

# After Dinner Gossip.

## Proposed Lady Curates.

It is said that lady curates might be advantageously employed in parishes to look after the young men. This idea cannot be passed by scoffingly, seeing that we have women doctors, dentists, house agents, etc. No doubt our churches are in want of attraction, and a pretty lady curate in white gown and hood would not only be a fetching sight, but would bring in a good many stray sheep to the fold that now go eye-bling, fishing, poloing, and cricketing on Sunday. And for sick-bed visits the lady curate would be very hard to beat. At all events, she is worth a trial.

## Testing Friendship Wholesale.

A gentleman has tried the following peculiar way of probing the ties of friendship. He sent letters to 24 intimate friends asking for the loan of £1. Thirteen of the two dozen friends did not reply at all; five declined to lend the money, two promised to send it on the next day and did not do it; one sent his "last ten shillings"; and only three sent the full sum asked for. The supplicant and all the "friends" he had written to are well off.

## Where Ladies Smoke 16-inch Cigars.

Cigars sixteen inches in length and five inches in circumference are the size that the ladies of the Philippine Islands prefer to smoke. They are not for an afternoon whiff, but are intended to last for five or six days, being lighted when required, and put out again when the fair smoker is tired of blowing rings.

Of course, the weight of such a cigar is considerable, and to offset this difficulty the end which is inserted in the mouth is filled with a soft fibre of tobacco, so that when the cigar is grasped firmly between the teeth so great an indentation is made that for the remainder of the six days' smoke the huge cigar fits naturally to the mouth, and can be held without any conscious effort.

Even seven-year-olds smoke a roll of tobacco the size of the average cigar used in this country.

If a woman smokes a cigar sixteen inches long, what would a grown man smoke? That is a problem that would naturally have for an answer, a cigar twice as big. But such is not the case. The men are inveterate cigarette smokers, and it is only the women who smoke cigars.

## At a Savings Bank.

The business man who was in a hurry was standing in line at the savings bank, waiting his turn to deposit. There was only one person ahead of him, and he was congratulating himself upon this good luck. The person ahead was a woman, and when the business man arrived she was just opening negotiations with the receiving teller.

"Now, I want to open accounts," she began, "for some little nieces and nephews of mine. It's for a present, you know—confidentially—and I'm only going to put £3 birthday in each bank. Of course that isn't much, but"—Here the teller endeavoured to get down to the business details, but in vain. "If they're real saving, as I want them to be, they'll soon make it more. Lots of rich men started with—"

"Yes, yes, madam," interrupted the teller, in desperation: "of course they did. Now, what are these children's names and ages?"

"Why, there's Fannie, my namesake, she's nine—no, maybe it was eight, her last birthday—What? Oh, her full name? Frances Jane, of course; how stupid of me! And then Johnnie—no, John William, named after an uncle that died—he's six, and just as 'cute as he can be. You wouldn't believe what that child—"

"Yes, I would, madam; but please be as brief as possible and omit everything but business. Are there any more children?"

"Oh, yes; there's the baby, Mildred. She's ten months old, and I thought she seemed pretty young to have a bank-book all to herself, so I'd like to take one for her and her mother together—her mother's only my brother's sister-in-law, but she's just like an own sister to me. What? I can't do that? Well, that's funny; but you fix it according to the rules, of course."

The business man, who had at first glared savagely at the loquacious depositor, now shifted wearily from one leg to the other, and began to show signs of collapse.

The teller succeeded in extracting the necessary information as to the birthplace of the children, and then inquired in whose names the books were to be held in trust for them.

"Will you have it in their mother's name or their father's, or whose?" he asked, shortly.

"Their father's! Mercy sakes!" exclaimed the depositor, energetically. "Why, he's a perfect good-for-nothing scamp, if there ever was one. You couldn't trust him!"

"No, I suppose not," hastened the teller, repenting that unfortunate suggestion. "The mother's, then, I suppose. Her name, age and birthplace, please. Be as quick as you can, madam."

As he finished the entries he turned with a sigh of relief and a look of pity for the business man who had been waiting so long. But the latter had given up.

## Snake in Church.

The snake is intimately associated with theology, and not Christian theology alone; in nearly all religions the serpent has a conspicuous place, and it is strange that the appearance of a snake in the Church of England at Bass, in Australia, the other Sunday should have occasioned so much surprise amongst the congregation and such consternation in the clergyman. The snake made two or three appearances on the platform behind the pulpit without the clergyman being aware of the presence of the enemy, and finally Satan's representative was overcome, not by the eloquence of the pastor, but by a layman armed with a riding whip. Since playing so unpopular a part in bringing about the fall of man, the snake has shown some good taste in avoiding churches, but the action of this snake at Bass is not the only exception to the rule.

## A Doctor and his Fees.

A certain medical man has great faith in clocks, and whenever he enters a fresh patient's house he is always careful to look round and see if there is a timepiece in the room. If so, all well and good, he feels satisfied that he will be paid; if not, the chances of his recovering his fees are very doubtful. This sign, he contends, has invariably proved accurate. Recently he received a visit from a stranger late at night, and was asked to go and see a sick woman some two miles away. It was a wet night, and the doctor debated as to whether he had not better send the case to another practitioner, as he knew nothing of the new patient or her family. Neither could he apply the clock test, and he did not want a journey for nothing. Suddenly a bright idea struck him. Turning to the young man he inquired, "What was the time when you left home?" "Well," was the prompt reply, "it was half-past ten by the kitchen clock, and five minutes later by the one in the sitting-room." This, at any rate, was reassuring, and he decided to go. Imagine his chagrin when, on arrival, he found there was not a clock in the house. The man happened to have heard of the doctor's eccentric-

ty, and so was prepared for the query. Now comes the funny part of the story. After attending the patient for a few days, and bringing her to a state of convalescence, the medical man sent in his bill, and receiving no reply called again, only to find the house empty, and no one could tell him where the people had gone. Since then, his faith in the infallibility of the clock test has been greater than ever.—"Birmingham Post."

## From South Africa.

An exciting incident, in which an officer, by the timely use of his fists, saved himself from a humiliating position, is reported from the Western Transvaal, the hero being Captain H. C. B. Phillips, commanding the 13th (Shropshire) Company, Imperial Yeomanry, with Lord Methuen's force.

Captain Phillips, the ex-English amateur heavy-weight champion boxer, it seems, was going his rounds, visiting his sentries on the outskirts of the camp, when, in an isolated position, he was suddenly confronted by three Boers, two of whom were armed. They made him prisoner, and at once proceeded to divest him in the usual fashion of his personal property, uniform, etc. They had got possession of pretty well everything except his spurs, which they ordered him to remove. He declined, at the same time telling them they must take them themselves, whereupon two stooped down to unfasten the straps, Captain Phillips being covered with the rifle of the third man. No sooner, however, had the two men got into the kneeling position than Captain Phillips, with two well-directed blows, bowled them over, and, seizing the Mauser of one, which had been incautiously laid on the ground, felled the Boer who was covering him with a tremendous blow on the side of the head with the butt-end of the rifle, giving him his quietus, not, however, before he had fired, the bullet passing uncomfortably near to the gallant officer's head. Captain Phillips then turned the tables by securing the two Boers and marching them into camp.

## A Cruel Hoax.

At a certain Melbourne club six men met who were all capitalists, breeders, stock-owners and prominent members of society, and who had all been storekeepers in the good old early fifties on Ballarat or Bendigo. Each, relates "Javelin" in the "Leader," had preserved for half a century a relic of the old canvas store in the shape of something drinkable, and as it transpired that one had kept a bottle of port wine, another a bottle of whisky, another a bottle of brandy, and so on, it was agreed that on a certain day each should bring his half century bottle to the club, and that they would have a connoisseurs' treat amongst themselves. The son of one member of the party was the only invited guest, and by the time they got to the last bottle, which happened to be his father's bottle of brandy, the young fellow was the only one of the party perfectly sober. Probably that was why he enjoyed the joke, as, after his father had with a freshly ordered table napkin himself specially wiped each of the liqueur glasses into which the priceless fluid was cautiously poured, he watched those winking and blinking old swells drawing long breaths, and exclaiming ecstatically: "Ah! By Jove, that's nectar if you like!" Just imagine the feelings of the only six men in Melbourne privileged to drink brandy half a century old! The jolly old Sybarites; no wonder they winked and blinked! Also imagine, if you can, the amusement they were giving to the youngster, who at the old man's office on the previous day had swapped the labels on that old bottle and a new one. Those old humbugs, who flattered themselves that since they ran into money their palates had been aristocratically educated, had been enthusing over a bottle of Boomerang, and the treasured half-century bottle was in the safe as intact as when it stood in the corner of the tent store in which its proprietor had made the money which transformed him into a wool king of later years.

## A Curse Which Was Fulfilled.

The unexpected fulfilment of a healthy, vigorous curse lately occurred in connection with the barque Ashmore. At Lyttelton (N.Z.) some olskins, placed temporarily in shore trucks, went astray, and the raging owner, unable to get satisfaction, stood on the wharf when the boat was leaving and dealt out lurid language to all and sundry, ending with the hope that the man suspected (and quite innocently, it transpires) should fall from aloft, break his neck or tumble into the sea. After a few weeks, while the watch was furling a sail, the man in question, through no apparent cause, fell from the yard, struck the rail, fell overboard, and couldn't be picked up. The owner of those olskins should now have something heavy on his mind.

## Racing Blunders.

We have all heard of the short-sighted starter, who, after calling three times to the trooper to "come back" and "stop trying to get a break," said to the clerk of the course, "Fine that chap in Jimmy Wilson's colours two quid." An equally ludicrous mistake was recently made by a country judge, who had joined in drinking the healths of all the winners on the first day, and had been to the race club dinner in the evening. A very popular local owner's colours are like Mr Carslake's scarlet jacket and black cap, and as the horses flashed past the post in the "cup" race on the second day the fuddled judge roared out, "Hoora! Shove up ole Billy Brown's number, boy, whatever it is—won by a good length! Bravo, Bill!" "Please, sir," whispered the youthful assistant, "Mr Brown ain't got nothink runnin'; the green jacket won by a good neck; that there one as you've give it to is Tom Duke, the clerk of the course!"

## Near It.

A well-known sporting man took a holiday trip to England last year. Recently one of his wife's friends who is thinking of taking a run home herself said, "What boat did Mr — go by? He might give me a useful hint." "Really, the name is on the tip of my tongue," replied the wife, "but I can't remember it. I shall think of it, however, as I am sure that it was one of the Orient line, and they nearly all commence with O." "No, ma," chimed in her seven-year-old daughter, "I remember daddy saying that he went in the Khubarb and came back in the Custard!" That was the nearest she could get to the Oruba and Cuzco, and not a bad attempt, was it?

## SUMMER FAG

WOMEN are the chief sufferers from summer fag. Hard work indoors, lack of fresh air, and home worries, spoil the appetite, impoverish the blood, weaken the system, and bring on that weary, tagged, feeling.

Bile Beans for Biliousness

by stimulating the digestive system, sharpening the appetite, ending constipation, restoring sound sleep, toning-up the liver and kidneys, and purifying the blood, restore strength and vigour to the enervated frame, end anaemia and all weaknesses.

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# BILE BEANS FOR BILIOUSNESS