

To any subject that we here debate. Mr JOSEPH (with a very sly expression on his face): I can corroborate our friend, indeed, and that was why I wished the note to read. For, having heard it, you'd at once admit. There was no shock at all contained in it. However, there's the letter, take it please. (He hands it back to Mr S.) And if the Council on the point agrees, I would suggest that it is only fitting that for the present we adjourn this sitting. Our friend is still excited and upset—Still somewhat damp, I notice with regret. And if we still sit on, I greatly doubt if he could follow what we talked about. Till Thursday then 'tis au revoir I'll say. Now, who is going Mr Seddon's way? Mr SEDDON (gruffy): Thanks, thanks, but I prefer to go alone. Mr JOSEPH: Take my greatcoat to cover up your own. Mr SEDDON (still sulking): No, thanks. I'll call a "growler" in the street. Mr JOSEPH (to all the Premiers): Thursday, remember. And at ten we meet. (Exeunt omnes, and as scene closes Mr SEDDON is observed still dripping as he descends the marble staircase.)

SCENE 4.—Mr SEDDON'S Private Room at the Cecil. The TWO SENTRY'S discovered at the door. To them enter the dripping PREMIER OF NEW ZEALAND.

FIRST SENTRY: Hullo! Here's our Old Man. Look lively, chum! I say, though, what's amiss? He does look grim. No matter. 'Taint for us, of course, to leer him; Now for a good salute; it p'rhaps may cheer him. They present arms in the most demonstrative and offensive manner, finishing up with the noisy grounding of their rifles and a prolonged rattle.

FIRST SENTRY: Well, this is very odd. He takes no notice. And look, he's dripping.

SECOND SENTRY: What a funny go 'tis! 'Tisn't like Dick our efforts to dis-dain.

FIRST SENTRY: I tell you what, chum. Let's "pre-sent" again. They do so, even more demonstratively and noisily than before, and this time Mr SEDDON looks round angrily.

FIRST SENTRY: There, Richard, wasn't that a proper one? We've had some practice—see? Mr SEDDON (testily): Have done! Have done! What is the use of foolery like that? (To FIRST SENTRY): Why don't you get a towel? (To SECOND SENTRY): Take my hat. Where is that Tompkins? (Presses electric bell button). Where is all my suite? Is this the way New Zealand's Boss to treat? (Enter Tompkins, hurriedly followed by a number of other perturbed members of Mr Seddon's household.)

TOMPKINS: Good gracious, Mr Seddon, sir, you're wet! Mr SEDDON: Where is that towel the sentry went to get? (Enter the SENTRY. He proceeds to rub "HONEST RICHARD" down). Enough of that!

TOMPKINS: Can't I do anything? Mr SEDDON: I've been insulted by that dusky King. Are all my people present? TOMPKINS: Every one! Mr SEDDON: Then all shall hear the shameful thing he's done. He describes at some length what happened at the Colonial Office, an account of which has already been given. At the close of his narrative he exclaims: There! 'Tis the treatment I have had to bear. How ought I now to deal with the affair? Come, Tompkins, let me your opinion learn.

TOMPKINS: Demit! your tickets and straight home return. Mr SEDDON: What! Bold Dick Seddon stoop to run away? Never! I'm here, and here I mean to stay. Jee-see! Jee-see! If any one goes back, I would suggest they send away the black. He has insulted me, and ought to go; This reputation, at the least, they owe. But, come! who else a notion can produce? McMUNGO: Hoots-toots, Dick! Have it brought before the House.

TIE O'MILLIGAN: Falth, sorr, you're wrong. Report us in the King! TOMPKINS: Or let the Cabinet take up the thing.

McMUNGO: Write a brow letter to the "Times," me lad!

Mr SEDDON: Upon my word, Mac, that is not so bad.

TIE O'MILLIGAN: But, falth, it is a thing to fight about. Couldn't ye call the dusky blaggard out?

TOMPKINS: Call out a King?

Mr SEDDON: But that's high treason, man! Do keep to common sense, please, if you can.

TOMPKINS: You say that Mr Joseph saw the letter?

Let him, then, take the matter up. — That's better!

Mr SEDDON: The fact to Jo-Jo ought to be conveyed. That he a terrible mistake has made. This should be done at once—that's how I view it—And Mr Chamberlain's the man to do it.

TOMPKINS: Jo-Jo and Joseph should the case discuss.

Mr SEDDON: Just what I think.

OMNES: And so say all of us!

("HONEST DICK" proceeds to dictate a voluminous letter to Mr JOSEPH, which he is still writing when the scene closes.)

SCENE 5.—The Council Room at Downing-street. The Cabinet discovered sitting.

Mr JOSEPH: A most momentous case awaits decision. King Jo-Jo, as you know, with marked derision, Has that portentous bore, Dick Seddon, treated, And now the latter has, in tones most heated, Called upon me to lay the case before you; Therefore, although it's well nigh sure to bore you, I'll read the letter (three woble folio-caps pages) In which he fumes and frets, and rants and rages.

Mr JOSEPH proceeds to carry out his threat, and at the close of his reading, impelled by a seemingly uncontrollable impulse, bursts into song—

Yes, that is the sort of thing Which we have in this great and this free land, To with patience and meekness endure At the hands of our friend from New Zealand. For the scalp of King Jo-Jo he thirsts, And, although 'twill be hard to appease him, Yet for humanity's sake, I suppose, We in some way must manage to please him.

THE MARQUIS: I can guess pretty clearly, I think, What he's sent you that lengthy despatch for— He must know very well in his heart That King Jo-Jo he isn't a match for.

Mr BALFOUR: My good Uncle is certainly right; Mr Seddon's decidedly bulky, But, with Jo-Jo compared, he's a child— And that's why our "Dick" is so sulky!

Mr JOSEPH: Still, we must not New Zealand annoy. Not, at least, while the Premiers are sitting; So what do you all recommend— What course do you think is most fitting?

For King Jo-Jo—depend upon this— When he sent poor old Seddon that letter, Wrote it all with his tongue in his cheek. You may take it from me he knew better.

Mr BALFOUR: It is in doubtless unseemly of me To take sides with a dusky provoked. For his victim I feel not a jot, I am all for King Jo-Jo, the Joker!

THE MARQUIS: 'Twould be foolish to let the two meet, And this is my humble suggestion— Mr Joseph alone should be left To tackle the intricate question. For if he to deal with the case Will but kindly consent to be led on, Why, I'm certain in some way he will "Save the face" of the blustering Seddon!

Mr JOSEPH: Very well! as is always the case. When these difficult problems beset you, It is I, please to recollect that, Who have out of the muddle to get you. So 'tis useless to talk any more, Let us cut this superfluous cackle— You may safely depend upon me, Honest Richard and Jo-Jo to tackle!

(The Council thereupon breaks up, and as the scene closes Mr JOSEPH is heard humming as he exits to the Colonial Office.)

If over there was a "smart" man, I flatter myself I am he! My colleagues may doubt me, But they don't do without me, For they can't hold a candle to me.)

SCENE 6.—The Secretary of State's Room at the Colonial Office. Mr JOSEPH discovered in earnest conversation with Mr BALFOUR. A week has elapsed since the close of Scene 3.

Mr JOSEPH: All you have said points to the same conclusion.

MR BALFOUR: Quite so.

MR JOSEPH: And this time 'tis no mere delusion?

MR BALFOUR: Certainly not. I'd have you understand My Uncle's resignation's close at hand; And that, as I have told you, means, of course, Our compact any day may come in force.



MR JOSEPH: So be it—I'm prepared!

MR BALFOUR: And so am I.

MR JOSEPH: 'Tis well!

MR BALFOUR: But tell me, Joseph, by-the-bye, How did you settle Seddon's bothering case?

That is to say, how did you "save his face"?

MR JOSEPH: It's rather funny.

MR BALFOUR: Let me hear it, pray!

MR JOSEPH: I only learned the end of it to-day. Well, first of all, the next time I saw "Dick" I laid the butter on a little thick— Told him how I lamented, for his sake, That Jo-Jo'd made so silly a mistake. "Must he should not, have known your name," said I. "Was inexcusable I don't deny. Still, as he could, of course, have had no animus, I hope, sir, you will show yourself magnanimous."

MR BALFOUR: And did you say this gravely?

MR JOSEPH: Like a judge. "Come, Mr Seddon, do not bear a grudge!" (Thus I went on.) "Poor Jo-Jo was misled. Why not heap coals of fire upon his head?"

MR BALFOUR: What! at their present price? You asked too much.

MR JOSEPH: The fact is, Richard seemed to like that touch. "Tell me," he answered, "how it's to be done?" And then I knew my victory was won. "Jo-Jo," said I, "by what he wrote to you, Proved that he nothing of your history knew. Then be it yours this ignorance to dissipate—"

Let him in what the Empire knows participate; Tell him about your wonderful career As squatter, labour Member, engineer; Describe your feats in commerce and finance; Let him at you in all your phantasies glance, As banker, sailor, soldier, politician, Law-maker, miner, courier, rhetorician!"

MR BALFOUR: You said all this, my friend, and didn't laugh?

MR JOSEPH: Not for a moment did he think it chaff. Well, not to weary you, before he went I smoothed him down, and he was quite content. "Don't call on Jo-Jo," I advised him, "The too great a compliment in that right way. But send your Memoirs, as I've said before, And let him over your strange history pore."

MR BALFOUR: And did your fish rise quickly to the bait?

MR JOSEPH: He simply gorged it straight away.

MR BALFOUR: First rate!

MR JOSEPH: Our friend said just the same, assuring me He thought my plans as good as good could be. And adding, he at once would start his staff Upon a comprehensive monograph. "Make it quite full!" said I. He yowled he would, As copious and exhaustive as he could.

MR BALFOUR: Yes, that you may be certain it will be; All who know Seddon will in that agree.

MR JOSEPH: And they'd be right.

MR BALFOUR: You seem the end to know?

MR JOSEPH: I got the manuscript two days ago. A monster package—neatly "typed" throughout.

MR BALFOUR: A "weighty" tome I've not the slightest doubt. What happened next?

MR JOSEPH: "How?" (asked our burly friend) "Well, you my Memoirs to King Jo-Jo send."

MR BALFOUR: Of course he would not hear of "Parcel Post"?

MR JOSEPH: When I suggested it he screamed almost. "Rather than that," he cried, "If all else fails, Myself I'll take them to the Prince of Wales (Who saw a lot of me in other lands), That he may place them in King Jo-Jo's hands."

Alarmed at this—For Seddon's just the man To carry through that sort of bump-tious plan—I smoothed him down. "Leave it to me," said I; "I'll hit upon a method by-and-bye; Some way quite worthy you may be assured Of that great reputation you've secured."

MR BALFOUR: And thus you pacified him?

MR JOSEPH: Yes, at length By putting forth my diplomatic strength. So that at last I sent him off serene, Thinking that p'rhaps the Prince might intervene, And would, in that case, read the Memoirs through Before he passed them further.

