suddenly ill. The native remedies availed him nothing and he writhed in agony. Messengers were sent to Baru imploring the missionary's help; but as ill luck would have it Mr. Jones was suffering at the moment from an attack of malaria. He was in bed and unable to move. He talked the matter over with his sister.

"It sounds like acute appendicitis," he told her.

"You can't go, Owen," she said.

"I can't let the man die."

Mr. Jones had a temperature of a hundred and four. His head was aching like mad. He had been delirious all night. His eyes were shining strangely and his sister felt that he was holding on to his wits by a sheer effort of will.

"You couldn't operate in the state you're in."

"No, I couldn't. Then Hassan must go."

Hassan was the dispenser.

"You couldn't trust Hassan. He'd never dare to do an operation on his own responsibility. And they'd never let him. I'll go. Hassan can stay here and look after you."

"You can't remove an appendix!"

"Why not? I've seen you do it. I've done lots of minor operations."
Mr. Jones felt he didn’t quite understand what she was saying.

"Is the launch in?"

"No, it’s gone to one of the islands. But I can go in the prahu the men came in."

"You? I wasn’t thinking of you. You can’t go."

"I’m going, Owen."

"Going where?" he said.

She saw that his mind was wandering already. She put her hand soothingly on his dry forehead. She gave him a dose of medicine. He muttered something and she realized that he did not know where he was. Of course she was anxious about him, but she knew that his illness was not dangerous, and she could leave him safely to the mission boy who was helping her nurse him and to the native dispenser. She slipped out of the room. She put her toilet things, a night-dress, and a change of clothes into a bag. A little chest with surgical instruments, bandages and antiseptic dressings was kept always ready. She gave them to the two natives who had come over from Maputiti, and telling the dispenser what she was going to do gave him instructions to inform her brother when he was able to listen. Above all he was not to be anxious about her. She put on her topi and sallied forth. The mission was about half a mile from the village. She walked quickly. At the end of the jetty the prahu was waiting. Six men manned it. She took her place in the stern and they set off with a rapid stroke. Within the reef the sea was calm, but when they crossed the bar they came upon a long swell. But this was not the first journey of the sort Miss Jones had taken and she was confident in the seaworthiness of the boat she was in. It was noon and the sun beat down from a sultry sky. The only thing that harassed her was that they could not arrive before dark, and if she found it necessary to operate at once she could count only on the light of hurricane lamps.

Miss Jones was a woman of hard on forty. Nothing in her appearance would have prepared you for such determination as she had just shown. She had an odd drooping gracefulness, which suggested that she might be swayed by every breeze; it was almost an affectation; and it made the strength of character which you soon discovered in her seem positively monstrous. She was flat-chested, tall and
extremely thin. She had a long sallow face and she was much
afflicted with prickly heat. Her lank brown hair was drawn
back straight from her forehead. She had rather small eyes,
grey in colour, and because they were somewhat too close
they gave her face a shrewish look. Her nose was long
and thin and a trifle red. She suffered a good deal from
indigestion. But this infirmity availed nothing against her
ruthless determination to look upon the bright side of things.
Firmly persuaded that the world was evil and men unspeak-
ably vicious, she extracted any little piece of decency she could
find in them with the modest pride with which a conjurer
extracts a rabbit from a hat. She was quick, resourceful and
competent. When she arrived on the island she saw that
there was not a moment to lose if she was to save the head-
man’s life. Under the greatest difficulties, showing a native
how to give the anaesthetic, she operated, and for the next
three days nursed the patient with anxious assiduity. Every-
thing went very well and she realized that her brother could
not have made a better job of it. She waited long enough
to take out the stitches and then prepared to go home. She
could flatter herself that she had not wasted her time. She
had given medical attention to such as needed it, she had
strengthened the small Christian community in its faith,
admonished such as were lax and cast the good seed in places
where it might be hoped under divine providence to take
root.

The launch, coming from one of the other islands, put in
somewhat late in the afternoon, but it was full moon and
they expected to reach Baru before midnight. They brought
her things down to the wharf and the people who were
seeing her off stood about repeating their thanks. Quite a
little crowd collected. The launch was loaded with sacks
of copra, but Miss Jones was used to its strong smell and it
did not incommode her. She made herself as comfortable a
place to sit in as she could, and waiting for the launch to
start, chatted with her grateful flock. She was the only
passenger. Suddenly a group of natives emerged from the
trees that embowered the little village on the lagoon and she
saw that among them was a white man. He wore a prison
sarong and a baju. He had long red hair. She at once
recognized Ginger Ted. A policeman was with him. They
shook hands and Ginger Ted shook hands with the villagers
who accompanied him. They bore bundles of fruit and a jar which Miss Jones guessed contained native spirit, and these they put in the launch. She discovered to her surprise that Ginger Ted was coming with her. His term was up and instructions had arrived that he was to be returned to Baru in the launch. He gave her a glance, but did not nod—indeed Miss Jones turned away her head—and stepped in. The mechanic started his engine and in a moment they were jug-juggling through the channel in the lagoon. Ginger Ted clambered on to a pile of sacks and lit a cigarette.

Miss Jones ignored him. Of course she knew him very well. Her heart sank when she thought that he was going to be once more in Baru, creating a scandal and drinking, a peril to the women and a thorn in the flesh of all decent people. She knew the steps her brother had taken to have him deported and she had no patience with the Contrôleur, who would not see a duty that stared him so plainly in the face. When they had crossed the bar and were in the open sea Ginger Ted took the stopper out of the jar of arak and putting his mouth to it took a long pull. Then he handed the jar to the two mechanics who formed the crew. One was a middle-aged man and the other a youth.

"I do not wish you to drink anything while we are on the journey," said Miss Jones sternly to the elder one.

He smiled at her and drank.

"A little arak can do no one any harm," he answered. He passed the jar to his companion, who drank also.

"If you drink again I shall complain to the Contrôleur," said Miss Jones.

The elder man said something she could not understand, but which she suspected was very rude, and passed the jar back to Ginger Ted. They went along for an hour or more. The sea was like glass and the sun set radiantly. It set behind one of the islands and for a few minutes changed it into a mystic city of the skies. Miss Jones turned round to watch it and her heart was filled with gratitude for the beauty of the world.

"And only man is vile," she quoted to herself.

They went due east. In the distance was a little island which she knew they passed close by. It was uninhabited. A rocky islet thickly grown with virgin forest. The boatman lit his lamps. The night fell and immediately the sky
was thick with stars. The moon had not yet risen. Suddenly there was a slight jar and the launch began to vibrate strangely. The engine rumbled. The head mechanic, calling to his mate to take the helm, crept under the housing. They seemed to be going more slowly. The engine stopped. She asked the youth what was the matter, but he did not know. Ginger Ted got down from the top of the copra sacks and slipped under the housing. When he reappeared she would have liked to ask him what had happened, but her dignity prevented her. She sat still and occupied herself with her thoughts. There was a long swell and the launch rolled slightly. The mechanic emerged once more into view and started the engine. Though it rumbled like mad they began to move. The launch vibrated from stem to stern. They went very slowly. Evidently something was amiss, but Miss Jones was exasperated rather than alarmed. The launch was supposed to do six knots, but now it was just crawling along; at that rate they would not get into Baru till long, long after midnight. The mechanic, still busy under the housing, shouted out something to the man at the helm. They spoke in Bugi, of which Miss Jones knew very little. But after a while she noticed that they had changed their course and seemed to be heading for the little uninhabited island a good deal to the lee of which they should have passed.

"Where are we going?" she asked the helmsman with sudden misgiving.

He pointed to the islet. She got up and went to the housing and called to the man to come out.

"You’re not going there? Why? What’s the matter?"

"I can’t get to Baru," he said.

"But you must. I insist. I order you to go to Baru."

The man shrugged his shoulders. He turned his back on her and slipped once more under the housing. Then Ginger Ted addressed her.

"One of the blades of the propeller has broken off. He thinks he can get as far as that island. We shall have to stay the night there and he’ll put on a new propeller in the morning when the tide’s out."

"I can’t spend the night on an uninhabited island with three men," she cried.

"A lot of women would jump at it."
"I insist on going to Baru. Whatever happens we must get there to-night."

"Don't get excited, old girl. We've got to beach the boat to put a new propeller on, and we shall be all right on the island."

"How dare you speak to me like that. I think you're very insolent."

"You'll be O.K. We've got plenty of grub and we'll have a snack when we land. You have a drop of arak and you'll feel like a house on fire."

"You're an impertinent man. If you don't go to Baru I'll have you all put in prison."

"We're not going to Baru. We can't. We're going to that island and if you don't like it you can get out and swim."

"Oh, you'll pay for this."

"Shut up, you old cow," said Ginger Ted.

Miss Jones gave a gasp of anger. But she controlled herself. Even out there, in the middle of the ocean, she had too much dignity to bandy words with that vile wretch. The launch, the engine rattling horribly, crawled on. It was pitch dark now, and she could no longer see the island they were making for. Miss Jones, deeply incensed, sat with lips tight shut and a frown on her brow; she was not used to being crossed. Then the moon rose and she could see the bulk of Ginger Ted sprawling on the top of the piled sacks of copra. The glimmer of his cigarette was strangely sinister. Now the island was vaguely outlined against the sky. They reached it and the boatman ran the launch on to the beach. Suddenly Miss Jones gave a gasp. The truth had dawned on her and her anger changed to fear. Her heart beat violently. She shook in every limb. She felt dreadfully faint. She saw it all. Was the broken propeller a put-up job or was it an accident? She could not be certain; anyhow, she knew that Ginger Ted would seize the opportunity. Ginger Ted would rape her. She knew his character. He was mad about women. That was what he had done, practically, to the girl at the mission, such a good little thing, she was an excellent sempstress; they would have prosecuted him for that and he would have been sentenced to years of imprisonment, only very unfortunately the innocent child had gone back to him several times and indeed
had only complained of his ill usage when he left her for somebody else. They had gone to the Contrôleur about it, but he had refused to take any steps, saying in that coarse way of his that even if what the girl said was true, it didn’t look very much, as though it had been an altogether unpleasant experience. Ginger Ted was a scoundrel. And she was a white woman. What chance was there that he would spare her? None. She must keep her wits about her. She must have courage. She was determined to sell her virtue dearly, and if he killed her—well, she would rather die than yield. And if she died she would rest in the arms of Jesus. For a moment a great light blinded her eyes and she saw the mansions of her Heavenly Father. They were a grand and sumptuous mixture of a picture palace and a railway station. The mechanics and Ginger Ted jumped out of the launch and, waist-deep in water, gathered round the broken propeller. She took advantage of their preoccupation to get her case of surgical instruments out of the box. She took out the four scalpels it contained and secreted them in her clothing. If Ginger Ted touched her she would not hesitate to plunge a scalpel in his heart.

"Now then, miss, you’d better get out," said Ginger Ted. "You’ll be better off on the beach than in the boat."

She thought so too. At least there she would have freedom of action. Without a word she clambered over the copra sacks. He offered her his hand.

"I don’t want your help," she said coldly.

"You can go to hell," he answered.

It was a little difficult to get out of the boat without showing her legs, but by the exercise of considerable ingenuity she managed it.

"Damned lucky we’ve got something to eat. We’ll make a fire and then you’d better have a snack and a nip of arak."

"I want nothing. I only want to be left alone."

"It won’t hurt me if you go hungry."

She did not answer. She walked, with head erect, along the beach. She held the largest scalpel in her closed fist. The moon allowed her to see where she was going. She looked for a place to hide. The thick forest came down to the very edge of the beach; but, afraid of its darkness (after all, she was but a woman), she dared not plunge into
its depth. She did not know what animals lurked there or what dangerous snakes. Besides, her instinct told her that it was better to keep those three bad men in sight; then if they came towards her she would be prepared. Presently she found a little hollow. She looked round. They seemed to be occupied with their own affairs and they could not see her. She slipped in. There was a rock between them and her so that she was hidden from them and yet could watch them. She saw them go to and from the boat carrying things. She saw them build a fire. It lit them luridly and she saw them sit around and eat, and she saw the jar of arak passed from one to the other. They were all going to get drunk. What would happen to her then? It might be that she could cope with Ginger Ted, though his strength terrified her, but against three she would be powerless. A mad idea came to her to go to Ginger Ted and fall on her knees before him and beg him to spare her. He must have some spark of decent feeling in him and she had always been so convinced that there was good even in the worst of men. He must have had a mother. Perhaps he had a sister. Ah, but how could you appeal to a man blinded with lust and drunk with arak? She began to feel terribly weak. She was afraid she was going to cry. That would never do. She needed all her self-control. She bit her lip. She watched them, like a tiger watching his prey; no, not like that, like a lamb watching three hungry wolves. She saw them put more wood on the fire and Ginger Ted, in his sarong, silhouetted by the flames. Perhaps after he had had his will of her he would pass her on to the others. How could she go back to her brother when such a thing had happened to her? Of course he would be sympathetic, but would he ever feel the same to her again? It would break his heart. And perhaps he would think that she ought to have resisted more. For his sake perhaps it would be better if she said nothing about it. Naturally the men would say nothing. It would mean twenty years in prison for them. But then, supposing she had a baby. Miss Jones instinctively clenched her hands with horror and nearly cut herself with the scalpel. Of course it would only infuriate them if she resisted.

"What shall I do?" she cried. "What have I done to deserve this?"

She flung herself down on her knees and prayed to God
to save her. She prayed long and earnestly. She reminded God that she was a virgin and just mentioned, in case it had slipped the divine memory, how much St. Paul had valued that excellent state. And then she peeped round the rock again. The three men appeared to be smoking and the fire was dying down. Now was the time that Ginger Ted's lewd thoughts might be expected to turn to the woman who was at his mercy. She smothered a cry, for suddenly he got up and walked in her direction. She felt all her muscles grow taut, and though her heart was beating furiously she clenched the scalpel firmly in her hand. But it was for another purpose that Ginger Ted had got up. Miss Jones blushed and looked away. He strolled slowly back to the others and sitting down again raised the jar of arak to his lips. Miss Jones, crouching behind the rock, watched with straining eyes. The conversation round the fire grew less and presently she divined, rather than saw, that the two natives wrapped themselves in blankets and composed themselves to slumber. She understood. This was the moment Ginger Ted had been waiting for. When they were fast asleep he would get up cautiously and without a sound, in order not to wake the others, creep stealthily towards her. Was it that he was unwilling to share her with them or did he know that his deed was so dastardly that he did not wish them to know of it? After all, he was a white man and she was a white woman. He could not have sunk so low as to allow her to suffer the violence of natives. But his plan, which was so obvious to her, had given her an idea; when she saw him coming she would scream, she would scream so loudly that it would wake the two mechanics. She remembered now that the elder, though he had only one eye, had a kind face. But Ginger Ted did not move. She was feeling terribly tired. She began to fear that she would not have the strength now to resist him. She had gone through too much. She closed her eyes for a minute.

When she opened them it was broad daylight. She must have fallen asleep and, so shattered was she by emotion, have slept till long after dawn. It gave her quite a turn. She sought to rise, but something caught in her legs. She looked and found that she was covered with two empty copra sacks. Someone had come in the night and put them over her. Ginger Ted! She gave a little scream. The
horrible thought flashed through her mind that he had outraged her in her sleep. No. It was impossible. And yet he had had her at his mercy. Defenceless. And he had spared her. She blushed furiously. She raised herself to her feet, feeling a little stiff, and arranged her disordered dress. The scalpel had fallen from her hand and she picked it up. She took the two copra sacks and emerged from her hiding-place. She walked towards the boat. It was floating in the shallow water of the lagoon.

"Come on, Miss Jones," said Ginger Ted. "We've finished. I was just going to wake you up."

She could not look at him, but she felt herself as red as a turkey cock.

"Have a banana?" he said.

Without a word she took it. She was very hungry, and she ate it with relish.

"Step on this rock and you'll be able to get in without wetting your feet."

Miss Jones felt as though she could sink into the ground with shame, but she did as he told her. He took hold of her arm—good heavens! his hand was like an iron vice, never, never could she have struggled with him—and helped her into the launch. The mechanic started the engine and they slid out of the lagoon. In three hours they were at Baru.

That evening, having been officially released, Ginger Ted went to the Contrôleur's house. He wore no longer the prison uniform, but the ragged singlet and the khaki shorts in which he had been arrested. He had had his hair cut and it fitted his head now like a curly little cap. He was thinner. He had lost his bloated flabbiness and looked younger and better. Mr. Gruyter, a friendly grin on his round face, shook hands with him and asked him to sit down. The boy brought two bottles of beer.

"I'm glad to see you hadn't forgotten my invitation, Ginger," said the Contrôleur.

"Not likely. I've been looking forward to this for six months."

"Here's luck, Ginger Ted."

"Same to you, Contrôleur."

They emptied their glasses and the Contrôleur clapped his hands. The boy brought two more bottles.
"Well, you don't bear me any malice for the sentence I gave you, I hope."
"No bloody fear. I was mad for a minute, but I got over it. I didn't have half a bad time, you know. Nice lot of girls on that island, Contrôleur. You ought to give 'em a look over one of these days."
"You're a bad lot, Ginger."
"Terrible."
"Good beer, isn't it?"
"Fine."
"Let's have some more."
Ginger Ted's remittance had been arriving every month and the Contrôleur now had fifty pounds for him. When the damage he had done to the Chinaman's shop was paid for there would still be over thirty.
"That's quite a lot of money, Ginger. You ought to do something useful with it."
"I mean to," answered Ginger. "Spend it."
The Contrôleur sighed.
"Well, that's what money's for, I guess."
The Contrôleur gave his guest the news. Not much had happened during the last six months. Time on the Alas Islands did not matter very much and the rest of the world did not matter at all.
"Any wars anywhere?" asked Ginger Ted.
"No. Not that I've noticed. Harry Jervis found a pretty big pearl. He says he's going to ask a thousand quid for it."
"I hope he gets it."
"And Charlie McCormack's married."
"He always was a bit soft."
Suddenly the boy appeared and said Mr. Jones wished to know if he might come in. Before the Contrôleur could give an answer Mr. Jones walked in.
"I won't detain you long," he said. "I've been trying to get hold of this good man all day and when I heard he was here I thought you wouldn't mind my coming."
"How is Miss Jones?" asked the Contrôleur politely. "None the worse for her night in the open, I trust."
"She's naturally a bit shaken. She had a temperature and I've insisted on her going to bed, but I don't think it's serious."
The two men had got up on the missionary’s entrance, and now the missionary went up to Ginger Ted and held out his hand.

“I want to thank you. You did a great and noble thing. My sister is right, one should always look for the good in their fellow-men; I am afraid I misjudged you in the past; I beg your pardon.”

He spoke very solemnly. Ginger Ted looked at him with amazement. He had not been able to prevent the missionary taking his hand. He still held it.

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“You had my sister at your mercy and you spared her. I thought you were all evil and I am ashamed. She was defenceless. She was in your power. You had pity on her. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Neither my sister nor I will ever forget. God bless and guard you always.”

Mr. Jones’s voice shook a little and he turned his head away. He released Ginger Ted’s hand and strode quickly to the door. Ginger Ted watched him with a blank face.

“What the blazes does he mean?” he asked.

The Contrôleur laughed. He tried to control himself, but the more he did the more he laughed. He shook and you saw the folds of his fat belly ripple under the sarong. He leaned back in his long chair and rolled from side to side. He did not laugh only with his face, he laughed with his whole body, and even the muscles of his podgy legs shook with mirth. He held his aching ribs. Ginger Ted looked at him frowning, and because he did not understand what the joke was he grew angry. He seized one of the empty beer bottles by the neck.

“If you don’t stop laughing, I’ll break your bloody head open,” he said.

The Contrôleur mopped his face. He swallowed a mouthful of beer. He sighed and groaned because his sides were hurting him.

“He’s thanking you for having respected the virtue of Miss Jones,” he spluttered at last.

“Me?” cried Ginger Ted.

The thought took quite a long time to travel through his head, but when at last he got it he flew into a violent
rage. There flowed from his mouth such a stream of blasphemous obscenities as would have startled a marine.

“That old cow,” he finished. “What does he take me for?”

“You have the reputation of being rather hot stuff with the girls, Ginger,” giggled the little Contrôleur.

“I wouldn’t touch her with the fag-end of a barge-pole. It never entered my head. The nerve. I’ll wring his blasted neck. Look here, give me my money, I’m going to get drunk.”

“I don’t blame you,” said the Contrôleur.


He was shocked and outraged. The suggestion really shattered his sense of decency.

The Contrôleur had the money at hand and having got Ginger Ted to sign the necessary papers gave it to him.

“Go and get drunk, Ginger Ted,” he said, “but I warn you, if you get into mischief it’ll be twelve months’ next time.”

“I shan’t get into mischief,” said Ginger Ted sombrely. He was suffering from a sense of injury. “It’s an insult,” he shouted at the Contrôleur. “That’s what it is, it’s a bloody insult.”

He lurched out of the house, and as he went he muttered to himself: “dirty swine, dirty swine.” Ginger Ted remained drunk for a week. Mr. Jones went to see the Contrôleur again.

“I’m very sorry to hear that poor fellow has taken up his evil course again,” he said. “My sister and I are dreadfully disappointed. I’m afraid it wasn’t very wise to give him so much money at once.”

“It was his own money. I had no right to keep it back.”

“Not a legal right, perhaps, but surely a moral right.”

He told the Contrôleur the story of that fearful night on the island. With her feminine instinct, Miss Jones had realized that the man, inflamed with lust, was determined to take advantage of her, and, resolved to defend herself to the last, had armed herself with a scalpel. He told the Contrôleur how she had prayed and wept and how she had hidden herself. Her agony was indescribable, and she knew that she could never have survived the shame. She rocked to and fro and every moment she thought he was coming. And
there was no help anywhere and at last she had fallen asleep; she was tired out, poor thing, she had undergone more than any human being could stand, and then when she awoke she found that he had covered her with copra sacks. He had found her asleep, and surely it was her innocence, her very helplessness that had moved him, he hadn’t the heart to touch her; he covered her gently with two copra sacks and crept silently away.

“It shows you that deep down in him there is something sterling. My sister feels it’s our duty to save him. We must do something for him.”

“Well, in your place I wouldn’t try till he’s got through all his money,” said the Contrôleur, “and then if he’s not in gaol you can do what you like.”

But Ginger Ted didn’t want to be saved. About a fortnight after his release from prison he was sitting on a stool outside a Chinaman’s shop looking vacantly down the street when he saw Miss Jones coming along. He stared at her for a minute and once more amazement seized him. He muttered to himself and there can be little doubt that his mutterings were disrespectful. But then he noticed that Miss Jones had seen him and he quickly turned his head away; he was conscious, notwithstanding, that she was looking at him. She was walking briskly, but she sensibly diminished her pace as she approached him. He thought she was going to stop and speak to him. He got up quickly and went into the shop. He did not venture to come out for at least five minutes. Half an hour later Mr. Jones himself came along and he went straight up to Ginger Ted with outstretched hand.

“How do you do, Mr. Edward? My sister told me I should find you here.”

Ginger Ted gave him a surly look and did not take the proffered hand. He made no answer.

“We’d be so very glad if you’d come to dinner with us next Sunday. My sister’s a capital cook and she’ll make you a real Australian dinner.”

“Go to hell,” said Ginger Ted.

“That’s not very gracious,” said the missionary, but with a little laugh to show that he was not affronted. “You go and see the Contrôleur from time to time, why shouldn’t you come and see us? It’s pleasant to talk to white people
now and then. Won’t you let bygones be bygones? I can assure you of a very cordial welcome.”

“I haven’t got clothes fit to go out in,” said Ginger Ted sulkily.

“Oh, never mind about that. Come as you are.”

“I won’t.”

“Why not? You must have a reason.”

Ginger Ted was a blunt man. He had no hesitation in saying what we should all like to when we receive unwelcome invitations.

“I don’t want to.”

“I’m sorry. My sister will be very disappointed.”

Mr. Jones, determined to show that he was not in the least offended, gave him a breezy nod and walked on. Forty-eight hours later there mysteriously arrived at the house in which Ginger Ted lodged a parcel containing a suit of ducks, a tennis shirt, a pair of socks and some shoes. He was unaccustomed to receiving presents and next time he saw the Contrôleur asked him if it was he who had sent the things.

“Not on your life,” replied the Contrôleur. “I’m perfectly indifferent to the state of your wardrobe.”

“Well, then, who the hell can have?”

“Search me.”

It was necessary from time to time for Miss Jones to see Mr. Gruyter on business and shortly after this she came to see him one morning in his office. She was a capable woman and though she generally wanted him to do something he had no mind to, she did not waste his time. He was a little surprised then to discover that she had come on a very trivial errand. When he told her that he could not take cognizance of the matter in question, she did not as was her habit try to convince him, but accepted his refusal as definite. She got up to go and then as though it were an afterthought said:

“Oh, Mr. Gruyter, my brother is very anxious that we should have the man they call Ginger Ted to supper with us and I’ve written him a little note inviting him for the day after to-morrow. I think he’s rather shy, and I wonder if you’d come with him.”

“That’s very kind of you.”

“My brother feels that we ought to do something for the poor fellow.”

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"A woman's influence and all that sort of thing," said the Contrôleur demurely.

"Will you persuade him to come? I'm sure he will if you make a point of it, and when he knows the way he'll come again. It seems such a pity to let a young man like that go to pieces altogether."

The Contrôleur looked up at her. She was several inches taller than he. He thought her very unattractive. She reminded him strangely of wet linen hung on a clothes-line to dry. His eyes twinkled, but he kept a straight face.

"I'll do my best," he said.

"How old is he?" she asked.

"According to his passport he's thirty-one."

"And what is his real name?"

"Wilson."

"Edward Wilson," she said softly.

"It's astonishing that after the life he's led he should be so strong," murmured the Contrôleur. "He has the strength of an ox."

"Those red-headed men sometimes are very powerful," said Miss Jones, but spoke as though she were choking.

"Quite so," said the Contrôleur.

Then for no obvious reason Miss Jones blushed. She hurriedly said good-bye to the Contrôleur and left his office.

"Goddverdomme!" said the Contrôleur.

He knew now who had sent Ginger Ted the new clothes.

He met him during the course of the day and asked him whether he had heard from Miss Jones. Ginger Ted took a crumpled ball of paper out of his pocket and gave it to him. It was the invitation. It ran as follows:

Dear Mr. Wilson,—

My brother and I would be so very glad if you would come and have supper with us next Thursday at 7.30. The Contrôleur has kindly promised to come. We have some new records from Australia which I am sure you will like. I am afraid I was not very nice to you last time we met, but I did not know you so well then, and I am big enough to admit it when I have committed an error. I hope you will forgive me and let me be your friend.

Yours sincerely,

Martha Jones.
The Contrôleur noticed that she addressed him as Mr. Wilson and referred to his own promise to go, so that when she told him she had already invited Ginger Ted she had a little anticipated the truth.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm not going, if that's what you mean. Damned nerve."

"You must answer the letter."

"Well, I won't."

"Now look here, Ginger, you put on those new clothes and you come as a favour to me. I've got to go, and damn it all, you can't leave me in the lurch. It won't hurt you just once."

Ginger Ted looked at the Contrôleur suspiciously, but his face was serious and his manner sincere: he could not guess that within him the Dutchman bubbled with laughter.

"What the devil do they want me for?"

"I don't know. The pleasure of your society, I suppose."

"Will there be any booze?"

"No, but come up to my house at seven, and we'll have a tiddly before we go."

"Oh, all right," said Ginger Ted sulkily.

The Contrôleur rubbed his little fat hands with joy. He was expecting a great deal of amusement from the party. But when Thursday came and seven o'clock Ginger Ted was dead drunk and Mr. Gruyter had to go alone. He told the missionary and his sister the plain truth. Mr. Jones shook his head.

"I'm afraid it's no good, Martha, the man's hopeless."

For a moment Miss Jones was silent and the Contrôleur saw two tears trickle down her long thin nose. She bit her lip.

"No one is hopeless. Everyone has some good in him. I shall pray for him every night. It would be wicked to doubt the power of God."

Perhaps Miss Jones was right in this, but the divine providence took a very funny way of effecting its ends. Ginger Ted began to drink more heavily than ever. He was so troublesome that even Mr. Gruyter lost patience with him. He made up his mind that he could not have the fellow on the islands any more and resolved to deport him on the next boat that touched at Baru. Then a man died under
mysterious circumstances after having been for a trip to one of the islands and the Contrôleur learnt that there had been several deaths on the same island. He sent the Chinese who was the official doctor of the group to look into the matter, and very soon received intelligence that the deaths were due to cholera. Two more took place at Baru and the certainty was forced upon him that there was an epidemic.

The Contrôleur cursed freely. He cursed in Dutch, he cursed in English, and he cursed in Malay. Then he drank a bottle of beer and smoked a cigar. After that, he took thought. He knew the Chinese doctor would be useless. He was a nervous little man from Java and the natives would refuse to obey his orders. The Contrôleur was efficient, and knew pretty well what must be done, but he could not do everything single-handed. He did not like Mr. Jones, but just then he was thankful that he was at hand, and he sent for him at once. In ten minutes Mr. Jones was in the office. He was accompanied by his sister.

"You know what I want to see you about, Mr. Jones," he said abruptly.

"Yes. I've been expecting a message from you. That is why my sister has come with me. We are ready to put all our resources at your disposal. I need not tell you that my sister is as competent as a man."

"I know. I shall be very glad of her assistance."

They set to without further delay to discuss the steps that must be taken. Hospital huts would have to be erected and quarantine stations. The inhabitants of the various villages on the islands must be forced to take proper precautions. In a good many cases the infected villages drew their water from the same well as the uninfected, and in each case this difficulty would have to be dealt with according to circumstances. It was necessary to send round people to give orders and make sure that they were carried out. Negligence must be ruthlessly punished. The worst of it was that the natives would not obey other natives, and orders given by native policemen, themselves unconvinced of their efficacy, would certainly be disregarded. It was advisable for Mr. Jones to stay at Baru, where the population was largest, and his medical attention most wanted; and what with the official duties that forced him to keep in touch with the headquarters, it was impossible for Mr. Gruyter to visit all the other islands himself. Miss
Jones must go; but the natives of some of the outlying islands were wild and treacherous; the Contrôleur had had a good deal of trouble with them. He did not like the idea of exposing her to danger.

"I'm not afraid," she said.

"I daresay. But if you have your throat cut I shall get into trouble, and besides, we're so short-handed I don't want to risk losing your help."

"Then let Mr. Wilson come with me. He knows the natives better than anyone, and can speak all their dialects."

"Ginger Ted?" The Contrôleur stared at her. "He's just getting over an attack of D.T.'s."

"I know," she answered.

"You know a great deal, Miss Jones."

Even though the moment was so serious, Mr. Gruyter could not but smile. He gave her a sharp look, but she met it coolly.

"There's nothing like responsibility for bringing out what there is in a man, and I think something like this may be the making of him."

"Do you think it would be wise to trust yourself for days at a time to a man of such infamous character?" said the missionary.

"I put my trust in God," she answered gravely.

"Do you think he'd be any use?" asked the Contrôleur.

"You know what he is."

"I'm convinced of it." Then she blushed. "After all, no one knows better than I that he's capable of self-control."

The Contrôleur bit his lip.

"Let's send for him."

He gave a message to the sergeant, and in a few minutes Ginger Ted stood before them. He looked ill. He had evidently been much shaken by his recent attack, and his nerves were all to pieces. He was in rags, and he had not shaved for a week. No one could have looked more disreputable.

"Look here, Ginger," said the Contrôleur, "it's about this cholera business. We've got to force the natives to take precautions, and we want you to help us."

"Why the hell should I?"

"No reason at all. Except philanthropy."

"Nothing doing, Contrôleur. I'm not a philanthropist."
"That settles that. That was all. You can go."

But as Ginger Ted turned to the door Miss Jones stopped him.

"It was my suggestion, Mr. Wilson. You see, they want me to go to Labobo and Sakunchi, and the natives there are so funny I was afraid to go alone. I thought if you came I should be safer."

He gave her a look of extreme distaste.

"What do you suppose I care if they cut your throat?" Miss Jones looked at him, and her eyes filled with tears. She began to cry. He stood and watched her stupidly.

"There's no reason why you should." She pulled herself together and dried her eyes. "I'm being silly. I shall be all right. I'll go alone."

"It's damned foolishness for a woman to go to Labobo."

She gave him a little smile.

"I daresay it is, but you see, it's my job, and I can't help myself. I'm sorry if I offended you by asking you. You must forget about it. I daresay it wasn't quite fair to ask you to take such a risk."

For quite a minute Ginger Ted stood and looked at her. He shifted from one foot to the other. His surly face seemed to grow black.

"Oh, hell, have it your own way," he said at last. "I'll come with you. When d'you want to start?"

They set out next day, with drugs and disinfectants, in the Government launch. Mr. Gruyter, as soon as he had put the necessary work in order, was to start off in a prahu in the other direction. For four months the epidemic raged. Though everything possible was done to localise it, one island after another was attacked. The Contrôleur was busy from morning to night. He had no sooner got back to Baru from one or other of the islands to do what was necessary there than he had to set off again. He distributed food and medicine. He cheered the terrified people. He supervised everything. He worked like a dog. He saw nothing of Ginger Ted, but he heard from Mr. Jones that the experiment was working out beyond all hopes. The scamp was behaving himself. He had a way with the natives; and by cajolery, firmness, and on occasion, the use of his fist, managed to make them take the steps necessary for their own safety. Miss Jones could congratulate herself on the success of the scheme. But the
Contrôleur was too tired to be amused. When the epidemic had run its course he rejoiced because out of a population of eight thousand only six hundred had died.

Finally he was able to give the district a clean bill of health.

One evening he was sitting in his sarong on the veranda of his house and he read a French novel with the happy consciousness that once more he could take things easy. His head boy came in and told him that Ginger Ted wished to see him. He got up from his chair and shouted to him to come in. Company was just what he wanted. It had crossed the Contrôleur's mind that it would be pleasant to get drunk that night, but it is dull to get drunk alone, and he had regretfully put the thought aside. And heaven had sent Ginger Ted in the nick of time. By God, they would make a night of it. After four months they deserved a bit of fun. Ginger Ted entered. He was wearing a clean suit of white ducks. He was shaved. He looked another man.

"Why, Ginger, you look as if you'd been spending a month at a health resort instead of nursing a pack of natives dying of cholera. And look at your clothes. Have you just stepped out of a band-box?"

Ginger Ted smiled rather sheepishly. The head boy brought two bottles of beer and poured them out.

"Help yourself, Ginger," said the Contrôleur, as he took his glass.

"I don't think I'll have any, thank you."

The Contrôleur put down his glass and looked at Ginger Ted with amazement.

"Why, what's the matter? Aren't you thirsty?"

"I don't mind having a cup of tea."

"A cup of what?"

"I'm on the wagon. Martha and I are going to be married."

"Ginger!"

The Contrôleur's eyes popped out of his head. He scratched his shaven pate.

"You can't marry Miss Jones," he said. "No one could marry Miss Jones."

"Well, I'm going to. That's what I've come to see you about. Owen's going to marry us in chapel, but we want to be married by Dutch law as well."

"A joke's a joke, Ginger. What's the idea?"
"She wanted it. She fell for me that night we spent on the island when the propeller broke. She's not a bad old girl when you get to know her. It's her last chance, if you understand what I mean, and I'd like to do something to oblige her. And she wants someone to take care of her, there's no doubt about that."

"Ginger, Ginger, before you can say knife she'll make you into a damned missionary."

"I don't know that I'd mind that so much if we had a little mission of our own. She says I'm a bloody marvel with the natives. She says I can do more with a native in five minutes than Owen can do in a year. She says she's never known anyone with the magnetism I have. It seems a pity to waste a gift like that."

The Contrôleur looked at him without speaking and slowly nodded his head three or four times. She'd nobbled him, all right.

"I've converted seventeen already," said Ginger Ted.

"You? I didn't know you believed in Christianity."

"Well, I don't know that I did exactly, but when I talked to 'em and they just came into the fold like a lot of blasted sheep, well, it gave me quite a turn. Blimey, I said, I daresay there's something in it, after all."

"You should have raped her, Ginger. I wouldn't have been hard on you. I wouldn't have given you more than three years and three years is soon over."

"Look here, Contrôleur, don't you ever let on that the thought never entered my head. Women are touchy, you know, and she'd be as sore as hell if she knew that."

"I guessed she'd got her eye on you, but I never thought it would come to this." The Contrôleur in an agitated manner walked up and down the veranda. "Listen to me, old boy," he said, after an interval of reflection, "we've had some grand times together, and a friend's a friend. I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll lend you the launch and you can go and hide on one of the islands till the next ship comes along, and then I'll get 'em to slow down and take you on board. You've only got one chance now, and that's to cut and run."

Ginger Ted shook his head.

"It's no good, Contrôleur, I know you mean well, but I'm going to marry the blasted woman, and that's that. You don't know the joy of bringing all them bleeding sinners to
repentance, and Moses! that girl can make a treacle pudding. I haven’t eaten a better one since I was a kid.”

The Contrôleur was very much disturbed. The drunken scamp was his only companion on the islands, and he did not want to lose him. He discovered that he had even a certain affection for him. Next day he went to see the missionary.

“What’s this I hear about your sister marrying Ginger Ted?” he asked him. “It’s the most extraordinary thing I’ve ever heard in my life.”

“It’s true, nevertheless.”

“You must do something about it. It’s madness.”

“My sister is of full age, and entitled to do as she pleases.”

“But you don’t mean to tell me you approve of it. You know Ginger Ted. He’s a bum, and there are no two ways about it. Have you told her the risk she’s running? I mean, bringing sinners to repentance and all that sort of thing’s all right, but there are limits. And does the leopard ever change his spots?”

Then for the first time in his life the Contrôleur saw a twinkle in the missionary’s eye.

“My sister is a very determined woman, Mr. Gruyter,” he replied. “From that night they spent on the island, he never had a chance.”

The Contrôleur gasped. He was as surprised as the prophet when the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? Perhaps Mr. Jones was human, after all.

“Alleluia!” muttered the Contrôleur.

Before anything more could be said, Miss Jones swept into the room. She was radiant. She looked ten years younger. Her cheeks were flushed, and her nose was hardly red at all.

“Have you come to congratulate me, Mr. Gruyter?” she cried, and her manner was sprightly and girlish. “You see, I was right, after all. Everyone has some good in them. You don’t know how splendid Edward has been all through this terrible time. He’s a hero. He’s a saint. Even I was surprised.”

“I hope you’ll be very happy, Miss Jones.”

“I know I shall. Oh, it would be wicked of me to doubt it. For it is the Lord who has brought us together.”

“Do you think so?”
"I know it. Don't you see? Except for the cholera Edward would never have found himself. Except for the cholera we should never have learnt to know one another. I have never seen the hand of God more plainly manifest."

The Contrôleur could not but think that it was rather a clumsy device to bring those two together that necessitated the death of six hundred innocent persons, but not being well versed in the ways of omnipotence, he made no remark.

"You'll never guess where we're going for our honeymoon," said Miss Jones, perhaps a trifle archly.

"Java?"

"No, if you'll lend us the launch, we're going to that island where we were marooned. It has very tender recollections for both of us. It was there that I first guessed how fine and good Edward was. It's there I want him to have his reward."

The Contrôleur caught his breath. He left quickly, for he thought that unless he had a bottle of beer at once he would have a fit. He was never so shocked in his life.
LOCUM TENENS

IAN HAY
IAN HAY is the pen-name by which Major J. H. Beith, C.B.E., M.C., is known to a very large reading and theatre-going public. Since the success of his first novel, more than twenty-five years ago, he has written many books and plays, of which The Middle Watch and The Midshipmaid are among the most popular,
LOCUM TENENS

I

The summer rain lashed down; another gust of wind came sweeping round the corner; and the motor-bicycle skidded giddily across the glistening road.

"A near shave that time, old soul!" observed Mr. Archibald Wade over his shoulder.

The gentleman addressed, Captain James Pryor, who for the last two hours had been enduring the acme of human discomfort upon the luggage-carrier, with his arms twined affectionately round his friend's waist, made no reply. Instead, he vacated his seat without warning or premeditation and assumed a recumbent attitude under an adjacent hedge. The motor-bicycle, unexpectedly lightened of half of its burden, miraculously righted itself, and, starting forward with a flick of its tail, whizzed on its way.

In due course it returned, trundled by its owner, who addressed the prostrate James reprovingly:—

"Tell me, my dear James, why did you dismount from the flapper-bracket?"

"Dismount, you lunatic?" replied the injured Pryor. "I fell off! I was shot off, if you like."

"Why, I wonder?" said Archibald thoughtfully.

"Because you came swinging round that last corner at forty miles an hour. We side-slipped, and I simply flew."

"It was foolish of you to fly without proper equipment, James. You are too ambitious—too impulsive. Are you in the Royal Air Force? No! You are only a machine-gunner. Machine-gunners don't fly: they pop—and stop. You have just stopped. Examine yourself, and decide—"

"For heaven's sake, Archie," exclaimed the exasperated James, "stop talking like a village idiot for a minute!" James was a serious-minded and slightly pessimistic young
man at the best of times; he was also severely bruised and badly in love—a combination inimical to equability of temper.

"I fear you are unstrung, comrade," replied Archibald, quite unruffled.

"Unstrung or not," retorted James warmly, "I'll see you to blazes before I trust myself on your rotten machine for another yard!"

"This is no time," Archibald pointed out reprovingly, "for the venting of passion. Besides, I have troubles of my own: this blinking back tyre has burst. Do you happen to remember what the last milestone said?"

"Popleigh, one mile," growled Captain Pryor.

"That is splendid."

"Why should it be splendid? We want to get on to Tuckleford."

"Why should we go to Tuckleford? What is Tuckleford to us?"

"Well—" James hesitated, and reddened.

"Well, what?"

"Well, if you must know, I am expecting to meet someone there."

"A girl, of course?"

"Yes."

"Not—Dorothy? The Dorothy?"

James, with the rain streaming down his face, nodded dismally.

"Yes," he said. "That was why I suggested the trip."

Archibald considered.

"It is well," he said at length. "We can push this condemned sewing-machine on to Popleigh; there we will obtain food and clothing, and I will get a new tyre. In the afternoon, if it clears up, I will convey you to Dorothy."

"How can we get food and clothing at Popleigh?" demanded the irritable James. "Have you ever been to the place in your life?"

"Never."

"Then why on earth—"

"Because I have had a rush of brains to the head. Do you remember The Old Flick?"

James considered.

"Do you mean Flick Windrum, of Trinity Hall?"

"The same."
"Yes. What about it? He became a Dodger, didn’t he? Curate in Kensington, or something."

"He was, but not now. I have just remembered that he wrote to me a year ago saying that he had received a push up —promotion. A cure of souls—that’s what he called it—a cure of souls in Popleigh. He must have cured quite a lot by this time. We will drop in at his parsonage, and touch him for a couple of them, and perhaps a bottle of Bass, and get our clothes dried. Then, hey for Dorothy!"

"Archibald," observed James, not without admiration, "you are quite balmy."

"I know," replied that irrepressible youth composedly. "The insanity of genius, really. You push the bike."

II

Half an hour later the motor-bicycle, still propelled by James, drew up at the gate of Popleigh Vicarage. The Vicarage itself stood well back from the road in a spacious garden—a riot of roses and honeysuckle—under the lee of an ancient Norman church. Simultaneously the summer storm passed, the clouds broke, and the hot July sun broke out hospitably.

Archibald Wade wheeled the bicycle up to the front door and rang the bell. After repeating the performance three times he turned to his depressed companion.

"I wonder where the old sinner can be," he remarked.

"We don’t know," replied James through chattering teeth, "and we aren’t likely to find out. Let’s go and find the village pub."

"Peradventure," suggested Archibald, upon whose receptive soul the ecclesiastical atmosphere was already taking effect, "he is upon a journey, or sleepteth, what?"

He tried the handle of the door.

"Locked," he announced.

"Let’s go round to the back," suggested the practical James. The procession, now steaming comfortably, moved off again. The back door was also locked. Upon the panel was pinned a fluttering scrap of paper which said, *tout court*:

*Bak at 3*

"I wonder who wrote that," said James.
“From the spelling,” replied Archibald, “I should say it was The Flick himself; but as it is written on buttery paper I expect it was the cook. Depend upon it, The Flick has taken the little creature out for a brisk country walk. Still, I know he would never forgive us if we gave him the go-by. Let us find a window.”

The windows upon the ground floor were all closed, but one stood open above a veranda on the sunny side of the house. With the assistance of the faithful James, Mr. Wade clambered up the trellis work and effected his burglaryous purpose. A minute later he opened the front door with a flourish, and admitted his shrinking accomplice. There ensued a tour of inspection.

“Dining-room!” announced Archibald, opening a door. “Table not laid for lunch. We will remedy that. Study—very snug! We will smoke there after. Kitchen! Aha, this is where we commandeer supplies. Now, my dear young friend, you will go upstairs and have a nice warm bath, while I raid the old man’s dressing-room. Run along, or you will catch something.

The docile James departed upstairs. Twenty minutes later, emerging greatly refreshed from the bathroom, draped in a towel, he was confronted by a saintly figure in impeccable clerical attire.

“Pax vobiscum!” clanged Archibald, in a throaty baritone. “What do you think of my kit? It took a bit of getting on, I can tell you. James, I have discovered why parsons have to marry right away.”

“Why?”

“Because they button up the back.” The newly-ordained clerk revolved slowly upon his toes. “A pretty good fit, on the whole. I expected to find it rather small for me, but Flick appears to have swelled. James, I am warming up to this part. I am going to be a success in it. Let us go downstairs and find the harmonium.”

“Dry up,” urged James, “and tell me where I can get some clothes. I suppose I shall have to make a holy show of myself too?”

“Unfortunately not,” replied his friend. “This is the only parsonical outfit that I can find. Probably it is what The Flick wears on Sunday.”

“Do you mean that there are no more clothes in the house?”
"There is nothing in the dressing-room. But root about a bit, and you may find something. In the last extremity you can lunch in that bath-towel. Meanwhile, I will lay the table."

Archibald bounded exuberantly downstairs, his coat-tails flying. The disconsolate James tried yet another door. This time he found himself in what was plainly the spare room. The blinds were drawn; the bed was draped in a dust-sheet; the jug stood upon its head in the basin. Under a heap of clerical vestments in the wardrobe he discovered an old blue flannel suit—evidently a relic of The Flick’s secular existence. With this he returned to the dressing-room, and having helped himself to a cricket shirt and a pair of socks, proceeded to invest himself in his borrowed plumes. They were a tight fit, for James was a large man.

"I wonder what that maniac is doing downstairs," he mused. "I hope he has made up the kitchen fire, so that we can dry our things. I can’t face Dolly in this rig. Hallo! What’s that?"

From the garden outside came the toot of a motor-horn; then a buzzing and popping right under the window; then silence.

Downstairs Archibald, depositing a fine ham upon the dining-room table, tip-toed to the window and peeped through the curtain. Outside the front door stood another motorcycle, this time with side-car attached. Within the porch he could descry two persons. One—a female—was disencumbering her head of a voluminous motor-veil. Her male companion was ringing the bell.

After a fortifying glance at his own ensemble in the mirror over the mantelpiece, Archibald strode into the hall and opened the front door.

"Good morning," he said.

The male caller returned the greeting with a patronising nod. He was a slender young man, with large eyes and a low turned-down collar. But Archibald’s first impression of him was that his hair required cutting.

"I trust you will pardon me," he said, "for coming to the door myself, but my servant"—a new inspiration came upon him as he spoke—"my manservant—is busy upstairs changing his clothes."

"Are you the incumbent of this parish?" inquired the young man, in the same patronising tone.
“I am his locum tenens,” replied Archibald blandly. “Will you not enter?”

All this while the girl in the motor-veil had stood silent, with her large blue eyes fixed apprehensively upon Archibald Wade. Archibald mentally diagnosed her as a romantic and impulsive infant, without sufficient knowledge or discrimination to be aware that one must never be seen in public with a young man with bobbed hair.

He ushered his visitors into the study. Even as they crossed the hall he was conscious of the anxious and inquiring countenance of Captain James Pryor suspended in mid-air, like a harvest moon, over the banisters of the upper landing.

“And now,” he inquired, taking up his new role with characteristic enjoyment, as the couple seated themselves upon the sofa, “what can I do for you, this lovely summer day?” He leaned back in The Flick’s swing chair and smiled paternally. The young gentleman with the long hair gave a brief staccato cough.

“Are you licensed?” he inquired. Archibald sprang to his feet.

“My dear sir,” he said, “a thousand apologies! I ought to have remembered! On such a warm morning, too! What will you take?”

This hospitable invitation was received with such unfeigned surprise that he realized that he had made a slip, and sat down again with a feeble giggle.

“You mean——?” he said.

“Is your church licensed,” asked the young man, “for the performance of the marriage ceremony?”

“Oh yes,” replied Archibald with a smile—“fully licensed. We are open on Sundays, too!” he added playfully.

“In that case,” said the young man, with a glance at the girl by his side, “we desire that you should marry us.” The girl gave a little hysterical gasp.

“Quite so,” replied Archibald calmly. “To each other, I presume?”

The young man, after a brief stare, nodded his head.

“And when would you like the ceremony to take place?” continued Archibald, instinctively playing for time.

“At once,” said the young man.

Archibald turned inquiringly to the young girl.

“Is that your wish?” he asked, smiling.
The girl turned crimson, and hesitated.
"Answer, Dorothy!" commanded the young man.
"Yes, please," whispered Dorothy.

III

Upstairs, five minutes later, pandemonium.
"I tell you it’s little Dolly Venner!" reiterated the distracted James, upon whose toilet Archibald had broken in with the news of the emergency. "My little girl! And she’s doing a bolt with that bounder!"

"Do you happen to know his name?" inquired Archibald.
"Lionel Gillibrand, or something like that. I don’t know much about him, but he has been hanging round her ever since she and I had a row last November."

"Oh, you had a row, had you? What was it about?"
"I have no notion: you know what girls are. We were half-engaged—but only half; and I suppose I took things too much for granted.

"What do you mean, half-engaged?" demanded Archibald. "Be more succinct. Have you ever kissed her, for instance?"

"That’s my business!" replied James briefly.
"That means you have. Proceed, mon enfant! You took things too much for granted. Yes?"

"We had a bit of a turn-up," continued James dolefully, "and she bunged me out for good and all. I haven’t seen her since; but being down here with you and knowing she would probably be at the garden-party, I thought I would go over to Tuckleford to-day and try to get her to make it up. And now she’s eloping with a feller like an Angora goat!" The unhappy young man groaned again.

"As things have turned out," remarked Archibald complacently, "nothing could have been more fortunate."

"Fortunate? What do you mean?"

"I mean that Providence has placed the matter in my hands. You are fortunate in having me to extricate your little friend from her predicament."

"Predicament? She’s doing it of her own free will."
Archibald shook his head judicially.
"She may have started out of her own free will," he
remarked, "but she's scared stiff now. I think we can stop this marriage all right."

"What are you going to do about it? Refuse to marry them?" inquired James, with gloomy sarcasm.

"No, I don't think I shall refuse. If I do, they will only go to some one else, which would be a pity, because some one else might marry them, which I can't do under any circumstances. Ergo, she is safer in my hands."

"But what are you going to do?"

"I haven't the faintest notion yet, but I have no doubt that something will occur to me at the proper time. I believe that Napoleon also relied a good deal upon the inspiration of the moment. For the present I shall temporize, and exercise extreme tact. It won't do to put that little person's back up. I should say she was the sort who would cut off her nose to spite her face."

"She is!" agreed James, with feeling.

"Meanwhile," continued Archibald, "I have invited them to have luncheon. I am afraid I can't ask you to join us, under the circumstances, but you shall come in and wait at table."

"Wait?"

"Yes. It will add a spice of pleasurable excitement to the proceedings."

"But she would recognize me."

"It is most unlikely that she will so much as look at you. She is far too agitated to notice anything. Still, she might; and that is where the pleasurable excitement will come in. I think I shall disguise you a little. There is a pair of blue spectacles lying on the study table: Flick must have taken to glasses. You can wear those. Blacken that beautiful golden moustache of yours with burnt cork, and speak, when necessary, in a husky whisper. I will explain that you have got diphtheria, or something. Don't loiter about the room too much, of course. Just hand the dishes, and clear away, and so on."

"I refuse altogether—" began James emphatically.

"It's too late to refuse now," replied Archibald. "I have already mentioned to them that I keep a manservant. They saw you hanging over the banisters as we crossed the hall, and I had to explain your face somehow. Luckily it was rather dark. Well, that's settled. Don't overdo your part,
of course. Don’t lean over the back of Dorothy’s chair, or blow on the top of her head, or tickle the back of her neck, or anything loverlike of that kind.”

“How long,” inquired James resignedly—he had never been clay in the hands of his volatile friend—“is this tomfool entertainment to go on?”

“Until I have an inspiration, or until The Flick turns up. It’s lunch-time now: go and sound the gong.”

Five minutes later the trio sat down to luncheon.

“Lenten fare, I fear, Mr. Gillibrand,” remarked Archibald. “But a warm welcome goes with it.”

“It is not Lent,” said Mr. Gillibrand at once.

“Some of us,” replied Archibald gently, “keep Lent all the year round, Mr. Gillibrand. Hand the cold salmon, Ja—John. Had you a pleasant ride, Mr. Gillibrand, until overtaken by the rain?”

“We had a fairly swift one, thanks,” replied Gillibrand languidly. “I wish I’d had my car, though, instead of a hired motor-cycle. Still, we were doing thirty-five miles an hour through that last ten-mile limit, I should think.” With some difficulty he helped himself to salmon, James’s ideas as to the right distance from which to proffer food being elementary.

“Leo is a dreadfully reckless driver,” said Dorothy, with timid admiration. “I was terrified.”

She smiled in a half-hypnotized fashion at the intrepid Leo, who took not the slightest notice. Archibald disliked him more and more.

“Thirty-five miles an hour!” he exclaimed, shaking a playful finger. “What would my parishioners say? I hope you did not run over any of them.”

“We flattened out two or three ducklings outside a cottage about a mile from here,” replied the intrepid one. “A bumptkin of a policeman saw us, and had the impudence to blow his whistle. Luckily I had my identification number covered with mud.”

“You ought to have stopped, Leo,” said Dorothy.

Mr. Gillibrand replied with a cold stare, which brought a blush to his beloved’s cheek and nearly converted a small blandmange, which James was handing round, from a comestible into a missile.

Suddenly an inspiration came to Archibald the Erratic.
He pushed back his chair, and fitting the tips of his fingers together after the traditional manner of stage clerics, addressed the couple before him.

"Now, my dear young people, with regard to the—ah—pleasant ceremony which is to take place this afternoon. I have already explained to you that certain formalities will be necessary, connected with a Special Licence, and Doctor’s Commons, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and so on. Mere matters of form, but you know what red-tape is! John!"

James came briskly to attention.

"Hand me the telegraph forms from off that writing-table in the window, please," said Archibald, and resumed:

"I propose telegraphing to His Grace for the necessary permission. It is a purely mechanical business; I need not even give your names. Ah, thank you, John!" He took the telegraph forms and proceeded to write. "Put on your hat, like a good fellow, and take this to the village. Let me see: Cantinar, London, is sufficient address, I think." He handed the form to his dazed friend. "Can you read it, John?"

James glanced through the message. It said:

"Tell village policeman that man who ran over ducklings is here, and be quick about it, my lad!"

"Is that legible?" he asked.

James emitted a muffled sound and departed.

"A strange, reticent fellow," observed Archibald to his guests. "His tonsils are most unreliable, but he has a heart of gold. Shall we go into the garden? The birds are singing again. Indeed, yes!" He cooed, and rose to his feet. "The answer to the telegram," he continued, "should be here within the hour, leaving ample time for the ceremony. I also expect a clerical friend about that time. Doubtless he will be glad to assist me, and so make assurance doubly sure!"

He led the way into the garden. He was still in a condition of utter ignorance as to how this escapade was to end; but he intended, if all else failed, to transfer the ensuing unpleasantness to the innocent shoulders of The Old Flick. Meanwhile, he calculated, the village policeman would incorporate an artistic element of complication into the afternoon’s entertainment.
Suddenly, as the trio strolled in constrained silence down an aisle of high hollyhocks, there came to their ears a crunching sound upon the gravel of the drive, and a small governess cart, drawn by a fat grey pony, entered the vicarage gateway and proceeded in the direction of the stable. The driver of the cart had his back turned, but Archibald could see that he wore a soft black clerical hat. The Old Flick had arrived, and the cast was completed.

"I rather fancy that it is my dear friend Windrum," he announced. "Forgive me if I leave you for a moment. You will doubtless bear my absence with fortitude!" He smiled archly. "The raspberries are at your disposal." With a pontifical gesture of benediction he turned and walked in the direction of the house. This would be a surprise for The Old Flick.

He entered the library through the veranda windows. Before him, in the cool shade of the hall beyond, he beheld the tall, black-coated figure of the gentleman to whom he was acting as understudy. His principal’s back was turned, and he was gazing dumbly through the open door into the adjoining dining-room, where the débris of the recent feast were still visible.

The Old Flick’s attention, however, was immediately distracted from this spectacle by a shattering blow upon the spine, followed by a thunderous greeting. He whirled round and faced his demonstrative assailant.

He was not The Old Flick at all.

Archibald the Erratic was stricken dumb for perhaps five seconds; then he put out a friendly hand.

"Good afternoon," he said. "I consider it most neighbourly of you to have called. Sit down, won’t you?"

The stranger, a severe-looking man of about fifty, wearing spectacles over which beetling brows bent threateningly, declined the proffered hand, and faced the intruder with great deliberation.

"My name," he said, "is Septimus Pontifex."

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance, Pontifex," said Archibald cordially. And reaching down a box from
the mantelpiece, he offered Mr. Pontifex one of his own cigarettes.

"May I inquire," said Pontifex, in a low, vibrating voice, "what you are doing in my house?"

"Your house?" replied Archibald with a rather uncertain smile. "Come, I like that!"

"You are pleased to be facetious, sir!" retorted Mr. Pontifex angrily. His spinal cord was still quivering. "If this house is not my actual property, it is mine in effect, so long as I remain Mr. Windrum's locum tenens."

So that was it! Archibald surveyed the swelling figure before him thoughtfully. He had better explain at once. No; on second thoughts he would wait a little. This was evidently a quarrelsome and inhospitable fellow—very different from The Flick—unworthy of great consideration. What would be an appropriate way of——

He was recalled from his meditations by the alarming demeanour of Pontifex, whose gaze for the last half-minute had been concentrated upon a small crimson, circular object upon the right-hand leg of Archibald's trousers. It was a spot of sealing-wax. Now he pointed a trembling finger, and almost screamed:

"What do you mean, sir, by wearing my clothes? I recognize my trousers: do not deny it! I made that spot of sealing-wax myself, last night."

"Yes, Pontifex," replied Archibald in a soothing voice, "I am sure you did. You invent your own games, and play them by yourself. Very clever and resourceful!"

"Do not trifle with me, sir!" boomed Pontifex. "You are wearing my trousers: I know they are mine!"

Archibald shook his head mournfully.

"Really, Pontifex, really!" he said. "I had heard stories, of course, but I had no idea things were as bad as this. No wonder the dear Bishop was getting anxious." He patted the astonished man upon the shoulder. "My poor friend, can't you do anything—anything? My heart bleeds for you."

Archibald choked—not from emotion, but from inability to decide what to say next. Mr. Pontifex saved him further trouble by turning on his heel and walking swiftly out of the room and upstairs. Presently he could be heard overhead, seeking confirmatory evidence in his rifled dressing-room.

Archibald lit a cigarette, strolled to the window, and
looked out into the garden. Presently Septimus Pontifex came striding downstairs again, and stood framed in the doorway.

"You are a thief, sir," he announced, "and an impostor. I do not know who you are or where you come from, but I presume that the motor-bicycle which I noticed in the stables is yours. I shall now lock you in this room and send for a constable."

"Do not put yourself to such trouble, my dear Mr. Pontifex," Archie replied. "I have already done so." He extended a hand and drew the bemused Pontifex to the window. "In fact, I see he has arrived."

Dorothy Venner was still enough of a child to appreciate being left alone with the raspberries. But this afternoon her appetite was gone—which was not altogether surprising. Eloping is like riding a bicycle: you must go full speed ahead all the time, or you will begin to wobble. Dorothy was of a romantic disposition and barely twenty. She had been attracted by Mr. Gillibrand’s dark eyes and lofty attitude towards his fellow-creatures; and the fact that a peppery papa and a philistine elder brother had described her paragon as an effeminate young Nancy and a mangy little swine respectively had been in itself sufficient to convince her that she loved him to distraction. But, as already indicated, you cannot take an elopement andante. Dorothy was wobbling badly. The sunny, peaceful garden did not soothe her at all. She wanted to cry. She wanted to scream. Above all, she wanted someone to confide in.

Furtively, almost fearfully, she peeped through the raspberry canes to observe the movements of her beloved. He was wandering—one had almost said slouching—along a gravel path not fifteen yards away. Suddenly he halted, stiffened, and gave a startled glance in the direction of the house. Then he ducked, and, running with quite surprising swiftness, in the attitude of a Red Indian on the war-trail, dived into a large rhododendron bush and disappeared from sight.

Dorothy was too astonished to move or cry out. Now she was conscious of the thump of elephantine feet upon the
grass close by, and next moment the explanation of Lionel's peculiar conduct revealed itself in the form of a policeman—the largest policeman she had ever seen.

Now although we are pleased to be humorous upon the subject of policemen, it is in a spirit of pure bravado. Secretly we are all afraid of them: our upbringing at the hands of unscrupulous under-nurses has ensured that. Whether we are stealing jam or engaging in an elopement, the policeman is ever at the back of our thoughts. Dorothy trembled guiltily.

The policeman addressed her. He was a stout, jolly-looking man, and in his leisure moments was much in request at home as a minder of the baby. He was painfully conscious of this infirmity, and in the execution of his duty endeavoured to nullify it as far as possible. He spoke in a deep monotone, and his language was formal and official.

"Good afternoon, miss. I am informed that the gentleman what passed through Popleigh village about two-thirty p.m. to-day riding a motor-cycle with side-car attached is on these 'ere premises can you give me any information as to his whereabouts?"

"He is somewhere about the garden, I think," gasped Dorothy.

The policeman thanked her, and passed on. Dorothy watched him out of sight, and then turned and ran blindly in the direction of the house, straight into the arms of Captain James Pryor. He was wearing his own clothes, and had discarded his make-up.

Dorothy started back with an hysterical little cry.

"Jim!" she whispered. "You?"

"Yes," said Jim simply—"just me."

Dorothy gave him both her hands.

"Jim, dear," she said, "I'm in awful trouble. I have been a little imbecile."

"Oh, not at all!" said James tenderly.

"Yes, I have!" insisted Dorothy.

"No, you haven't!" said James. "I tell you, I know about imbeciles. I've been spending the day with one."

Miss Venner abandoned the argument, and wept comfortably, with her forehead resting upon Jim's broad chest.

"I'm ashamed to look you in the face," she sobbed.

"Never mind," replied James, passing a protecting arm
round her. "Have a look at my waistcoat instead: it's been greatly admired in its time. Now, what's your trouble?"

"It's a long story," said Dorothy; "but I simply must tell——"

"Don't you tell me any stories you don't need to," interposed James swiftly. "I'm not an inquisitive sort of feller. . . . That's a wretched little handkerchief of yours: try mine!" He deprived Miss Venner of a small scrap of lawn and handed her a prismatic bandana.

"Now, cut out the explanations, and tell me what you want me to do," he said.

"I want you to take me away from this place. Back to Tuckleford—anywhere!" said Dorothy with a shuddering glance over her shoulder in the direction of the rhododendron bush.

"Righto!" replied James, who was always happy when there was plenty to do and nothing to say. "Let's go to the stable and start up your little friend's buzz-wagon. . . . By Jove, there's someone coming out of the veranda window now. Run!" He seized his lady-love by the arm and fairly whirled her into the stable yard.

VI

Septimus Pontifex, dazed and bewildered, crossed the lawn and approached the raspberry canes, accompanied by Archibald. Ten yards behind followed an elderly female, carrying three dead ducklings. She had been brought to the Vicarage as principal witness for the prosecution, and, growing tired of waiting in the road outside, had decided to take a more intimate part in the proceedings.

The policeman had extracted Lionel Gillibrand from the rhododendron bush; and having produced a notebook and pencil from the interior of his chest, was well embarked upon a searching but stereotyped inquiry into his prisoner's identity and antecedents, when he became aware that two gentlemen in clerical dress—one elderly and lowering like a thundercloud, the other young and struggling with acute hysteria—had included themselves in the interview. Slightly flustered, he touched his helmet and returned to his cross-examination.

"Your name and address?" he repeated.
"You have no right to ask for it," persisted Lionel uneasily. "The law cannot touch me in this matter."

"You name and address?" reiterated the policeman, with the steady insistence of a man who has the whole British Constitution at his back. "Surname? Christian name?"

"You had better give it, Mr. Gillibrand," advised the less sedate clergyman.

"Persons," corroborated the policeman, "charged with a offence against the law and withholdin' of their name and address when requested by a police officer is liable to be arrested summary. Now, my man, out with it!"

Lionel complied, sulkily.

"I say again," he added, "that the law cannot touch me in the matter. There was no compulsion or undue influence. It was a purely voluntary act."

The policeman ploughed on.

"I must ask you to show me your licence," he continued. Lionel grasped at this straw.

"Certainly!" he replied triumphantly. "I have a Special Licence!"

The policeman scratched his ear in puzzled fashion, and then resorted to sarcasm.

"Special?" he said slowly. "What may a Special Licence be? Does it include liddle flappers?"

"Are you referring," inquired Leo furiously, "to my future——?"

"I am referrin'," replied the policeman doggedly, "to your licence."

"I tell you I have a Special Licence," shouted Lionel—"from the Archbishop of Canterbury." He turned to Archibald. "Has the telegram arrived yet?" he inquired feverishly.

"Not yet," replied Archibald.

"Touchin' this licence," persisted the adamantine policeman, "I don't see what no Archbishop of Canterbury has got to do with liddle flappers. Mrs. Chalice, will you step this way?"

The elderly female with the corpses, who had been standing respectfully aloof, glided mechanically forward.

"I was a-sittin' outside my door, sir——" she began rapidly to Archibald.

"You will be charged——" announced the policeman to Mr. Gillibrand.
"Hallo! What's that?" exclaimed Archibald. From the drive came a whirring and a popping sound.

"It's my motor-cycle!" exclaimed Gillibrand.

"BG seven-oh-two," corroborated the policeman grimly.

"I've got your number all right. Here, stop!"

Mr. Gillibrand was already half-way across the lawn. But he was too late. As he rounded the corner of the house his motor-cycle, carrying two passengers, swung out of the gate into the road and whizzed away, with a single derisive toot, in the direction of Tuckleford.

Desperately he sped after it. The policeman, stertorous but tenacious, followed. Last of all came the owner of the corpses, minus her evidence. Archibald the Erratic and Septimus Pontifex were left alone.

VII

"Well," announced Archie cheerfully, "that's that."

Mr. Pontifex turned majestically upon him.

"Sir," he announced, "I shall wait no longer——"

"Sorry you have to go," said Archibald, extending a friendly hand. "Look in again, won't you?"

Mr. Pontifex ignored this hospitable invitation and continued:

"You have broken into my house; you are masquerading in my clothes; you have entertained a party of friends to luncheon at my expense; and you have involved me in a grotesque and inexplicable brawl between a village policeman and an escaped criminal, to whom you have apparently promised a dispensation from the Archbishop of Canterbury. If you can explain all these things to me with any degree of plausibility I shall be grateful."

Archie, who possessed the saving grace—rare in irresponsible humorists—of knowing when a joke has gone far enough, complied. His explanation was characteristically involved, and abounded in irrelevance. But Pontifex's severe features had relaxed considerably ere he finished.

"Mr. Wade," he said—"if that be your name—I am inclined to accept your narrative as substantially correct, and I applaud your design to prevent this marriage, though your methods of execution are open to criticism. But you will
forgive me if I verify your statements by a direct reference to Mr. Windrum? I shall send a telegram—"

"I can save you the trouble," replied Archibald.

"You seem to think of everything," remarked Mr. Pontifex, with an indulgent smile. "Have you telegraphed yourself?"

"No, sir. My certificate of character is hanging in your own study.

Archibald crossed the veranda and disappeared. Presently he returned, carrying a framed photograph.

"My passport, sir, and certificate aforesaid," he announced.

Mr. Pontifex examined the portrait—a young officer in the uniform of the Royal Air Force, inscribed: "To The Old Flick, from Archibald the Erratic."

"I recognize it," he said. "And you are Archibald the Erratic?"

"Yes, sir."

"And The—er—Old Flick?"

"Mr. Windrum, sir. We were boys together. At that age we are apt to be thoughtless and inconsiderate in the nicknames that we bestow."

"That is very true," agreed Mr. Pontifex. "I remember, in my undergraduate days at Oxford—"

What Mr. Pontifex remembered will never be known, for at this moment there was a sound of turmoil outside, the garden gate clicked, and the policeman reappeared, holding Mr. Lionel Gillibrand by the collar. The lady of the ducklings appeared to have been unable to stay the course: at any rate, she was no longer visible.

"I've got him, sir!" announced the policeman to Archibald—whom, not altogether unreasonably, he appeared to regard as the president of the tribunal.

"Excellent, officer!" said Archibald approvingly. "Put him there." He indicated a chair, into which the representative of the law proceeded to bump his prisoner. This done, the policeman again extracted the notebook from his bosom, and resumed:

"Attemptin' to escape from custody amounts to resistin' of the police in the execution of their duty. That makes the charge much more serious." He sucked his blunt pencil thoughtfully; then wrote. . . .

"You will now be charged with driving a mechanically-
propelled vehicle—to wit, one motor-cycle—along the Tuckleford Road to the common danger; exceeding of the speed-limit in a ten-mile control; destroying of live-stock—
to wit, three flappers; refusing to stop when requested to do
so by a police officer, and resisting of the police in the execu-
tion of their duty.” He shut the book with a snap. Lionel
Gillibrand gazed at him incredulously.

“Do you mean to say—” he began.

The policeman held up a hand about the size of a small
ham.

“Stop one minute!” he commanded. “I have some
evidence here.” He dived under his chair and produced the
corpses of the ducklings. “Three flappers! That’s what
you’re wanted for, my man!”

“Do you mean to say,” inquired Gillibrand, in a voice of
mingled indignation and relief, “that that is all?”

“And quite enough too!” retorted the policeman,
obviously more than a little piqued.

“But—but—I thought—”

Archibald intervened swiftly.

“Yes, that is all, Mr. Gillibrand. If you have any other
crime on your conscience—well, forget it! Next Monday
you will be penalized forty shillings or a month by the local
beaks, like any other ordinary little road-hog, for running
over three ducklings and resisting the police in the execution
of their duty. I wouldn’t have the charge made more—
romantic than that, if I were you. Believe me, it’s not done! See?”

Gillibrand favoured him with a lingering and malevolent
glare; then turned away sulkily. Archibald rose to his feet.

“I suppose this gentleman is at liberty to leave us now,
officer?” he said.

“I shall not require him further,” replied the policeman
grandly—“for a day or two.”

VIII

Archibald the Erratic accompanied Mr. Gillibrand to
the gate, and pointed out to that depreciated Lochinvar the
nearest way to the railway station. He returned to find
the Rector sitting alone in the veranda.
"Has our policeman left us?" Archibald asked.

"My housekeeper," replied Mr. Pontifex, "who has just returned from an afternoon visit to her sister, is supplying him with refreshment in the kitchen. Mr. Wade, I think you handled the delicate matter of the true reason of Mr. Gillibrand’s presence here with great discrimination. I am glad now I trusted to my own judgment and allowed you to conduct the case in your own way. Will you remain and join us at supper?"

"Yourself and your housekeeper?" inquired Archibald, politely temporizing until he should find a way of escape from what promised to be a somewhat parochial evening.

"Oh, dear no! My housekeeper is a person of quite humble station. Myself and my daughter."

"Your daughter?"

"Precisely. Possibly I have not informed you that I am so blessed. There she is, coming in at the garden gate now. She has been to a garden-party."

Archibald turned quickly. In the open gateway stood a girl—fair-haired, slender, dressed in white, her face shaded by a large black-lace hat. There was a bunch of pink carnations at her belt. On seeing her father engaged in amicable conversation with a young and eminently presentable brother of the cloth, she broke into a smile. Archibald, who was an observant young man, noted she had a dimple in her left cheek. Concurrently, he was conscious of a slight shortness of breath.

"You will stay to supper, then?" said Mr. Pontifex.

Archibald the Erratic bowed his head reverentially, and uttered the first serious words of a frivolous career:

"I will!"