

Anstey F.

**Puppets at Large: Scenes and
Subjects from Mr Punch's Show**



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Содержание

DOING A CATHEDRAL	4
THE INSTANTANEOUS PROCESS; IN THE CAUSE OF CHARITY	11 18
THE CLASSICAL SCHOLAR IN REDUCED CIRCUMSTANCES	27
RUS IN URBE	31
CATCHING THE EARLY BOAT	36
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	41

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DOING A CATHEDRAL

(A Sketch From the Provinces.)

The interior of Dulchester Cathedral. Time —About 12.30. The March sunshine slants in pale shafts through the clerestory windows, leaving the aisles in shadow. From without, the cawing of rooks and shouts of children at play are faintly audible. By the West Door, a party of Intending Sightseers have collected, and the several groups, feeling that it would be a waste of time to observe anything in the building until officially instructed to do so, are engaged in eyeing one another with all the genial antipathy and suspicion of true-born Britons.

A Stodgy Sightseer (to his friend). Disgraceful, keeping us standing about like this! If I'd only known, I'd have told the head-waiter at the "Mitre" to keep back those chops till —

[He breaks off abruptly, finding that the chops are reverberating from column to column with disproportionate solemnity; a white-haired and apple-faced verger rustles down from the choir and beckons the party forward benignantly, whereupon they advance with a secret satisfaction at the prospect of "getting the cathedral 'done' and having the rest of the day to themselves;" they are conducted to a desk and requested, as a preliminary, to put sixpence apiece in the Restoration Fund box and inscribe their names in a book.

Confused Murmurs. Would you put "Portico Lodge, Camden Road, or only London?" ... Here, I'd better sign for the lot of you, eh?.. They *might* provide a better pen – in a *cathedral*, I *do* think!.. He might have given all our names in full instead of just "And party!" ... Oh, I've been and made a blot – will it *matter*, should you think?.. I never *can* write my name with people looking on, can *you*?.. I'm sure you've done it beautifully, dear!.. Just hold my umbrella while I take off my glove, Maria... Oh, why *don't* they make haste? &c., &c.

[The Stodgy Sightseer fumes, feeling that, while they are fiddling, his chops are burning.

The Verger. Now, ladies and gentlemen, if you will please to follow me, the portion of the building where we now are is part of the original hedifice founded by Ealfrytha, wife of Earl Baldric, in the year height 'undred heighty-height, though we 'ave reason to believe that an even hearlier church was in existence 'ere so far back as the Roman occupation, as is proved by a hancient stone

receptacle recently discovered under the crypt and hevidently used for baptismal purposes.

A Spectacled S. (*who feels it due to herself to put an intelligent question at intervals.*) What *was* the method of baptism among the Early Christians?

The Verger. We believe it to 'ave been by total immersion, Ma'am.

The Spect. S. Oh? *Baptists!*

[She sets down the Early Christians as Dissenters, and takes no further interest in them.]

The Verger. At the back of the choir, and immediately in front of you, is the shrine, formerly containing the bones of St. Chasuble, with relics of St. Alb. (*An Evangelical Sightseer snorts in disapproval.*) The 'ollow depressions in the steps leading up to the shrine, which are still visible, were worn away, as you see, by the pilgrims ascending on their knees. (*The party verify the depressions conscientiously, and click their tongues to express indulgent contempt.*) The spaces between the harches of the shrine were originally enriched by valuable gems and mosaics, all of which 'ave now long since disappeared, 'aving been removed by the more devout parties who came 'ere on pilgrimages. In the chapel to your left a monument with recumbent heffigies of Bishop Buttress and Dean Gurgoyle, represented laying side by side with clasped 'ands, in token of the lifelong affection between them. The late Bishop used to make a rather facetious remark about this tomb. He was in the 'abit of observing that it

was the honly instance in *his* experience of a Bishop being on friendly terms with his Dean. (*He glances round for appreciation of this instance of episcopal humour, but is pained to find that it has produced a general gloom; the Evangelical Sightseer, indeed, conveys by another and a louder snort, his sense that a Bishop ought to set a better example.*) In the harched recess to your right, a monument in painted halibarster to Sir Ralph Ringdove and his lady, erected immediately after her decease by the disconsolate widower, with a touching inscription in Latin, stating that their ashes would shortly be commingled in the tomb. (*He pauses, to allow the ladies of the party to express a becoming sympathy – which they do, by clicks.*) Sir Ralph himself, however, is interred in Ficklebury Parish Church, forty mile from this spot, along with his third wife, who survived him.

[The ladies regard the image of Sir Ralph with indignation, and pass on; the Verger chuckles faintly at having produced his effect.

The Evangelical S. (*snuffing the air suspiciously*). I'm sorry to perceive that you are in the habit of burning *incense* here!

[He looks sternly at the Verger, as though to imply that it is useless to impose upon him.

The Verger. No, Sir, what you smell ain't incense – on'y the vaults after the damp weather we've bin 'aving.

[The Evangelical Sightseer drops behind, divided between relief and disappointment.

A Plastic S. (*to the Verger*). What a perfectly *exquisite* rose-

window that is! For all the world like a kaleidoscope. I suppose it dates from the Norman period, at *least*?

The Verger (*coldly*). No, Ma'am, it was only put up about thirty year ago. *We* consider it the poorest glass we 'ave.

The Plast. S. Oh, the glass, yes; *that's* hideous, certainly. I meant the – the other part.

The Verger. The tracery, Ma'am? That was restored at the same time by a local man – and a shocking job he made of it, too!

The Plast. S. Yes, it *quite* spoils the Cathedral, *doesn't* it? Couldn't it be taken down?

The Verger (*in answer to another Inquirer*). Crowborough Cathedral finer than this, Sir? Oh, *dear* me, no. I went over a-purpose to 'ave a look at it the last 'oliday I took, and I was quite surprised to find 'ow very inferior it was. The spire? I don't say that mayn't be 'igher as a mere matter of feet, but our lantern-tower is so 'appily proportioned as to give the effect of being by far the 'ighest in existence.

A Travelled S. Ah, you should see the *continental* cathedrals. Why, *our* towers would hardly come up to the top of the naves of some of them!

The Verger (*loftily*). I don't take no notice of foreign cathedrals, Ma'am. If foreigners like to build so ostentatious, all I can say is, I'm sorry *for* them.

A Lady (*who has provided herself with a "Manual of Architecture" and an unsympathetic Companion*). *Do* notice the excessive use of the ball-flower as a decoration, dear. Parker says

it is especially characteristic of this cathedral.

Unsympathetic Companion. I don't see *any* flowers myself. And if they like to decorate for festivals and that, where's the harm?

[*The Lady with the Manual perceives that it is hopeless to explain.*]

The Verger. The dog-tooth mouldings round the triforium arches is considered to belong to the best period of Norman work —

The Lady with the Manual. Surely not *Norman*? Dog-tooth is Saxon, *I* always understood.

The Verger (*indulgently*). You'll excuse *me*, Ma'am, but I fancy it's 'erringbone as is running in *your* 'ed.

The Lady with the M. (*after consulting "Parker" for corroboration, in vain*). Well, I'm sure dog-tooth is quite *Early English*, anyway. (*To her Companion.*) Did you know it was the interlacing of the round arches that gave the first idea of the pointed arch, dear?

Her Comp. No. But I shouldn't have thought there was so very much in the *idea*.

The Lady with the M. I do *wish* you took more *interest*, dear. Look at those two young men who have just come in. They don't *look* as if they'd care for carving; but they've been studying every one of the Miserere seats in the choir-stalls. That's what *I* like to see!

The Verger. That concludes my dooties, ladies and gentlemen. You can go out by the South Transept door, and that'll take

you through the Cloisters. (*The Party go out, with the exception of the two 'Arries, who linger, expectantly, and cough in embarrassment.*) Was there anything you wished to know?

First 'Arry. Well, Mister, it's on'y – er – 'aven't you got some old carving or other 'ere of a rather – well, *funny* kind – sorter thing you on'y show to *gentlemen*, if you know what I mean?

The Verger (*austerely*). There's nothing in *this* Cathedral for gentlemen o' *your* sort, and I'm surprised at your expecting of it.

[He turns on his heel.]

First 'Arry (*to Second*). I spoke civil enough to *'im*, didn't I? What did 'e want to go and git the fair 'ump about?

Second 'Arry. Oh, *I* dunno. But you don't ketch *me* comin' over to no more cathedrils, and wastin' time and money all for nuthink – that's all.

[They tramp out, feeling that their confidence has been imposed upon.]

THE INSTANTANEOUS PROCESS;

Or, Fluff Sits for his Photograph

A Photographer's Studio on the Seventh Floor. It is a warm afternoon. Mr. Stippler, Photographic Artist, is discovered alone.

Mr. Stippler (*to himself*). No appointments while this weather lasts, thank goodness! I shall be able to get ahead with those negatives now. (*Sharp whistle from speaking-tube, to which he goes.*) Well?

Voice of Lady Assistant (*in shop below*). Lady just brought her dog in; wants to know if she can have it taken now.

Mr. Stip. (*to himself*). Oh, dash the dog and the lady too!

The Voice. No, only the *dog*, the lady says.

Mr. Stip. (*confused*). Eh? Oh, exactly. Ask the lady to have the goodness to – ah – step up. (*He opens the studio door, and awaits the arrival of his client; interval, at the end of which sounds as of a female in distress about halfway down are distinctly audible.*) She's stepping up. (*Another interval. The head of a breathless Elderly Lady emerges from the gloom.*) This way, Madam.

Elderly Lady (*entering and sinking into the first plush chair*). Oh, dear me, I thought I should *never* get to the top! Now *why* can't you photographers have your studios on the ground floor?

So *much* more convenient!

Mr. Stip. No doubt, Madam, no doubt. But there is – ah – a prejudice in the profession in favah of the roof; possibly the light is considered somewhat superiah. I thought I understood there was – ah – a dog?

The E. L. Oh, he'll be here presently. I think he saw something in one of the rooms on the way up that took his fancy, or very likely he's resting on one of the landing mats, – such an *intelligent* dog! I'll call him. Fluffy, Fluffy, come along, my pet, nearly up now! Mustn't keep his missis waiting for him. (*A very long pause: presently a small rough-haired terrier lounges into the studio with an air of proprietorship.*) That's the dog; he's so small, he can't take *very* long to do, *can* he?

Mr. Stip. The – ah – precise size of the animal does not signify, Madam; we do it by an instantaneous process. The only question is the precise pose you would prefer. I presume the dog is a good – ah – rattah?

The E. L. Really, I've no idea. But he's *very* clever at killing bluebottles; he *will* smash them on the window-panes.

Mr. Stip. (*without interest*). I see, Madam. We have a speciality for our combination backgrounds, and you might like to have him represented on a country common, in the act of watching a hole in a bank.

The E. L. (*impressed*). For bluebottles?

Mr. Stip. For – ah – rats. (*By way of concession.*) Or bluebottles, of course, if you prefer it.

The E. L. I think I would rather have something more characteristic. He has such a pretty way of lying on his back with all his paws sticking straight up in the air. I never saw any *other* dog do it.

Mr. Stip. Precisely. But I doubt whether that particular pose would be effective – in a photograph.

The E. L. You think not? Where *has* he got to, now? Oh, *do* just look at him going round, examining everything! He *quite* understands what he's wanted to do; you've no idea what a clever dog he is!

Mr. Stip. Ray-ally? How would it do to have him on a rock in the middle of a salmon stream?

The E. L. It would make me so uncomfortable to see it; he has a perfect *horror* of wetting his little feet!

Mr. Stip. In *that* case, no doubt – Then what do you say to posing him on an ornamental pedestal? We could introduce a Yorkshire moor, or a view of Canterbury Cathedral, as a background.

The E. L. A pedestal seems *so* suggestive of a cemetery, doesn't it?

Mr. Stip. Then we must try some other position. (*He resigns himself to the commonplace.*) Can the dog – ah – sit up?

The E. L. Bee-yutifully! Fluffy, come and show how nicely you can sit up!

Fluff (*to himself*). Show off for this fellow? Who pretends he's got rats – and hasn't! Not if *I* know it!

[He rolls over on his back with a well-assumed air of idiocy.]

The E. L. (*delighted*). There, *that's* the attitude I told you of. But perhaps it *would* come out rather too leggy?

Mr. Stip. It is – ah – open to that objection, certainly, Madam. Perhaps we had better take him on a chair sitting up. (*Fluff is, with infinite trouble, prevailed upon to mount an arm-chair, from which he growls savagely whenever Mr. Stippler approaches.*) You will probably be more successful with him than I, Madam.

The E. L. I could make him sit up in a *moment*, if I had any of his biscuits with me. But I forgot to bring them.

Mr. Stip. There is a confectionah next door. We could send out a lad for some biscuits. About how much would you requiah – a quartah of a pound? *He goes to the speaking tube.*

The E. L. He won't eat *all* those; he's a *most* abstemious dog. But they must be *sweet*, tell them. (*Delay. Arrival of the biscuits. The Elderly Lady holds one up, and Fluff leaps, barking frantically, until he succeeds in snatching it; a man[oe]uvre which he repeats with each successive biscuit.*) Do you know, I'm afraid he really *mustn't* have any more – biscuits always *excite* him so. Suppose you take him lying on the chair, much as he is now? (*Mr. Stippler attempts to place the dog's paws, and is snapped at.*) Oh, *do* be careful!

Mr. Stip. (*heroically*). Oh, it's of no consequence, Madam. I am – ah —*accustomed* to it.

The E. L. Oh, yes; but *he* isn't, you know; so please be *very* gentle with him! And could you get him a little water first? I'm

sure he's thirsty. (Mr. Stippler *brings water in a developing dish, which Fluff empties promptly.*) Now he'll be as good— !

Mr. Stip. (*after wiping Fluff's chin and arranging his legs*). If we can only keep him like that for one second.

The E. L. But he ought to have his ears pricked. (Mr. Stippler *makes weird noises behind the camera, resembling demon cats in torture; Fluff regards him with calm contempt.*) Oh, and his hair is all in his eyes, and they're his best feature!

[Mr. Stippler attempts to part Fluff's fringe; snarls.

Mr. Stip. I have not discovered his eyes at present, Madam; but he appears to have excellent — ah — *teeth*.

The E. L. *Hasn't he!* Now, couldn't you catch him like *that*?

Mr. Stip. (*to himself*). He's more likely to catch *me* like that! (*Aloud; as he retreats under a hanging canopy.*) I think we shall get a good one of him as he is. (*Focussing.*) Yes, that will do very nicely. (*He puts in the plate, and prepares to release the shutter, whereupon Fluff deliberately rises and presents his tail to the camera.*) I presume you do not desiah a *back* view of the dog, Madam!

The E. L. Certainly not! Oh, Fluffy, naughty — naughty! Now lie down again, like a good dog. Oh, I'm afraid he's going to sleep!

Mr. Stip. If you would kindly take this — ah — toy in your hand, Madam, it might rouse him a little.

The E. L. (*exhibiting a gutta-percha rat*). Here, Fluffy, Fluffy, *here's* a pitty sing! What *is* it, eh!

Fluff (*after opening one eye*). The old fool fancies she's got a

rat! Well, she may *keep* it!

[He curls himself up again.]

Mr. Stip. We must try to obtain more – ah – animation than that.

[He hands the Elderly Lady a jingling toy.]

The E. L. (*shaking it vigorously*). Fluffy, see what Missis has got!

Fluff (*by a yawn of much eloquence*). At her age, too! Wonderful how she can *do* it!

[He closes his eyes wearily.]

Mr. Stip. Perhaps you may produce a better effect with this. *[He hands her a stuffed stoat.]*

Fluff (*to himself*). What's she got hold of *now*? Hul-lo! (*He rises, and inspects the stoat with interest.*) I'd no idea the old girl was so "varmint"!

Mr. Stip. Capital! Now, if he'll stay like that another – (*Fluff jumps down, and wags his tail with conscious merit.*) Oh, dear me. I never saw such a dog!

The E. L. He's tired out, poor doggie, and no wonder. But he'll be all the *quieter* for it, *won't* he? (*After restoring Fluff to the chair.*) Now, couldn't you take him panting, like that?

Mr. Stip. I must wait till he's got a little less tongue out, Madam.

The E. L. Must you? Why? *I* should have thought it was a capital opportunity.

Mr. Stip. For a physician, Madam, *not* a photographer. If I were to take him now the result would be an – ah – enormous tongue, with a dog in the remote distance.

The E. L. And he's putting out more and more of it! Perhaps he's thirsty again. Here, Fluffy, water – water! [*She produces the developing dish.*]

Fluff (*in barks of unmistakable significance*). Look here, I've had about enough of this tomfoolery. Let's go. *Come on!*

Mr. Stip. (*seconding the motion with relief*). I'm afraid we're not likely to do better with him to-day. Perhaps if you could look in some othah afternoon?

The E. L. Why, we've only been an hour and twenty minutes as yet! But what would be the best time to bring him?

Mr. Stip. I should say the light and the temperatuah would probably be more favourable by the week aftah next – (*to himself*) when I shall be taking my holiday!

The E. L. Very well, I'll come then. Oh, Fluffy, Fluffy, what a silly little dog you are to give all this trouble!

Fluff (*to himself, as he makes a triumphant exit*). Not half so silly as some people think! I *must* tell the cat about this; she'll go into fits! I will say she has a considerable sense of humour – for a cat.

IN THE CAUSE OF CHARITY

Mona House, the Town Mansion of the Marquis of Manx, which has been lent for a Sale of Work in aid of the "Fund for Super-annuated Skirt-dancers," under the patronage of Royalty and other distinguished personages.

In the Entrance Hall.

Mrs. Wylie Dedhead (*attempting to insinuate herself between the barriers*). Excuse me; I only wanted to pop in for a moment, just to see if a lady friend of mine is in there, that's *all!*

The Lady Money-taker (*blandly*). If you will let me know your friend's name – ?

Mrs. W. D. (*splendide mendax*). She's assisting the dear Duchess. *Now*, perhaps, you will allow me to pass!

The L. M. Afraid I can't, really. But if you mean Lady Honor Hyndlegges —*she* is the only lady at the Duchess's stall – I could send *in* for her. Or of course, if you like to pay half-a-crown —

Mrs. W. D. (*hastily*). Thank you, I – I won't disturb her ladyship. I had no *idea* there was any charge for admission, and – (*bristling*) – allow me to say I consider such regulations *most* absurd.

The L. M. (*sweetly, with a half glance at the bowl of coins on the table*). Quite *too* ridiculous, ain't they? *Good* afternoon!

Mrs. W. D. (*audibly, as she flounces out*). If they suppose I'm going to pay half-a-crown for the privilege of being *fleeced*– !

Footman (*on steps, sotto voce, to confrère*). "Fleeced"! that's a good 'un, eh? *She ain't brought much wool in with her!*

His Confrère. On'y what's stuffed inside of her ear. [*They resume their former impassive dignity.*

In the Venetian Gallery – where the Bazaar is being held.

A Loyal Old Lady (*at the top of her voice – to Stall-keeper*). Which of 'em's the Princess, my dear, eh? It's her I paid *my* money to see.

The Stall-keeper (*in a dismayed whisper*). Ssh! Not *quite* so loud! There – just opposite – petunia bow in her bonnet – selling kittens.

The L. O. L. (*planting herself on a chair*). So *that's* her! Well, she *is* dressed plain – for a Royalty – but looks *pleasant* enough. I wouldn't mind taking one o' them kittens off her Royal 'Ighness myself, if they was going at all reasonable. But there, I expect, the cats '*ere* is meat for my masters, so to speak; and you see, my dear, 'aving the promise of a tortoise-shell Tom from the lady as keeps the Dairy next door, whenever —

[She finds, with surprise, that her confidences are not encouraged.]

Miss St. Leger de Mayne (*persuasively to Mrs. Nibbler*). Do let me show you some of this exquisite work, all embroidered entirely by hand, you see!

Mrs. Nibbler (*edging away*). Lovely — *quite* lovely; but I think — a — I'll just take a look round before I —

Miss de M. If there is any *particular* thing you were looking for, perhaps *I* could —

Mrs. N. (*becoming confidential*). Well, I *did* think if I could come across a nice *sideboard-cloth*—

Miss de M. (*to herself*). What on earth's a sideboard-cloth? (*Aloud.*) Why, I've the very *thing*! See – all worked in Russian stitch!

Mrs. N. (*dubiously*). I thought they were always quite plain. And what's that queer sort of flap-thing for?

Miss de M. Oh, *that*? That's – a – to cover up the spoons, and forks, and things; quite the latest fashion, *now*, you know.

Mrs. N. (*with self-assertion*). I *have* noticed it at several dinner parties I've been to in society lately, certainly. Still I am not sure that —

Miss de M. I always have them on my *own* sideboard now – my husband won't *hear* of any others... Then, I *may* put this one in paper for you? fifteen-and-sixpence – thanks *so* much! (*To her colleague, as Mrs. N. departs*). Connie, I've got rid of that awful nightgown case at *last*!

Mrs. Maycup. A – you *don't* happen to have a small bag to hold a powder-puff, and so on, you know?

Miss de M. I *had* some very pretty ones; but I'm afraid they're all – oh, no, there's just *one* left – crimson velvet and real *passementerie*. (*She produces a bag*). Too trotty for words, isn't it?

Mrs. Maycup (*tacitly admitting its trottiness*). But then – that sort of purse shape – Could I get a small pair of folding curling-irons into it, should you think, at a pinch?

Miss de M. You could get *anything* into it – at a pinch. I've one

myself which will hold – well, I can't tell you what it *won't* hold! Half-a-guinea – so *many* thanks! (*To herself, as Mrs. Maycup carries off her bag.*) What *would* the vicar's wife say if she knew I'd sold her church collection bag for *that*! But it's all in a good cause! (*An Elderly Lady comes up.*) May I show you some of these – ?

The Elderly Lady. Well, I was wondering if you had such a thing as a good warm pair of sleeping socks; because, these bitter nights, I do find I suffer so from cold in my feet.

Miss de M. (*with effusion*). Ah, then I can *feel* for you – so do I! At least, I *used* to before I tried – (*To herself.*) Where is that pair of thick woollen driving-gloves? Ah, I know. (*Aloud.*) – these. I've found them *such* a comfort!

The E. L. (*suspiciously*). They have rather a queer – And then they are divided at the ends, too.

Miss de M. Oh, haven't you seen *those* before? Doctors consider them so much healthier, don't you know.

The E. L. I daresay they are, my dear. But aren't the – (*with delicate embarrassment*) – the separated parts rather long?

Miss de M. Do you *think* so? They allow so much more freedom, you see; and then, of course, they'll shrink.

The E. L. That's true, my dear. Well, I'll take a pair, as you recommend them so strongly.

Miss de M. I'm quite *sure* you'll never regret it! (*To herself, as the E. L. retires, charmed.*) I'd give *anything* to see the poor old thing trying to put them on!

Miss Mimosa Tendrill (*to herself*). I do so *hate* hawking this horrid old thing about! (*Forlornly, to Mrs. Allbutt-Innett.*) I – I beg your pardon; but *will* you give me ten-and-sixpence for this lovely work-basket?

Mrs. Allbutt-Innett. My good girl, let me tell you I've been pestered to buy that identical basket at every bazaar I've set foot in for the last twelve-month, and how you can have the face to ask ten-and-six for it – you must think I've more money than wit!

Miss Tendr. (*abashed*). Well —*eighteenpence* then? (*To herself, as Mrs. A. I. closes promptly.*) There, I've sold *something*, anyhow!

The Hon. Diana D'Autenbas (*to herself*). It's rather fun selling at a Bazaar; one can let oneself *go* so much more! (*To the first man she meets.*) I'm sure you'll buy one of my buttonholes – now *won't* you? If I fasten it in for you myself?

Mr. Cadney Rowser. A button'ole, eh? Think I'm not classy enough as I am?

Miss D'Aut. I don't think *anyone* could accuse you of not being "*classy*;" still a flower would just give the finishing-touch.

Mr. C. R. (*modestly*). Rats! – if you'll pass the reedom. But you've such a way with you that – there – 'ow much.

Miss D'Aut. Only five shillings. Nothing to *you*!

Mr. C. R. Five bob? You're a artful girl, *you* are! "*Fang de Seakale*," and no error! But I'm *on* it; it's worth the money to 'ave a flower fastened in by such fair 'ands. I won't 'owl – not even if you *do* run a pin into me... What? You ain't done a'ready! No

'urry, yer know... 'Ere, won't you come along to the refreshment-stall, and 'ave a little something at my expense. Do!

Miss D'Aut. I think you must imagine you are talking to a barmaid!

Mr. C. R. (*with gallantry*). I on'y wish barmaids was 'alf as pleasant and sociable as *you*, Miss. But they're a precious stuck-up lot, *I* can assure you!

Miss D'Aut. (*to herself as she escapes*). I suppose one ought to put up with this sort of thing – for a charity!

Mrs. Babbicombe (*at the Toy Stall, to the Belle of the Bazaar, aged three-and-a-half*). You *perfect* duck! You're simply too sweet! I *must* find you something. (*She tempers generosity with discretion by presenting her with a small pair of knitted doll's socks.*) There, darling!

The Belle's Mother. What do you say to the kind lady *now*, Marjory?

Marjory (*a practical young person, to the donor*). Now div me a dolly to put ve socks on.

[Mrs. B. finds herself obliged to repair this omission.]

A Young Lady Raffler (*to a Young Man*). Do take a ticket for this charmin' *sachet*. Only half-a-crown!

The Young Man. Delighted! If you'll put in for this *splendid* cigar cabinet. Two shillin's!

[The Young Lady realises that she has encountered an Augur, and passes on.]

Miss de. M. (*to Mr. Isthmian Gatwick*). Can't I tempt you with this tea-cosy? It's so absurdly cheap!

Mr. Isthmian Gatwick (*with dignity*). A-thanks; I think not. Never *take* tea, don't you know.

Miss de M. (*with her characteristic adaptability*). Really? No more do *I*. But you *could* use it as a *smoking-cap*, you know. *I* always —

[Recollects herself, and breaks off in confusion.

Miss Ophelia Palmer (*in the "Wizard's Cave" – to Mr. Cadney Rowser*). Yes, your hand indicates an intensely refined and spiritual nature; you are perhaps a *little* too indifferent to your personal comfort where that of others is concerned; sensitive – too much so for your own happiness, perhaps – you feel things keenly when you *do* feel them. You have lofty ambitions and the artistic temperament – seven-and-sixpence, please.

Mr. C. R. (*impressed*). Well, Miss, if you can read all that for seven-and-six on the palm of my 'and, I wonder what you *wouldn't* see for 'alf a quid on the sole o' my boot!

[Miss P.'s belief in Chiromancy sustains a severe shock.

Bobbie Patterson (*outside tent, as Showman*). This way to the Marvellous Jumping Bean from Mexico! Threepence!

Voice from Tent. Bobbie! Stop! The Bean's *lost*! Lady Honor's horrid Thought-reading Poodle has just stepped in and swallowed it.

Bobbie. Ladies and Gentlemen, owing to sudden domestic

calamity, the Bean has been unavoidably compelled to retire, and will be unable to appear till further notice.

Miss Smylie (*to Mr. Otis Barleywater, who – in his own set – is considered "almost equal to Corney Grain"*). I thought you were giving your entertainment in the library? Why *aren't* you? Mr. Otis Barleywater (*in a tone of injury*). Why? Because I can't give my imitations of Arthur Roberts and Yvette Guilbert with anything *like* the requisite "go," unless I get a better audience than three programme-sellers, all under ten, and the cloak-room maid —*that's* why!

Mrs. Allbutt-Innett (*as she leaves, for the benefit of bystanders*). I must say, the house is *most* disappointing – not at *all* what I should expect a *Marquis* to live in. Why, my *own* reception-rooms are very nearly as large, and decorated in a much more modern style!

Bobbie Patterson (*to a "Doosid Good-natured Fellow, who doesn't care what he does," and whom he has just discovered inside a case got up to represent an automatic sweetmeat machine*). Why, my dear old *chap*! No idea it was *you* inside that thing! Enjoying yourself in there, eh?

The Doosid Good-natured Fellow (*fluffily, from the interior*). Enjoying myself! With the beastly pennies droppin' down into my boots, and the kids howlin' because all the confounded chocolates have worked up between my shoulder-blades, and I can't shake 'em out of the slit in my arm? I'd like to see *you* tryin' it!

The L. O. L. (*to a stranger, who is approaching the Princess's stall*). 'Ere, Mister, where are your manners? 'Ats off in the presence o' Royalty!

[She pokes him in the back with her umbrella; the stranger turns, smiles slightly, and passes on.]

A Well-informed Bystander. You are evidently unaware, Madam, that the gentleman you have just addressed is His Serene Highness the Prince of Potsdam!

The L. O. L. (*aghast*). Her '*usban*'! And me a jobbin' of 'im with my umbrella! 'Ere, let me get out!

[She staggers out, in deadly terror of being sent to the Tower on the spot.]

THE CLASSICAL SCHOLAR IN REDUCED CIRCUMSTANCES

You are, let us say, a young professional man in chambers or offices, incompetently guarded by an idiot boy whom you dare not trust with the responsibility of denying you to strangers. You hear a knock at your outer door, followed by conversation in the clerk's room, after which your salaried idiot announces "A Gentleman to see you." Enter a dingy and dismal little man in threadbare black, who advances with an air of mysterious importance. "I think," he begins, "I 'ave the pleasure of speaking to Mr. – " (*whatever your name is.*) "I take the liberty of calling, Mr. – , to consult you on a matter of the utmost importance, and I shall feel personally obliged if you will take precautions for our conversation not being over'eard." He looks grubby for a client – but appearances are deceptive, and you offer him a seat, assuring him that he may speak with perfect security – whereupon he proceeds in a lowered voice. "The story I am about to reveal," he says, smoothing a slimy tall hat, "is of a nature so revolting, so 'orrible in its details, that I can 'ardly bring myself to speak it to any 'uming ear!" (*Here you will probably prepare to take notes.*) "You see before you one who is of 'igh birth but low circumstances!" (*At this you give him up as a possible client, but a mixture of diffidence and curiosity compels you to*

listen.) "Yes, Sir, I was '*fruges consumeary nati.*' I 'ave received a neducation more befitting a dook than my present condition. Nursed in the lap of haffluence, I was trained to fill the lofty position which was to have been my lot. But, '*necessitas,*' Sir, as you are aware, '*necessitas non abat lejim,*' and such I found it. While still receiving a classical education at Cambridge College – (praps you are yourself an alumbus of *Halma Mater*? No? I apologise, Sir, I'm sure) – but while preparing to take my honorary degree, my father suddenly enounced the horful news that he was a bankrup'. Stript of all we possessed, we were turned out of our sumchuous 'ome upon the cold world, my father's grey 'airs were brought down sorrowing to sangwidge boards, though he is still sangwin of paying off his creditors in time out of what he can put by from his scanty hearnings. My poor dear Mother – a lady born and bred – sank by slow degrees to a cawfy-stall, which is now morgidged to the 'ilt, and my eldest Sister, a lovely and accomplished gairl, was 'artlessly thrown over by a nobleman, to 'oom she was engaged to be married, before our reverses overtook us. His name the delikit hinstinks of a gentleman will forbid you to inquire, as likewise me to mention – enough to 'int that he occupies a prominent position amongst the hupper circles of Society, and is frequently to be met with in the papers. His faithlessness preyed on my Sister's mind to that degree, that she is now in the Asylum, a nopeless maniac! My honely Brother was withdrawn from 'Arrow, and now 'as the 'yumiliation of selling penny toys on the kerbstone to his former

playfellers. '*Tantee nannymice salestibus hiræ,*' indeed, Sir! "But you ask what befell myself." (*You have not – for the simple reason that, even if you desired information, he has given you no chance, as yet, of putting in a word.*) "Ah, Sir, there you 'ave me on a tender point. '*Hakew tetigisti,*' if I may venture once more upon a scholarly illusion. But I 'ave resolved to conceal nothing – and you shall 'ear. For a time I obtained employment as Seckertary and Imanuensis to a young baranit, 'oo had been the bosom friend of my College days. He would, I know, have used his influence with Government to obtain me a lucrative post; but, alas, ere he could do so, unaired sheets, coupled with deliket 'elth, took him off premature, and I was once more thrown on my own resources. "In conclusion, Sir, you 'ave doubtless done me the hinjustice to expect, from all I 'ave said, that my hobjick in obtaining this interview was to ask you for pecuniary assistance?" (*Here you reflect with remorse that a suspicion to this effect has certainly crossed your mind.*) "Nothing of the sort or kind, I do assure you. A little 'uming sympathy, the relief of pouring out my sorrers upon a feeling 'art, a few kind encouraging words, is all I arsk, and that, Sir, the first sight of your kind friendly face told me I should not lack. Pore as I am, I still 'ave my pride, the pride of a English gentleman, and if you was to offer me a sovereign as you sit there, I should fling it in the fire – ah, I *should*– 'urt and indignant at the hinsult!" (*Here you will probably assure him that you have no intention of outraging his feelings in any such manner.*) "No, and *why*, Sir? Because you 'ave a gentlemanly

'art, and if you were to make sech a orfer, you would do it in a kindly Christian spirit which would rob it of all offence. There's not many as I would bring myself to accept a paltry sovereign from, but I dunno – I might from one like yourself – I *might*. *Ord hignara mali, miseris succur-reary disco*, as the old philosopher says. You 'ave that kind of way with you." (*You mildly intimate that he is mistaken here, and take the opportunity of touching the bell.*) "No, Sir, don't be untrue to your better himpulses. 'Ave a feelin 'art, Sir! Don't send me away, after allowing me to waste my time 'ere – which is of value *to me*, let me tell yer, whatever *yours* is! – like this!.. Well, well, there's 'ard people in this world? I'm *going*, Sir ... I 'ave sufficient dignity to take a 'int... You 'aven't got even a trifle to spare an old University Scholar in redooced circumstances then?.. Ah, it's easy to see you ain't been at a University yourself – you ain't got the *hair* of it! Farewell, Sir, and may your lot in life be 'appier than – All right, don't *hexcite* yourself. I've bin mistook in yer, that's all. I thought you was as soft-edded a young mug as you look. Open that door, will yer; I want to get out of this 'ole!" Here he leaves you with every indication of disgust and disappointment, and you will probably hear him indulging in unclassical vituperation on the landing.

RUS IN URBE

(A Sketch in Regent's Park.)

A railed-in corner of the Park. Time – About 7 p.m. Inside the enclosure three shepherds are engaged in shearing the park sheep. The first shepherd has just thrown his patient on its back, gripped its shoulders between his knees, and tucked its head, as a tiresome and obstructive excrescence, neatly away under one of his arms, while he reaches for the shears. The second is straddled across his animal, which is lying with its hind legs hobbled on a low stage under an elm, in a state of stoical resignation, as its fleece is deftly nipped from under its chin. The third operator has almost finished his sheep, which, as its dark grey fleece slips away from its pink-and-white neck and shoulders, suggests a rather décolletée dowager in the act of removing her theatre-cloak in the stalls. Sheep, already shorn, lie and pant in shame and shivering bewilderment, one or two nibble the blades of grass, as if to assure themselves that that resource is still open to them. Sheep whose turn is still to come are penned up at the back, and look on, scandalised, but with an air which seems to express that their own superior respectability is a sufficient protection against similar outrage. The shearers appear to take a humorous view of their

task, and are watched by a crowd which has collected round the railings, with an agreeable assurance that they are not expected to contribute towards the entertainment. First Work-girl (*edging up*). Whatever's goin' on inside 'ere? (*After looking – disappointed.*) Why they ain't on'y a lot o' sheep! I thought it was Reciters, or somethink o' that. Second Work-girl (*with irony*). They *look* like Reciters, don't they! It do seem a shime cuttin' them poor things as close as convicks, that it do! First W. – g. They don't mind it partickler; you'd 'ear 'em 'oller fast enough if they did. Second W. – g. I expeck they feel so redic'lus, they 'aven't the 'art to 'oller. Lucilla (*to George*). Do look at that one going up and sniffing at the bundle of fleeces, trying to find out which is his. *Isn't* it pathetic? George. H'm – puts one in mind of a shy man in a cloak-room after a party, saying feebly, "I rather think that's *my* coat, and there's a crush hat of mine *somewhere* about," eh? Lucilla (*who is always wishing that George would talk more sensibly*). Considering that sheep don't wear crush hats, I hardly see how —

George. My dear, I bow to your superior knowledge of natural history. Now you mention it, I believe it *is* unusual. But I merely meant to suggest a general resemblance.

Lucilla (*reprovingly*). I know. And you've got into such a silly habit of seeing resemblances in things that are perfectly different. I'm sure I'm *always* telling you of it.

George. You are, my dear. But I'm not nearly so bad as I *was*. Think of all the things I used to compare *you* to before we were

married!

Sarah Jane (*to her Trooper*). I could stand an' look at 'em hours, I could. I was born and bred in the country, and it do seem to bring back my old 'ome that plain.

Her Trooper. I'm country bred too, though yer mightn't think it. But there ain't much in sheep shearin' to *my* mind. If it was *pig killin'*, now!

Sarah Jane. Ah, that's along o' your bein' in the milingtary, I expect.

Her Trooper. No, it ain't that. It's the reckerlections it 'ud call up. I 'ad a 'ole uncle a pork-butcher, d'ye see, and (*with sentiment*) many and many a 'appy hour I've spent as a boy – [*He indulges in tender reminiscences.*]

A Young Clerk (*who belongs to a Literary Society, to his Fiancée*). It has a wonderfully rural look – quite like a scene in 'Ardy, isn't it?

His Fiancée (*who has "no time for reading rubbish"*). I daresay; though I've never been there myself.

The Clerk. Never been? Oh, I see. *You* thought I said *Arden*– the Forest of Arden, in Shakspeare, didn't you?

His Fiancée. Isn't that where Mr. Gladstone lives, and goes cutting down the trees in?

The Clerk. No; At least it's spelt different. But it was 'Ardy I meant. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, you know.

His Fiancée (*with a vague view to the next Bank Holiday*). What do you *call* "far" – farther than *Margate*?

[Her companion has a sense of discouragement.]

An Artisan (*to a neighbour in broadcloth and a white choker*). It's wonderful 'ow they can go so close without 'urtin' of 'em, ain't it?

His Neighbour (*with unction*). Ah, my friend, it on'y shows 'ow true it is that 'eving tempers the shears for the shorn lambs!

A Governess (*instructively, to her charge*). Don't you think you ought to be very grateful to that poor sheep, Ethel, for giving up her nice warm fleece on purpose to make a frock for *you*?

Ethel (*doubtfully*). Y – yes, Miss Mavor. But (*with a fear that some reciprocity may be expected of her*) she's too big for any of my *best* frocks, *isn't* she?

First Urchin (*perched on the railings*). Ain't that 'un a-kicking? 'E don't like 'aving 'is 'air cut, 'e don't, no more shouldn't I if it was me... 'E's bin an' upset 'is bloke on the grorss, now! Look at the bloke layin' there larfin'... 'E's ketched 'im agin now. See 'im landin' 'im a smack on the 'ed; that'll learn 'im to stay quiet, eh? 'E's strong, ain't 'e?

Second Urchin. Rams is the wust, though, 'cause they got 'orns, rams 'ave.

First Urch. What, same as goats?

Second Urch. (*emphatically*). Yuss! Big crooked 'uns. And runs at yer, they do.

First Urch. I wish they was rams in 'ere. See all them sheep waitin' to be done. I wonder what they're finkin' of.

Second Urch. Ga-arn! They *don't* fink, sheep don't.

First Urch. Not o' anyfink?

Second Urch. Na-ow! They ain't got nuffink to fink *about*, sheep ain't.

First Urch. I lay they *do* fink, 'orf and on.

Second Urch. Well, I lay *you* never see 'em doin' of it!

[And so on. The first Shepherd disrobes his sheep, and dismisses it with a disrespectful spank. After which he proceeds to refresh himself from a brown jar, and hands it to his comrades. The spectators look on with deeper interest, and discuss the chances of the liquid being beer, cider, or cold tea, as the scene closes.]

CATCHING THE EARLY BOAT

In Bed; At the Highland Hotel, Oban

What an extraordinary thing is the mechanism of the human mind! Went to sleep last night impressed with vital importance of waking at six, to catch early steamer to Gairloch. And here I am – broad awake – at exactly 5.55! Is it automatic action, or what? Like setting clockwork for explosive machine. When the time comes, I blow up – I mean, *get up*. Think out this simile – rather a good one... Need not have been so particular in telling Boots to call me, after all. Shall I get up *before* he comes? He'll be rather surprised when he knocks at the door, and hears me singing inside like a lark. But, on reflection, isn't it rather *petty* to wish to astonish an hotel Boots? And why on earth should I get up myself, when I've tipped another fellow to get me up? But suppose he forgets to call me. I've no right, as yet, to *assume* that he will. To get up now would argue want of confidence in him – might hurt his feelings. I will give him another five minutes, poor fellow...

Getting up. – No actual necessity to get up yet, but, to make assurance doubly – something or other, forget what – I will ... I do. Portmanteau rather refractory; retreats under bed – quite

ten minutes before I can coax it out... When I have, it won't let me pack it. That's the worst of this breed of brown portmanteaus – they're always nasty-tempered. However, I am getting a few things into it now, by degrees. Very annoying – as fast as I put them in, this confounded portmanteau shoots them out again! If I've put in that pair of red and white striped pyjamas once, I've done it twenty times – and they always come twisting and rolling out of the back, somehow. Fortunate I left myself ample time.

Man next door to me is running it rather fine. *He* has to catch the boat, too, and he's not up yet! Hear the Boots hammering away at his door. How *can* a fellow, just for the sake of a few more minutes in bed – which he won't even know he's *had!* – go and risk losing his steamer in that way? I'll do him a good turn – knock at the wall myself. "Hi! get up, you lazy beggar. Look sharp – you'll be late!" He thanks me, in a muffled tone, through the wall. He is a remarkably quick dresser, he tells me – it won't take him thirty-five seconds to pack, dress, pay his bill, and get on board. If that's the case, I don't see why *I* should hurry. I've got much more than that *already*.

At the Quay. – People in Oban stare a good deal. Can't quite make out reason, unless they're surprised to find me up so early. Explain that I got up without having even been called. Oban populace mildly surprised, and offer me neckties — *Why?*

Fine steamer this; has a paddle-wheel at *both* ends – "because," the Captain explains, "she has not only to *go* to Gairloch – but come back as well."

First-rate navigator, the Captain; he has written my weight, the date of my last birthday, and the number of the house I live in, down in a sort of ledger he keeps. He does this with all his passengers, he tells me, reduces the figures to logarithms, and works out the ship's course in decimals. No idea there was so much science in modern seamanship.

On Board.— Great advantage of being so early is that you can breakfast quietly on deck before starting. Have mine on bridge of steamer, under awning; everything very good — ham-méringues *excellent*. No coffee, but, instead, a capital brand of dry, sparkling marmalade, served, sailor-fashion, in small pomatum-pots.

What a small world we live in! Of all people in the world, who should be sitting next to me but my Aunt Maria! I was always under the impression that she had died in my infancy. Don't like to mention this, because if I am *wrong*, she might be offended. But if she *did* die when I was a child, she ought to be a much older woman than she looks. I *do* tell her this — because it is really a compliment.

My Aunt, evidently an experienced traveller, never travels, she informs me, without a pair of globes and a lawn-mower. She offers, very kindly, to lend me the Celestial globe, if the weather is at all windy. This is behaving *like* an Aunt!

We are taking in live-stock; curious-looking creatures, like spotted pug-dogs (only bigger and woollier, of course) and without horns. Somebody leaning over the rail next to me (I *think* he is the Public Prosecutor, but am not quite sure), tells me they

are "Scotch Shortbreads." Agreeable man, but rather given to staring.

Didn't observe it before, but my Aunt is really amazingly like Mr. Gladstone. Ask her to explain this. She is much distressed that I have noticed it; says she has felt it coming on for some time; it is not, as she justly complains, as if she took any interest in politics either. She has consulted every doctor in London, and they all tell her it is simply weakness, and she will outgrow it with care. Singular case – must find out (delicately) whether it's catching.

We ought to be starting soon; feel quite fresh and lively, in spite of having got up so early. Mention this to Captain. Wish he and the Public Prosecutor wouldn't stare at me so. Just as if there was something singular in my appearance!

They're embarking my portmanteau now. Knew they would have a lively time of it! It takes at least four sailors, in kilts, to manage it. Ought I to step ashore and quiet it down? Stay where I am. Don't know why, but feel a little afraid of it when it's like this. Shall exchange it for a quiet hand-bag when I get home.

Captain busy hammering at a hole in the funnel – dangerous place to spring a leak in – hope he is making it water-tight. The hammering reminds me of that poor devil in the bedroom next to mine at the hotel. *He* won't catch the boat now – he *can't*! My Aunt (who has left off looking like Mr. Gladstone) asks me why I am laughing. I tell her about that unfortunate man and his "thirty-five seconds." She screams with laughter. Very humorous

woman, my Aunt.

Deck crowded with passengers now: all pointing and staring ... at whom? Ask Aunt Maria. She declines to tell me: says, severely, that "If I don't know, I ought to."

Great Heavens! It's at *me* they're staring! And no wonder – in the hurry I was in, I must have packed *everything* up!.. I've come away just as I was! *Now*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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