PENNY PLAIN

BY O. DOUGLAS

Shopman—"You may have your choice—penny plain or two-pence colored."
Solemn Small Boy—"Penny plain, please. It's better value for the money."

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CHAPTER VII.—(Cont'd.)

"I simply don't know," said Pamela, "how people who don't care for clothes get through their lives. Clothes are a joy to the prosperous, a solace to the unhappy, and an interest always—even to old age. I knew a dear old lady of ninety-four whose chief diversion was to buy a new bonnet. She would sit before the mirror discarding model after model because they were 'too old' for her. One would have thought it difficult to find anything too old for ninety-four."

Jean laughed, but shook her head.

"Doesn't it seem to you rather awful to care about bonnets at ninety-four?"

"Not a bit," said Pamela. She was powdering her face as she spoke. "I like to see old people holding on, not losing interest in their appearance, making a brave show to the end. . . . Did you never see any one use powder before, Jean? Your eyes in the glass look so surprised."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Jean, in great confusion, "I didn't mean to stare——" She hastily averted her eyes.

Pamela looked at her with an amused smile.

"There's nothing actively immoral about powdering one's nose, you know, Jean. Did Great-aunt Alison tell you it was wrong?"

"Great-aunt Alison never talked about such things," Jean said, flushing hotly. "I don't think it's wrong, but I don't see that it's an improvement. I couldn't take any pleasure in myself if my face were made up."

"Pamela swung round on her chair and laid her hands on Jean's shoulders.

"Jean," she said, "you're within an ace of being a prig.. It's only the freckles on your little unpowdered nose, and the yellow lights in your eyes, and the way your hair curls up at the ends that save you. Remember, please, that three-and-twenty with a perfect complexion has no call to reprove her elders. Just wait till you come to forty years."

"Oh," said Jean, "it's absurd of you to talk like that. As if you didn't know that you are infinitely more attractive than any young girl. I never know why people talk so much about youth. What does being young matter if you're awkward and dull and shy as well? I'd far rather be middle-aged and interesting.

"That," said Pamela, as she laid her treasures back in the box, "is one of the minor tragedies of life. One begins by being bored with being young, and as we begin to realize what an asset youth is, it flies. Rejoice in your youth, little Jean-girl, for it's a stuff will not endure. . . . Now we'll go downstairs. It's too bad of me keeping you up here."

"How you have changed this room," said Jean. "It smells so nice."

"It is slightly less forbidding. I am quite attached to both my rooms, though when Mawson and I are both here together I sometimes feel I must poke my arms out of the window or thrust my head up the chimney like Bill the Lizard, in order to get room. It is a great disadvantage to be too large for one's surroundings."

The parlor was as much changed as the bedroom.

The round table with the red-and-green cover that filled up the middle of the room had been banished and a small card-table stood against the wall ready to be brought out for meals. A Persian carpet covered the linoleum and two comfortable wicker-chairs filled with cushions stood by the fireside. The sideboard had been converted into a stand for books and flowers. The blue vases had gone from the mantelshelf and two small candlesticks and a strip of embroidery took their place. A writing-table stood in the window, from which the hard muslin curtains had been removed; there were flowers wherever a place could be found for them, and new books and papers lay about.

Jean sank into a chair with a book, but Pamela produced some visiting-cards and read aloud:

"MRS. DUFF-WHALLEY.
MISS DUFF-WHALLEY.
The Towers,
Priorsford.

"Who are they, please? and why do they come to see me?"

Jean shut her book, but kept her finger in as if hoping to get back to it soon, and smiled broadly.

"Mrs. Duff-Whalley is a wonderful woman," she said. "She knows everything about everybody and simply scents out social opportunities. Your name would draw her like a magnet."

"Why is she called Duff-Whalley? and where does she live? I'm frightfully intrigued."

"As to the first," said Jean, "there was no thought of pleasing either you or me when she was christened—or rather when the late Mr. Duff-Whalley was christened. And I pointed out the house to you the other day. You asked what the monstrosity was and I told you it was called The Towers."

"I remember. A staring red-and-white house with about thirty bow-windows and twenty turrets. It defiles the landscape."

"Wait," said Jean, "till you see it close at hand. It's the most naked, newest thing you ever saw. Not a creeper, not an ivy leaf is allowed to crawl on it; weather seems to have no effect on it; it never gets to look any less new. And in summer it is worse, for then round about it blaze the reddest geraniums and the yellowest calceolarias and the bluest lobelias that it's possible to imagine."

"Ghastly! What is the owner like?"

"Small, with yellowish hair turning grey. She has a sharp nose, and her eyes seem to dart out at you, take you all in, and then look away. She is rather like a ferret, and she has small, sharp teeth like a ferret. I'm never a bit sure she won't bite. She really is rather a wonderful woman. She hasn't been here very many years, but she dominates everyone. At whatever house you meet her she has the air of being hostess. She welcomes you and advises you where to sit, makes suitable conversation and finally bids you good-bye, and you feel yourself murmuring to her the grateful 'Such a pleasant afternoon,' that was due to the real hostess. She is in constant conflict with the other prominent matrons in Priorsford, but she always gets her own way. At a meeting she is quite insupportable. She just calmly tell us what we are to do. It's no good saying we are busy; it's no good saying anything. We walk away with a great district to collect and a pile of pamphlets under one arm. . . Her nose is a little on one side, and when I sit and look at her presiding at a meeting I toy with the thought that some one goaded to madness by her calm persistence had once heaved something at her, and wish I had been there to see. Really, though, she is rather a blessing in the place; she keeps us from stagnation. I read somewhere that when they bring tanks of cod to this country from wherever cod abound, they put a cat-fish in beside them, and it chases the cod round all the time, so that they arrive in good condition. Mrs. Duff-Whalley is our cat-fish."

"I see. Has she children?"

"Three. A daughter, married in London—Mrs. Egerton-Thomson—a son at Cambridge, and a daughter, Muriel, at home. I think it must be very bad for the Duff-Whalleys living in such a vulgar, restless-looking house."

Pamela laughed. "Do you think all the little pepper-pot towers must have an effect on the soul? I doubt it, my dear."

"Still," said Jean, "I think more will be expected at the end from the people who have all their lives lived in and looked at lovely places. It always worries me, the thought of people who live in the dark places of big cities—children especially, growing up like 'plants in mines that never saw the sun.' It is so dreadful that sometimes I feel I must go and help."

"What could you do?"

"That's what common sense always asks. I could do nothing alone, but if all the decent people tried their hardest it would make a difference. . . . It's the thought of the cruelty in the world that makes me sick. It's the hardest thing for me to keep from being happy. Great-aunt Alison said I had a light nature. Even when I ought to be sad my heart jumps up in the most unreasonable way, and I am happy. But sometimes it feels as if we comfortable people are walking on a flowery meadow that is really a great quaking morass, and underneath there is black slime full of unimagined horrors. A paragraph in the newspaper makes a crack and you see down: women who take money for keeping little babies and allow them to die, men who torture: tales of horror and terror. The War made a tremendous crack. It seemed then as if we were all to be drawn into the slime, as if cruelty had got its fangs into the heart of the world. When you knelt to pray at nights you could only cry and cry. The courage of the men who grappled in the slime with the horrors was the one thing that kept me from despair. And the fact that they could laugh. You know about the dying man who told his nurse some joke and finished, 'This is the War for laughs.' "

Pamela nodded. "It hardly bears thinking of yet—the War and the fighters. Later on it will become the greatest of all sagas. But I want to hear about Priorsford people. That's a clean, cheerful subject. Who lives in the pretty house with the long ivy-covered front?"

"The Knowe it is called. The Jowetts live there—retired Anglo-Indians. Mr. Jewett is a funny, kind little man with a red face and rather a nautical air. He is so busy that often it is afternoon before he reads his morning's letters."

(To be continued.)

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Pattern sent to any address on receipt of 20 cents in silver, by the Wilson Pattern Service, 73 West Adelaide St., Toronto.

TINKLING GLASSES.

What sound could there be more interesting and musical on a hot day than tinkling glasses? And what awfully good and refreshing drinks can be made at home—other than lemonades and root beer known to every housekeeper.

No time of year offers such a variety of fruit juices as during the warm months. Not a drop of left-over juice from canning should ever be thrown away, however tired one is. In the wintertime these make excellent punches, hot or chilled, spiced or livened with lemon or vinegar.

Iced Tea is always best and clearest made and poured hot over the ice. It should be made almost double strength and the glass filled three-quarters full of chopped ice. With the usual lemon, try adding several whole cloves to the steeping tea. A most refreshing flavor as well as aromatic fragrance makes it a choice drink for hot weather.

Blackberry Mint is one of the favorite "coolers" at our house. Take a few mint leaves and crush in the bottom of the glass. Allow two tablespoonfuls of blackberry syrup of the consistency and sweetness of unboiled jelly juice. Fill with half a glass of cold water and chopped ice.

Pineapple Spice is easily prepared and served nicely for either home refreshment or at club or social. Cook together one shredded fresh pineapple with the juice and rind of two lemons, two sticks of cinnamon, a half teaspoonful of ground ginger and two cupfuls of sugar. The syrup should be quite sweet and more sugar may be used if desired. Simmer an hour, drain through a bag and bottle, using one-third glassful of the juice over cracked ice and fill the glass with water.

Iced Coffee is made a number of different ways, but a most satisfactory one is to make the coffee double strength and, like the tea, pour it over a three-quarters filled glass of ice, serving a heaping tablespoonful of whipped cream on top. When stirred into the coffee the color is just right and the flavor excellent.

Chocolate Whip is not only a cool drink but a nourishing food as well. Make a rich cocoa and chill. Beat an egg for each glass. Mix into the chilled cocoa and pour over a small quantity of chopped ice. Top with whipped cream in which cherries have been folded. Too much ice spoils the drink; use only enough to make it cold.

PRESSING FERNS ON BLUE-PRINT PAPER.

Three youngsters at our house have found much pleasure with blue-print paper and printing frames. Small feathery ferns carefully pressed between the glass and paper gave attractive results. Print in the bright sunshine until the shadows show bronzed. The examination must be made carefully lest one part slip when half the frame is opened. Then wash in clear water until the whites are clear, and dry between blotters. Pretty place cards may be made if an oblong of heavy paper is placed over a small portion of the blue-print paper so it will keep white.

EASIER UPSTAIRS WORK.

By keeping on the second floor a carpet sweeper, a small basket containing dusters, cleaning brushes, bathroom cleaners, polish and anything likely to be needed, much running up and down stairs will be saved.

This double equipment is an investment and not an expense, as the articles wear just so much longer.

The immediate need is not for kindness to animals, but for a modification of the manifold hardships and cruelties with which humanity afflicts them—for plain Biblical mercy.

London Older Than Rome.

Rome is a modern city compared with London. London was founded in 1108 B.C., while Rome was not founded until 735 B.C.

For Sore Feet—Minard's Liniment.

Pa An Artist.

"A good artist," said the drawing master, "can turn a happy face into a sorrowful one with a few strokes!"

"That's nothing," replied Tommy, with memories of several whackings at home. "My father can do it with one!"

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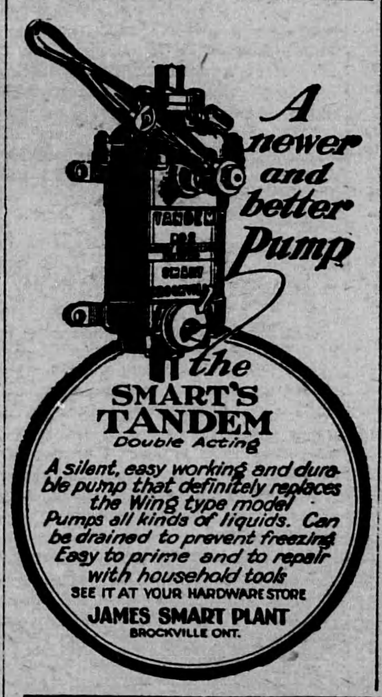

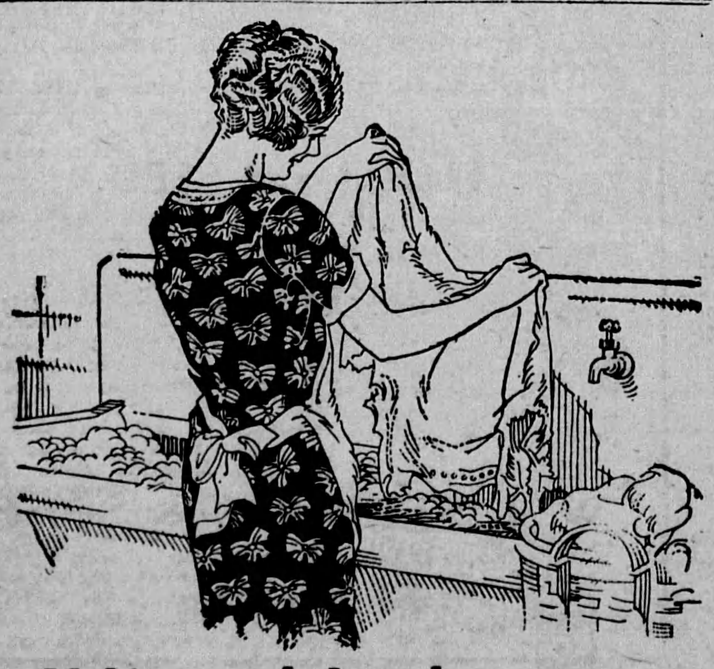

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ISSUE No. 29—'24.

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