

"But I thought Mr. Pootle had at first," laughed Harry.

"Not he. There's not an ounce of harm in him. He was just trying all he knew—according to his lights—to make things go and set every one at their ease."

"He certainly worked hard," agreed Mrs. McMucker. "Poor Mrs. Mortimer!"

"It was the King's birthday: a day for the people," went on the Commandant. "Why should we expect them to spend about the only treat we give them in saying 'prunes and prisms'? The Mortimers can come here on any afternoon."

"Let me see," said Mrs. McMucker tapping her forehead vigorously. "Didn't you say something about Ethel and her uncle coming to-day, Harry?"

"I did," assented Harry. "At about half-past five."

"So you did," said Mrs. McMucker, hiding a smile. "How stupid of me. What did Ethel say in her letter?"

"Why, I've read it to you about six times already."

"Well, read it again."

"Yes, do. I haven't heard it you know," urged the Commandant.

Husband and wife smiled at each other over their tea-cups.

"She says," said Harry reading, "that she is long—"