

**JEROME
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THE ANGEL AND THE
AUTHOR, AND OTHERS

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The Angel and the Author, and Others

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Jerome K. Jerome

The Angel and the Author and Others

CHAPTER I

I had a vexing dream one night, not long ago: it was about a fortnight after Christmas. I dreamt I flew out of the window in my nightshirt. I went up and up. I was glad that I was going up. "They have been noticing me," I thought to myself. "If anything, I have been a bit too good. A little less virtue and I might have lived longer. But one cannot have everything." The world grew smaller and smaller. The last I saw of London was the long line of electric lamps bordering the Embankment; later nothing remained but a faint luminosity buried beneath darkness. It was at this point of my journey that I heard behind me the slow, throbbing sound of wings.

I turned my head. It was the Recording Angel. He had a weary look; I judged him to be tired.

"Yes," he acknowledged, "it is a trying period for me, your Christmas time."

"I am sure it must be," I returned; "the wonder to me is how you get through it all. You see at Christmas time," I went on, "all we men and women become generous, quite suddenly. It is really a delightful sensation."

"You are to be envied," he agreed.

"It is the first Christmas number that starts me off," I told him; "those beautiful pictures – the sweet child looking so pretty in her furs, giving Bovril with her own dear little hands to the shivering street arab; the good old red-faced squire shovelling out plum pudding to the crowd of grateful villagers. It makes me yearn to borrow a collecting box and go round doing good myself."

"And it is not only me – I should say I," I continued; "I don't want you to run away with the idea that I am the only good man in the world. That's what I like about Christmas, it makes everybody good. The lovely sentiments we go about repeating! the noble deeds we do! from a little before Christmas up to, say, the end of January! why noting them down must be a comfort to you."

"Yes," he admitted, "noble deeds are always a great joy to me."

"They are to all of us," I said; "I love to think of all the good deeds I myself have done. I have often thought of keeping a diary – jotting them down each day. It would be so nice for one's children."

He agreed there was an idea in this.

"That book of yours," I said, "I suppose, now, it contains all the good actions that we men and women have been doing during the last six weeks?" It was a bulky looking volume.

Yes, he answered, they were all recorded in the book.

The Author tells of his Good Deeds

It was more for the sake of talking of his than anything else that I kept up with him. I did not really doubt his care and conscientiousness, but it is always pleasant to chat about one's self. "My five shillings subscription to the *Daily Telegraph's* Sixpenny Fund for the Unemployed – got that down all right?" I asked him.

Yes, he replied, it was entered.

"As a matter of fact, now I come to think of it," I added, "it was ten shillings altogether. They spelt my name wrong the first time."

Both subscriptions had been entered, he told me.

"Then I have been to four charity dinners," I reminded him; "I forget what the particular charity was about. I know I suffered the next morning. Champagne never does agree with me. But, then,

if you don't order it people think you can't afford it. Not that I don't like it. It's my liver, if you understand. If I take more – ”

He interrupted me with the assurance that my attendance had been noted.

“Last week I sent a dozen photographs of myself, signed, to a charity bazaar.”

He said he remembered my doing so.

“Then let me see,” I continued, “I have been to two ordinary balls. I don't care much about dancing, but a few of us generally play a little bridge; and to one fancy dress affair. I went as Sir Walter Raleigh. Some men cannot afford to show their leg. What I say is, if a man can, why not? It isn't often that one gets the opportunity of really looking one's best.”

He told me all three balls had been duly entered: and commented upon.

“And, of course, you remember my performance of Talbot Champneys in *Our Boys* the week before last, in aid of the Fund for Poor Curates,” I went on. “I don't know whether you saw the notice in the *Morning Post*, but – ”

He again interrupted me to remark that what the *Morning Post* man said would be entered, one way or the other, to the critic of the *Morning Post*, and had nothing to do with me. “Of course not,” I agreed; “and between ourselves, I don't think the charity got very much. Expenses, when you come to add refreshments and one thing and another, mount up. But I fancy they rather liked my Talbot Champneys.”

He replied that he had been present at the performance, and had made his own report.

I also reminded him of the four balcony seats I had taken for the monster show at His Majesty's in aid of the Fund for the Destitute British in Johannesburg. Not all the celebrated actors and actresses announced on the posters had appeared, but all had sent letters full of kindly wishes; and the others – all the celebrities one had never heard of – had turned up to a man. Still, on the whole, the show was well worth the money. There was nothing to grumble at.

There were other noble deeds of mine. I could not remember them at the time in their entirety. I seemed to have done a good many. But I did remember the rummage sale to which I sent all my old clothes, including a coat that had got mixed up with them by accident, and that I believe I could have worn again.

And also the raffle I had joined for a motor-car.

The Angel said I really need not be alarmed, that everything had been noted, together with other matters I, may be, had forgotten.

The Angel appears to have made a slight Mistake

I felt a certain curiosity. We had been getting on very well together – so it had seemed to me. I asked him if he would mind my seeing the book. He said there could be no objection. He opened it at the page devoted to myself, and I flew a little higher, and looked down over his shoulder. I can hardly believe it, even now – that I could have dreamt anything so foolish:

He had got it all down wrong!

Instead of to the credit side of my account he had put the whole bag of tricks to my debit. He had mixed them up with my sins – with my acts of hypocrisy, vanity, self-indulgence. Under the head of Charity he had but one item to my credit for the past six months: my giving up my seat inside a tramcar, late one wet night, to a dismal-looking old woman, who had not had even the politeness to say “thank you,” she seemed just half asleep. According to this idiot, all the time and money I had spent responding to these charitable appeals had been wasted.

I was not angry with him, at first. I was willing to regard what he had done as merely a clerical error.

“You have got the items down all right,” I said (I spoke quite friendly), “but you have made a slight mistake – we all do now and again; you have put them down on the wrong side of the book. I only hope this sort of thing doesn’t occur often.”

What irritated me as much as anything was the grave, passionless face the Angel turned upon me.

“There is no mistake,” he answered.

“No mistake!” I cried. “Why, you blundering – ”

He closed the book with a weary sigh.

I felt so mad with him, I went to snatch it out of his hand. He did not do anything that I was aware of, but at once I began falling. The faint luminosity beneath me grew, and then the lights of London seemed shooting up to meet me. I was coming down on the clock tower at Westminster. I gave myself a convulsive twist, hoping to escape it, and fell into the river.

And then I awoke.

But it stays with me: the weary sadness of the Angel’s face. I cannot shake remembrance from me. Would I have done better, had I taken the money I had spent upon these fooleries, gone down with it among the poor myself, asking nothing in return. Is this fraction of our superfluity, flung without further thought or care into the collection box, likely to satisfy the Impracticable Idealist, who actually suggested – one shrugs one’s shoulders when one thinks of it – that one should sell all one had and give to the poor?

The Author is troubled concerning his Investments

Or is our charity but a salve to conscience – an insurance, at decidedly moderate premium, in case, after all, there should happen to be another world? Is Charity lending to the Lord something we can so easily do without?

I remember a lady tidying up her house, clearing it of rubbish. She called it “Giving to the Fresh Air Fund.” Into the heap of lumber one of her daughters flung a pair of crutches that for years had been knocking about the house. The lady picked them out again.

“We won’t give those away,” she said, “they might come in useful again. One never knows.”

Another lady, I remember coming downstairs one evening dressed for a fancy ball. I forget the title of the charity, but I remember that every lady who sold more than ten tickets received an autograph letter of thanks from the Duchess who was the president. The tickets were twelve and sixpence each and included light refreshments and a very substantial supper. One presumes the odd sixpence reached the poor – or at least the noisier portion of them.

“A little *décolletée*, isn’t it, my dear?” suggested a lady friend, as the charitable dancer entered the drawing-room.

“Perhaps it is – a little,” she admitted, “but we all of us ought to do all we can for the Cause. Don’t you think so, dear?”

Really, seeing the amount we give in charity, the wonder is there are any poor left. It is a comfort that there are. What should we do without them? Our fur-clad little girls! our jolly, red-faced squires! we should never know how good they were, but for the poor? Without the poor how could we be virtuous? We should have to go about giving to each other. And friends expect such expensive presents, while a shilling here and there among the poor brings to us all the sensations of a good Samaritan. Providence has been very thoughtful in providing us with poor.

Dear Lady Bountiful! does it not ever occur to you to thank God for the poor? The clean, grateful poor, who bob their heads and curtsy and assure you that heaven is going to repay you a thousandfold. One does hope you will not be disappointed.

An East-End curate once told me, with a twinkle in his eye, of a smart lady who called upon him in her carriage, and insisted on his going round with her to show her where the poor hid themselves.

They went down many streets, and the lady distributed her parcels. Then they came to one of the worst, a very narrow street. The coachman gave it one glance.

“Sorry, my lady,” said the coachman, “but the carriage won’t go down.”

The lady sighed.

“I am afraid we shall have to leave it,” she said.

So the gallant greys dashed past.

Where the real poor creep I fear there is no room for Lady Bountiful’s fine coach. The ways are very narrow – wide enough only for little Sister Pity, stealing softly.

I put it to my friend, the curate:

“But if all this charity is, as you say, so useless; if it touches but the fringe; if it makes the evil worse, what would you do?”

And questions a Man of Thought

“I would substitute Justice,” he answered; “there would be no need for Charity.”

“But it is so delightful to give,” I answered.

“Yes,” he agreed. “It is better to give than to receive. I was thinking of the receiver. And my ideal is a long way off. We shall have to work towards it slowly.”

CHAPTER II

Philosophy and the Dæmon

Philosophy, it has been said, is the art of bearing other people's troubles. The truest philosopher I ever heard of was a woman. She was brought into the London Hospital suffering from a poisoned leg. The house surgeon made a hurried examination. He was a man of blunt speech.

"It will have to come off," he told her.

"What, not all of it?"

"The whole of it, I am sorry to say," growled the house surgeon.

"Nothing else for it?"

"No other chance for you whatever," explained the house surgeon.

"Ah, well, thank Gawd it's not my 'ead," observed the lady.

The poor have a great advantage over us better-off folk. Providence provides them with many opportunities for the practice of philosophy. I was present at a "high tea" given last winter by charitable folk to a party of char-women. After the tables were cleared we sought to amuse them. One young lady, who was proud of herself as a palmist, set out to study their "lines." At sight of the first toil-worn hand she took hold of her sympathetic face grew sad.

"There is a great trouble coming to you," she informed the ancient dame.

The placid-featured dame looked up and smiled:

"What, only one, my dear?"

"Yes, only one," asserted the kind fortune-teller, much pleased, "after that all goes smoothly."

"Ah," murmured the old dame, quite cheerfully, "we was all of us a short-lived family."

Our skins harden to the blows of Fate. I was lunching one Wednesday with a friend in the country. His son and heir, aged twelve, entered and took his seat at the table.

"Well," said his father, "and how did we get on at school to-day?"

"Oh, all right," answered the youngster, settling himself down to his dinner with evident appetite.

"Nobody caned?" demanded his father, with – as I noticed – a sly twinkle in his eye.

"No," replied young hopeful, after reflection; "no, I don't think so," adding as an afterthought, as he tucked into beef and potatoes, "'cepting, o' course, me."

When the Dæmon will not work

It is a simple science, philosophy. The idea is that it never matters what happens to you provided you don't mind it. The weak point in the argument is that nine times out of ten you can't help minding it.

"No misfortune can harm me," says Marcus Aurelius, "without the consent of the dæmon within me."

The trouble is our dæmon cannot always be relied upon. So often he does not seem up to his work.

"You've been a naughty boy, and I'm going to whip you," said nurse to a four-year-old criminal.

"You tant," retorted the young ruffian, gripping with both hands the chair that he was occupying, "I'se sittin' on it."

His dæmon was, no doubt, resolved that misfortune, as personified by nurse, should not hurt him. The misfortune, alas! proved stronger than the dæmon, and misfortune, he found did hurt him.

The toothache cannot hurt us so long as the dæmon within us (that is to say, our will power) holds on to the chair and says it can't. But, sooner or later, the dæmon lets go, and then we howl. One sees the idea: in theory it is excellent. One makes believe. Your bank has suddenly stopped payment. You say to yourself.

“This does not really matter.”

Your butcher and your baker say it does, and insist on making a row in the passage.

You fill yourself up with gooseberry wine. You tell yourself it is seasoned champagne. Your liver next morning says it is not.

The dæmon within us means well, but forgets it is not the only thing there. A man I knew was an enthusiast on vegetarianism. He argued that if the poor would adopt a vegetarian diet the problem of existence would be simpler for them, and maybe he was right. So one day he assembled some twenty poor lads for the purpose of introducing to them a vegetarian lunch. He begged them to believe that lentil beans were steaks, that cauliflowers were chops. As a third course he placed before them a mixture of carrots and savoury herbs, and urged them to imagine they were eating saveloys.

“Now, you all like saveloys,” he said, addressing them, “and the palate is but the creature of the imagination. Say to yourselves, ‘I am eating saveloys,’ and for all practical purposes these things will be saveloys.”

Some of the lads professed to have done it, but one disappointed-looking youth confessed to failure.

“But how can you be sure it was not a saveloy?” the host persisted.

“Because,” explained the boy, “I haven't got the stomach-ache.”

It appeared that saveloys, although a dish of which he was fond, invariably and immediately disagreed with him. If only we were all dæmon and nothing else philosophy would be easier. Unfortunately, there is more of us.

Another argument much approved by philosophy is that nothing matters, because a hundred years hence, say, at the outside, we shall be dead. What we really want is a philosophy that will enable us to get along while we are still alive. I am not worrying about my centenary; I am worrying about next quarter-day. I feel that if other people would only go away, and leave me – income-tax collectors, critics, men who come round about the gas, all those sort of people – I could be a philosopher myself. I am willing enough to make believe that nothing matters, but they are not. They say it is going to be cut off, and talk about judgment summonses. I tell them it won't trouble any of us a hundred years hence. They answer they are not talking of a hundred years hence, but of this thing that was due last April twelvemonth. They won't listen to my dæmon. He does not interest them. Nor, to be candid, does it comfort myself very much, this philosophical reflection that a hundred years later on I'll be sure to be dead – that is, with ordinary luck. What bucks me up much more is the hope that they will be dead. Besides, in a hundred years things may have improved. I may not want to be dead. If I were sure of being dead next morning, before their threat of cutting off that water or that gas could by any possibility be carried out, before that judgment summons they are bragging about could be made returnable, I might – I don't say I should – be amused, thinking how I was going to dish them. The wife of a very wicked man visited him one evening in prison, and found him enjoying a supper of toasted cheese.

“How foolish of you, Edward,” argued the fond lady, “to be eating toasted cheese for supper. You know it always affects your liver. All day long to-morrow you will be complaining.”

“No, I shan't,” interrupted Edward; “not so foolish as you think me. They are going to hang me to-morrow – early.”

There is a passage in Marcus Aurelius that used to puzzle me until I hit upon the solution. A foot-note says the meaning is obscure. Myself, I had gathered this before I read the foot-note. What it is all about I defy any human being to explain. It might mean anything; it might mean nothing. The majority of students incline to the latter theory, though a minority maintain there is a meaning, if

only it could be discovered. My own conviction is that once in his life Marcus Aurelius had a real good time. He came home feeling pleased with himself without knowing quite why.

“I will write it down,” he said to himself, “now, while it is fresh in my mind.”

It seemed to him the most wonderful thing that anybody had ever said. Maybe he shed a tear or two, thinking of all the good he was doing, and later on went suddenly to sleep. In the morning he had forgotten all about it, and by accident it got mixed up with the rest of the book. That is the only explanation that seems to me possible, and it comforts me.

We are none of us philosophers all the time.

Philosophy is the science of suffering the inevitable, which most of us contrive to accomplish without the aid of philosophy. Marcus Aurelius was an Emperor of Rome, and Diogenes was a bachelor living rent free. I want the philosophy of the bank clerk married on thirty shillings a week, of the farm labourer bringing up a family of eight on a precarious wage of twelve shillings. The troubles of Marcus Aurelius were chiefly those of other people.

“Taxes will have to go up, I am afraid,” no doubt he often sighed. “But, after all, what are taxes? A thing in conformity with the nature of man – a little thing that Zeus approves of, one feels sure. The *dæmon* within me says taxes don’t really matter.”

Maybe the *paterfamilias* of the period, who did the paying, worried about new sandals for the children, his wife insisting she hadn’t a frock fit to be seen in at the amphitheatre; that, if there was one thing in the world she fancied, it was seeing a Christian eaten by a lion, but now she supposed the children would have to go without her, found that philosophy came to his aid less readily.

“Bother these barbarians,” Marcus Aurelius may have been tempted, in an unphilosophical moment, to exclaim; “I do wish they would not burn these poor people’s houses over their heads, toss the babies about on spears, and carry off the older children into slavery. Why don’t they behave themselves?”

But philosophy in Marcus Aurelius would eventually triumph over passing fretfulness.

“But how foolish of me to be angry with them,” he would argue with himself. “One is not vexed with the fig-tree for yielding figs, with the cucumber for being bitter! One must expect barbarians to behave barbariously.”

Marcus Aurelius would proceed to slaughter the barbarians, and then forgive them. We can most of us forgive our brother his transgressions, having once got even with him. In a tiny Swiss village, behind the angle of the school-house wall, I came across a maiden crying bitterly, her head resting on her arm. I asked her what had happened. Between her sobs she explained that a school companion, a little lad about her own age, having snatched her hat from her head, was at that moment playing football with it the other side of the wall. I attempted to console her with philosophy. I pointed out to her that boys would be boys – that to expect from them at that age reverence for feminine headgear was to seek what was not conformable with the nature of boy. But she appeared to have no philosophy in her. She said he was a horrid boy, and that she hated him. It transpired it was a hat she rather fancied herself in. He peeped round the corner while we were talking, the hat in his hand. He held it out to her, but she took no notice of him. I gathered the incident was closed, and went my way, but turned a few steps further on, curious to witness the end. Step by step he approached nearer, looking a little ashamed of himself; but still she wept, her face hidden in her arm.

He was not expecting it: to all seeming she stood there the personification of the grief that is not to be comforted, oblivious to all surroundings. Incautiously he took another step. In an instant she had “landed” him over the head with a long narrow wooden box containing, one supposes, pencils and pens. He must have been a hard-headed youngster, the sound of the compact echoed through the valley. I met her again on my way back.

“Hat much damaged?” I inquired.

“Oh, no,” she answered, smiling; “besides, it was only an old hat. I’ve got a better one for Sundays.”

I often feel philosophical myself; generally over a good cigar after a satisfactory dinner. At such times I open my Marcus Aurelius, my pocket Epicurus, my translation of Plato's "Republic." At such times I agree with them. Man troubles himself too much about the unessential. Let us cultivate serenity. Nothing can happen to us that we have not been constituted by Nature to sustain. That foolish farm labourer, on his precarious wage of twelve shillings a week: let him dwell rather on the mercies he enjoys. Is he not spared all anxiety concerning safe investment of capital yielding four per cent.? Is not the sunrise and the sunset for him also? Many of us never see the sunrise. So many of our so-termed poorer brethen are privileged rarely to miss that early morning festival. Let the dæmon within them rejoice. Why should he fret when the children cry for bread? Is it not in the nature of things that the children of the poor should cry for bread? The gods in their wisdom have arranged it thus. Let the dæmon within him reflect upon the advantage to the community of cheap labour. Let the farm labourer contemplate the universal good.

CHAPTER III

Literature and the Middle Classes

I am sorry to be compelled to cast a slur upon the Literary profession, but observation shows me that it still contains within its ranks writers born and bred in, and moving amidst – if, without offence, one may put it bluntly – a purely middle-class environment: men and women to whom Park Lane will never be anything than the shortest route between Notting Hill and the Strand; to whom Debrett's Peerage – gilt-edged and bound in red, a tasteful-looking volume – ever has been and ever will remain a drawing-room ornament and not a social necessity. Now what is to become of these writers – of us, if for the moment I may be allowed to speak as representative of this rapidly-diminishing yet nevertheless still numerous section of the world of Art and Letters? Formerly, provided we were masters of style, possessed imagination and insight, understood human nature, had sympathy with and knowledge of life, and could express ourselves with humour and distinction, our pathway was, comparatively speaking, free from obstacle. We drew from the middle-class life around us, passed it through our own middle-class individuality, and presented it to a public composed of middle-class readers.

But the middle-class public, for purposes of Art, has practically disappeared. The social strata from which George Eliot and Dickens drew their characters no longer interests the great B. P. Hetty Sorrell, Little Em'ly, would be pronounced "provincial;" a *Deronda* or a *Wilfer Family* ignored as "suburban."

I confess that personally the terms "provincial" and "suburban," as epithets of reproach, have always puzzled me. I never met anyone more severe on what she termed the "suburban note" in literature than a thin lady who lived in a semi-detached villa in a by-street of Hammersmith. Is Art merely a question of geography, and if so what is the exact limit? Is it the four-mile cab radius from Charing Cross? Is the cheesemonger of Tottenham Court Road of necessity a man of taste, and the Oxford professor of necessity a Philistine? I want to understand this thing. I once hazarded the direct question to a critical friend:

"You say a book is suburban," I put it to him, "and there is an end to the matter. But what do you mean by suburban?"

"Well," he replied, "I mean it is the sort of book likely to appeal to the class that inhabits the suburbs." He lived himself in Chancery Lane.

May a man of intelligence live, say, in Surbiton?

"But there is Jones, the editor of *The Evening Gentleman*," I argued; "he lives at Surbiton. It is just twelve miles from Waterloo. He comes up every morning by the eight-fifteen and returns again by the five-ten. Would you say that a book is bound to be bad because it appeals to Jones? Then again, take Tomlinson: he lives, as you are well aware, at Forest Gate which is Epping way, and entertains you on *Kakemonos* whenever you call upon him. You know what I mean, of course. I think 'Kakemono' is right. They are long things; they look like coloured hieroglyphics printed on brown paper. He gets behind them and holds them up above his head on the end of a stick so that you can see the whole of them at once; and he tells you the name of the Japanese artist who painted them in the year 1500 B.C., and what it is all about. He shows them to you by the hour and forgets to give you dinner. There isn't an easy chair in the house. To put it vulgarly, what is wrong with Tomlinson from a high art point of view?"

“There’s a man I know who lives in Birmingham: you must have heard of him. He is the great collector of Eighteenth Century caricatures, the Rowlandson and Gilray school of things. I don’t call them artistic myself; they make me ill to look at them; but people who understand Art rave about them. Why can’t a man be artistic who has got a cottage in the country?”

“You don’t understand me,” retorted my critical friend, a little irritably, as I thought.

“I admit it,” I returned. “It is what I am trying to do.”

“Of course artistic people live in the suburbs,” he admitted. “But they are not of the suburbs.”

“Though they may dwell in Wimbledon or Hornsey,” I suggested, “they sing with the Scotch bard: ‘My heart is in the South-West postal district. My heart is not here.’”

“You can put it that way if you like,” he growled.

“I will, if you have no objection,” I agreed. “It makes life easier for those of us with limited incomes.”

The modern novel takes care, however, to avoid all doubt upon the subject. Its personages, one and all, reside within the half-mile square lying between Bond Street and the Park – a neighbourhood that would appear to be somewhat densely populated. True, a year or two ago there appeared a fairly successful novel the heroine of which resided in Onslow Gardens. An eminent critic observed of it that: “It fell short only by a little way of being a serious contribution to English literature.” Consultation with the keeper of the cabman’s shelter at Hyde Park Corner suggested to me that the “little way” the critic had in mind measures exactly eleven hundred yards. When the nobility and gentry of the modern novel do leave London they do not go into the provinces: to do that would be vulgar. They make straight for “Barchester Towers,” or what the Duke calls “his little place up north” – localities, one presumes, suspended somewhere in mid-air.

In every social circle exist great souls with yearnings towards higher things. Even among the labouring classes one meets with naturally refined natures, gentlemanly persons to whom the loom and the plough will always appear low, whose natural desire is towards the dignities and graces of the servants’ hall. So in Grub Street we can always reckon upon the superior writer whose temperament will prompt him to make respectful study of his betters. A reasonable supply of high-class novels might always have been depended upon; the trouble is that the public now demands that all stories must be of the upper ten thousand. Auld Robin Grey must be Sir Robert Grey, South African millionaire; and Jamie, the youngest son of the old Earl, otherwise a cultured public can take no interest in the ballad. A modern nursery rhymester to succeed would have to write of Little Lord Jack and Lady Jill ascending one of the many beautiful eminences belonging to the ancestral estates of their parents, bearing between them, on a silver rod, an exquisitely painted Sèvres vase filled with ottar of roses.

I take up my fourpenny-halfpenny magazine. The heroine is a youthful Duchess; her husband gambles with thousand-pound notes, with the result that they are reduced to living on the first floor of the Carlton Hotel. The villain is a Russian Prince. The Baronet of a simpler age has been unable, poor fellow, to keep pace with the times. What self-respecting heroine would abandon her husband and children for sin and a paltry five thousand a year? To the heroine of the past – to the clergyman’s daughter or the lady artist – he was dangerous. The modern heroine misbehaves herself with nothing below Cabinet rank.

I turn to something less pretentious, a weekly periodical that my wife tells me is the best authority she has come across on blouses. I find in it what once upon a time would have been called a farce. It is now a “drawing-room comedietta. All rights reserved.” The *dramatis personæ* consist of the Earl of Danbury, the Marquis of Rottenborough (with a past), and an American heiress – a character that nowadays takes with lovers of the simple the place formerly occupied by “Rose, the miller’s daughter.”

I sometimes wonder, is it such teaching as that of Carlyle and Tennyson that is responsible for this present tendency of literature? Carlyle impressed upon us that the only history worth consideration was the life of great men and women, and Tennyson that we “needs must love

the highest.” So literature, striving ever upward, ignores plain Romola for the Lady Ponsonby de Tompkins; the provincialisms of a Charlotte Brontë for what a certain critic, born before his time, would have called the “doin’s of the hupper succles.”

The British Drama has advanced by even greater bounds. It takes place now exclusively within castle walls, and – what Messrs. Lumley & Co.’s circular would describe as – “desirable town mansions, suitable for gentlemen of means.” A living dramatist, who should know, tells us that drama does not occur in the back parlour. Dramatists have, it has been argued, occasionally found it there, but such may have been dramatists with eyes capable of seeing through clothes.

I once wrote a play which I read to a distinguished Manager. He said it was a most interesting play: they always say that. I waited, wondering to what other manager he would recommend me to take it. To my surprise he told me he would like it for himself – but with alterations.

“The whole thing wants lifting up,” was his opinion. “Your hero is a barrister: my public take no interest in plain barristers. Make him the Solicitor General.”

“But he’s got to be amusing,” I argued. “A Solicitor General is never amusing.”

My Manager pondered for a moment. “Let him be Solicitor General for Ireland,” he suggested. I made a note of it.

“Your heroine,” he continued, “is the daughter of a seaside lodging-house keeper. My public do not recognize seaside lodgings. Why not the daughter of an hotel proprietor? Even that will be risky, but we might venture it.” An inspiration came to him. “Or better still, let the old man be the Managing Director of an hotel Trust: that would account for her clothes.”

Unfortunately I put the thing aside for a few months, and when I was ready again the public taste had still further advanced. The doors of the British Drama were closed for the time being on all but members of the aristocracy, and I did not see my comic old man as a Marquis, which was the lowest title that just then one dared to offer to a low comedian.

Now how are we middle-class novelists and dramatists to continue to live? I am aware of the obvious retort, but to us it absolutely is necessary. We know only parlours: we call them drawing-rooms. At the bottom of our middle-class hearts we regard them fondly: the folding-doors thrown back, they make rather a fine apartment. The only drama that we know takes place in such rooms: the hero sitting in the gentleman’s easy chair, of green repp: the heroine in the lady’s ditto, without arms – the chair, I mean. The scornful glances, the bitter words of our middle-class world are hurled across these three-legged loo-tables, the wedding-cake ornament under its glass case playing the part of white ghost.

In these days, when “Imperial cement” is at a premium, who would dare suggest that the emotions of a parlour can by any possibility be the same as those exhibited in a salon furnished in the style of Louis Quatorze; that the tears of Bayswater can possibly be compared for saltiness with the lachrymal fluid distilled from South Audley Street glands; that the laughter of Clapham can be as catching as the cultured cackle of Curzon Street? But we, whose best clothes are exhibited only in parlours, what are we to do? How can we lay bare the souls of Duchesses, explain the heart-throbs of peers of the realm? Some of my friends who, being Conservative, attend Primrose “tourneys” (or is it “Courts of love”? I speak as an outsider. Something mediæval, I know it is) do, it is true, occasionally converse with titled ladies. But the period for conversation is always limited owing to the impatience of the man behind; and I doubt if the interview is ever of much practical use to them, as conveying knowledge of the workings of the aristocratic mind. Those of us who are not Primrose Knights miss even this poor glimpse into the world above us. We know nothing, simply nothing, concerning the deeper feelings of the upper ten. Personally, I once received a letter from an Earl, but that was in connection with a dairy company of which his lordship was chairman, and spoke only of his lordship’s views concerning milk and the advantages of the cash system. Of what I really wished to know – his lordship’s passions, yearnings and general attitude to life – the circular said nothing.

Year by year I find myself more and more in a minority. One by one my literary friends enter into this charmed aristocratic circle; after which one hears no more from them regarding the middle-classes. At once they set to work to describe the mental sufferings of Grooms of the Bed-chamber, the hidden emotions of Ladies in their own right, the religious doubts of Marquises. I want to know how they do it – “how the devil they get there.” They refuse to tell me.

Meanwhile, I see nothing before me but the workhouse. Year by year the public grows more impatient of literature dealing merely with the middle-classes. I know nothing about any other class. What am I to do?

Commonplace people – friends of mine without conscience, counsel me in flippant phrase to “have a shot at it.”

“I expect, old fellow, you know just as much about it as these other Johnnies do.” (I am not defending their conversation either as regards style or matter: I am merely quoting.) “And even if you don’t, what does it matter? The average reader knows less. How is he to find you out?”

But, as I explain to them, it is the law of literature never to write except about what you really know. I want to mix with the aristocracy, study them, understand them; so that I may earn my living in the only way a literary man nowadays can earn his living, namely, by writing about the upper circles.

I want to know how to get there.

CHAPTER IV

Man and his Master

There is one thing that the Anglo-Saxon does better than the “French, or Turk, or Rooshian,” to which add the German or the Belgian. When the Anglo-Saxon appoints an official, he appoints a servant: when the others put a man in uniform, they add to their long list of masters. If among your acquaintances you can discover an American, or Englishman, unfamiliar with the continental official, it is worth your while to accompany him, the first time he goes out to post a letter, say. He advances towards the post-office a breezy, self-confident gentleman, borne up by pride of race. While mounting the steps he talks airily of “just getting this letter off his mind, and then picking up Jobson and going on to Durand’s for lunch.”

He talks as if he had the whole day before him. At the top of the steps he attempts to push open the door. It will not move. He looks about him, and discovers that is the door of egress, not of ingress. It does not seem to him worth while redescending the twenty steps and climbing another twenty. So far as he is concerned he is willing to pull the door, instead of pushing it. But a stern official bars his way, and haughtily indicates the proper entrance. “Oh, bother,” he says, and down he trots again, and up the other flight.

“I shall not be a minute,” he remarks over his shoulder. “You can wait for me outside.”

But if you know your way about, you follow him in. There are seats within, and you have a newspaper in your pocket: the time will pass more pleasantly. Inside he looks round, bewildered. The German post-office, generally speaking, is about the size of the Bank of England. Some twenty different windows confront your troubled friend, each one bearing its own particular legend. Starting with number one, he sets to work to spell them out. It appears to him that the posting of letters is not a thing that the German post-office desires to encourage. Would he not like a dog licence instead? is what one window suggests to him. “Oh, never mind that letter of yours; come and talk about bicycles,” pleads another. At last he thinks he has found the right hole: the word “Registration” he distinctly recognizes. He taps at the glass.

Nobody takes any notice of him. The foreign official is a man whose life is saddened by a public always wanting something. You read it in his face wherever you go. The man who sells you tickets for the theatre! He is eating sandwiches when you knock at his window. He turns to his companion:

“Good Lord!” you can see him say, “here’s another of ’em. If there has been one man worrying me this morning there have been a hundred. Always the same story: all of ’em want to come and see the play. You listen now; bet you anything he’s going to bother me for tickets. Really, it gets on my nerves sometimes.”

At the railway station it is just the same.

“Another man who wants to go to Antwerp! Don’t seem to care for rest, these people: flying here, flying there, what’s the sense of it?” It is this absurd craze on the part of the public for letter-writing that is spoiling the temper of the continental post-office official. He does his best to discourage it.

“Look at them,” he says to his assistant – the thoughtful German Government is careful to provide every official with another official for company, lest by sheer force of *ennui* he might be reduced to taking interest in his work – “twenty of ’em, all in a row! Some of ’em been there for the last quarter of an hour.”

“Let ’em wait another quarter of an hour,” advises the assistant; “perhaps they’ll go away.”

“My dear fellow,” he answers, “do you think I haven’t tried that? There’s simply no getting rid of ’em. And it’s always the same cry: ‘Stamps! stamps! stamps!’ ’Pon my word, I think they live on stamps, some of ’em.”

“Well let ’em have their stamps?” suggests the assistant, with a burst of inspiration; “perhaps it will get rid of ’em.”

Why the Man in Uniform has, generally, sad Eyes

“What’s the use?” wearily replies the older man. “There will only come a fresh crowd when those are gone.”

“Oh, well,” argues the other, “that will be a change, anyhow. I’m tired of looking at this lot.”

I put it to a German post-office clerk once – a man I had been boring for months. I said:

“You think I write these letters – these short stories, these three-act plays – on purpose to annoy you. Do let me try to get the idea out of your head. Personally, I hate work – hate it as much as you do. This is a pleasant little town of yours: given a free choice, I could spend the whole day mooning round it, never putting pen to paper. But what am I to do? I have a wife and children. You know what it is yourself: they clamour for food, boots – all sorts of things. I have to prepare these little packets for sale and bring them to you to send off. You see, you are here. If you were not here – if there were no post-office in this town, maybe I’d have to train pigeons, or cork the thing up in a bottle, fling it into the river, and trust to luck and the Gulf Stream. But, you being here, and calling yourself a post-office – well, it’s a temptation to a fellow.”

I think it did good. Anyhow, after that he used to grin when I opened the door, instead of greeting me as formerly with a face the picture of despair. But to return to our inexperienced friend.

At last the wicket is suddenly opened. A peremptory official demands of him “name and address.” Not expecting the question, he is a little doubtful of his address, and has to correct himself once or twice. The official eyes him suspiciously.

“Name of mother?” continues the official.

“Name of what?”

“Mother!” repeats the official. “Had a mother of some sort, I suppose.”

He is a man who loved his mother sincerely while she lived, but she has been dead these twenty years, and, for the life of him he cannot recollect her name. He thinks it was Margaret Henrietta, but is not at all sure. Besides, what on earth has his mother got to do with this registered letter that he wants to send to his partner in New York?

“When did it die?” asks the official.

“When did what die? Mother?”

“No, no, the child.”

“What child?” The indignation of the official is almost picturesque.

“All I want to do,” explains your friend, “is to register a letter.”

“A what?”

“This letter, I want – ”

The window is slammed in his face. When, ten minutes later he does reach the right wicket – the bureau for the registration of letters, and not the bureau for the registration of infantile deaths – it is pointed out to him that the letter either is sealed or that it is not sealed.

I have never been able yet to solve this problem. If your letter is sealed, it then appears that it ought not to have been sealed.

If, on the other hand, you have omitted to seal it, that is your fault. In any case, the letter cannot go as it is. The continental official brings up the public on the principle of the nurse who sent the eldest girl to see what Tommy was doing and tell him he mustn’t. Your friend, having wasted half an hour and mislaid his temper for the day, decides to leave this thing over and talk to the hotel porter

about it. Next to the Burgomeister, the hotel porter is the most influential man in the continental town: maybe because he can swear in seven different languages. But even he is not omnipotent.

The Traveller's one Friend

Three of us, on the point of starting for a walking tour through the Tyrol, once sent on our luggage by post from Constance to Innsbruck. Our idea was that, reaching Innsbruck in the height of the season, after a week's tramp on two flannel shirts and a change of socks, we should be glad to get into fresh clothes before showing ourselves in civilized society. Our bags were waiting for us in the post-office: we could see them through the grating. But some informality – I have never been able to understand what it was – had occurred at Constance. The suspicion of the Swiss postal authorities had been aroused, and special instructions had been sent that the bags were to be delivered up only to their rightful owners.

It sounds sensible enough. Nobody wants his bag delivered up to anyone else. But it had not been explained to the authorities at Innsbruck how they were to know the proper owners. Three wretched-looking creatures crawled into the post-office and said they wanted those three bags – “those bags, there in the corner” – which happened to be nice, clean, respectable-looking bags, the sort of bags that anyone might want. One of them produced a bit of paper, it is true, which he said had been given to him as a receipt by the post-office people at Constance. But in the lonely passes of the Tyrol one man, set upon by three, might easily be robbed of his papers, and his body thrown over a precipice. The chief clerk shook his head. He would like us to return accompanied by someone who could identify us. The hotel porter occurred to us, as a matter of course. Keeping to the back streets, we returned to the hotel and fished him out of his box.

“I am Mr. J.,” I said: “this is my friend Mr. B. and this is Mr. S.”

The porter bowed and said he was delighted.

“I want you to come with us to the post-office,” I explained, “and identify us.”

The hotel porter is always a practical man: his calling robs him of all sympathy with the hide-bound formality of his compatriots. He put on his cap and accompanied us back to the office. He did his best: no one could say he did not. He told them who we were: they asked him how he knew. For reply he asked them how they thought he knew his mother: he just knew us: it was second nature with him. He implied that the question was a silly one, and suggested that, as his time was valuable, they should hand us over the three bags and have done with their nonsense.

They asked him how long he had known us. He threw up his hands with an eloquent gesture: memory refused to travel back such distance. It appeared there was never a time when he had not known us. We had been boys together.

Did he know anybody else who knew us? The question appeared to him almost insulting. Everybody in Innsbruck knew us, honoured us, respected us – everybody, that is, except a few post-office officials, people quite out of society.

Would he kindly bring along, say; one undoubtedly respectable citizen who could vouch for our identity? The request caused him to forget us and our troubles. The argument became a personal quarrel between the porter and the clerk. If he, the porter, was not a respectable citizen of Innsbruck, where was such an one to be found?

The disadvantage of being an unknown Person

Both gentlemen became excited, and the discussion passed beyond my understanding. But I gathered dimly from what the clerk said, that ill-natured remarks relative to the porter's grandfather and a missing cow had never yet been satisfactorily replied to: and, from observations made by the

porter, that stories were in circulation about the clerk's aunt and a sergeant of artillery that should suggest to a discreet nephew of the lady the inadvisability of talking about other people's grandfathers.

Our sympathies were naturally with the porter: he was our man, but he did not seem to be advancing our cause much. We left them quarrelling, and persuaded the head waiter that evening to turn out the gas at our end of the *table d'hôte*.

The next morning we returned to the post-office by ourselves. The clerk proved a reasonable man when treated in a friendly spirit. He was a bit of a climber himself. He admitted the possibility of our being the rightful owners. His instructions were only not to *deliver up* the bags, and he himself suggested a way out of the difficulty. We might come each day and dress in the post-office, behind the screen. It was an awkward arrangement, even although the clerk allowed us the use of the back door. And occasionally, in spite of the utmost care, bits of us would show outside the screen. But for a couple of days, until the British Consul returned from Salzburg, the post-office had to be our dressing room. The continental official, I am inclined to think, errs on the side of prudence.

CHAPTER V

If only we had not lost our Tails!

A friend of mine thinks it a pity that we have lost our tails. He argues it would be so helpful if, like the dog, we possessed a tail that wagged when we were pleased, that stuck out straight when we were feeling mad.

“Now, do come and see us again soon,” says our hostess; “don’t wait to be asked. Drop in whenever you are passing.”

We take her at her word. The servant who answers our knocking says she “will see.” There is a scuffling of feet, a murmur of hushed voices, a swift opening and closing of doors. We are shown into the drawing-room, the maid, breathless from her search, one supposes, having discovered that her mistress *is* at home. We stand upon the hearthrug, clinging to our hat and stick as to things friendly and sympathetic: the suggestion forcing itself upon us is that of a visit to the dentist.

Our hostess enters wreathed in smiles. Is she really pleased to see us, or is she saying to herself, “Drat the man! Why must he choose the very morning I had intended to fix up the clean curtains?”

But she has to pretend to be delighted, and ask us to stay to lunch. It would save us hours of anxiety could we look beyond her smiling face to her tail peeping out saucily from a placket-hole. Is it wagging, or is it standing out rigid at right angles from her skirt?

But I fear by this time we should have taught our tails polite behaviour. We should have schooled them to wag enthusiastically the while we were growling savagely to ourselves. Man put on insincerity to hide his mind when he made himself a garment of fig-leaves to hide his body.

One sometimes wonders whether he has gained so very much. A small acquaintance of mine is being brought up on strange principles. Whether his parents are mad or not is a matter of opinion. Their ideas are certainly peculiar. They encourage him rather than otherwise to tell the truth on all occasions. I am watching the experiment with interest. If you ask him what he thinks of you, he tells you. Some people don’t ask him a second time. They say:

“What a very rude little boy you are!”

“But you insisted upon it,” he explains; “I told you I’d rather not say.”

It does not comfort them in the least. Yet the result is, he is already an influence. People who have braved the ordeal, and emerged successfully, go about with swelled head.

And little Boys would always tell the Truth!

Politeness would seem to have been invented for the comfort of the undeserving. We let fall our rain of compliments upon the unjust and the just without distinction. Every hostess has provided us with the most charming evening of our life. Every guest has conferred a like blessing upon us by accepting our invitation. I remember a dear good lady in a small south German town organizing for one winter’s day a sleighing party to the woods. A sleighing party differs from a picnic. The people who want each other cannot go off together and lose themselves, leaving the bores to find only each other. You are in close company from early morn till late at night. We were to drive twenty miles, six in a sledge, dine together in a lonely *Wirtschaft*, dance and sing songs, and afterwards drive home by moonlight. Success depends on every member of the company fitting into his place and assisting in the general harmony. Our chieftainess was fixing the final arrangements the evening before in the drawing-room of the *pension*. One place was still to spare.

“Tompkins!”

Two voices uttered the name simultaneously; three others immediately took up the refrain. Tompkins was our man – the cheeriest, merriest companion imaginable. Tompkins alone could be trusted to make the affair a success. Tompkins, who had only arrived that afternoon, was pointed out to our chieftainess. We could hear his good-tempered laugh from where we sat, grouped together at the other end of the room. Our chieftainess rose, and made for him direct.

Alas! she was a short-sighted lady – we had not thought of that. She returned in triumph, followed by a dismal-looking man I had met the year before in the Black Forest, and had hoped never to meet again. I drew her aside.

“Whatever you do,” I said, “don’t ask – ” (I forget his name. One of these days I’ll forget him altogether, and be happier. I will call him Johnson.) “He would turn the whole thing into a funeral before we were half-way there. I climbed a mountain with him once. He makes you forget all your other troubles; that is the only thing he is good for.”

“But who is Johnson?” she demanded. “Why, that’s Johnson,” I explained – “the thing you’ve brought over. Why on earth didn’t you leave it alone? Where’s your woman’s instinct?”

“Great heavens!” she cried, “I thought it was Tompkins. I’ve invited him, and he’s accepted.”

She was a stickler for politeness, and would not hear of his being told that he had been mistaken for an agreeable man, but that the error, most fortunately, had been discovered in time. He started a row with the driver of the sledge, and devoted the journey outwards to an argument on the fiscal question. He told the proprietor of the hotel what he thought of German cooking, and insisted on having the windows open. One of our party – a German student – sang, “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,” – which led to a heated discussion on the proper place of sentiment in literature, and a general denunciation by Johnson of Teutonic characteristics in general. We did not dance. Johnson said that, of course, he spoke only for himself, but the sight of middle-aged ladies and gentlemen catching hold of each other round the middle and jiggling about like children was to him rather a saddening spectacle, but to the young such gambolling was natural. Let the young ones indulge themselves. Only four of our party could claim to be under thirty with any hope of success. They were kind enough not to impress the fact upon us. Johnson enlivened the journey back by a searching analysis of enjoyment: Of what did it really consist?

Yet, on wishing him “Good-night,” our chieftainess thanked him for his company in precisely the same terms she would have applied to Tompkins, who, by unflagging good humour and tact, would have made the day worth remembering to us all for all time.

And everyone obtained his just Deserts!

We pay dearly for our want of sincerity. We are denied the payment of praise: it has ceased to have any value. People shake me warmly by the hand and tell me that they like my books. It only bores me. Not that I am superior to compliment – nobody is – but because I cannot be sure that they mean it. They would say just the same had they never read a line I had written. If I visit a house and find a book of mine open face downwards on the window-seat, it sends no thrill of pride through my suspicious mind. As likely as not, I tell myself, the following is the conversation that has taken place between my host and hostess the day before my arrival:

“Don’t forget that man J- is coming down to-morrow.”

“To-morrow! I wish you would tell me of these things a little earlier.”

“I did tell you – told you last week. Your memory gets worse every day.”

“You certainly never told me, or I should have remembered it. Is he anybody important?”

“Oh, no; writes books.”

“What sort of books? – I mean, is he quite respectable?”

“Of course, or I should not have invited him. These sort of people go everywhere nowadays. By the by, have we got any of his books about the house?”

“I don’t think so. I’ll look and see. If you had let me know in time I could have ordered one from Mudie’s.”

“Well, I’ve got to go to town; I’ll make sure of it, and buy one.”

“Seems a pity to waste money. Won’t you be going anywhere near Mudie’s?”

“Looks more appreciative to have bought a copy. It will do for a birthday present for someone.”

On the other hand, the conversation may have been very different. My hostess may have said:

“Oh, I *am* glad he’s coming. I have been longing to meet him for years.”

She may have bought my book on the day of publication, and be reading it through for the second time. She may, by pure accident, have left it on her favourite seat beneath the window. The knowledge that insincerity is our universal garment has reduced all compliment to meaningless formula. A lady one evening at a party drew me aside. The chief guest – a famous writer – had just arrived.

“Tell me,” she said, “I have so little time for reading, what has he done?”

I was on the point of replying when an inveterate wag, who had overheard her, interposed between us.

“‘The Cloister and the Hearth,’” he told her, “and ‘Adam Bede.’”

He happened to know the lady well. She has a good heart, but was ever muddle-headed. She thanked that wag with a smile, and I heard her later in the evening boring most evidently that literary lion with elongated praise of the “Cloister and the Hearth” and “Adam Bede.” They were among the few books she had ever read, and talking about them came easily to her. She told me afterwards that she had found that literary lion a charming man, but —

“Well,” she laughed, “he has got a good opinion of himself. He told me he considered both books among the finest in the English language.”

It is as well always to make a note of the author’s name. Some people never do – more particularly playgoers. A well-known dramatic author told me he once took a couple of colonial friends to a play of his own. It was after a little dinner at Kettner’s; they suggested the theatre, and he thought he would give them a treat. He did not mention to them that he was the author, and they never looked at the programme. Their faces as the play proceeded lengthened; it did not seem to be their school of comedy. At the end of the first act they sprang to their feet.

“Let’s chuck this rot,” suggested one.

“Let’s go to the Empire,” suggested the other. The well-known dramatist followed them out. He thinks the fault must have been with the dinner.

A young friend of mine – a man of good family – contracted a *mésalliance*: that is, he married the daughter of a Canadian farmer, a frank, amiable girl, bewitchingly pretty, with more character in her little finger than some girls possess in their whole body. I met him one day, some three months after his return to London.

And only people would do Parlour Tricks who do them well!

“Well,” I asked him, “how is it shaping?”

“She is the dearest girl in the world,” he answered. “She has only got one fault; she believes what people say.”

“She will get over that,” I suggested.

“I hope she does,” he replied; “it’s awkward at present.”

“I can see it leading her into difficulty,” I agreed.

“She is not accomplished,” he continued. He seemed to wish to talk about it to a sympathetic listener. “She never pretended to be accomplished. I did not marry her for her accomplishments. But now she is beginning to think she must have been accomplished all the time, without knowing it. She plays the piano like a schoolgirl on a parents’ visiting-day. She told them she did not play – not worth

listening to – at least, she began by telling them so. They insisted that she did, that they had heard about her playing, and were thirsting to enjoy it. She is good nature itself. She would stand on her head if she thought it would give real joy to anyone. She took it they really wanted to hear her, and so let 'em have it. They tell her that her touch is something quite out of the common – which is the truth, if only she could understand it – why did she never think of taking up music as a profession? By this time she is wondering herself that she never did. They are not satisfied with hearing her once. They ask for more, and they get it. The other evening I had to keep quiet on my chair while she thumped through four pieces one after the other, including the Beethoven Sonata. We knew it was the Beethoven Sonata. She told us before she started it was going to be the Beethoven Sonata, otherwise, for all any of us could have guessed, it might have been the 'Battle of Prague.' We all sat round with wooden faces, staring at our boots. Afterwards those of them that couldn't get near enough to her to make a fool of her crowded round me. Wanted to know why I had never told them I had discovered a musical prodigy. I'll lose my temper one day and pull somebody's nose, I feel I shall. She's got a recitation; whether intended to be serious or comic I had never been able to make up my mind. The way she gives it confers upon it all the disadvantages of both. It is chiefly concerned with an angel and a child. But a dog comes into it about the middle, and from that point onward it is impossible to tell who is talking – sometimes you think it is the angel, and then it sounds more like the dog. The child is the easiest to follow: it talks all the time through its nose. If I have heard that recitation once I have heard it fifty times; and now she is busy learning an encore.

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