

Miss Ogg—Miss Meadows——” The voice of Mrs. Sockitt trailed off as she glanced round the table and murmured various names.

Young Mr. Batchelor bowed, and there ensued the usual awkward silence that invariably follows such an introduction. In a sense young Mr. Batchelor appeared to be taking stock of his fellow-boarders, not in any quizzical sense, but rather because he was of that age that is keenly alive to everything and everyone about it. Rutherglen, leaning forward, and glancing along the line of faces till his eyes met those of the new-comer, challenged him :

“ Not in my profession by any chance, I take it ? ”

“ The stage ? ” Mr. Batchelor's eyes had narrowed, and he might almost have been said to be taking the mental measure of the other man.

“ Exactly. That's the sort of thing I do for a living.” The tone was contemptuous, but the dignity of the man was severely upheld.

“ Nothing half so exciting,” said young Mr. Batchelor, with a momentary flash of his teeth. “ I'm by way of beginning to be a medico. Kill or cure—with a faint sort of hope that there may be more of cure than kill. You amuse people, Mr. Rutherglen ; I'm out to patch 'em up.”

“ As a matter of fact,” murmured Mrs. Sockitt in her smothered voice, “ we get most of the professions, one way or another, here.”

Mrs. Ogg, casting about for something that should make some sort of light conversation, happened to notice that vacant chair at the most uncomfortable corner of the table, and remarked upon it. “ Mr. Hicks is late to-night,” she said.

“ Poor old chap—he's generally late— isn't he ? ”