

the hundred-and-fifty-dollar-a-week conductor of "The Electric Chair," the paper's humorous column, came in to see what was up. Bob's "contrijs" had been generous that morning, and he was in unusually good humour for a humourist.

"What's the matter, Stock," he inquired genially, "Got a cold? Or has George Moore sent in a new novel?"

Stockton looked up sadly from the proofs he was correcting. How could he confess his paltry problem to this debonair creature who wore life lightly, like a flower, and played at literature as he played tennis, with swerve and speed? Bolles was a bachelor, the author of a successful comedy, and a member of the smart literary club which was over the reviewer's horizon, although in the great ocean of letters the humourist was no more than a surf bather. Stockton shook his head. No one but a married man and an unsuccessful author could understand his trouble.

"A touch of asthma," he fibbed shyly. "I always have it at this time of year."

"Come and have some lunch," said the other. "We'll go up to the club and have some ale. That'll put you on your feet."

"Thanks, ever so much," said Stockton, "but I can't do it to-day. Got to make up my page. I tell you what, though— —"