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A Queer Story.

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“Let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee.”

It was a peaceful Government office in a backwater of Whitehall. At its head was that eminent civil servant, Alwyn Champion. He was a C.B. and drew two thousand a year, so, perhaps, it is best to describe him as a very eminent and distinguished civil servant. He had, of course, two months' leave in the year, which he usually, under cover of official inquiries—generally conducted in the immediate neighbourhood of golf links—stretched into three. Next to him came Latters. Latters had £1,200, a year, and collected bric-à-brac. He complained bitterly that this confinement to the office and his miserable eight weeks' holiday prevented him from making any progress with his collection. Then in order came the three principal clerks—Bates, Saxelby, and Morris—all distinguished Oxford men, who drew their miserable pittance of £800 a year almost under protest. Still, they did draw it, and waited impatiently till the Government should recognise more fully the distinction of their University careers. Below them came a small corps of first-class clerks, who starved on miserable pittance of £600 a year, and waited anxiously for the principal clerks to be called up higher.

The office machine worked very smoothly. That was due entirely to Mr. Latters. He knew the names of all the clerks, whilst the chief was weak on names. In fact, during Lat-

ters' absence on holiday, Mr. Champion had called in the most conscientious and hardworking clerk in the office and warned him that if he continued in his recklessly idle ways his position would be gravely imperilled. The next moment he highly commended the office scapegrace, and assured him that he would bear him in mind for promotion when opportunity came. No one grumbled at this little weakness of the chief's. In the first place a C.B. can do nothing wrong—that is, officially. And in the second place the hard-working clerk felt pretty sure that when the time came for promotions to be made it was as certain as anything could be in this world that the chief would mix up the names again. So Mr. Champion's praises were accepted without elation, and his rebukes without dejection.

However, one morning, after a little break at Easter, the head messenger waited on each of the three principal clerks. “Mr. Champion, gentlemen, desires to see you all in his room.”

This was unprecedented, except when Mr. Latters was away on his holidays.

The three arrived at the private room of the great man together, wondering what was the reason for the summons.

“Good morning, Mr. Saxelby,” said the chief, addressing Morris. “Good morning, Mr. Morris,” salut-