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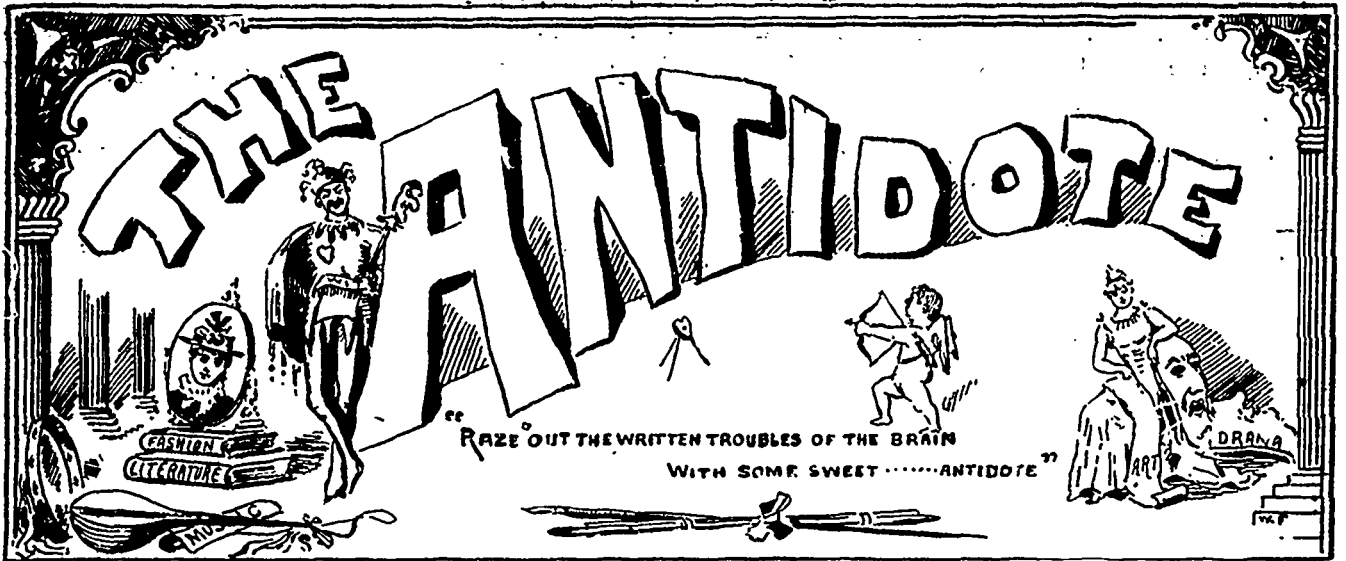
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## ON TALKING SHOP.

It is very wrong to talk shop. This is one of Society's most venerated precepts, even if it is one of the least obeyed. Not to know it, is not to know the rudimentary duty toward our neighbor, the duty of social religion; and to enforce it, as occasion may require, of course must be the duty of every self-respecting member of society, because if you fall among shop-talkers, whose shop is not the same kind as yours, you may get thrown into the back-ground. The predicament is serious.

It is not only that you may be prevented from taking part in a conversation with your accustomed cleverness, but that you may have to hold your tongue altogether; and in spite of so many compliments paid to silence by the many wise people who have wished to do all the talking themselves, people are apt to assume that when a man says nothing in company, it is because he can find nothing to say; and at any rate, no one likes to play the part of the mummy at the Egyptian banquet, to be the blank guest, whose silence conveys a protest against the whole proceedings, and concerning whom the other guests must needs feel that the best they can do for him, is to let him alone. He who finds himself in such a pass, will no more doubt that it is a vice to talk shop, than he would doubt that it is a vice not to pay one's debts, if somebody else persevered in owing him an inconveniently large sum of money.

And yet there is something to be said on behalf of shop. The rule of society no doubt is, that we should talk of what we do not know, rather than of what we do know. Still there are many men, and doubtless women also, who are absolutely unable to obey the rule—except negatively—by not talking of anything at all. Women who mix much with the world of society, readily acquire the knack of talking companionably, of what they know nothing about. A great many women indeed, seem less to acquire it than to have it as a birthright, as the poet is born, not made. Obedience to the rule sets upon them as early and as fitly as the fur-

belows and gauzes in which a man would find himself like a fly in a cobweb.

Therefore women, even women with specialties, very rarely talk shop, and talk part under the fear of those fatal terms, "blue," "gushing," "strong-minded," and partly from a sort of mental prudery—one which has its good side, but also its bad—which objects as it were to the real woman being too accurately scanned, they more usually shrink from any discussion of subjects in which they feel a close interest. But there is a large reckoning of men who never arrive at being able to talk on subjects, about which they have neither information nor concern; and the question is, whether in their case it is not worth while to relax the stringency of the rule.

Suppose a man's shop so engrosses him, that it really is the only thing he knows or cares about. He is not uneducated, perhaps not even narrow-minded, but his intellect is not of the much-embracing order, and his profession or his purpose has so absorbed his intellectual sympathies, that just as if he were some great artist, all he sees and learns gets somehow, dove-tailed or mixed up, in the one theme of his life. Whenever circumstances have led to a man's occupying his time and his thoughts, in one especial manner, with any sort of zeal, he will unconsciously acquire such a readiness in detecting everything that has the remotest affinity for his paramount topic, that it can never be quite out of his memory. There will always be the temptation to get back to it. Set him down where you will, some byway brings him back to the familiar road. Cleverness will not place him out of risk. Indeed the cleverer he is, the more likely he is to become, to this extent, the slave of his shop.

This of course is not meant of the man of genius, the many-sided man, but of the busy practical man of ordinary life. Say that he is of more than average intellect, that he has talent, and still better, a wise and honest love for his science, his art, or whatever may be the name of his work, he will be at a disadvantage, as compared with the man who, failing either in the ability or in the energy, necessary for concentration, has been enabled to learn a little plausible ignorance on a good many topics of general interest. Now such concentration may be damaging to the balance of his mind, and without doubt the concentration is detrimental to him as a conversationalist, lessening the area, over which his tongue can travel. But since the man is so badly off, that there is only class of

subjects on which he can enter readily, may there not be something gained for his associates, as well as for himself, in letting him go his own way?

If one found oneself in the company of the philosopher who has concentrated his life on the dative case, it might be better to put him to discourse on that subject, than to elicit his dullness on the weather. One might not succeed in achieving even a temporary sympathy with his fervor, but one would have at least have learned something about the dative case; and a man must be very stupid indeed, or else his listener must be very stupid, if he can talk freely and earnestly on a subject which thoroughly interests him, without the listener's becoming interested, if not in the subject, at least in the interest it has for its exponent. Nor need the listener's interest be lessened, surely if he is hearing several men, skilled and eager in some special pursuit, talking with each other, instead of only one such man talking with him.

Thus there are exceptions to every rule—even in society.

## READINGS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE.

Readings, public and private, are becoming quite fashionable again. Nym Crinkle declares that there are at least 5,000 girls in New York who have "the mark of elocution on their snowy brows." The female reader as a rule, he says, "has a book in her hand, but does not refer to it. Not to have a book would be to recite, and there is a broad line between a reciter and a reader. One is supposed to be intellectual, the other dramatic. One is literary, the other stagy. One sticks to poetry, the other strikes off a little on pantomime. As a rule husbands will put up with moderate reciters, but they will not tolerate readers. Besides the reader always has you at a disadvantage so long as she has the book in her hand. She can read the whole of Manfred or Coriolanus, and not break down, but the reciter, thank heaven, can't. There is a wise provision of nature which ordains that memory shall not be equal to misery." Young ladies, and those not so young who give readings from Faust and Childe Harold and Robert Browning are indifferent to the sufferings of the opposite sex. But after the first hour the male begins to groan. The second hour makes him hate his species. One reader in Philadelphia recently gave her audience 200 pages at one sitting, and a morning paper said that she was better acquainted with her author than her victims. We have

not heard of such torture as that yet in Montreal. It is the fashion among the followers of the favorite reader to either feel, or assume to feel, deep and even tragic interest in the poems selected. The brow is fixed, a solemnity of depth or dulness or vacuity overspreads the countenance, and this is only relieved at intervals where the reader makes a pause, and the intellectual people present exchange glances or nods of appreciation and delight. When the average reader gives the following, for instance, from Robert Browning's Master Hagues of Saxe-Gotha, no one in the audience would admit for an instant that he or she did not understand the meaning of the words, or would fail to certify that it was delightful:

"One dissertates, he is canild;  
Two must discept—has distinguished;  
Three helps the couple if ever yet man did;  
Four protests; five makes a dart at the thing wished;  
Back to one, goes the case bandied."

There are a number of people mentioned by Dickens who are given to readings and recitations and who deluged various characters of his novels, among them the immortal Mr. Pickwick. Mrs. Leo Hunter was one who read her own poems, which she had originally published in the Ladies Magazine and signed with an L and eight stars. Her ode to an expiring frog was one which used to create an immense sensation with her audiences. Two stanzas are worth quoting here:

"Can I view thee panting, lying  
On thy stomach without sighing,  
On a log,  
Expiring frog?"

When this was first repeated to Mr. Pickwick, that gentleman exclaimed with great enthusiasm: "Beautiful." "It is fine," said Mr. Leo Hunter, "it is so simple." "Very," said Mr. Pickwick. "The next verse," said Mr. Hunter, "is still more touching. Shall I read it?" "If you please," said Mr. Pickwick. "It runs thus," said the speaker more gravely:

"Say, have friends in shape of boys,  
With wild halloo and brutal noise  
Hunted thee from marshy joys,  
With a dog  
Expiring frog?"

"It is finely expressed," said Mr. Pickwick.

"All point, sir, all point," returned Mr. Leo Hunter, "and Mrs. Leo can do it justice."

There are few people, professionals or otherwise, who read well; few indeed who will not weary the patience of an audience in an hour. When all is said and done, however, the fact that our people are making efforts to familiarize themselves with the best poets is a



AN IMPRESSIONIST AT WORK.

hopeful sign and indicates that culture will not be permitted to lag behind our material progress. For while we are being bored, we are imperceptibly perhaps, but none the less positively, cultivating a better and higher taste which in the end will find delight in what we may now only tolerate.

See Missing Word Offer. this issue

Society Events, Past and Present.

"There was a sound of revelry last Monday at the St. George's Club house, Cote St. Antoine. The company numbered about 250, who danced merrily to the strains of Gruenwalds' orchestra, which played an excellent selection of dance music. The large ball-room was utilized for dancing, whilst the Octagon was furnished as a charming drawing-room for sitters out. There were many handsome dresses among the fair ones, white being predominant, and large colored sleeves quite de rigueur. Dancing men mustered in large numbers.

Tuesday evening Madame Desjardin, had a very pleasant surprise party.

Madame Amos gave a charming dance for young people on Wednesday.

Mrs. B. J. Coghlin of Sherbrooke street gave an afternoon reception at her house on Thursday. There was a large attendance. A novel feature was the tastefully arranged dining-room, with subdued lights, and six young ladies to serve refreshments. The guests were received in the upper drawing-room by the hostess and her daughter, both looked exceedingly well. The ex-Mayoress was present and looked charming in a rich gown of bronze velvet trimmed with mink fur.

The bal poudre, which is becoming an institution given by Mrs. Wolferston Thomas of Llangorae House, last evening, was a pronounced success, a great number of guests were present, and dancing was kept up with zest. The dresses worn were exceedingly handsome, and the spectacle presented in the ball-room when dancing was in progress was one of great beauty.

Next week promises to be unusually gay.

Mrs. George Drummond, of Sherbrooke street will give a large dance on Monday evening.

The M. A. A. A. are having a dance the same evening. Tuesday night, bal masque at Mrs. George Drummond's, the scene will be a brilliant one!

Mrs. Van Horne will give a dance for young people on the 8th, over two hundred invitations have been accepted.

A smart ball is expected at the Windsor Hotel on Wednesday next.

The second of the series of successful balls given by the Hunt Club takes place on Thursday the 9th.

Mrs. Albert D. Nelson will give a dancing party on February 13th. 170 invitations have been issued, a good time is expected, with so genial a host and hostess as Mr. and Mrs. Nelson. (The dance is given for their son, Mr. Warren Nelson.

The wits of hostesses are becoming more strained than ever in finding gentlemen capable of dancing to attend their parties. Ladies, nimble and graceful, are in abundance, but on the part of men the art of dancing seems to be a vanishing accomplishment.

Crinoline is gradually coming in again. She re-enters to the air of "Steel So Gently O'er Me Stealing."

**THE FASHIONS.**

A friend writes from Paris that mauve is a very favorite color for evening gowns among the Parisian elegantes, and it is also to be seen in cloth promenade gowns. The royal purple still holds its sway, and violets are the flowers par excellence. Knots of them are worn at the throat, and a cluster clasped with a jewelled brooch nestles in the jaunty velvet toque bordered with sable tails.

The proper caper for adjusting ribbon belts is to fasten them on the left side with stiff, upstanding bows. If you use a buckle, place it diagonally.

Gray, needless to say, is always a favorite color, but it will be more so than ever this year. It is never unbecoming, and is always neat.

Japanese embroidered silk table covers are seen in white, pale green, yellow and pink.

Black and green, navy blue and tobacco are the four favored shades for winter dresses.

The Langtry coiffure, the low, hose coil on the nape of the neck, has returned, and is again favored by those who want to appear real chic.

In our illustration this week we give a matinee gown. Corselet skirt in fawn-coloured corduroy, edged with a jet galon; a broad band in brown velvet is carried along the shaped opening in front, and is set off in the centre with a huge bow; yoke, and long close-fitting sleeves in gimp of Eastern tints over pink silk; sleeves goffered on the shoulders, and finished off with flutings at the elbow. Black velvet hat, embellished with a fringe and a cluster of shaded feather tips; loops of corded ribbon.



*From Lonaon Queen.*

**The Missing Word Contest.**

Owing to gross negligence on the part of those who contracted to deliver the Antidote in one section of the city, by which a number of subscribers did not receive their papers until Wednesday, we deem it but fair to extend the time for receiving answers for our "Missing Word Contest" another week. Answers will be received to Wednesday the 8th February inst.

An engagement is on the tapis between a large and popular dry goods merchant and one of the loveliest of her sex. The lady's vocal talents are of no mean order.

Mr Chas. Cassils and his nephew Mr. Wm. C. McIntyre (McIntyre Sons & Co.), purpose leaving for a transatlantic trip some time in March.

Mr. Walter Shanly, C. E., who has been somewhat indisposed at his rooms in the St. Lawrence Hall for some weeks, is convalescent.

"Jimmy" says the late electic, was merely the first round, and that he is good enough yet for the third term. It was a close encounter.

**Non-Appearance of Paderewski.**

Many of us are disappointed at the postponement of the Paderewski recital, although we are not surprised at its cause. Musicians are all more or less incapacitated by cold, and the measure of their sufferings is according to the measure of their genius. An indifferent musician suffers indifferently. He dislikes it but manages to pull through. A master musician suffers in a masterly manner; he becomes utterly unstrung; he is good for nothing, even if he isn't rendered positively ill thereby.

The caricatures in the Witness a few evenings ago, were laughable, but a trifle rough on Paderewski. Mrs. Thrower has the sympathy of her numerous friends.

**THE PERILS OF THEOSOPHY.**

"Confound the Theosophists!"  
 "Why?"  
 "They convinced my wife that she had seven bodies, and she went off and bought a dress for each one."

**See Missing Word Offer, this issue**

**A BLESSING.**

A youth recently gone over, went down on his knees in a Protestant drawing-room, and asked a cardinal who entered for his blessing. The magnificent old man looked ruffled, and said, in impatient tones, and without any punctuation, "God bless you get up sir," and passed away.

**See Missing Word Offer, this issue**

In Siberia the ground in winter is frozen down some fifty feet. A person's lot there must be hard if he's got one.

### Recipes.

**Turkey Salad.**—Take the white meat and lightest bits of brown and shred with the fingers into inch-long bits, rather fine. Have an equal quantity of celery, cut about three quarters of an inch long and torn into slender bits. Mix these together and season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle over it a tablespoonful of purest olive oil and as much vinegar; toss the whole up lightly and mound up in a salad bowl which you have lined with crisp lettuce leaves. Mask the whole with mayonnaise dressing and keep in a cold place till served.

**Rye Drop Cakes.**—One pint of rye meal and a half pint of flour, measured before sifting. When both are sifted, add the flour to the meal, then a pinch of salt, a teaspoonful of brown sugar, and one tablespoonful of melted butter; then add, gradually, a pint and a half of milk, stirring well; three eggs, well beaten, are put in last, and all mixed thoroughly. Have a gem pan—cup-shaped, if possible—well buttered, and very hot, over top of stove; fill with batter without moving from the stove. Bake in a hot oven.

### The Household.

Sponge a grease spot with four tablespoonfuls of alcohol to one of salt.

Sprinkle salt over the soot on a carpet and sweep all up together.

Rub finger marks from furniture with a little sweet oil.

Put a lump of camphor in a airtight case with silverware to keep it from discoloration.

Remove paint spots from a window by rubbing a copper cent over them.

Sprinkle salt over fresh claret stains.

Wash ink stains in strong brine and then sponge with lemon juice.

Hold a fruit stained article over a bowl and pour boiling water through the cloth.

Rub egg stains on silver with salt on a damp cloth.

Use wood ashes on discolored tableware.

Clean steel knives with raw potato dipped in fine brick dust.

Rub brass with hot vinegar and salt and scour with fine ashes.

Clean a carpet with a broom dipped in a very weak solution of turpentine in hot water.

Cleanse grained woodwork with cold tea.

Scour ironware with finely sifted coal ashes.

Soak mildewed clothes in buttermilk and spread on the grass (when you have it), in the sun.

Wash rusty gilt frames in spirits of wine.



### CURT.

"But I had an appointment here, with Mr. Roberts, at this time."

"Well, sir, I s'pose that's the reason he isn't in."

Wash oil cloth with a flannel and warm water, dry thoroughly and rub with a little skim milk.

Purify jars by soaking them in strong soda water.

Wash blackened ceilings with soda water.

Rub white spots on furniture with camphor.

Rub a stove zinc with kerosene.

Cleanse bottles with hot water and fine coals.

Remove fruit stains from the hands with weak oxalic acid.

Clean jewelry with prepared chalk.

Wash hair brushes in weak ammonia water.

Rub stained hands with salt and lemon juice.

Rub mirrors with spirits of wine.

Remove writing from books by a solution of tartaric acid.

Clean hard finished walls with ammonia water.

Rub whitewashed spots with strong vinegar.

Sponge faded plush with chloroform.

Take paint out of clothing by equal parts of ammonia and turpentine.

To remove machine oil from satin use benzine.

### A BILL OF FARE.

Housewife—"So, now, I think everything is ready for the party. The goose, liver, lobster, two hams, two professors, a famous painter, a passable musician—Yes, that will be all."—*La. Chronicle.*

Paderewski declines to have his hair cut on the ground that it would be sheer extravagance.

THRENODY.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, OCTOBER 6, 1892.

I

Life, sublime and serene when time had  
power upon it and ruled its breath,  
Changed it, bade it be glad or sad, and  
hear what change in the world's ear saith,  
Shines more fair in the starrier air whose  
glory lightens the dusk of dear  
Suns that sink on the wan sea's brink, and  
moons that kindle and flame and fade,  
Leave more clear for the darkness here the  
stars that set not and see not shade  
Rise and rise on the lowlier skies by rule  
of sunlight and moonlight swayed.  
So when night for his eyes grow bright,  
his proud head pillowed on Shakespeare's  
breast,  
Hand in hand with him, soon to stand  
where shine the glories that death loves  
best.  
Passed the light of his face from sight,  
and sank sublimely to radiant rest.

II

Far above us and all our love, beyond all  
reach of its voiceless praise,  
Shines for ever the name that never shall  
feel the shade of the changeful days  
Fall and chill the delight that still sees  
winter's light on it shine like May's.  
Strong as death is the dark day's breath  
whose blast has withered the life we see  
Here where light is the child of night, and  
less than visions or dreams are we:  
Strong as death; but a word, a breath, a  
dream is stronger than death can be.  
Strong as truth and superb in youth eter-  
nal, fair as the sundawn's flame  
Seen when May on her first-born day bids  
earth exult in her radiant name,  
Lives, clothed round with its praise and  
crowned with love that dies not, his love-  
lit fame.

III

Fairer far than the morning star, and  
sweeter far than the songs that rang  
Loud through heaven from the choral Seven  
when all the stars of the morning sang,  
Shines the song that we loved so long—  
since first such love in us flamed and  
sprang.  
England glows as a sunlit rose from mead  
to mountain, from sea to sea,  
Bright with love and with pride above all  
taint of sorrow that needs must be,  
Needs must live for an hour, and give its  
rainbow's glory to lawn and lea.  
Not through tears shall the new-born years  
behold him, crowned with applause of  
men,  
Pass at last from a lustrous past to life  
that lightens beyond their ken,  
Glad and dead, and from earthward led to  
sunward, guided of Imogen.  
"Nineteenth Century."



HE PREFERRED THE BRIDESMAID.

At a marriage in Scotland the bridegroom had never seen the bride's attending maid until the hour of the ceremony.

When the parties had been properly arranged and the minister was about to proceed with the ceremony the bridegroom suddenly said:

"Wad ye bide a wee, sir?"

"What is it now?" asked the minister.

"Weel, I was jist gaun to say that if it wad be the same to yo I wad rather hae that ane," pointing to the bridesmaid.

"That's a most extraordinary state-

ment to make at this stage!" exclaimed the minister. "I'm afraid it is too late to talk of such a thing now."

"Is it?" said the bridegroom in a tone of resignation to the inevitable. "Weel, then, ye maun jist gang on."

It is not recorded that there was any feeling of elation on the part of the bridesmaid, or of jealousy on the part of the bride, and the ceremony proceeded.

WINTER FEASTING.

'Tis now with nose like cherry ripe,  
Old Pipkir, after lunch,  
Remarks that he will "poke a snipe,  
And have a powl of bunch."

See Missing Word Offer, this issue



## ECLIPSED.

"Why has your ladyship done away with your splendid saddle horse?"

"Because it's beauty was so much admired that I was quite thrown into the shade."—*Humoristische Blätter*.

See Missing Word Offer, this issue

## SMILES.

Of this tiny raven ringlet  
He was both proud and fond,  
Until he called on her one day  
And found she was a blonde.

"Frank, who was that delightful person who just left? I know he wanted to do something for you?"

Frank—Yes, he wanted to owe me \$10.

"The poor man was dying. His breath was becoming weaker and weaker every minute when I saw him."

"And what did you do?"

"I gave him an onion."

He—I aspire to be a good man.

She—Yes, it is the common lot to yearn for the unattainable.

An article on how to sit down gracefully, which is now being run to a considerable extent by the papers, is particularly timely.

See Missing Word Offer, this issue

## AUDACITY—A bet well won

(From London Hawk.)

"The cab is here, Jack, so I shall be off. Do you think I look nice?"

Mrs. Seymour stood before her husband as she spoke, and letting her cloak slip from her shoulders, appeared in all the glory of a deliciously apocryphic gown of shimmering white satin, shrouded in lace and filmy chiffon.

"Of course you do, darling, prettier than ever."

"That's all right. Now put my cloak on again, like a good boy. Thanks! Any messages for the Delmores?"

"Tell them how awfully sorry I am that I can't dine with them to-night, but say that I really must read over these briefs and get up my opening speech."

He gave the large bundles of papers lying before him an impatient push. "Shall you be very late, Sylvia?"

"Oh, no!" answered his wife, as she stooped to kiss him. "But you know Mrs. Delmare always has music after dinner, and generally asks a few people to come in, so don't expect me much before twelve. However, if you are tired, mind you go to bed; I've got my latch-key with me. I've told the servants to put out the drinks, and not to wait up." And then Mrs. Seymour blew her husband a kiss and vanished through the door.

Half-past twelve was booming out from a neighboring street when Mrs. Seymour returned home to her house in Belgrave. She sprang lightly from her haubon, paid the driver his fare, and then leisurely turned to mount the steps, feeling for her latch-key as she did so. She had just inserted the key in the door, snivering a little the while, the agent was chilly, when she heard a footstep close behind her.

Thinking it was the cabman, she cried out sharply, "I shall give you no more. The fare is only a shilling, and I gave you eighteen pence. 1—"

Then she became aware that the tall well-dressed figure standing, hat in hand, by her side, was no common cabman. She drew back a little, at the same time giving the latch-key an impatient jerk, in a vain endeavor to open the front door more quickly.

"Pity do not be alarmed, Mrs. Seymour," said the stranger, bowing. "Although I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, I am an old friend of your husband's, and it is the fact of being charged with a message from him for you that makes me introduce myself. My name is Messiter—Cyril Messiter. Perhaps you have heard him mention me?"

Mrs. Seymour shook her head doubtfully, although at the same time a vague feeling crept over her that she had heard Jack speak of such a person.

"Your husband asked me to tell you—" began Mr. Messiter; but Mrs. Seymour interrupted him.

"Where have you seen my husband? Is he not at home?"

"He is not, and that is what I am commissioned by him to explain to you, though I fancy you will find a letter from him inside; but pardon me, is it not rather rash of you to stand here on such a cold night, in your evening gown and thin satin shoes? And really, if I had not been afraid of frightening the servants, who would have taken me for a burglar, I should have attempted to get them to let me in."

"How long have you been waiting?"

"Oh, only about half-an-hour; but to be honest, it has been cold."

"You must be frozen! Won't you come in?"

Mrs. Seymour, feeling conscious that her uplifted skirts showed a good deal of those same satin shoes, and growing colder every moment, metaphorically took the bull by the horns. She turned the key sharply, then flinging the door wide open, repeated, with a courage born of intense curiosity and the knowledge that a bell rang from the library to where the butler slept, downstairs, "Do come in?"

"With much pleasure," answered Mr. Messiter, bowing once more, then following Mrs. Seymour through the dimly-lit hall to the library at the back of the house. Here a blazing fire and a couple of softly-shaded lamps made a brilliant illumination, and each took stock of the other.

Mrs. Seymour saw before her a tall, well-built man of about thirty-five. Dark blue eyes, eyes with a smile in their depths, lit up a clear-skinned, handsome face. The hair was closely cut to the well-shaped head, and as he unbuttoned his overcoat Sylvia Seymour noticed that he was in faultless evening dress. His whole appearance, voice, and manner betokened such a thorough gentleman that her last feelings of nervousness left her as she flung herself into a low chair before the crackling blaze and asked him for the message.

Mr. Messiter paused one instant before answering her. He was too absorbed for the moment in taking in the beauty of the golden head, and the sweet lines of the fair face upturned to him, to answer her question at once. Alarm had pale her cheeks, but now the color was slowly creeping back to them, and when, with a charming smile, she repeated her request, her mysterious visitor thought her the prettiest creature he had ever seen.

"And now get close to the fire and tell me all about it."

"Well, to begin at the beginning, I was almost alone at the club, and just finishing my dinner, when your husband rushed in, looked round the room, and, seeing me, came right over, saying, as though he were going to ask instead of to confer the greatest compliment in the world"—here they both smiled at the compliment—"I want you to go and see my wife. She will return about twelve; introduce yourself, she has often heard me speak of you, and explain that I have received a wire saying my sister is dangerously ill."

"Lady Hunter?"

"Yes, I fancy that was the name—lives off Watford way—but he was in such a hurry I can hardly be sure."

"What is the matter with her?"

"He didn't say exactly. It seems he got a telegram about ten, from her husband. I think he said, saying that she was very ill, that a dog-cart would call for him, and that he was to start at once."

"Lisa is his favorite sister."

"So I gathered, as he seemed dreadfully cut up."

"But why did he send you instead of coming on to tell me?"

"Well, it seems it would have been out of the way, whereas he must pass the club, and he trusted to find somebody he knew there—I was the fortunate man—and so he asked me if I would mind coming on to say that on no account were you to await his return, and I have promised him to remain here till there is a chance of his getting back. Until half-past two, in fact. If he is not in by then, I am to know that he is detained. You see, he thought I could explain matters better than the letter which I understood he had left for you."

"What letter?"

"The one I told you of. See, here it is, I dare say," he picked up an addressed envelope on the chimney-piece, and handed it to her.

Mrs. Seymour burst open the letter, saying, "Yes; and here is the telegram inclosed."

She read it aloud to her companion:

"Come at once. Lisa seriously ill. Am sending dog-cart to fetch you as too late for trains. Should Lisa improve, will stop you by messenger on the road.—Robert Hunter."

Sylvia let the piece of pink paper flutter to the floor, while she read through her husband's hastily-scribbled note.

"Dearest Sylvia!—Inclosed explains itself. Of course I must go. If I am stopped on the road by good news, I shall drive straight back to town. If I have to go, however, I shall telegraph to you first thing in the morning. Do not wait up for me, as my chances of returning are very slight. Dog-cart just arrived. In greatest haste.

"Jack."

She handed the note to Mr. Messiter.

"It's awfully sad," he said kindly, seeing how distressed she looked. "But perhaps you'll hear better news in the morning."

"I hope so," she replied with a little sigh. Then she roused herself, and said, more cheerfully, "But all this time you will be thinking me dreadfully inhospitable. Won't you make yourself a drink? Everything is over there." She nodded towards a low table, "and here are both cigars and cigarettes. Which is it to be?"

"Thanks, a cigar. Will you permit me to give you anything?"

"No; I think not, thank you. Now pray light up, and do take that chair, I know it's all right, for it's my husband's favorite. The ash tray is at your elbow."

"Now that you have so kindly fixed me up, as the Yankees would say, won't you do the right thing by yourself and go to bed?"

"Certainly not. I am not one little bit tired, and I'm going to sit up and talk to you. Where shall we begin? Our odd introduction obviates the customary preliminaries ordained by society between two people of opposite sexes who meet for the first time. Besides, I'm sure you don't want to know what I think of the last new play, and I really don't care about your opinion of the Academy; so we can skip all that with clear consciences."

"By all means. Well, what shall we talk about?"

"Oh! we shall drift into some topic of mutual interest presently. Jack will do to begin with. Tell me, do you see him often?"

Mrs. Seymour turned her gaze from the fire and full on to her companion as she spoke. He looked her straight in the eyes, as he answered.

"Yes, frequently at the club, and at the courts."

"Are you a barrister, too?"

"No; but one often has occasion to go through the law courts, and of course one runs against one's legal friends at lunch time."

"Of course. Do you think he's altered much since his marriage?"

"Who's altered? Ah! your husband, Jack. No, I think he's the same as ever. Steady, plodding—and—" he did not finish his sentence, but smiled across at Sylvia.

"I know what you're going to say," she answered, returning his smile with interest. "Just a little too devoted to his work. He is—and I have rather dull times now and again—but, all the same, I'm very fond of Jack."

"Naturally," Mr. Messiter answered, with a gravity so deep as to engender a suspicion of its genuineness. "All wives are fond of their husbands."

Sylvia laughed aloud. "Do you really believe that?"

"Are they not? I've often thought of marrying for the sake of gaining that same affection."

His companion shook her pretty head. "Gain the affection first, and then marry afterward, if you like. That is my advice, and I'll supplement it with another piece. Fill up your glass again, it is empty."

Mr. Messiter rose before replying, "No, thanks, I must be going."

"Going? But it's not yet two o'clock, and I thought you said—"

"That I promised to wait for your husband. Yes, I did but I, also, promised him that you should go to bed."

"I really am not tired, Mr. Messiter, and even if I were I don't see why you should go."

"You give me no alternative, Mrs. Seymour. If I remain here you will persist in sitting up, against Mr. Seymour's

wishes, and you will make me feel dreadfully uncomfortable by so doing. If, however, I await him outside, you will perhaps go to bed, for you are tired. Ah! don't deny it, Mrs. Seymour, I can see it in your eyes, and you are worried about your sister-in-law into the bargain. It's half-past one, and you may have to get up early to-morrow to go to Watford. I shall say good-night."

He held out his hand, but although she rose from her chair she did not take it.

"Outside! How can you wait for Jack outside? Listen! I believe it's raining."

"I dare say it is."

"Then sit down again and wait here."

"No, I can't do that, you give me no alternative but to go."

Again he put out his hand. This time she slipped her own into it.

"Obstinacy, thy name is Mr. Messiter. And do you know I believe I am a little sleepy after all. Shall you mind very much if I do go?"

"I shall miss your society, of course, but as I must spend the next hour or so alone, I would rather do so here than out in the rain."

"That settles the question. I'll be good and yield to the inevitable. And now, perhaps, you'll let me make you another drink before I go?"

"Thanks. Whiskey, please, and not too strong. I might fall asleep here, you know, and frighten your housemaid to death when she came down in the morning. Good-night, and sleep well. I shall give Jack till a little after two, and then if he does not return I shall take my departure. Once more, good-night."

Cyril Messiter stood erect until the last rustle of Mr. Seymour's satin skirts had died away on the staircase, then he sank into the depths of a downy chair and smilingly contemplated the dying fire.

He sat there smoking and sipping, till the silence of the night was broken by the iron tongue of the church clock beating out half-past two. The grandfather's time-piece on the stairs whirred and groaned as it struck, while just above his head the sharp chimes of a little French clock startled the watcher from his reverie.

He rose, tossed his half-smoked cigarette into the grate, then went into the hall and listened. Nothing but the slow, heavy tick from the carved clock on an upper landing disturbed the intense stillness. The hour was like a grave, and his footsteps, as he went down the marble hall, echoed clearly up the wide staircase.

With a sharp click he opened the front door, and as sharply closed it to again. He returned to the library for another half-hour, then with a quiet smile playing round the corners of his mouth, he turned out the gas, lit a candle which stood on the hall table, and taking off his boots crept quietly upstairs to bed.

It was past nine o'clock next morning before Mrs. Seymour rang for her tea and letters.

"Has your master rung his bell yet?" she asked the servant who answered the bell.

"No, ma'am. I don't think my master is back."

"Oh, yes he is. I heard him come upstairs at half-past two this morning. Go to his room and say I wish to know what news he has of Lady Hunter." But the next moment the maid was back again.

"Mr. Seymour's not in his room, ma'am. I've knocked there, and then I looked in."

"How very odd. I suppose I must have dreamt—and yet, I could have sworn that

dreamt—and yet, I could have sworn that The dainty tray was handed her, laden with delicate china, a whole heap of letters, and—a telegram.

She opened that first, and gave a little cry of astonishment as she mastered its contents.

"Have been hoaxed. Lisa quite well. Back to breakfast at 10.30. "Jack."

"A hoax! Then who was that man who came here last night? What was his object?"

With her brain full of vague conjectures Sylvia mechanically opened and glanced over her correspondence.

"Myra's bill again. How that woman bothers for her money! A long gossip from Lena Daltou. Full of the children's and servants' doings as usual. A ball at Lady Weldon's. How jolly! I must have a new gown for it though. The Jacobs ask us to dinner. How pushing some Jews are. We've only met them about twice. A line from mamma. Simpson's flower bill. Heaven! what a lot I owe him. Tillie Weston engaged at last. Umph! She's tried long enough. Why, what's this? A packet, and sealed, too, and I don't know the handwriting. It must have been delivered by hand; there are no stamps or postmarks on it. Well I shan't know what it's about till I open it, so here goes."

With deft fingers she broke the seal, and drew from the envelope a small roll, inclosed in a type-written sheet of paper, which she rapidly read:

7:30 A.M.

"Dear Mrs. Seymour:—Ere you receive this you will have heard from your husband that the message sent him last night was a hoax. Knowing so much you may as well be made acquainted with the reason for the trick. A fortnight ago at my club a friend bet me the sum of £5,000 that I would not succeed in passing a night under the roof of any lady moving in society, and of good reputation, who might be pointed out to me in the street. In a fit of bravado on the spur of the moment I accepted the bet. We went out with two witnesses to fix upon the lady. As we went down Piccadilly toward the Park, you drove by, and were at once pointed out to me. At the time I did not even know your name, but in order to win my bet I had to make it my business to find out all about you. I soon ascertained who you were and where you lived. A little judicious bribery gave me a key to your movements and engagements. Hearing that you were dining out alone last night, I devised the scheme which took your husband out of town, and which eventually landed him outside his sister's country house in the small hours of the morning. I myself left your house half an hour ago, having satisfactorily proved to the witnesses who watched outside all night that I had fairly won my bet. I am now writing this letter (which my valet will put in your letter-box) to explain matters, and also to say that I owe you my thanks for having unwittingly enabled me to win a large sum of money. You need have no fear, and may trust to my discretion. Though appearances may be against me, I hope I am a gentleman and understand paying my debts as well as winning my bets. For your help in the matter, I inclose you £2,000. I am already on my way abroad, so if you are as wise as you are beautiful, you will keep the notes and your own counsel, for neither you nor your husband will ever find one who was once, "Yours truly, Cyril Messiter."

# THE + ANTIDOTE + CLUB.

..... Amusement to Instruction Joined .....  
(UTILE OUM DULOE.)

## The Missing Word Competition.

**T**HE English courts lately decided against the legality of the plan inaugurated by the editor of "Pick-Me-Up," in connection with what is known as the "Missing Word Contest," but it was solely on the ground that it was not the most appropriate word which determined the award, but that which was chosen by the editor. The Editor of the "Antidote," believing that the plan, when shorn of this uncertainty, to be a good one, is offering similar inducements. The right word for the place is the word which takes the award. The answers and enclosures should be on hand by the Thursday following the date of publication. The competition is open to every old and new paid-up subscriber to the "Antidote," or to any person whom he may introduce. The sums received will be distributed equally among those who furnish us with the correct word by the date named, together with a copy of the paper for two months.

### EXPLANATION.

The object of The "Antidote" Club is to increase the interest in, and extend the circulation of this cheapest of all weekly illustrated newspapers. On account of the large number of excellent awards which are given by the Editor each month this department is sure to prove specially entertaining to all our readers.

Care will be exercised in these contests to make them of an educational character, and a benefit to all who participate therein. None can make the necessary search among standard authors in connection with these poetical competitions without deriving literary and linguistic advantages.

The conditions governing these contests are so simple and inexpensive, that all desiring may readily take part.

### ...+ Rules of The Antidote Club. +...

1st. Every subscriber to the Antidote for not less than six months is a member of this Club, and entitled to enter the contests by complying with the rules published herein.

2nd. The coupon cut from this page must be used in forwarding the answer to The Antidote Club contests.

3rd. On account of the financial outlay necessitated monthly for awards, which are solely to attract attention to and introduce THE ANTIDOTE into new homes, every answer from a member of this Society must be accompanied by 25 cents silver (or ten three-cent stamps) to pay for THE ANTIDOTE for eight weeks on trial, which will be sent, postpaid, to the address of any friend or acquaintance you may direct.

4th. Each member receiving an award must acknowledge same by letter within three days after its arrival. Failure to do this will debar them from future contests.

Address EDITOR ANTIDOTE, Montreal.

## THE ANTIDOTE CLUB COUPON.

TO BE MAILED TO	THE Antidote Club MONTREAL, P.Q.	NOT LATER THAN Wednesday, Feb. 8.
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CONTEST No. 1.

### MISSING WORD VERSE.

Then rose the deadly din of fight;  
Then shouted, charged, with all his might,  
Of Wilna each Teutonic Knight,  
And of St. John's,  
While flashing out from yonder height  
Thundered the.....

Fill in missing word.

List of those receiving rewards in above contest will be published in THE ANTIDOTE early in March.

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"How much is it from here to Saragossa?"

"Eight reals."

"Carambo! That's a lot. Won't you take four?"

"There's no chaffering here."

"Carambo! I'll give you six, then!"

"No."

"I say, can I take my dog with me to Saragossa?"

"Yes, in the dog department, if you get a ticket for him."

"For how much?"

"Two reals."

"Ah, then, let us have two dog tickets."—Almanaque Espanol.

## A SPRINKLE OF SPICE.

Glazebrooke—What do you think of that cigar? Grimshaw—It's so good I'm sure you must have given me the wrong one.

"How brilliant the moon is to-night," said Naggs, as they walked to church last night.

"Yes," said Mrs. Naggs, "like most men he's brightest when he's full."

Enamored Youth (who has been bidding her good-bye for half an hour)—Oh, darling, how can I leave thee?

Deep Red Voice (from top of the stairs, with fiery sarcasm)—Shall I come down and show you how, young man?

Doctor—What makes you think the climate won't agree with him?

Wife—Well, I've tried it for twenty years and I never could do it.

Tea drinkers believe that it takes an artist to draw it.

## CRACKS EASILY.

"His voice has unusually fine timbre."

"Yes—but it's so brittle!"

## SNOWFLAKES.

Miss Green wedded Mr. Brown. Their offspring is a little yellow.

Lightning isn't a farce at all, but whenever it plays the thunder always roars.

Tell me not in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream:  
What with coal combines and plumbers,  
Things are too much what they seem.

De Ville—You say that Whipple's horse jumped that ditch? That was a wonderful jump. Fellowes—Yes; but still it was nothing to the one Whipple made. He landed at least a rod further on than the horse did.

He—He is making love to her at too high a tension to suit me.

She—He is making love to her with too much attention to suit me.

## WHY SHE ADORED IT.

"'Twas only a leather-guster,"  
But she worshipped it, she said,  
For its fascinating likeness  
To Paderewski's head.

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