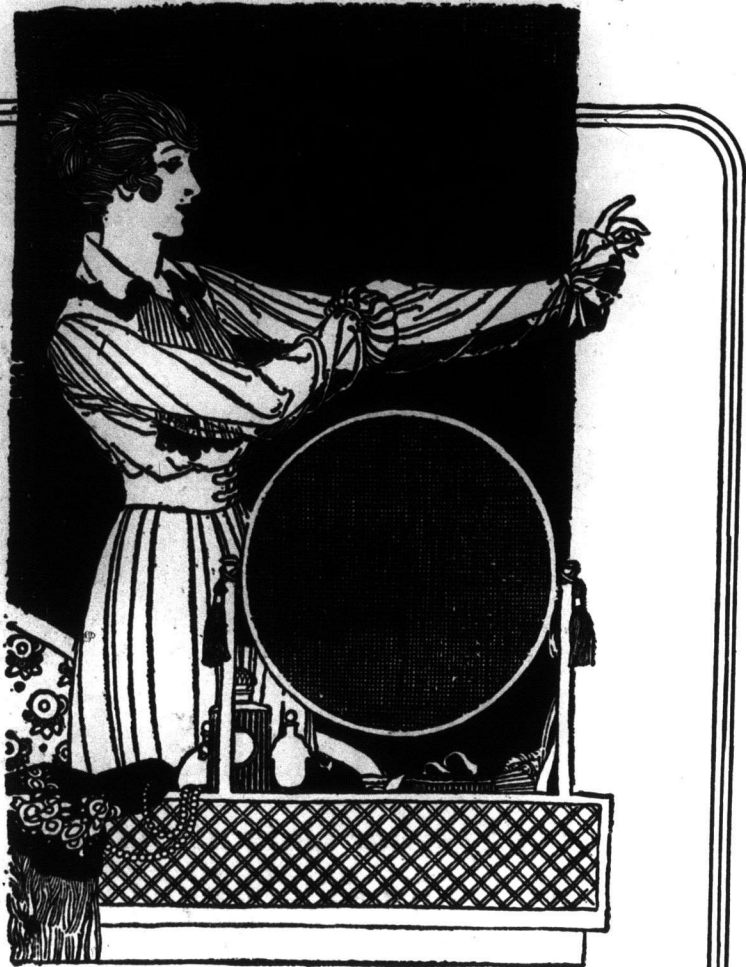




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missionary fresh from the benighted heathen of Greenland's Icy Mountains, Mr. Emerson paused. He ran his eyes slowly down one side of the long banquet-board and back up the other side. Old Ben Groat, with one hand behind his best ear, was leaning forward as far as he could get without falling completely over into stout Mrs. Larcombe's lap; old Jerry Rawlins, with his mouth so wide open that his lower "goombs" were visible, was peering earnestly; everybody else seemed equally bent on obeying the Scriptural injunction concerning those that had ears to hear. With a thrill of gratification, Mr. Emerson cleared his throat.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he resumed, "I went up to the Premier and I said, 'E. B.,' I said, 'this is a bad storm.' He turned to me and, putting his hand on my shoulder, he said, 'Emer, you're right as usual. It is a bad storm—a very bad storm. In fact, Emer, my boy,' he said to me, 'now that you speak of it, I may say, with all due regard for truth and precedent, it's the very worst storm I've seen in thirty years.'"

"I saw, ladies and gentlemen, that we were indeed stuck and would not be able to reach our destination for that night's meeting. I pointed this out to the Premier and succeeded in convincing him that I was right. We had telegraph apparatus on board, and I ordered the train-crew to cut the wire and put us in touch with the operator at the next station. In that way I got word through that we were stuck and knew that they would send a snow-plow to dig us out as soon as possible.

"I then rang the bell for the steward, 'Jepson,' I said, 'bring us some cigars.' 'Would you like the Havanas or the Domestics, sir?' said Jepson to me. And, knowing the Premier would leave the choice to me, having at all times great confidence in my judgment and discretion, 'Bring us the Havanas, Jepson,' I ordered. And when he had obeyed my instructions, we lit our cigars and played dominoes, the Premier and me."

Commenting in the Bugle afterwards, Editor Bill said it was a "masterly oration," a verdict with which everybody agreed. In fact, the whole affair, from "alpha to omega," was a glowing tribute to their fellow-townsmen, and equalled only by the enthusiastic send-off which marked Mr. Ashberry Emerson's departure from their midst. For, pleasant though it be thus to renew the ties of home and fireside, a politician perforce must meet the incessant demands entailed by virtue of his position as a public servant; so said Mr. Emerson. And when he had fixed up his mother's little place till it was cozy and pretty as could be; when he had opened an account for her at the local bank; when he had given a subscription to the Temperance League, had stuffed a ten-dollar bill into old Jerry Rawlins's pocket to pay for the cabbages stolen in the wicked days of yore, and had paid for the Bugle several years in advance—when he had done these things and several more, Mr. Emerson packed his trunk.

The Mayor and Councilmen, who had consulted him on several matters of civic importance such as drains, etc., showed their gratitude for the expert advice thus cheaply acquired, by hiring the Tiverton Brass Band of six separate and distinct pieces to escort the Secretary to the station, and the whole town turned out to say good-by.

A great day it was for Mr. Ashberry Emerson. A great day was it for poor Sarah Ann, who wore her new dress and showed her shiny ring to wee Johnny Bowser and other small creatures, filling them with unholy envy and admiration. But it was the greatest day of all for old Mrs. Emerson, whose cheeks were flushed a wild-rose pink with excitement, and whose eyes shone with tears of love and pride in her boy.

The train was almost on time for once, and the short interval before it steamed in was one of the liveliest the little wooden station had ever experienced. Mayor Pratt, Councilman Hendricks, and all the other councilmen and officials seized the opportunity for making brief speeches. Editor Bill Bassett flitted here, there, and everywhere, his note-book in constant use. The gay ribbons of Miss Pratt and Miss Hendricks fluttered in the breeze, and their hearts went pit-a-pat every time Mr. Emerson smiled upon them, which was often. Old Jerry Rawlins, who had been fidgeting about in an anxious attempt to find somebody to talk to, finally discovered an audience in the palsied person of

old Ben Groat, who was promptly driven into a corner and there buttonholed.

"Aye tell ye, Ben, Aye knowed 'm ash shoon: 'sh Aye sot may aye on 'im! An' he shaysh to me, 'Jerry,' he shaysh, 'Aye wanter talk to ye an' nobuddy elshe,' he shaysh. 'Aye wanter show ye m' noo clo'es,' he shaysh, 'fer they be made o' shilk,' he shaysh. An' Aye shaysh to him—"

Far down the track a whistle blew and smoke was visible. At once the good-byes began. Mr. Emerson shook hands with them all, and if he shook hands with some of them more than once it was for good measure. He kissed his sister, Sarah Ann, who burst into tears. Then, last of all, he went to his little old mother, fondly pinched her cheeks and kissed her several times before them all, vowing that he would be back again just as soon as he could.

In rattled the train and bumped to a squeaky stop. The conductor swung briskly to the platform with a warning "Bo—ard!"—for even the pokey local did not stop at Tiverton longer than was imperative. "Play!" shouted the leader wildly, and the Tiverton Brass Band, standing in a little circle, blew till their six faces went quite red. Thus to the strains of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" did Mr. Ashberry Emerson give his old mother one last big hug and mount the back step of the back car.

As the train pulled leisurely away, a great cheer broke from the assembled citizens of Tiverton—a cheer in which even Bob Applegate and Hen Jenkins joined heartily, despite the fact that their respective girls had not looked at them for two whole weeks.

And Mr. Emerson remained on the rear platform, waving his handkerchief—remained there until the bit of white that fluttered in the uplifted hand of his proud little old mother was utterly lost in the shimmer of distance.

The Premier's carriage, glittering in the sunlight, was standing before the Parliament Buildings. The Premier himself, complacently stroking his mustache, came down the steps.

"Ah!" he said, glancing up at the man who held the reins. "Back again, I see."

"Yes, sir. Just got in this morning, sir, in time to drive up."

"Very good. Take me down to the bank. Tell cook I'll be bringing a couple of the directors out to dinner. And, by the way, my man, overhaul that harness for the sorrel team; it hasn't been cleaned since you left." He paused with one foot on the carriage-step. "Er—had a good time, Thomas?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" grinned Mr. Emerson. "The time of my life, sir! Thank you, sir."

He Obeyed Instructions

The wit of a sharp retort often makes the reader forget its impertinence. Such a rebuke was that which Sir W. S. Gilbert administered to an overbearing man at a dinner-party.

After the dinner, Gilbert was standing in the hall, waiting for a friend to join him, when a pompous and somewhat near-sighted gentleman, mistaking him for one of the servants, exclaimed:

"Call me a cab!"

Gilbert looked the stranger up and down; then he observed, quietly, "You're a four-wheeler."

"What do you mean, sir?" spluttered the other. "How dare you, sir?"

"Well," Gilbert retorted, "you asked me to call you a cab—and I couldn't call you 'hansom.'"

Thick and Thin

During his visit to the United States, Mr. Arnold Bennett told an amusing story about the cockney accent that prevails in parts of London. The Boston Journal repeats the tale.

"The cockney accent," said Bennett, "turns 'make haste' into 'mike iste'; and 'th' it turns into 'v' or 'f.' Thus, in cockney, 'father' is pronounced 'faver,' and 'thistle,' 'fistle.'"

"A little boy, who always spoke the broadest cockney, was sent by his mother to buy some fish."

"'Gimme a haddie,' he said to the fishmonger."

"'Finnan?' the dealer asked."

"At this the boy laughed knowingly, with the air of one determined not to be cheated."

"'Fin 'un?' he said. 'No, not likely. Fick 'un!'"