

The Club Smoking Room

By HAVANA

THE cynic had a slow, sad smile as he read a document he had taken from his pocket-book. Turning towards the lawyer, he said: "I have here a most interesting letter. It came into my hands quite accidentally, and presents a very nice legal and social problem. It is touching in its simplicity, and its obvious sincerity. I don't know the name of the writer, and I can only hazard a very rough guess as to the person for whom it was intended. But I had better tell you first how I got it in case you might think I had been guilty of petty larceny or the greater crime of robbing His Majesty's mails."

Most of us scented something interesting, and we urged him to tell us all about it, while the lawyer promised to duly deliver a legal opinion on the contents.

"If," said the man of law, "it is merely another application from your tailor for a settlement of his little account, my advice is to pay it if you are poor, and to contest it if you are rich. Only very wealthy people can afford the luxury of resisting demands for payment, as with persons so inclined I always collect my own fee in advance. They can then conscientiously plead inability to meet any further claims on their purse."

"The other day," resumed the first speaker, ignoring the interruption, "I went into the public library with the somewhat unusual intention of reading a book. At the same table as myself there sat a rather seedy-looking individual, who was evidently deep in the throes of composition. From time to time he consulted a small and somewhat grimy dictionary, which he had evidently brought with him, as, unlike the books in our public library, it showed signs of frequent usage. From his generally unkempt appearance and his somewhat wild and rolling eye, I concluded that he must be a poet, and I hazarded the conjecture that he was writing an ode on the visit of the American fleet. I left my place for a few minutes to consult a book in another part of the library, and when I came back my friend had gone, but he had been absent-minded enough to leave his composition behind, and I took possession of it, meaning to forward it to him if I found any clue to his identity. In this, however, I was disappointed. It was a letter addressed to some person unknown. Perhaps if I read it to you some of you chaps can give me a hint as to its intended destination. It is hardly a private matter; it seems to be addressed to the public at large."

At this stage the cynic leisurely took a sip from the glass at his elbow, and carefully smoothed out a crumpled and rather dirty letter. "This," he said, "is what I found, and I think you will agree with me that the writer's sad case deserves public commiseration." "Dear Sir,—I take up my pen to write to you, hoping it will find you as well as it leaves me at present. Sir, I have been the victim of cruel injustice, and I know how your noble heart bleeds for all victims of social tyranny. I have been dismissed from my employment by a hard-hearted, unjust, suspicious employer. I want you to make him re-instate me. I know you can easily make him do this if you like. For some months I was employed as sole assistant at a shop in the city. When my employer was out I was always left in charge, and no one could ever breathe a

word against my unsullied integrity. Sir, I never robbed him of a single penny, and yet he discharged me for dishonesty."

"Perhaps," interrupted the reader, "my friend's woes fail to touch you, and his plaintive epistle finds no response in your stony hearts. If so I will read no more, as it is rather long, and might only bore you."

"Not at all," we all exclaimed. "We are getting interested," and the padre aptly quoted:—

"Tears of compassion stand upon our eyelids,

Ready to fall as soon as you have told your pitiful story."

"I think," resumed the cynic, thus encouraged, "that the most affecting part of this letter has yet to come. It continues thus: My employer never marked his goods in plain figures, he used a cypher known only to us two. When I was left alone to serve in the shop, if I saw an article was marked to be sold at 3/6, I used to charge 5/-, if 10/- I charged 12/-, and so on. I most faithfully put the smaller sum in the till, the balance I put in my own pocket as the reward of my enterprise. Sir, there was no dishonesty in this. My employer never lost a single penny of his just due. One day the boss was serving, whilst I was at lunch, and a customer came in to change an article he had bought. He said he had paid 5/- for it. The boss said it ought to have been 3/6. The customer said he had bought two of them and paid 10/- for the two, and so he ought to know. He got quite angry about it. I was just returning, and heard the row going on. I did not want to be drawn into any fuss, so I went for a walk up the street and came back later. Now, sir, if the boss had tackled me like a man about it I should have had a chance to deny it and prove my innocence. But he didn't say anything. Instead, he spied upon me through a hole in a ground-glass window in a door. Nobly have you protested against this system of espionage so revolting to all honest men. He taxed me with dishonesty and dismissed me. He had no valid reason, I was no thief, I never stole a penny in my life. I want you to take up my case and demand instant restitution."

"I cannot," remarked the cynic, "hazard even the remotest guess as to whom he is addressing. The concluding words of his letter only deepen the mystery—'you have nobly espoused the cause of the toiler from motives of the purest benevolence,' he continues, 'and I do not like to even hint at money payment. But a lot of us would like to form a union, and if you would be secretary we would each give you a shilling a week, and if you get a hundred to join that would be some sort of small honorarium for your trouble, though I know you never look at things in a money light.' Here the letter abruptly ends. There is no signature and no address. It is evidently only a rough copy in pencil meant to be copied out fair afterwards. It seems a hard case. I should say that in law the employer had no valid reason to justify him in his action. The man had clearly committed no theft."

"You wish for a legal opinion," remarked the lawyer as he absent-mindedly held out his hand for six and eightpence, but recollecting himself, pretended he was reaching for the matches. "I recall two somewhat similar cases: Box

v. Robinson, and Cummings v. Jones. In the first case a man was employed to keep people from crawling underneath a tent to see a circus instead of paying at the door. His employer charged him with theft because he took sixpence each from two boys to allow them to crawl under. It was held no theft had been committed. The shilling had never belonged to the employer, nor had the employee dishonestly sold goods and pocketed the money. I should say that this was a similar case. The reason given for discharge was not valid, and the man should clearly be re-instated. A reason valid only to the employer is clearly no just cause for dismissal."

"It is sad," said the journalist, "to think that our worthy friend should have lost the fruit of so much literary toil, and also the benefit of your eminently legal decision. Let us hope that he will try again, and that his noble and disinterested patron will duly interest himself in this sad and distressing case of capitalistic tyranny. When will injustice to the workers cease?"

Hon. John Burns and the "Suffragettes."

Mr. John Burns, the President of the Local Government Board, completely lost his temper when he addressed a packed meeting of his supporters at Battersea Town Hall.

The cause of his very genuine outburst was, to use his own expression, the "vulgar, unwomanly, and disgraceful conduct" of a number of suffragists who interrupted the flow of rhetoric in support of the Licensing Bill.

A crowd of several thousands outside the building cheered each suffragist as she was ejected, and in several cases gave the women a hearing.

The proceedings may be thus summarised:—

8.20 p.m.—Suffragist No. 1 arises, makes incoherent squeal. (Ejected. Cheers.)

Mr. Burns: "Leave them to the stewards. We've got 'em on the list, and they never will be missed." (Loud laughter.)

8.25.—Suffragist No. 2: "Why should women—?" (Ejected. Cheers.)

Mr. Burns: "We will not allow the right of public meeting to be broken by any man or woman." (Loud cheers.)

8.35.—Man Heckler: "Confiscation;" (Ejected amid uproar.)

Mr. Burns (to stewards): "Put him out!" (Sterily to audience): "Look this way."

8.40.—Suffragist No. 4: "Votes for women!" (Ejected. Loud cheers.)

Mr. Burns: "It is not my fault that the mild should be mixed with the bitter." (Loud laughter.)

8.45.—Man Heckler: "What about your £5000 a year?" (Ejected. Wild cheers.)

Mr. Burns: "The potman has gone to join the barmaid." (Shrieks of laughter.)

8.50.—Suffragist No. 8: "We insist on the vote this session—." (Feeble effort. Allowed to remain.)

9.0.—Suffragist No. 7: "The men make the laws and—." (Ejected after tussle. Loud "hoos.")

Mr. Burns: "There's no moaning at the bar when she puts out to sea."

9.5.—Suffragist No. 9 gives faint scream. (Ejected. Mild uproar.)

9.10.—Suffragist No. 10: "Give the women the vote." (Carried out struggling.)

Mr. Burns (passionately to women in the audience): "Now, ladies, if you've come here for a laughing competition you can go out. We are not going to allow a number of frivolous and vulgar strangers to interrupt this meeting. It makes me almost ashamed that I am a supporter of woman's suffrage. This disgraceful conduct has put back the clock of woman's suffrage. The ingratitude of these women is disgusting."

Boiling eggs without the use of water is the latest novelty exploited at one of London's leading hotels, and as the feat is accomplished directly before the customer the new way of cooking generally attracts attention and comment. The waiter places a box-like apparatus on the table and turns on a little electricity, and places the desired number of eggs in the heater. In about a minute and a half, or half the time consumed by the hot water process, the eggs are cooked to a turn.

YOUNG WOMAN CURED OF ST. VITUS' DANCE.

By Dr. Williams' Pink Pills.

Their great value as a nerve tonic proved—One of the worst nervous cases on record—Helpless as a baby—Had to be held during attacks—Seven years a sufferer, and practically bedridden for all that time — In good health to-day.

St. Vitus' Dance is one of the most nervous disorders. It often follows a shock or run-down condition of the nerves, and can only be cured by "tuning" the nerves. That's what Dr. Williams' Pink Pills do. They are both a blood builder and a nerve tonic, and their value in nervous complaints is shown by the marvelous cure of a Sydney young woman, who was violently attacked.

"For seven years I suffered from St. Vitus' Dance," said Mrs. Thomas Edmunds, 38, Bullaunamint-st., Redfern, Sydney. "I had the best advice, but I got no lasting benefit. I had twitches all over my body, in my hands, feet, arms, mouth and eyes. It was pitiable to see me. I couldn't do the smallest thing for myself. I was fed with a spoon, for I couldn't handle a thing. If I tried to dress myself I'd tear my clothes to rags. I was twisting and turning all the time. In my sleep I'd be restless all the night. There was hardly any hair on my head, I'd tear it out in handfuls. I got so bad that I dare not be taken out, my legs would twitch and down I'd fall. My mouth would twitch violently, and I'd make the most awful grimaces. I could only appear in stammers and mumbles. I was painfully thin and seemed to have no blood in my body. I hadn't a scrap of colour in my face or hands. It was pitiable to see me. I couldn't sit still, my shoulders would shrug and my body shake. I was in bed pretty well all the years I was ill. I was just taken out on the veranda on fine days for an airing. Some days I'd have to be strapped down. No one could have suffered worse. I was despairing of Mother spent large sums on doctors and medicines, but I got no better until she tried Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for me. The twitches were less with the second box, and after that improvement continued steadily. My hands got stiffer, and before I was on the fifth box I began to feed myself and dress myself. By the time I started the eighth box I was able to get about the house without fear of falling. Soon after I could go out for a short walk. I began to eat heartily and fill out. My blood got richer and the colour came back to my face. By the time I had finished the ninth box I was a changed girl. Everyone was amazed. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills worked a miracle in my case."

If you are in doubt about your own case, write for hints as to diet, etc., to The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., of Wellington. From that address you can also order by mail the genuine Dr. Williams' Pink Pills—3/- a box, six boxes 16/6, post free.