

Men We Meet

Number Three in a Series of Six Benevolent Satires

THE IDEAL HUSBAND—By KEBLE HOWARD

YOU meet him, first of all, on the morning train. You can tell at a glance that he is married. At the second glance you would say that he was happily married. A third glance would convince you that his wife was happily married. And, at the fourth glance, you would be sure that here was the ideal husband.

You look, first of all, at his eyes. They are clear, and steady, and set well apart. He has a ruddy complexion, a brown moustache, and a tendency to plumpness. His clothes fit him. His coat sits easily on his sturdy shoulders, and his boots do not pinch. He is evidently on good terms with his tailor, his bootmaker, and his hatter. He has paid for his clothes.

He carries an umbrella, which is neatly rolled. This he places in the rack, and you are quite sure that he will not forget it. He has a folded copy of the *Daily Telegraph* in his hand. He has read the *Daily Mail* at breakfast, so he leaves it at home for his wife and daughters to enjoy. He opens his *Telegraph* in the centre, and reads the chief item of news all through and then the leader on it. Whatever happens that day, he will be "up" in the news of the day, and prepared with a definite opinion—the *Telegraph's* opinion—on it.

HE knows all the men in the carriage, and exchanges nods and kindly greetings with them. This one is a wit; he laughs with him. That one is very serious; he frowns with him over the latest move of the Government. Another one has a child ill at home; he makes a gentle enquiry after the child.

As the train gathers speed, and before he opens his *Telegraph*, he fills his pipe. First of all it must be knocked out, very carefully, against his boot. Then out comes the embroidered pouch, filled with the favourite brand of tobacco, and the pipe is carefully packed. Last of all he produces the wooden box of safety matches that stamps the family man as surely as the neatly folded umbrella, and the brown-paper parcels at night.

Whilst he reads and smokes—not quickly, but slowly and healthfully—you picture his home. You can see it quite clearly, standing back a little from the quiet road, with the neat front garden, and the neat curtains, and the clean steps, and the well-polished knocker, and the one palm in the dining-room window, and the occasional table, loaded with little knick-knacks, in the drawing-room window.

You can see inside as well—the dining-room, with its substantial table in the centre (a smaller palm on that), and the substantial sideboard, and the six quite good chairs, and the steel fender, and the marble mantelpiece, and the portraits of his father and mother, and her father and mother, and a water-colour by that clever Doris, the second daughter.

You can see the drawing-room, with the small table loaded with knick-knacks in the window, and the chintz-covered Chesterfield, and the three or four easy chairs that are not really so very easy, and the three nicely-framed reproductions of well-known pictures (not too classical), and the brass fender, and the brass fire-irons, and the piano, and the Canterbury music-stand, and a nice photograph of Aunt Elsie, and an equally good photograph of Uncle Fred.

And so you wander into the tidy kitchen, and the jolly little garden (not an inch wasted here), and you go upstairs and inspect the best bed-room, and the girls' room, and the spare room, and Tom's little den. You do not glance into the servant's room; that is the one mysterious spot in every house.

BY this time, the ideal husband has reached his office, changed his coat for a rather shabbier one, made himself a pair of neat white paper cuffs to protect his real cuffs, put his umbrella in the usual corner, his hat on the usual peg, and settled down to work. He works neither hurriedly nor lazily. He has no financial interest in the business apart from his salary, but he will not, on that account, scamp his work. He takes a pride in his books, a pride in his letters, a pride even in the way he addresses his envelopes.

His employers know him for a thoroughly reliable man. Not brilliant, perhaps, rather lacking

in initiative, certainly lacking in fire, but extremely trustworthy and reliable. They know that he does not chatter outside about office secrets, partly because he never chatters, and partly because he does not know many of the secrets. He will never decamp with a large or small lump of cash. He will never be rude to a client, or turn up late in the morning, or incite rebellion among the other clerks. They are prepared to keep him in their employ until he wishes to retire or is compelled to do so by old age.

When the luncheon-hour arrives, he changes his coat, gets his hat, takes his *Telegraph*—he has still to read the lighter features of that wonderful pennyworth—and betakes him to his accustomed restaurant. Here, if fortune favours him, he sits in his usual corner, and he knows pretty well before he looks at the card what there will be to eat and what he will order. A cut off the joint, two vegetables, cheese, and butter. If there is a very tempting sweet, such as roly-poly jam pudding, he may yield and have three-penn'orth. (The amount of roly-poly jam pudding that is consumed daily in the city of London by business men of all denominations would astonish the housewives of England into a fit.)

Then comes a cup of coffee, half-a-pipe, and perhaps, if a friend is handy, a game of dominoes in the room upstairs. Back to the office five minutes before his hour is up, and at work again on the tick.

WE next meet the ideal husband on his way home.

He has finished with the *Telegraph*, and buys an evening paper—one with good "fashions" preferred, for that gives pleasure at home. He has two or three little parcels under his arm, especially towards the end of the week. These he places in the rack, together with his umbrella, and he will not forget any of them. He does not play cards in the train—he has seen too many fellows led into bad habits through that simple game of bridge in the train—but he likes his pipe, and his evening paper, and the consciousness of duty done, and the pleasant welcome that is awaiting him.

Balking the German People

A Timely Comment on the German Constitution

By FRITZ HENSCHEL

ON December 4th, the German Reichstag voted with an overwhelming majority to manifest their want of confidence in the Imperial Chancellor, Doctor von Bethmann-Hollweg, and the course he had taken in the recent military affair in Alsace-Lorraine. A week after, the Chancellor held his annual speech in Parliament on foreign affairs, without mentioning with one word the vote this same Parliament had taken against him some days before. It was only after the leader of the Social Democratic party had risen, and had reminded the Chancellor of this vote, that Bethmann-Hollweg referred to it, saying that he did not think of resigning his office on the vote mentioned, that the Parliament had no right at all to ask him for a justification, and that he is responsible to his Imperial Master only. Moreover—remembering the old proverb: the best way of defence is the attack—he held a strong tirade against the Social Democratic party, accusing them for aiming at altering the Constitution by making the ministers responsible to the House.

And—most surprising—after his speech he has the applause of the majority of the House. For people who have grown up in a model land of parliamentary government, such as England and Canada, it is hard to understand these affairs, and we have to go back to the time when Bismarck created the Empire and its Constitution, if we want to understand them.

There are three factors in the Constitution: The Emperor, the Federal Council—Bundesrat—and the Parliament—Reichstag.

The Emperor represents the Empire internationally; he can declare war, if defensive, and make peace; he can enter into treaties with other nations

So we follow him to the neat house in the quiet street, and we go in with him, and we hear him call for his wife. He kisses her before he does anything else, and then she takes the parcels, and finds that he has executed all her commissions without making a single mistake. If there is still a little daylight, he slips into a very old coat, and tidies up the already very tidy little garden. The man next door is doing the same, and they exchange remarks over the wall, and sympathize with each other about the weather.

Then comes the evening meal, with the chatter of the girls, and the news of the home-day. The ideal husband, being also an ideal father, is interested to hear all that the girls and Tom have to say. He does not snub them, or gruffly tell them to be seen and not heard, but laughs at their little jokes, advises them, shows himself a real good pal.

After the evening meal, he may read a book, or he may play draughts or chess with his wife or one of the children, or they may have a round game of cards (nuts for counters), or they may go to a local entertainment, or they may have "friends in," or they may go to the house of a friend. Whatever happens, father is in it, and enjoying it, and helping to make the time pass happily for everybody.

Saturdays and Sundays are his favourite days. On Saturday afternoons he goes on some expedition with his wife, now to visit a relative, now to a matinee, now to a concert, now for a long walk. Saturday evening is always a jolly time, and it is then, if fortune is kind, that the girls persuade father to sing, in his nice baritone voice, extracts from the operas of the late Gilbert and Sullivan. Mother likes to hear him, too, and he does it as much to please her and the children as himself.

Being by this time in a position of importance in his firm, he takes his holiday in July, August, or September. He is passionately fond of the country, but his wife and the children prefer the seaside. They have a fortnight by the sea, therefore, and he has a week in the country with a friend, or at a small inn. During this week he indulges to the full the overweening passion of his life—fishing.

The ideal husband insures against everything—fire, burglars, sickness, accidents, death. He saves, too, and he glows with the thought that the hat will not have to be passed round for his widow and children. The one worry of his life is the income-tax, which he feels to be unjust and very hard on the professional middle-classes. Still, his office returns the amount of his salary quite correctly to the Inland Revenue Department, and that saves him many a twinge of conscience.

He is, in all, a good fellow, a good citizen, a good patriot, and the backbone of the country.

and appoint, as well as receive, ambassadors, and last, but not least, he is the absolute commander of the German army and navy in times of war. Of course it is not probable that the Emperor would ever take charge of the General Staff in time of war, as he cannot consider himself an expert on tactics, and he would have to nominate one of his generals as chief of the General Staff.

The Federal Council represents the individual Confederate States, the Chancellor of the Empire being its president. There is no appeal against the decisions of the Bundesrat, as there is against those of the Canadian Senate, by making it an issue for the election.

And the Bundesrat is in no way responsible to anybody, the individual member being accountable only to his own particular sovereign.

The Reichstag represents the nation, or, as often is said, misrepresents the nation. Originally every electorate had about 120,000 inhabitants, but after the enormous industrial development of the Empire, there are urban electorates with more than 600,000 inhabitants, and rural ones with less than 70,000. Berlin, for instance, is divided in only six electorates, although it ought to have about 20 representatives, according to its present number of inhabitants. The left parties are aiming at an alteration of this state of affairs already a long time, but there must be a two-thirds majority in the House for a change like that, and as the agrarian party is strongly opposed to it, there can hardly be expected any alteration in the near future.

The Reichstag has no initiative whatever. The measures framed up by the Government and sanctioned by the Bundesrat are submitted to the Reichstag for approval. The Parliament is not