Special Occasion

It was a wet night—a bad night for the Plume of Feathers. In the saloon bar there were just the three of them. The young couple who had come in at nine and the man who had been sitting in the same corner chair, silent and gloomy, the whole evening.

For a time the young couple didn't notice him. Just as they hadn't seemed to notice the rain. They were lost in a private world of their own. When they stopped laughing and talking they looked into each other's eyes. They did not hear the man's heavy sighing breath that came every few minutes. They had no time to notice the misery in the lines round his mouth, the pain in his eyes.

But when the boy started to order a second round, the girl nudged him and whispered. He hesitated for a moment, then smiled and nodded.

He walked across the bar to the man in the corner.

"Excuse me, but won't you join us? I mean," he added, shyly, "well, seeing there's just the three of us——"

A thin smile struggled on to the man's lips. "That's very kind of you but——"

"Please, no 'buts.' As a matter of fact, this is a frightfully special occasion for us. We want somebody to drink with us. We shall be really upset if you don't."

"All right. I'm poor company, I'm afraid. And mine's only a bitter."

"Sure?"

"Quite sure."

The three glasses of bitter made their appearance. The barmaid removed herself along the counter to the more lively atmosphere of the public bar.

"Well, then, here's to your special occasion!" said the man, making another valiant effort to produce a smile. He was really very little older than the boy—at the most seven or eight years older. But happiness was taking years off one face and gloom was adding years to the other, so that they might have been father and son.

The girl laughed self-consciously. Almost a giggle. "Thanks. You're the first. I hope you feel duly honoured."

The boy grinned sheepishly. "You see, we got engaged about an hour ago. On the top of a bus. So we didn't get off it—stayed on till the end of the journey. Then we came in here. I expect it all sounds mad, but it's how we felt."

"We just had to ask somebody to drink—to our future," the girl added.

"Rather!—only once in a lifetime," said the boy, heartily.

The man fumbled in his pocket, found his wallet. For a moment they looked anxiously at each other, frightened he was going to embarrass them with the offer of a present. But he handed them instead a tiny photograph.

The girl caught her breath. "Why she—she's lovely!"

"Yes. Very lovely." His voice was toneless. "I was engaged to her for three years." He fumbled in his trousers pockets. "Ah, there it is. Yes, that's the ring. She gave it back to me at five-thirty this evening. That's why I've been sitting in here since six—drinking. Funny, isn't it?" His voice was still toneless.

"Oh, I say, we're terribly sorry—"

"If we'd realized we—we'd never have butted in——"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I'm not feeling as bad about it as I was at six. Sunk quite a few beers since then. It helps."

"And now we've made it worse for you," said the boy, guiltily.

"No, for Heaven's sake don't imagine that. Talking—once you get started—helps as much as drinking."

"Were you very much in love with her?" asked the girl.

He paused. "Well, the idea we were going to get married one day was a mental habit."

"Perhaps she'll change her mind again. I think long engagements are awfully difficult — especially for girls. We'd have been engaged eighteen months ago but I wouldn't. Now we shall only be engaged for a few months. Dick didn't like me being obstinate, but I'm sure it was right."

"Well, it's been the same thing—we've gone about together everywhere," said the boy, quickly.

"Yes, but because we wanted to. Not because we felt we had to. That's the big difference. And it wasn't really possible to think about getting married before. Now Dick's had a rise—well, it's a good deal simpler." She smiled almost distantly. She was still in her own private world.

The man sighed. "Yes, I know all that. Waiting—this year, next year. Money, money — always blasted money! People say it doesn't matter but, by Heaven, it does! Well, you two are all right. Stick to it. I hope you'll get a devil of a lot more rises. Big ones. My ruddy firm's in the wrong sort of trade for these days —they've just cut my salary."

They looked at him with sudden understanding. "Was that why—?"

"Yes, that was why. After three years of waiting—and now smashed to pieces. I suppose I can't blame her. It was a pretty big cut, blast them! Only it was all so nearly possible. We'd have had to be careful, of course, but, still, it wouldn't have been all scraping and watching every farthing. Oh, I can't blame her. They haven't left me enough to offer any woman."

"Pretty tough luck!" The boy gulped. "Makes me feel a pig. I mean, I got my rise this morning and you——"

"Don't be a fool, man! If anybody ought to feel a pig it's me—shouldn't have said a thing about it, ought to have just drunk your healths. Spoiling your great day for you—ought to have known better. But it was a kind of coincidence and I suppose I had to get it off my chest to somebody. Been drinkin' anyway—makes you say things you shouldn't . . ."

"We were thinking too much about ourselves, anyway. I know I was. A hell of a chap I was thinking myself. Just because they'd shoved my money up to eight quid a week——"

"How much?" He almost shouted. He stepped back as if someone had hit him and the remnants of beer in his glass splashed on to the floor.

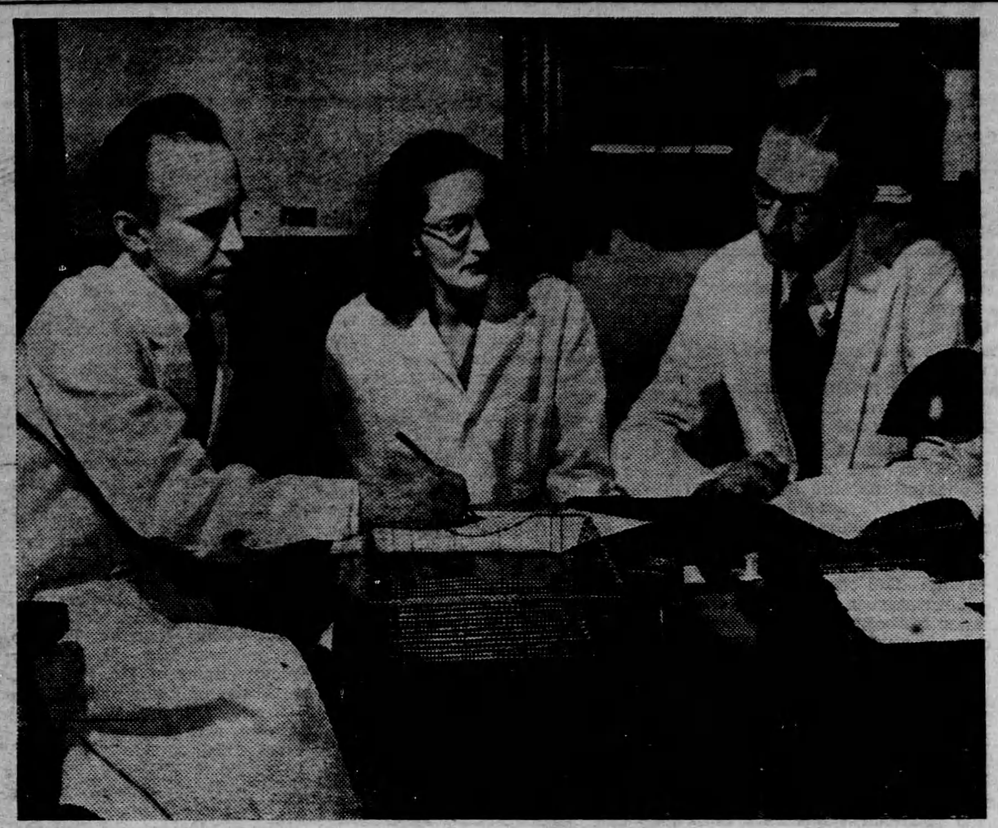
The boy flushed. "Eight pounds," he said, curtly.

The man flung the glass against the bar counter. "Eight pounds—eight quid! My God, that's what they cut my money down to!" He reached the door laughing like a madman.

The young couple looked at each other. When they looked round again there was just the door swinging violently.

"And what's up with him, I'd like to know," exclaimed the barmaid, looking angrily at the floor. "Glasses cost money!"

—From "Tit Bits".



Canadian Fighters In Battle Against Cancer—Throughout Canada there are some 70 highly trained groups of research workers carrying on scientific research into the cause and cure for cancer. Perhaps one of the most unusual research teams is to be found at the Medical School of the University of Western Ontario. Dr. Lee Fraser Bertram, a graduate of Western University, and her husband Ewart Bertram, M.Sc., a graduate of the same college are working together on cancer research under the guidance of Dr. Murray Llewellyn Barr, another Western graduate.

Dr. Bertram entered the field of medicine by a rather circuitous route. Daughter of a Port Elgin doctor, Dr. James E. Fraser, she studied music at Alma College and attained her degree before finally deciding to enter the medical School at Western.

Ewart Bertram is a graduate biologist and after his marriage to the brilliant young doctor in the fall of 1949 they commenced their research career together.

Dr. Barr, an RCAF veteran, is in charge of the research project which concerns the structure of cell nuclei as it may relate to the cancer cell. Dr. Barr's project is financed by the National Cancer Institute and the National Research Council. He is also assisted by H. Lindsay.

Part of the funds raised during the April campaign of the Canadian Cancer Society will be used to assist this and similar research projects in Canada. Contributions may be sent to any local unit of the Society or mailed direct to Ontario Headquarters, Postal Station 'F', Toronto.

How The Donkey Got His Bray

Waterloo was a large black donkey. In those days donkeys were the usual means of transportation in Jerusalem, and people rode donkey-back on their business rounds and even when paying social calls . . .

Our Arab nurses told us the story of how the donkey got his bray when we were little, solemnly assuring us it was true. When Noah was collecting the animals for the ark, Mr. and Mrs. Donkey came early, but lingered a few minutes on the green turf for a last nibble of grass. They did not notice the gathering clouds nor the first huge drops of rain. Then Mr. Donkey looked up to see that the door of the ark was closed!

He was terribly frightened. What if he and his mate were left behind? So he lifted up a loud voice and called: "Noa-ah! No-ah!"

The rain beat and the lightning flashed and the thunder tore, and suddenly Noah opened the door of the ark to them.

Mr. Donkey was so relieved to see Noah that his shouting subsided into "Ah! ah! ah!" and that is how the donkey got his bray, and the reason why it is so loud, for he had to raise his voice above the downpouring of the Flood.

The story is much better told in Arabic, where the cries of Noah sound exactly like the donkey's bray.

We children had glorious times riding Waterloo. He was big and strong and could carry several of us at one time. An ingenious contrivance of panniers made of two upholstered kerosene boxes was slung on either side of an Arabic saddle, on which was fastened, throne-like, a coffee-shop stool upside down with one rung cut out to make a chair. Plump and cheerful John Whiting sat in this, his sister Ruth and my sister Grace in the kerosene boxes, and we older children walked or ran alongside. . . .

We often went donkey-back to Ein Farrah, and in my parents' letters are many mentions of picnics in this wildly picturesque and rocky gorge near Anathoth, the birthplace of Jeremiah. . .

We liked going to Ein Farrah early, to avoid travelling in the summer heat, and generally arrived by sunrise at a certain plain which we children dubbed "The Plain of the Rising Sun," for we loved giving names to places. On this plain was a Moslem shrine or "weli," and we noticed that all the donkeys lifted up their voices in a tremendous bray as they faced the first rays of the rising sun, which was usually just as we were approaching the weli. Because of the Arabic tale of the donkey and his bray, we called the shrine "Noah's Tomb."

A few years ago I gave a tea-party to a group of Biblical students visiting Jerusalem. They were late, and in their apology mentioned that they had been taken to see Noah's Tomb. I questioned them, for I knew there was no tomb in Palestine that could possibly attributed to Noah.

To my amusement I found they had been taken by one of our old "donkey-boys," now graduated into a dragoman, or guide, to our shrine on our "Plain of the Rising Sun," both named by us when we were children. So does fantasy get handed down to become a tradition.

—From "Our Jerusalem," by Bertha Spafford Vester.

Imagination

"Mrs. Cohen," said Mrs. Nathan, "what's the trouble? You look worried."

"Yes, yes," sighed Mrs. Cohen, "my husband is always sick."

"Your husband is just a hypochondriac," said Mrs. Nathan. "He isn't sick. He just thinks he's sick. Take no notice of his complaints and watch him get well."

A month later, the two women met again. Mrs. Cohen looked even more worried.

"Your husband no better?" asked the friend.

"Worse," said Mrs. Cohen. "He thinks he's dead."

How To Build A Barbecue Grill

Naturally you'll need first to select your building site. Choose a spot where there is shade in the late afternoon, if this is possible. You had better get the whole family together to decide on this, because although the grill can be moved, it is unnecessarily hard work. Then you must place your order for concrete blocks. It will take 63 whole blocks and 12 half ones. While this order is being filled, you can use this time to find the articles you will need in order to start work. They are few. A hoe, a spade, four pegs and some string, a level and a trowel will do.

Stake the pegs and string that you have to the ground to form the outline of your pit. Take some sharp instrument and mark this outline off so that the strings may be removed. Then you start to dig because you must have a base for the grill that will not allow it to sink and become unlevel. You accomplish this by sinking the blocks their full 8" in the ground. The base is completed.

The remainder of the work is placing the blocks in order to build up the sides and back. No cement is used. The blocks are merely stacked one on top of the other. The sides of the firebox are built 3 blocks high from the base and are 3½ blocks deep. In order to keep your wood in a dry and orderly fashion, a wood box is built on one side of the firebox. The walls of the wood box are only two blocks high, but are the same depth as the firebox. This wood box also serves as a table during cooking operations.

Now take two and one-half blocks and place them on the top of the back wall of the firebox. On top of these you place two more blocks and another one on top of these two, so that you have a simulated chimney in the back. All blocks should be placed so that they interlace, since this lessens their chance of falling. Since no cement is used, the blocks may be replaced easily should one crack from the heat. However, chances are you won't have to worry about this for several years.

The building operation can be completed in a day and your grill finished except for three items. The wood box needs a top, the firebox needs a grill and the base of the firebox needs to be built up about eight inches so that so much wood need not be used for the fire. The base of the firebox may be built up with either concrete blocks, gravel, cinders, or old bricks. The grill must be obtained and can either be made out of iron rods about ½ inch in diameter, or any suitable grill that can withstand great heat.

The top of the wood box will look best made of concrete. This means that a frame the exact size of the top must be built. The ground may serve as the base of this frame. The concrete must be moxed in these proportions: 6 coal buckets of gravel, 4 of sand, and 2 of cement. Water must be added to form the correct mixture of concrete. Mixing concrete is heavy work and you may need some help on this. After it is poured, the top must be smoothed with a trowel until there are no lumps or pieces of gravel left on top. The concrete must be left to dry for at least 24 hours and must be sprinkled with water several times during this drying period to prevent cracking. Then with help, a great deal of help, because this concrete block is very heavy, the finished slab is placed on top of the wood box and the barbecue grill is complete.

Comeback

A wealthy widow married a man of slender means. The honeymoon had scarcely ended before she began reminding her husband that it was her money which was paying the bills. Even when friends dropped in and admired the newlyweds' home, the wife would remark, "Of course, if it weren't for my money, Henry would not be able to afford a place like this." One day the husband bought a television set. His wife examined it and said:

"It's beautiful. But I don't have to remind you, Henry, that if it weren't for my money, it wouldn't be here."

"My dear," replied the husband, quietly, "I think it's time to tell you that if it weren't for your money, I wouldn't be here either."

And then, of course, there was the optician's daughter. Two glasses and she made a spectacle of herself.

Warp and Woof of Fashion—Snug as two dogs in a rug are "Fancy Dapper Dan," left, police bloodhound, and "Merry Windjammer," champion Surrey English cocker spaniel. The dogs suffered through the fitting of their new "rug-ed look" hats for a special benefit fashion show. Hats get that way being made of carpeting.

Leper Mission Begins—Navy doctor Gordon C. McNeilly, with his daughter, Miriam, 4, left Alameda, Calif., bound for an 18-month tour of duty in the leper colony on Tinian Island. Dr. McNeilly volunteered for the hazardous assignment because he felt it his "Christian duty." Also accompanying him were his wife and another daughter, 4 months old.

No, No, Not Again! — The year is only three months old, but already the flagpole sitters are at it. First to jump the gun on the summer silly season is Odell Smith, ex-Marine paratrooper, of Atlanta, Ga., shown ascending to his perch. He plans to bust all pole-sitting records by squatting up there for nine months, coming down on Christmas.

JITTER — **By Arthur Pointer**