

I'll come with his wine."

Who'll put him to proof?

"I," said All Earth,  
"Whatever he's worth,  
I'll put to the proof."

Who'll choose him for Knight?

"I," said his Mother,  
"Before any other,  
My very own knight!"

And after this fashion, adventure to seek,  
Was Sir Galahad made--as it might be last week!

## THE PUZZLER

I had not seen Penfentenyou since the Middle Nineties, when he was Minister of Ways and Woodsides in De Thouar's first Administration. Last summer, though he nominally held the same portfolio, he was his Colony's Premier in all but name, and the idol of his own province, which is two and a half times the size of England. Politically, his creed was his growing country; and he came over to England to develop a Great Idea in

her behalf.

Believing that he had put it in train, I made haste to welcome him to my house for a week.

That he was chased to my door by his own Agent-General in a motor; that they turned my study into a Cabinet Meeting which I was not invited to attend; that the local telegraph all but broke down beneath the strain of hundred word coded cables; and that I practically broke into the house of a stranger to get him telephonic facilities on a Sunday, are things I overlook. What I objected to was his ingratitude, while I thus tore up England to help him. So I said: "Why on earth didn't you see your Opposite Number in Town instead of bringing your office work here?"

"Eh? Who?" said he, looking up from his fourth cable since lunch.

"See the English Minister for Ways and Woodsides."

"I saw him," said Penfentyou, without enthusiasm.

It seemed that he had called twice on the gentleman, but without an appointment--("I thought if I wasn't big enough, my business was")--and each time had found him engaged. A third party intervening, suggested that a meeting might be arranged if due notice were given.

"Then," said Penfentyou, "I called at the office at ten o'clock."

"But they'd be in bed," I cried.

"One of the babies was awake. He told me that--that 'my sort of questions "--he slapped the pile of cables--"were only taken between 11 and 2 P.M. So I waited."

"And when you got to business?" I asked.

He made a gesture of despair. "It was like talking to children. They'd never heard of it."

"And your Opposite Number?"

Penfentyou described him.

"Hush! You mustn't talk like that!" I shuddered. "He's one of the best of good fellows. You should meet him socially."

"I've done that too," he said. "Have you?"

"Heaven forbid!" I cried; "but that's the proper thing to say."

"Oh, he said all the proper things. Only I thought as this was England that they'd more or less have the hang of all the--general hang-together of my Idea. But I had to explain it from the beginning."

"Ah! They'd probably mislaid the papers," I said, and I told him the story of a three-million pound insurrection caused by a deputy Under-Secretary sitting upon a mass of green-labelled correspondence instead of reading it.

"I wonder it doesn't happen every week," he answered. "D'you mind my having the Agent-General to dinner again tonight? I'll wire, and he can motor down."

The Agent-General arrived two hours later, a patient and expostulating person, visibly torn between the pulling Devil of a rampant Colony, and the placid Baker of a largely uninterested England. But with Penfentyou behind him he had worked; for he told us that Lord Lundie--the Law Lord was the final authority on the legal and constitutional aspects of the Great Idea, and to him it must be referred.

"Good Heavens alive!" thundered Penfentyou. "I told you to get that settled last Christmas."

"It was the middle of the house-party season," said the Agent-General mildly. "Lord Lundie's at Credence Green now--he spends his holidays there. It's only forty miles off."

"Shan't I disturb his Holiness?" said Penfentyou heavily. "Perhaps

'my sort of questions,'" he snorted, "mayn't be discussed except at midnight."

"Oh, don't be a child," I said.

"What this country needs," said Penfentyou, "is--" and for ten minutes he trumpeted rebellion.

"What you need is to pay for your own protection," I cut in when he drew breath, and I showed him a yellowish paper, supplied gratis by Government, which is called Schedule D. To my merciless delight he had never seen the thing before, and I completed my victory over him and all the Colonies with a Brassey's "Naval Annual" and a "Statesman's Year Book."

The Agent-General interposed with agent-generalities (but they were merely provocateurs) about Ties of Sentiment.

"They be blowed!" said Penfentyou. "What's the good of sentiment towards a Kindergarten?"

"Quite so. Ties of common funk are the things that bind us together; and the sooner you new nations realize it the better. What you need is an annual invasion. Then you'd grow up."

"Thank you! Thank you!" said the Agent-General. "That's what I am always

trying to tell my people."

"But, my dear fool," Penfentyou almost wept, "do you pretend that these banana-fingered amateurs at home are grown up?"

"You poor, serious, pagan man," I retorted, "if you take 'em that way, you'll wreck your Great Idea."

"Will you take him to Lord Lundie's to-morrow?" said the Agent-General promptly.

"I suppose I must," I said, "if you won't."

"Not me! I'm going home," said the Agent-General, and departed. I am glad that I am no colony's Agent-General.

Penfentyou continued to argue about naval contributions till 1.15 A.M., though I was victor from the first.

At ten o'clock I got him and his correspondence into the motor, and he had the decency to ask whether he had been unpolished over-night. I replied that I waited an apology. This he made excuse for renewed arguments, and used wayside shows as illustrations of the decadence of England.

For example we burst a tyre within a mile of Credence Green, and, to

save time, walked into the beautifully kept little village. His eye was caught by a building of pale-blue tin, stencilled "Calvinist Chapel," before whose shuttered windows an Italian organ-grinder with a petticoated monkey was playing "Dolly Grey-"

"Yes. That's it!" snapped the egoist. "That's a parable of the general situation in England. And look at those brutes!" A huge household removals van was halted at a public-house. The men in charge were drinking beer from blue and white mugs. It seemed to me a pretty sight, but Penfentyou said it represented Our National Attitude.

Lord Lundie's summer resting-place we learned was a farm, a little out of the village, up a hill round which curled a high hedged road. Only an initiated few spend their holidays at Credence Green, and they have trained the householders to keep the place select. Penfentyou made a grievance of this as we walked up the lane, followed at a distance by the organ-grinder.

"Suppose he is having a house-party," he said: "Anything's possible in this insane land."

Just at that minute we found ourselves opposite an empty villa. Its roof was of black slate, with bright unweathered ridge-tiling; its walls were of blood-coloured brick, cornered and banded with vermiculated stucco work, and there was cobalt, magenta, and purest apple-green window-glass on either side of the front door. The whole was fenced from the road by

a low, brick-pillared, flint wall, topped with a cast-iron Gothic rail, picked out in blue and gold.

Tight beds of geranium, calceolaria, and lobelia speckled the glass-plat, from whose centre rose one of the finest araucarias (its other name by the way is "monkey-puzzler"), that it has ever been my lot to see. It must have been full thirty feet high, and its foliage exquisitely answered the iron railings. Such bijou ne plus ultras, replete with all the amenities, do not, as I pointed out to Penfentyou, transpire outside of England.

A hedge, swinging sharp right, flanked the garden, and above it on a slope of daisy-dotted meadows we could see Lord Lundie's tiled and half-timbered summer farmhouse. Of a sudden we heard voices behind the tree--the fine full tones of the unembarrassed English, speaking to their equals--that tore through the hedge like sleet through rafters.

"That it is not called 'monkey-puzzler' for nothing, I willingly concede"--this was a rich and rolling note--"but on the other hand--"

"I submit, me lud, that the name implies that it might, could, would, or should be ascended by a monkey, and not that the ascent is a physical impossibility. I believe one of our South American spider monkeys wouldn't hesitate... By Jove, it might be worth trying, if--"

This was a crisper voice than the first. A third, higher-pitched, and



full of pleasant affectations, broke in.

"Oh, practical men, there is no ape here. Why do you waste one of God's own days on unprofitable discussion? Give me a match!"

"I've a good mind to make you demonstrate in your own person. Come on, Bubbles! We'll make Jimmy climb!"

There was a sound of scuffling, broken by squeaks from Jimmy of the high voice. I turned back and drew Penfentyou into the side of the flanking hedge. I remembered to have read in a society paper that Lord Lundie's lesser name was "Bubbles."

"What are they doing?" Penfentyou said sharply. "Drunk?"

"Just playing! Superabundant vitality of the Race, you know. We'll watch 'em," I answered. The noise ceased.

"My deliver," Jimmy gasped. "The ram caught in the thicket, and--I'm the only one who can talk Neapolitan! Leggo my collar!" He cried aloud in a foreign tongue, and was answered from the gate.

"It's the Calvinistic organ-grinder," I whispered. I had already found a practicable break at the bottom of the hedge. "They're going to try to make the monkey climb, I believe."

"Here--let me look!" Penfentyou flung himself down, and rooted till he too broke a peep-hole. We lay side by side commanding the entire garden at ten yards' range.

"You know 'em?" said Penfentyou, as I made some noise or other.

"By sight only. The big fellow in flannels is Lord Lundie; the light-built one with the yellow beard painted his picture at the last Academy: He's a swell R.A., James Loman."

"And the brown chap with the hands?"

"Tomling, Sir Christopher Tomling, the South American engineer who built the--"

"San Juan Viaduct. I know," said Penfentyou. "We ought to have had him with us.... Do you think a monkey would climb the tree?"

The organ-grinder at the gate fenced his beast with one arm as Jimmy-talked.

"Don't show off your futile accomplishments," said Lord Lundie. "Tell him it's an experiment. Interest him!"

"Shut up, Bubbles. You aren't in court," Jimmy replied. "This needs delicacy. Giuseppe says--"

"Interest the monkey," the brown engineer interrupted. "He won't climb for love. Cut up to the house and get some biscuits, Bubbles--sugar ones and an orange or two. No need to tell our womenfolk."

The huge white figure lobbed off at a trot which would not have disgraced a boy of seventeen. I gathered from something Jimmy let fall that the three had been at Harrow together.

"That Tomling has a head on his Shoulders," muttered Penfentyou. "Pity we didn't get him for the Colony. But the question is, will the monkey climb?"

"Be quick, Jimmy. Tell the man we'll give him five bob for the loan of the beast. Now run the organ under the tree, and we'll dress it when Bubbles comes back," Sir Christopher cried.

"I've often wondered," said Penfentyou, "whether it would puzzle a monkey?" He had forgotten the needs of his Growing Nation, and was earnestly parting the white-thorn stems with his fingers.

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Giuseppe and Jimmy did as they were told, the monkey following them with a wary and malignant eye.

"Here's a discovery," said Jimmy. "The singing part of this organ comes off the wheels." He spoke volubly to the proprietor. "Oh, it's so as Giuseppe can take it to his room o' nights. And play it. D'you hear that? The organ-grinder, after his day's crime, plays his accursed machine for love. For love, Chris! And Michael Angelo was one of 'em!"

"Don't jaw! Tell him to take the beast's petticoat off," said Sir Christopher Tomling.

Lord Lundie returned, very little winded, through a gap higher up the hedge.

"They're all out, thank goodness!" he cried, "but I've raided what I could. Macrons glaces, candied fruit, and a bag of oranges."

"Excellent!" said the world-renowned contractor.

"Jimmy, you're the light-weight; jump up on the organ and impale these things on the leaves as I hand 'em!"

"I see," said Jimmy, capering like a springbuck. "Upward and onward, eh? First, he'll reach out for--how infernal prickly these leaves are!--this biscuit. Next we'll lure him on--(that's about the reach of his arm)--with the marron glare, and then he'll open out this orange. How human! How like your ignoble career, Bubbles!"

With care and elaboration they ornamented that tree's lower branches with sugar-topped biscuits, oranges, bits of banana, and marrons glaires till it looked very ape's path to Paradise.

"Unchain the Gyascutis!" said Sir Christopher commandingly. Giuseppe placed the monkey atop of the organ, where the beast, misunderstanding, stood on his head.

"He's throwing himself on the mercy of the Court, me lud," said Jimmy. "No--now he's interested. Now he's reaching after higher things. What wouldn't I give to have here" (he mentioned a name not unhonoured in British Art). "Ambition plucking apples of Sodom!" (the monkey had pricked himself and was swearing). "Genius hampered by Convention? Oh, there's a whole bushelful of allegories in it!"

"Give him time. He's balancing the probabilities," said Lord Lundie.

The three closed round the monkey,--hanging on his every motion with an earnestness almost equal to ours. The great judge's head--seamed and vertical forehead, iron mouth, and pike-like under-jaw, all set on that thick neck rising out of the white flannelled collar--was thrown against the puckered green silk of the organ-front as it might have been a cameo of Titus. Jimmy, with raised eyes and parted lips, fingered his grizzled chestnut beard, and I was near enough to-note, the capable beauty of his hands. Sir Christopher stood a little apart, his arms folded behind his back, one heavy brown boot thrust forward, chin in as curbed, and black

eyebrows lowered to shade the keen eyes.

Giuseppe's dark face between flashing earrings, a twisted rag of red and yellow silk round his throat, turned from the reaching yearning monkey to the pink and white biscuits spiked on the bronzed leafage. And upon them all fell the serious and workmanlike sun of an English summer forenoon.

"Fils de Saint Louis, montez au ciel!" said Lord Lundie suddenly in a voice that made me think of Black Caps. I do not know what the monkey thought, because at that instant he leaped off the organ and disappeared.

There was a clash of broken glass behind the tree.

The monkey's face, distorted with passion, appeared at an upper window of the house, and a starred hole in the stained-glass window to the left of the front door showed the first steps of his upward path.

"We've got to catch him," cried Sir Christopher. "Come along!"

They pushed at the door, which was unlocked.

"Yes. But consider the ethics of the case," said Jimmy. "Isn't this burglary or something, Bubbles?"

"Settle that when he's caught," said Sir Christopher. "We're responsible for the beast."

A furious clanging of bells broke out of the empty house, followed by muffled gurglings and trumpeting.

"What the deuce is that?" I asked, half aloud.

"The plumbing, of course," said Penfentyou. "What a pity! I believe he'd have climbed if Lord Lundie hadn't put him off!"

"Wait a moment, Chris," said Jimmy the interpreter; "Giuseppe says he may answer to the music of his infancy. Giuseppe, therefore, will go in with the organ. Orpheus with his lute, you know. Avante, Orpheus! There's no Neapolitan for bathroom, but I fancy your friend is there."

"I'm not going into another man's house with a hurdy-gurdy," said Lord Lundie, recoiling, as Giuseppe unshipped the working mechanism of the organ (it developed a hang-down leg) from its wheels, slipped a strap round his shoulders, and gave the handle a twist.

"Don't be a cad, Bubbles," was Jimmy's answer. "You couldn't leave us now if you were on the Woolsack. Play, Orpheus! The Cadi accompanies."

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With a whoop, a buzz, and a crash, the organ sprang to life under the hand of Giuseppe, and the procession passed through the rained-to-imitate-walnut front door. A moment later we saw the monkey ramping on the roof.

"He'll be all over the township in a minute if we don't head him," said Penfentyou, leaping to his feet, and crashing into the garden. We headed him with pebbles till he retired through a window to the tuneful reminder that he had left a lot of little things behind him. As we passed the front door it swung open, and showed Jimmy the artist sitting at the bottom of a newly-cleaned staircase. He waggled his hands at us, and when we entered we saw that the man was stricken speechless. His eyes grew red--red like a ferret's--and what little breath he had whistled shrilly. At first we thought it was a fit, and then we saw that it was mirth--the inopportune mirth of the Artistic Temperament.

The house palpitated to an infamous melody punctuated by the stump of the barrel-organ's one leg, as Giuseppe, above, moved from room to room after his rebel slave. Now and again a floor shook a little under the combined rushes of Lord Lundie and Sir Christopher Tomling, who gave many and contradictory orders. But when they could they cursed Jimmy with splendid thoroughness.

"Have you anything to do with the house?" panted Jimmy at last. "Because we're using it just now." He gulped. "And I'm ah--keeping cave."



"All right," said Penfentyou, and shut the hall door.

"Jimmy, you unspeakable blackguard, Jimmy, you cur! You coward!"  
(Lord Lundie's voice overbore the flood of melody.) "Come up here!  
Giussieppe's saying something we don't understand."

Jimmy listened and interpreted between hiccups.

"He says you'd better play the organ, Bubbles, and let him do the  
stalking. The monkey knows him."

"By Jove, he's quite right," said Sir Christopher from the landing.

"Take it, Bubbles, at once."

"My God!" said Lord Lundie in horror.

The chase reverberated over our heads, from the attics to the first  
floor and back again. Bodies and Voices met in collision and argument,  
and once or twice the organ hit walls and doors. Then it broke forth in  
a new manner.

"He's playing it," said Jimmy. "I know his acute Justinian ear. Are you  
fond of music?"

"I think Lord Lundie plays very well for a beginner," I ventured.

"Ah! That's the trained legal intellect. Like mastering a brief. I haven't got it." He wiped his eyes and shook.

"Hi!" said Penfentyou, looking through the stained glass window down the garden. "What's that!"

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A household removals van, in charge of four men, had halted at the gate. A husband and his wife householders beyond question--quavered irresolutely up the path. He looked tired. She was certainly cross. In all this haphazard world the last couple to understand a scientific experiment.

I laid hands on Jimmy--the clamour above drowning speech and with Penfentyou's aid, propped him against the window, that he should see.

He saw, nodded, fell as an umbrella can fall, and kneeling, beat his forehead on the shut door. Penfentyou slid the bolt.

The furniture men reinforced the two figures on the path, and advanced, spreading generously.

"Hadn't we better warn them up-stairs?" I suggested:

"No. I'll die first!" said Jimmy. "I'm pretty near it now. Besides, they called me names."

I turned from the Artist to the Administrator.

"Coeteris paribus, I think we'd better be going," said Penfentyou, dealer in crises.

"Ta--take me with you," said Jimmy. "I've no reputation to lose, but I'd like to watch 'em from--er--outside the picture."

"There's always a modus vivendi," Penfentyou murmured, and tiptoed along the hall to a back door, which he opened quite silently. We passed into a tangle of gooseberry bushes where, at his statesmanlike example, we crawled on all fours, and regained the hedge.

Here we lay up, secure in our alibi.

"But your firm,"--the woman was wailing to the furniture removals men--"your firm promised me everything should be in yesterday. And it's to-day! You should have been here yesterday!"

"The last tenants ain't out yet, lydy," said one of them.

Lord Lundie was rapidly improving in technique, though organ-grinding,

unlike the Law, is more of a calling than a trade, and he hung occasionally on a dead centre. Giuseppe, I think, was singing, but I could not understand the drift of Sir Christopher's remarks. They were Spanish.

The woman said something we did not catch.

"You might 'ave sub-let it," the man insisted. "Or your gentleman 'ere might."

"But I didn't. Send for the Police at once."

"I wouldn't do that, lydy. They're only fruit pickers on a beano. They aren't particular where they sleep."

"D'you mean they've been sleeping there? I only had it cleaned last week. Get them out."

"Oh, if you say so, we'll 'ave 'em out of it in two twos. Alf, fetch me the spare swingle-bar."

"Don't! You'll knock the paint off the door. Get them out!"

"What the 'ell else am I trying to do for you, lydy?" the man answered with pathos; but the woman wheeled on her mate.

"Edward! They're all drunk here, and they're all mad there. Do something!" she said.

Edward took one short step forward, and sighed "Hullo!" in the direction of the turbulent house. The woman walked up and down, the very figure of Domestic Tragedy. The furniture men swayed a little on their heels, and--

"Got him!" The shout rang through all the windows at once. It was followed by a blood-hound-like bay from Sir Christopher, a maniacal prestissimo on the organ, and loud cries, for Jimmy. But Jimmy, at my side, rolled his congested eyeballs, owl-wise.

"I never knew them," he said. "I'm an orphan."

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The front, door opened, and the three came forth to short-lived triumph. I had never before seen a Law Lord dressed as for tennis, with a stump-leg barrel-organ strapped to his shoulder. But it is a shy bird in this plumage. Lord Lundie strove to disembarass himself of his accoutrements much as an ill-trained Punch and Judy dog tries to escape backwards through his frilled collar. Sir Christopher, covered with limewash, cherished a bleeding thumb, and the almost crazy monkey tore at Giuseppe's hair.

The men on both sides reeled, but the woman stood her ground. "Idiots!" she said, and once more, "Idiots!"

I could have gladdened a few convicts of my acquaintance with a photograph of Lord Lundie at that instant.

"Madam," he began, wonderfully preserving the roll in his voice, "it was a monkey."

Sir Christopher sucked his thumb and nodded.

"Take it away and go," she replied. "Go away!"

I would have gone, and gladly, on this permission, but these still strong men must ever be justifying themselves. Lord Lundie turned to the husband, who for the first time spoke.

"I have rented this house. I am moving in," he said.

"We ought to have been in yesterday," the woman interrupted.

"Yes. We ought to have been in yesterday. Have you slept there overnight?" said the man peevishly.

"No; I assure you we haven't," said Lord Lundie.

"Then go away. Go quite away," cried the woman.

They went--in single file down the path. They went silently, restrapping the organ on its wheels, and rechaining the monkey to the organ.

"Damn it all!" said Penfentyou. "They do face the music, and they do stick by each other in private life!"

"Ties of Common Funk," I answered. Giuseppe ran to the gate and fled back to the possible world. Lord Lundie and Sir Christopher, constrained by tradition, paced slowly.

Then it came to pass that the woman, who walked behind them, lifted up her eyes, and beheld the tree which they had dressed.

"Stop!" she called; and they stopped. "Who did that?"

There was no answer. The Eternal Bad Boy in every man hung its head before the Eternal Mother in every woman.

"Who put these disgusting things there?" she repeated.

Suddenly Penfentyou, Premier of his Colony in all but name, left Jimmy and me, and appeared at the gate. (If he is not turned out of office, that is how he will appear on the Day of Armageddon.)

"Well done you!" he cried zealously, and doffed his hat to the woman.

"Have you any children, madam?" he demanded.

"Yes, two. They should have been here to-day. The firm promised--"

"Then we're not a minute too soon. That monkey escaped. It was a very dangerous beast. 'Might have frightened your children into fits. All the organ-grinder's fault! A most lucky thing these gentlemen caught it when they did. I hope you aren't badly mauled, Sir Christopher?" Shaken as I was (I wanted to get away and laugh) I could not but admire the scoundrel's consummate tact in leading his second highest trump. An ass would have introduced Lord Lundie and they would not have believed him.

It took the trick. The couple smiled, and gave respectful thanks for their deliverance by such hands from such perils.

"Not in the least," said Lord Lundie. "Anybody--any father would have done as much, and pray don't apologize your mistake was quite natural." A furniture man sniggered here, and Lord Lundie rolled an Eye of Doom on their ranks. "By the way, if you have trouble with these persons--they seem to have taken as much as is good for them--please let me know. Er--Good morning!"

They turned into the lane.



"Heavens!" said Jimmy, brushing himself down. "Who's that real man with the real head?" and we hurried after them, for they were running unsteadily, squeaking like rabbits as they ran. We overtook them in a little nut wood half a mile up the road, where they had turned aside, and were rolling. So we rolled with them, and ceased not till we had arrived at the extremity of exhaustion.

"You--you saw it all, then?" said Lord Lundie, rebuttoning his nineteen-inch collar.

"I saw it was a vital question from the first," responded Penfentyou, and blew his nose.

"It was. By the way, d'you mind telling me your name?"

Summa. Penfentyou's Great Idea has gone through, a little chipped at the edges, but in fine and far-reaching shape. His Opposite Number worked at it like a mule--a bewildered mule, beaten from behind, coaxed from in front, and propped on either soft side by Lord Lundie of the compressed mouth and the searing tongue.

Sir Christopher Tomling has been ravished from the Argentine, where, after all, he was but preparing trade-routes for hostile peoples, and now adorns the forefront of Penfentyou's Advisory Board. This was an unforeseen extra, as was Jimmy's gratis full-length--(it will be in this

year's Academy) of Penfentyou, who has returned to his own place.

Now and again, from afar off, between the slam and bump of his shifting scenery, the glare of his manipulated limelight, and the controlled rolling of his thunder-drums, I catch his voice, lifted in encouragement and advice to his fellow-countrymen. He is quite sound on Ties of Sentiment, and--alone of Colonial Statesmen ventures to talk of the Ties of Common Funk.

Herein I have my reward.

#### THE PUZZLER

The Celt in all his variants from Buihth to Ballyhoo,  
His mental processes are plain--one knows what he will do,  
And can logically predicate his finish by his start:  
But the English--ah, the English!--they are quite a race apart.

Their psychology is bovine, their outlook crude and rare;  
They abandon vital matters to be tickled with a straw;  
But the straw that they were tickled with--the chaff that  
    they were fed with--  
They convert into a weaver's beam to break their foeman's head

with.

For undemocratic reasons and for motives not of State,  
They arrive at their conclusions--largely inarticulate.  
Being void of self-expression they confide their views to none;  
But sometimes, in a smoking-room, one learns why things were  
done.

In telegraphic sentences, half swallowed at the ends,  
They hint a matter's inwardness--and there the matter ends.  
And while the Celt is talking from Valencia to Kirkwall,  
The English--ah, the English!--don't say anything at all!

## LITTLE FOXES

### A TALE OF THE GIHON HUNT

A fox came out of his earth on the banks of the Great River Gihon,  
which waters Ethiopia. He saw a white man riding through the dry  
dhurra-stalks, and, that his destiny might be fulfilled, barked at him.

The rider drew rein among the villagers round his stirrup.

"What," said he, "is that?"

"That," said the Sheikh of the village, "is a fox, O Excellency Our Governor."

"It is not, then, a jackal?"

"No jackal, but Abu Hussein the father of cunning."

"Also," the white man spoke half aloud, "I am Mudir of this Province."

"It is true," they cried. "Ya, Saart el Mudir" (O Excellency Our Governor).

The Great River Gihon, well used to the moods of kings, slid between his mile-wide banks toward the sea, while the Governor praised God in a loud and searching cry never before heard by the river.

When he had lowered his right forefinger from behind his right ear, the villagers talked to him of their crops--barley, dhurrah, millet, onions, and the like. The Governor stood in his stirrups. North he looked up a strip of green cultivation a few hundred yards wide that lay like a carpet between the river and the tawny line of the desert. Sixty miles that strip stretched before him, and as many behind. At every half-mile a groaning water-wheel lifted the soft water from the river to the crops by way of a mud-built aqueduct. A foot or so wide was the water-channel;

five foot or more high was the bank on which it ran, and its base was broad in proportion. Abu Hussein, misnamed the Father of Cunning, drank from the river below his earth, and his shadow was long in the low sun. He could not understand the loud cry which the Governor had cried.

The Sheikh of the village spoke of the crops from which the rulers of all lands draw revenue; but the Governor's eyes were fixed, between his horse's ears, on the nearest water-channel.

"Very like a ditch in Ireland," he murmured, and smiled, dreaming of a razor-topped bank in distant Kildare.

Encouraged by that smile, the Sheikh continued. "When crops fail it is necessary to remit taxation. Then it is a good thing, O Excellency Our Governor, that you come and see the crops which have failed, and discover that we have not lied."

"Assuredly." The Governor shortened his reins. The horse cantered on, rose at the embankment of the water-channel, changed leg cleverly on top, and hopped down in a cloud of golden dust.

Abu Hussein from his earth watched with interest. He had never before seen such things.

"Assuredly," the Governor repeated, and came back by the way he had gone. "It is always best to see for one's self."

An ancient and still bullet-speckled stern-wheel steamer, with a barge lashed to her side, came round the river bend. She whistled to tell the Governor his dinner was ready, and the horse, seeing his fodder piled on the barge, whinnied back.

"Moreover," the Sheikh added, "in the days of the Oppression the Emirs and their creatures dispossessed many people of their lands. All up and down the river our people are waiting to return to their lawful fields."

"Judges have been appointed to settle that matter," said the Governor. "They will presently come in steamers and hear the witnesses."

"Wherefore? Did the Judges kill the Emirs? We would rather be judged by the men who executed God's judgment on the Emirs. We would rather abide by your decision, O Excellency Our Governor."

The Governor nodded. It was a year since he had seen the Emirs stretched close and still round the reddened sheepskin where lay El Mahdi, the Prophet of God. Now there remained no trace of their dominion except the old steamer, once part of a Dervish flotilla, which was his house and office. She sidled into the shore, lowered a plank, and the Governor followed his horse aboard.

Lights burned on her till late, dully reflected in the river that tugged at her mooring-ropes. The Governor read, not for the first time, the

administration reports of one John Jorrocks, M.F.H.

"We shall need," he said suddenly to his Inspector, "about ten couple. I'll get 'em when I go home. You'll be Whip, Baker?"

The Inspector, who was not yet twenty-five, signified his assent in the usual manner, while Abu Hussein barked at the vast desert moon.

"Ha!" said the Governor, coming out in his pyjamas, "we'll be giving you capivi in another three months, my friend."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was four, as a matter of fact, ere a steamer with a melodious bargeful of hounds anchored at that landing. The Inspector leaped down among them, and the homesick wanderers received him as a brother.

"Everybody fed 'em everything on board ship, but they're real dainty hounds at bottom," the Governor explained. "That's Royal you've got hold of--the pick of the bunch--and the bitch that's got, hold of you--she's a little excited--is May Queen. Merriman, out of Cottesmore Maudlin, you know."

"I know. 'Grand old betch with the tan eyebrows,'" the Inspector cooed.

"Oh, Ben! I shall take an interest in life now. Hark to 'em! O hark!"

Abu Hussein, under the high bank, went about his night's work. An eddy carried his scent to the barge, and three villages heard the crash of music that followed. Even then Abu Hussein did not know better than to bark in reply.

"Well, what about my Province?" the Governor asked.

"Not so bad," the Inspector answered, with Royal's head between his knees. "Of course, all the villages want remission of taxes, but, as far as I can see, the whole country's stinkin' with foxes. Our trouble will be choppin' 'em in cover. I've got a list of the only villages entitled to any remission. What d'you call this flat-sided, blue-mottled beast with the jowl?"

"Beagle-boy. I have my doubts about him. Do you think we can get two days a week?"

"Easy; and as many byes as you please. The Sheikh of this village here tells me that his barley has failed, and he wants a fifty per cent remission."

"We'll begin with him to-morrow, and look at his crops as we go. Nothing like personal supervision," said the Governor.

They began at sunrise. The pack flew off the barge in every direction, and, after gambols, dug like terriers at Abu Hussein's many earths. Then



they drank themselves pot-bellied on Gihon water while the Governor and the Inspector chastised them with whips. Scorpions were added; for May Queen nosed one, and was removed to the barge lamenting. Mystery (a puppy, alas!) met a snake, and the blue-mottled Beagle-boy (never a dainty hound) ate that which he should have passed by. Only Royal, of the Belvoir tan head and the sad, discerning eyes, made any attempt to uphold the honour of England before the watching village.

"You can't expect everything," said the Governor after breakfast.

"We got it, though--everything except foxes. Have you seen May Queen's nose?" said the Inspector.

"And Mystery's dead. We'll keep 'em coupled next time till we get well in among the crops. I say, what a babbling body-snatcher that Beagle-boy is! Ought to be drowned!"

"They bury people so damn casual hereabouts. Give him another chance," the Inspector pleaded, not knowing that he should live to repent most bitterly.

"Talkin' of chances," said the Governor, "this Sheikh lies about his barley bein' a failure. If it's high enough to hide a hound at this time of year, it's all right. And he wants a fifty per cent remission, you said?"

"You didn't go on past the melon patch where I tried to turn Wanderer. It's all burned up from there on to the desert. His other water-wheel has broken down, too," the Inspector replied.

"Very good. We'll split the difference and allow him twenty-five per cent off. Where'll we meet to-morrow?"

"There's some trouble among the villages down the river about their land-titles. It's good goin' ground there, too," the Inspector said.

The next meet, then, was some twenty miles down the river, and the pack were not enlarged till they were fairly among the fields. Abu Hussein was there in force--four of him. Four delirious hunts of four minutes each--four hounds per fox--ended in four earths just above the river. All the village looked on.

"We forgot about the earths. The banks are riddled with 'em. This'll defeat us," said the Inspector.

"Wait a moment!" The Governor drew forth a sneezing hound. "I've just remembered I'm Governor of these parts."

"Then turn out a black battalion to stop for us. We'll need 'em, old man."

The Governor straightened his back. "Give ear, O people!" he cried. "I

make a new Law!"

The villagers closed in. He called:--

"Henceforward I will give one dollar to the man on whose land Abu Hussein is found. And another dollar"--he held up the coin--"to the man on whose land these dogs shall kill him. But to the man on whose land Abu Hussein shall run into a hole such as is this hole, I will give not dollars, but a most unmeasurable beating. Is it understood?"

"Our Excellency," a man stepped forth, "on my land Abu Hussein was found this morning. Is it not so, brothers?"

None denied. The Governor tossed him over four dollars without a word.

"On my land they all went into their holes," cried another. "Therefore I must be beaten."

"Not so. The land is mine, and mine are the beatings."

This second speaker thrust forward his shoulders already bared, and the villagers shouted.

"Hullo! Two men anxious to be licked? There must be some swindle about the land," said the Governor. Then in the local vernacular: "What are your rights to the beating?"

As a river-reach changes beneath a slant of the sun, that which had been a scattered mob changed to a court of most ancient justice. The hounds tore and sobbed at Abu Hussein's hearthstone, all unnoticed among the legs of the witnesses, and Gihon, also accustomed to laws, purred approval.

"You will not wait till the Judges come up the river to settle the dispute?" said the Governor at last.

"No!" shouted all the village save the man who had first asked to be beaten. "We will abide by Our Excellency's decision. Let Our Excellency turn out the creatures of the Emirs who stole our land in the days of the Oppression."

"And thou sayest?" the Governor turned to the man who had first asked to be beaten.

"I say I will wait till the wise Judges come down in the steamer. Then I will bring my many witnesses," he replied.

"He is rich. He will bring many witnesses," the village Sheikh muttered.

"No need. Thy own mouth condemns thee!" the Governor cried. "No man lawfully entitled to his land would wait one hour before entering upon it. Stand aside!" The man, fell back, and the village jeered him.

The second claimant stooped quickly beneath the lifted hunting-crop. The village rejoiced.

"Oh, Such an one; Son of such an one," said the Governor, prompted by the Sheikh, "learn, from the day when I send the order, to block up all the holes where Abu Hussein may hide on--thy--land!"

The light flicks ended. The man stood up triumphant. By that accolade had the Supreme Government acknowledged his title before all men.

While the village praised the perspicacity of the Governor, a naked, pock-marked child strode forward to the earth, and stood on one leg, unconcerned as a young stork.

"Hal" he said, hands behind his back. "This should be blocked up with bundles of dhurra stalks--or, better, bundles of thorns."

"Better thorns," said the Governor. "Thick ends innermost."

The child nodded gravely and squatted on the sand.

"An evil day for thee, Abu Hussein," he shrilled into the mouth of the earth. "A day of obstacles to thy flagitious returns in the morning."

"Who is it?" the Governor asked the Sheikh. "It thinks."

"Farag the Fatherless. His people were slain in the days of the Oppression. The man to whom Our Excellency has awarded the land is, as it were, his maternal uncle."

"Will it come with me and feed the big dogs?" said the Governor.

The other peering children drew back. "Run!" they cried. "Our Excellency will feed Farag to the big dogs."

"I will come," said Farag. "And I will never go." He threw his arm round Royal's neck, and the wise beast licked his face.

"Binjamin, by Jove!" the Inspector cried.

"No!" said the Governor. "I believe he has the makings of a James Pigg!"

Farag waved his hand to his uncle, and led Royal on to the barge. The rest of the pack followed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gihon, that had seen many sports, learned to know the Hunt barge well. He met her rounding his bends on grey December dawns to music wild and lamentable as the almost forgotten throb of Dervish drums, when, high above Royal's tenor bell, sharper even than lying Beagle-boy's falsetto

break, Farag chanted deathless war against Abu Hussein and all his seed. At sunrise the river would shoulder her carefully into her place, and listen to the rush and scutter of the pack fleeing up the gang-plank, and the tramp of the Governor's Arab behind them. They would pass over the brow into the dewless crops where Gihon, low and shrunken, could only guess what they were about when Abu Hussein flew down the bank to scratch at a stopped earth, and flew back into the barley again. As Farag had foretold, it was evil days for Abu Hussein ere he learned to take the necessary steps and to get away crisply. Sometimes Gihon saw the whole procession of the Hunt silhouetted against the morning-blue, bearing him company for many merry miles. At every half mile the horses and the donkeys jumped the water-channels--up, on, change your leg, and off again like figures in a zoetrope, till they grew small along the line of waterwheels. Then Gibon waited their rustling return through the crops, and took them to rest on his bosom at ten o'clock. While the horses ate, and Farag slept with his head on Royal's flank, the Governor and his Inspector worked for the good of the Hunt and his Province.

After a little time there was no need to beat any man for neglecting his earths. The steamer's destination was telegraphed from waterwheel to waterwheel, and the villagers stopped out and put to according. If an earth were overlooked, it meant some dispute as to the ownership of the land, and then and there the Hunt checked and settled it in this wise: The Governor and the Inspector side by side, but the latter half a horse's length to the rear; both bare-shouldered claimants well in front; the villagers half-mooned behind them, and Farag with the pack,

who quite understood the performance, sitting down on the left. Twenty minutes were enough to settle the most complicated case, for, as the Governor said to a judge on the steamer, "One gets at the truth in a hunting-field a heap quicker than in your lawcourts."

"But when the evidence is conflicting?" the Judge suggested.

"Watch the field. They'll throw tongue fast enough if you're running a wrong scent. You've never had an appeal from one of my decisions yet."

The Sheikhs on horseback--the lesser folk on clever donkeys--the children so despised by Farag soon understood that villages which repaired their waterwheels and channels stood highest in the Governor's favour. He bought their barley, for his horses.

"Channels," he said, "are necessary that we may all jump them. They are necessary, moreover, for the crops. Let there be many wheels and sound channels--and much good barley."

"Without money," replied an aged Sheikh, "there are no waterwheels."

"I will lend the money," said the Governor.

"At what interest, O Our Excellency?"

"Take you two of May Queen's puppies to bring up in your village in



such a manner that they do not eat filth, nor lose their hair, nor catch fever from lying in the sun, but become wise hounds."

"Like Ray-yal--not like Bigglebai?" (Already it was an insult along the River to compare a man to the shifty anthropophagous blue-mottled harrier.)

"Certainly, like Ray-yal--not in the least like Bigglebai. That shall be the interest on the loan. Let the puppies thrive and the waterwheel be built, and I shall be content," said the Governor.

"The wheel shall be built, but, O Our Excellency, if by God's favour the pups grow to be well-smelters, not filth-eaters, not unaccustomed to their names, not lawless, who will do them and me justice at the time of judging the young dogs?"

"Hounds, man, hounds! Ha-wands, O Sheikh, we call them in their manhood."

"The ha-wands when they are judged at the Sha-ho. I have unfriends down the river to whom Our Excellency has also entrusted ha-wands to bring up."

"Puppies, man! Pah-peaz we call them, O Sheikh, in their childhood."

"Pah-peat. My enemies may judge my pah-peaz unjustly at the Sha-ho. This

must be thought of."

"I see the obstacle. Hear now! If the new waterwheel is built in a month without oppression, thou, O Sheikh, shalt be named one of the judges to judge the pah-peaz at the Sha-ho. Is it understood?"

"Understood. We will build the wheel. I and my seed are responsible for the repayment of the loan. Where are my pah-peaz? If they eat fowls, must they on any account eat the feathers?"

"On no account must they eat the feathers. Farag in the barge will tell thee how they are to live."

There is no instance of any default on the Governor's personal and unauthorized loans, for which they called him the Father of Waterwheels. But the first puppyshow at the capital needed enormous tact and the presence of a black battalion ostentatiously drilling in the barrack square to prevent trouble after the prize-giving.

But who can chronicle the glories of the Gihon Hunt--or their shames? Who remembers the kill in the market-place, when the Governor bade the assembled sheikhs and warriors observe how the hounds would instantly devour the body of Abu Hussein; but how, when he had scientifically broken it up, the weary pack turned from it in loathing, and Farag wept because he said the world's face had been blackened? What men who have not yet ridden beyond the sound of any horn recall the midnight run

which ended--Beagleboy leading--among tombs; the hasty whip-off, and the oath, taken Abo e bones, to forget the worry? The desert run, when Abu Hussein forsook the cultivation, and made a six-mile point to earth in a desolate khor--when strange armed riders on camels swooped out of a ravine, and instead of giving battle, offered to take the tired hounds home on their beasts. Which they did, and vanished.

Above all, who remembers the death of Royal, when a certain Sheikh wept above the body of the stainless hound as it might have been his son's--and that day the Hunt rode no more? The badly-kept log-book says little of this, but at the end of their second season (forty-nine brace) appears the dark entry: "New blood badly wanted. They are beginning to listen to beagle-boy."

\* \* \* \* \*

The Inspector attended to the matter when his leave fell due.

"Remember," said the Governor, "you must get us the best blood in England--real, dainty hounds--expense no object, but don't trust your own judgment. Present my letters of introduction, and take what they give you."

The Inspector presented his letters in a society where they make much of horses, more of hounds, and are tolerably civil to men who can ride. They passed him from house to house, mounted him according to his

merits, and fed him, after five years of goat chop and Worcester sauce, perhaps a thought too richly.

The seat or castle where he made his great coup does not much matter. Four Masters of Foxhounds were at table, and in a mellow hour the Inspector told them stories of the Gihon Hunt. He ended: "Ben said I wasn't to trust my own judgment about hounds, but I think there ought to be a special tariff for Empire-makers."

As soon as his hosts could speak, they reassured him on this point.

"And now tell us about your first puppy-show all over again," said one.

"And about the earth-stoppin'. Was that all Ben's own invention?" said another.

"Wait a moment," said a large, clean-shaven man--not an M.F.H.--at the end of the table. "Are your villagers habitually beaten by your Governor when they fail to stop foxes' holes?"

The tone and the phrase were enough even if, as the Inspector confessed afterwards, the big, blue double-chinned man had not looked so like Beagle-boy. He took him on for the honour of Ethiopia.

"We only hunt twice a week--sometimes three times. I've never known a man chastised more than four times a week unless there's a bye."

The large loose-lipped man flung his napkin down, came round the table, cast himself into the chair next the Inspector, and leaned forward earnestly, so that he breathed in the Inspector's face.

"Chastised with what?" he said.

"With the kourbash--on the feet. A kourbash is a strip of old hippo-hide with a sort of keel on it, like the cutting edge of a boar's tusk. But we use the rounded side for a first offender."

"And do any consequences follow this sort of thing? For the victim, I mean--not for you?"

"Ve-ry rarely. Let me be fair. I've never seen a man die under the lash, but gangrene may set up if the kourbash has been pickled."

"Pickled in what?" All the table was still and interested.

"In copperas, of course. Didn't you know that" said the Inspector.

"Thank God I didn't." The large man sputtered visibly.

The Inspector wiped his face and grew bolder.

"You mustn't think we're careless about our earthstoppers. We've a Hunt

fund for hot tar. Tar's a splendid dressing if the toe-nails aren't beaten off. But huntin' as large a country as we do, we mayn't be back at that village for a month, and if the dressings ain't renewed, and gangrene sets in, often as not you find your man pegging about on his stumps. We've a well-known local name for 'em down the river. We call 'em the Mudir's Cranes. You see, I persuaded the Governor only to bastinado on one foot."

"On one foot? The Mudir's Cranes!" The large man turned purple to the top of his bald head. "Would you mind giving me the local word for Mudir's Cranes?"

From a too well-stocked memory the Inspector drew one short adhesive word which surprises by itself even unblushing Ethiopia. He spelt it out, saw the large man write it down on his cuff and withdraw. Then the Inspector translated a few of its significations and implications to the four Masters of Foxhounds. He left three days later with eight couple of the best hounds in England--a free and a friendly and an ample gift from four packs to the Gihon Hunt. He had honestly meant to undeceive the large blue mottled man, but somehow forgot about it.

The new draft marks a new chapter in the Hunt's history. From an isolated phenomenon in a barge it became a permanent institution with brick-built kennels ashore, and an influence social, political, and administrative, co-terminous with the boundaries of the province. Ben, the Governor, departed to England, where he kept a pack of real dainty

hounds, but never ceased to long for the old lawless lot. His successors were ex-officio Masters of the Gihon Hunt, as all Inspectors were Whips. For one reason; Farag, the kennel huntsman, in khaki and puttees, would obey nothing under the rank of an Excellency, and the hounds would obey no one but Farag; for another, the best way of estimating crop returns and revenue was by riding straight to hounds; for a third, though Judges down the river issued signed and sealed land-titles to all lawful owners, yet public opinion along the river never held any such title valid till it had been confirmed, according to precedent, by the Governor's hunting crop in the hunting field, above the wilfully neglected earth. True, the ceremony had been cut down to three mere taps on the shoulder, but Governors who tried to evade that much found themselves and their office compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses who took up their time with lawsuits and, worse still, neglected the puppies. The older sheikhs, indeed, stood out for the unmeasurable beatings of the old days--the sharper the punishment, they argued, the surer the title; but here the hand of modern progress was against them, and they contented themselves with telling tales of Ben the first Governor, whom they called the Father of Waterwheels, and of that heroic age when men, horses, and hounds were worth following.

This same Modern Progress which brought dog biscuit and brass water-taps to the kennels was at work all over the world. Forces, Activities, and Movements sprang into being, agitated themselves, coalesced, and, in one political avalanche, overwhelmed a bewildered, and not in the least intending it, England. The echoes of the New Era were borne into the

Province on the wings of inexplicable cables. The Gihon Hunt read speeches and sentiments, and policies which amazed them, and they thanked God, prematurely, that their Province was too far off, too hot, and too hard worked to be reached by those speakers or their policies. But they, with others, under-estimated the scope and purpose of the New Era.

One by one, the Provinces of the Empire were hauled up and baited, hit and held, lashed under the belly, and forced back on their haunches for the amusement of their new masters in the parish of Westminster. One by one they fell away, sore and angry, to compare stripes with each other at the ends of the uneasy earth. Even so the Gihon Hunt, like Abu Hussein in the old days, did not understand. Then it reached them through the Press that they habitually flogged to death good revenue-paying cultivators who neglected to stop earths; but that the few, the very few who did not die under hippohide whips soaked in copperas, walked about on their gangrenous ankle-bones, and were known in derision as the Mudir's Cranes. The charges were vouched for in the House of Commons by a Mr. Lethabie Groombride, who had formed a Committee, and was disseminating literature: The Province groaned; the Inspector--now an Inspector of Inspectors--whistled. He had forgotten the gentleman who sputtered in people's faces.

"He shouldn't have looked so like Beagle-boy!" was his sole defence when he met the Governor at breakfast on the steamer after a meet.



"You shouldn't have joked with an animal of that class," said Peter the Governor. "Look what Farag has brought me!"

It was a pamphlet, signed on behalf of a Committee by a lady secretary, but composed by some person who thoroughly understood the language of the Province. After telling the tale of the beatings, it recommended all the beaten to institute criminal proceedings against their Governor, and, as soon as might be, to rise against English oppression and tyranny. Such documents were new in Ethiopia in those days.

The Inspector read the last half page. "But--but," he stammered, "this is impossible. White men don't write this sort of stuff."

"Don't they, just?" said the Governor. "They get made Cabinet Ministers for doing it too. I went home last year. I know."

"It'll blow over," said the Inspector weakly.

"Not it. Groombride is coming down here to investigate the matter in a few days."

"For himself?"

"The Imperial Government's behind him. Perhaps you'd like to look t my orders." The Governor laid down an uncoded cable. The whiplash to it ran: "You will afford Mr. Groombride every facility for his inquiry,

and will be held responsible that no obstacles are put in his way to the fullest possible examination of any witnesses which he may consider necessary. He will be accompanied by his own interpreter, who must not be tampered with."

"That's to me--Governor of the Province!" said Peter the Governor.

"It seems about enough," the Inspector answered.

Farag, kennel-huntsman, entered the saloon, as was his privilege.

"My uncle, who was beaten by the Father of Waterwheels, would approach, O Excellency," he said, "and there are others on the bank."

"Admit," said the Governor.

There tramped aboard sheikhs and villagers to the number of seventeen. In each man's hand was a copy of the pamphlet; in each man's eye terror and uneasiness of the sort that Governors spend and are spent to clear away. Farag's uncle, now Sheikh of the village, spoke: "It is written in this book, Excellency, that the beatings whereby we hold our lands are all valueless. It is written that every man who received such a beating from the Father of Waterwheels who slow the Emirs, should instantly begin a lawsuit, because the title to his land is not valid."

"It is so written. We do not wish lawsuits. We wish to hold the land as

it was given to us after the days of the Oppression," they cried.

The Governor glanced at the Inspector. This was serious. To cast doubt on the ownership of land means, in Ethiopia, the letting in of waters, and the getting out of troops.

"Your titles are good," said the Governor. The Inspector confirmed with a nod.

"Then what is the meaning of these writings which came from down the river where the Judges are?" Farag's uncle waved his copy. "By whose order are we ordered to slay you, O Excellency Our Governor?"

"It is not written that you are to slay me."

"Not in those very words, but if we leave an earth unstopped, it is the same as though we wished to save Abu Hussein from the hounds. These writings say: 'Abolish your rulers.' How can we abolish except we kill? We hear rumours of one who comes from down the river soon to lead us to kill."

"Fools!" said the Governor. "Your titles are good. This is madness!"

"It is so written," they answered like a pack.

"Listen," said the Inspector smoothly. "I know who caused the writings

to be written and sent. He is a man of a blue-mottled jowl, in aspect like Bigglebai who ate unclean matters. He will come up the river and will give tongue about the beatings."

"Will he impeach our land-titles? An evil day for him!"

"Go slow, Baker," the Governor whispered. "They'll kill him if they get scared about their land."

"I tell a parable." The Inspector lit a cigarette. "Declare which of you took to walk the children of Milkmaid?"

"Melik-meid First or Second?" said Farag quickly.

"The second--the one which was lamed by the thorn."

"No--no. Melik-meid the Second strained her shoulder leaping my water-channel," a sheikh cried. "Melik-meid the First was lamed by the thorns on the day when Our Excellency fell thrice."

"True--true. The second Melik-meid's mate was Malvolio, the pied hound," said the Inspector.

"I had two of the second Melik-meid's pups," said Farag's uncle. "They died of the madness in their ninth month."

"And how did they do before they died?" said the Inspector.

"They ran about in the sun, and slavered at the mouth till they died."

"Wherefore?"

"God knows. He sent the madness. It was no fault of mine."

"Thy own mouth hath answered thee." The Inspector laughed. "It is with men as it is with dogs. God afflicts some with a madness. It is no fault of ours if such men run about in the sun and froth at the mouth. The man who is coming will emit spray from his mouth in speaking, and will always edge and push in towards his hearers. When ye see and hear him ye will understand that he is afflicted of God: being mad. He is in God's hands."

"But our titles--are our titles to our lands good?" the crowd repeated.

"Your titles are in my hands--they are good," said the Governor.

"And he who wrote the writings is an afflicted of God?" said Farag's uncle.

"The Inspector hath said it," cried the Governor. "Ye will see when the man comes. O sheikhs and men, have we ridden together and walked puppies

together, and bought and sold barley for the horses that after these years we should run riot on the scent of a madman--an afflicted of God?"

"But the Hunt pays us to kill mad jackals," said Farag's uncle. "And he who questions my titles to my land--"

"Aahh! 'Ware riot!" The Governor's hunting-crop cracked like a three-pounder. "By Allah," he thundered, "if the afflicted of God come to any harm at your hands, I myself will shoot every hound and every puppy, and the Hunt shall ride no more. On your heads be it. Go in peace, and tell the others."

"The Hunt shall ride no more," said Farag's uncle. "Then how can the land be governed? No--no, O Excellency Our Governor, we will not harm a hair on the head of the afflicted of God. He shall be to us as is Abu Hussein's wife in the breeding season."

When they were gone the Governor mopped his forehead.

"We must put a few soldiers in every village this Groombride visits, Baker. Tell 'em to keep out of sight, and have an eye on the villagers. He's trying 'em rather high."

"O Excellency," said the smooth voice of Farag, laying the Field and Country Life square on the table, "is the afflicted of God who resembles Bigglebai one with the man whom the Inspector met in the great house in

England, and to whom he told the tale of the Mudir's Cranes?"

"The same man, Farag," said the Inspector.

"I have often heard the Inspector tell the tale to Our Excellency at feeding-time in the kennels; but since I am in the Government service I have never told it to my people. May I loose that tale among the villages?"

\* \* \* \* \*

The Governor nodded. "No harm," said he.

The details of Mr. Groombride's arrival, with his interpreter, whom he proposed should eat with him at the Governor's table, his allocution to the Governor on the New Movement, and the sins of Imperialism, I purposely omit. At three in the afternoon Mr. Groombride said: "I will go out now and address your victims in this village."

"Won't you find it rather hot?" said the Governor. "They generally take 'a nap till sunset at this time of year."

Mr. Groombride's large, loose lips set. "That," he replied pointedly, "would be enough to decide me. I fear you have not quite mastered your instructions. May I ask you to send for my interpreter? I hope he has not been tampered with by your subordinates."

He was a yellowish boy called Abdul, who had well eaten and drunk with Farag. The Inspector, by the way, was not present at the meal.

"At whatever risk, I shall go unattended," said Mr. Groombride. "Your presence would cow them--from giving evidence. Abdul, my good friend, would you very kindly open the umbrella?"

He passed up the gang-plank to the village, and with no more prelude than a Salvation Army picket in a Portsmouth slum, cried: "Oh, my brothers!"

He did not guess how his path had been prepared. The village was widely awake. Farag, in loose, flowing garments, quite unlike a kennel huntsman's khaki and puttees, leaned against the wall of his uncle's house. "Come and see the afflicted of God," he cried musically, "whose face, indeed, resembles that of Bigglebai."

The village came, and decided that on the whole Farag was right.

"I can't quite catch what they are saying," said Mr. Groombride.

"They saying they very much pleased to see you, Sar," Adbul interpreted.

"Then I do think they might have sent a deputation to the steamer; but I suppose they were frightened of the officials. Tell them not to be



frightened, Abdul."

"He says you are not to be frightened," Abdul explained. A child here sputtered with laughter. "Refrain from mirth," Farag cried. "The afflicted of God is the guest of The Excellency Our Governor. We are responsible for every hair of his head."

"He has none," a voice spoke. "He has the white and the shining mange."

"Now tell them what I have come for, Abdul, and please keep the umbrella well up. I think I shall reserve myself for my little vernacular speech at the end."

"Approach! Look! Listen!" Abdul chanted. "The afflicted of God will now make sport. Presently he will speak in your tongue, and will consume you with mirth. I have been his servant for three weeks. I will tell you about his undergarments and his perfumes for his head."

He told them at length.

"And didst thou take any of his perfume bottles?" said Farag at the end.

"I am his servant. I took two," Abdul replied.

"Ask him," said Farag's uncle, "what he knows about our land-titles. Ye young men are all alike." He waved a pamphlet. Mr. Groombride smiled to

see how the seed sown in London had borne fruit by Gihon. Lo! All the seniors held copies of the pamphlet.

"He knows less than a buffalo. He told me on the steamer that he was driven out of his own land by Demah-Kerazi which is a devil inhabiting crowds and assemblies," said Abdul.

"Allah between us and evil!" a woman cackled from the darkness of a hut. "Come in, children, he may have the Evil Eye."

"No, my aunt," said Farag. "No afflicted of God has an evil eye. Wait till ye hear his mirth-provoking speech which he will deliver. I have heard it twice from Abdul."

"They seem very quick to grasp the point. How far have you got, Abdul?"

"All about the beatings, sar. They are highly interested."

"Don't forget about the local self-government, and please hold the umbrella over me. It is hopeless to destroy unless one first builds up."

"He may not have the Evil Eye," Farag's uncle grunted, "but his devil led him too certainly to question my land-title. Ask him whether he still doubts my land-title?"

"Or mine, or mine?" cried the elders.

"What odds? He is an afflicted of God," Farag called. "Remember the tale I told you."

"Yes, but he is an Englishman, and doubtless of influence, or Our Excellency would not entertain him. Bid the down-country jackass ask him."

"Sar," said Abdul, "these people, much fearing they may be turned out of their land in consequence of your remarks. Therefore they ask you to make promise no bad consequences following your visit."

Mr. Groombride held his breath and turned purple. Then he stamped his foot.

"Tell them," he cried, "that if a hair of any one of their heads is touched by any official on any account whatever, all England shall ring with it. Good God! What callous oppression! The dark places of the earth are full of cruelty." He wiped his face, and throwing out his arms cried: "Tell them, oh! tell the poor, serfs not to be afraid of me. Tell them I come to redress their wrongs--not, heaven knows, to add to their burden."

The long-drawn gurgle of the practised public speaker pleased them much.

"That is how the new water-tap runs out in the kennel," said Farag. "The

Excellency Our Governor entertains him that he may make sport. Make him say the mirth-moving speech."

"What did he say about my land-titles?" Farag's uncle was not to be turned.

"He says," Farag interpreted, "that he desires, nothing better than that you should live on your lands in peace. He talks as though he believed himself to be Governor."

"Well. We here are all witnesses to what he has said. Now go forward with the sport." Farag's uncle smoothed his garments. "How diversely hath Allah made His creatures! On one He bestows strength to slay Emirs; another He causes to go mad and wander in the sun, like the afflicted sons of Melik-meid."

"Yes, and to emit spray from the mouth, as the Inspector told us. All will happen as the Inspector foretold," said Farag. "I have never yet seen the Inspector thrown out during any run."

"I think," Abdul plucked at Mr. Groombride's sleeves, "I think perhaps it is better now, Sar, if you give your fine little native speech. They not understanding English, but much pleased at your condescensions."

"Condescensions?" Mr. Groombride spun round. "If they only knew how I felt towards them in my heart! If I could express a tithe of my

feelings! I must stay here and learn the language. Hold up the umbrella, Abdull I think my little speech will show them I know something of their vie intime."

It was a short, simple; carefully learned address, and the accent, supervised by Abdul on the steamer, allowed the hearers to guess its meaning, which was a request to see one of the Mudir's Cranes; since the desire of the speaker's life, the object to which he would consecrate his days, was to improve the condition of the Mudir's Cranes. But first he must behold them with his own eyes. Would, then, his brethren, whom he loved, show him a Mudir's Crane whom he desired to love?

Once, twice, and again in his peroration he repeated his demand, using always--that they might see he was acquainted with their local argot--using always, I say, the word which the Inspector had given him in England long ago--the short, adhesive word which, by itself, surprises even unblushing Ethiopia.

There are limits to the sublime politeness of an ancient people. A bulky, blue-chinned man in white clothes, his name red-lettered across his lower shirtfront, spluttering from under a green-lined umbrella almost tearful appeals to be introduced to the Unintroducible; naming loudly the Unnameable; dancing, as it seemed, in perverse joy at mere mention of the Unmentionable--found those limits. There was a moment's hush, and then such mirth as Gihon through his centuries had never heard--a roar like to the roar of his own cataracts in flood. Children

cast themselves on the ground, and rolled back and forth cheering and whooping; strong men, their faces hidden in their clothes, swayed in silence, till the agony became insupportable, and they threw up their heads and bayed at the sun; women, mothers and virgins, shrilled shriek upon mounting shriek, and slapped their thighs as it might have been the roll of musketry. When they tried to draw breath, some half-strangled voice would quack out the word, and the riot began afresh. Last to fall was the city-trained Abdul. He held on to the edge of apoplexy, then collapsed, throwing the umbrella from him.

Mr. Groombridge should not be judged too harshly. Exercise and strong emotion under a hot sun, the shock of public ingratitude, for the moment rued his spirit. He furlled the umbrella, and with t beat the prostrate Abdul, crying that he had been betrayed. In which posture the Inspector, on horseback, followed by the Governor, suddenly found him.

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"That's all very well," said the Inspector, when he had taken Abdul's dramatically dying depositions on the steamer, "but you can't hammer a native merely because he laughs at you. I see nothing for it but the law to take its course."

"You might reduce the charge to--er--tampering with an interpreter," said the Governor. Mr. Groombridge was too far gone to be comforted.

"It's the publicity that I fear," he wailed. "Is there no possible means of hushing up the affair? You don't know what a question--a single question in the House means to a man of my position--the ruin of my political career, I assure you."

"I shouldn't have imagined it," said the Governor thoughtfully.

"And, though perhaps I ought not to say it, I am not without honour in my own country--or influence. A word in season, as you know, Your Excellency. It might carry an official far."

The Governor shuddered.

"Yes, that had to come too," he said to himself. "Well, look here. If I tell this man of yours to withdraw the charge against you, you can go to Gehenna for aught I care. The only condition I make is that if you write--I suppose that's part of your business about your travels, you don't praise me!"

So far Mr. Groombride has loyally adhered to this understanding.

GALLIO'S SONG