

Eed talk. I like it. Do you think you can manage to do so?

'Ra-thor!' said Mr Apps. 'And it is a capital make-up, Captain Norman,' she went on. 'Do you know that at first, just for one moment, I thought you were a real burglar.'

'Fancy that now!' said Mr Apps. He was relieved at seeing an obvious way out of his difficulty. 'There's nothing like doing the thing in a proper stridentforward way.'

'And,' said Lady Staplehurst with her fan on his arm as they walked across the room, 'you have got the East End accent capitally.'

'Taint so dusty, is it?' She beckoned to the Gondolier. 'Captain Norman and I are great friends,' she said in an explanatory way. 'He has not been long home from abroad, and he knows scarcely any one.'

'Not a blessed soul,' echoed Mr Apps. 'You must let me show you round a bit, Captain Norman,' said the Gondolier with determined geniality. 'Can you come round to my club one night this week?'

'What for?' demanded Mr Apps suspiciously. 'Why, to dine! Say Thursday.'

'Gaud knows where I shall be on Friday,' said Mr Apps. 'I don't.'

'You must consider me at your disposal if you require any introductions. I know a good lot of people and any friend of Lady Staplehurst's—'

'Oh, come off the roof,' said Mr Apps with much discontent; 'wot's the use of talking.'

'Isn't it capital?' asked Lady Staplehurst of the Gondolier delightedly. 'How much more interesting it would be if everyone would only talk to me in their character.'

Lady Staplehurst rose with something of a hurry in her manner and spoke to Henry the Eighth. 'What regiment do you belong to, Captain Norman?' asked the Gondolier.

'Find out,' said Mr Apps. 'Am I too curious? I know very little of the army, I'm afraid.' The Gondolier was resolved to be agreeable to Lady Staplehurst's friend. 'I always lodge the army nights in the House. I suppose you know several of the service members?'

'I know as many as I want to know,' said Mr Apps evasively. 'A man in my position of life has to be a bit careful who he mixes up with.'

The hostess returned from Henry the Eighth. 'I can make nothing of this man,' whispered the Gondolier to her as he rose. 'I think he's silly.'

'If you knew his qualities you wouldn't speak of him like that.' She resumed her seat by the side of Mr Henry Apps.

'Well, blow me,' said Lady Staplehurst, screwing her pretty mouth in her effort to imitate the Cockney's accent, 'blow me if this ain't a fair take—I mean like dshn.' She laughed. 'It's of no use, Captain Norman. I can't talk as you can.'

'It's a gift,' said Mr Apps, 'that's what it is.' 'You don't want to be introduced to anybody here, I suppose?'

'Not me.' 'You have heard of—'

She pointed in the direction of the Gondolier. 'All I want to.' 'He's really making a big name in the House, you know. I watch his career with great interest.'

'Think a jolly lot of himself.' 'Oh, I think a lot of him too,' remarked Lady Staplehurst pleasantly. 'And is that a jummy sticking out of your jacket pocket? This is indeed realism. You don't know how it works, I suppose?'

'Well, I've got a kind of a idea,' said Mr Apps. 'Look here, you put this end in and—'

Mr Apps found himself getting quite excited in the explanations that he gave. It was a new sensation to meet one who showed an intelligent interest in his profession, and he could not help feeling flattered. Looking up, he saw the Gondolier gazing at him.

'He don't look 'appy, that chap,' said Mr Apps. 'Will you excuse me for one moment?'

'Wot are you going up to, miss?' he said apprehensively. 'I want to speak to him.'

'Oh! (with relief) I don't mind that.'

Whilst Lady Staplehurst was making the Gondolier resume his ordinary expression, Mr Apps thought and thought. The couples promenading after the waltz looked curiously at him.

'It's the rummiest show you was ever in, 'Enery,' said Mr Apps; 'you're a 'aving 'em on toast, you are; but you'll be glad to get upstairs agen. You want them diamonds, that's wot you want. Time means money to you, 'Enery.'

Lady Staplehurst hurried towards the doorway. A murmur of amnusement went through the room as the guests saw a new arrival in the costume of a police constable, accompanied by a man in plain clothes. Mr Apps, thinking over his exploit and gazing abstractedly at his boots and regretting their want of polish, did not see them until the plain clothes man tapped him on the shoulder.

'What, Apps, again!' exclaimed the man. 'Yus,' said the burglar discontentedly; 'yus, it is Apps agin, Mr Walker. And vurry glad you are to see him, I've no daht.'

'Always a pleasure to meet a gentleman like you,' said Mr Walker cheerfully, as he conducted him to the doorway. 'I've wanted to run up against you before.'

Much commotion in the ballroom at the diverting little scene. General agreement that Lady Staplehurst was a perfect genius at entertaining.

'But, loveliest girl,' said the Gondolier confidentially to Lady Staplehurst, 'ain't this carrying a joke rather too far? That's a real detective.'

'I know,' said Loveliet Girl, trembling now a little. 'That's a real burglar, too.'

'A real—'

'Yes, yes. Don't make a fuss. I don't want the dance spoilt. Take me down to supper, like a good fellow.'

W.S.

WHIST.

The origins of whist are vulgar and obscure. It was evolved, probably, out of Triumph, or Trump, a game referred to by Latimer in a Christmaside sermon of 1529. Rabelais names 'Trump,' 'La Triomphe,' about the same date as Latimer's sermon, among the amusements of Gargantua; his date of publication is rather later, but that does not prove the game to have arisen in England before it was known in France.

In 1526 the game was familiar in Italy among peasants. It is referred to in 'Gammer Garton's Needle,' but the nature of the sport remains obscure.

Shakespeare alludes to it, in a series of puns, in 'Antony and Cleopatra,' as Dunces first observed. Whisk or whist is described by Cotton Walton's 'son' in 1674. He says that almost every child of eight has the game at his finger-ends. Hoyle came forth with the first edition of his 'Short Treatise' in 1743.

It is not disagreeable to learn that the Duke of Cumberland once held a wonderfully good hand, yet lost £20,000 on the game. But probably this Duke was not the Butcher. Short whist came in by a mere bit-section of long whist, to wit Lord Peterborough gave his revenge in a hurry. The old reckoning of the honours was allowed to stand, hence the actual game has a greater element of chance, which we do not think matter for regret.

The game, even as it stands, is a game of fatiguing application. The player must observe, remember, forecast, and calculate. Yet some persons (usually men of entire leisure) call it a 'relaxation.'

The late Emperor of France and the novelist Lord Lytton were busy in their different ways, but both played whist. The Emperor was a vacillating, Lord Lytton a absent-minded player. It was difficult to say *a priori*, what class of mind will make a whist player. Dr. Johnson did not play; silence was not his forte. We never heard that Mr Carlyle and Macaulay were experts.

Politicians like Talleyrand have often been players; literary men are usually no more skilled than was the late Mr Pater. Mr James Payn is a familiar example of a novelist who occasionally does not disdain to take a hand, and, for a classical scholar, the late Professor Sellar was by no means proficient. But, as a rule, letters and cards do not assort well together, and probably the intellect of Mr John Stuart Mill soared above Blue Peter. It is difficult to guess why many active and acute minds are paralysed by a pack of cards, and have to announce that no inference is to be drawn from whatever they may chance to lead.

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