

THE EMPTY TAXI

By Cecil Hammerley

Jenny Branton hailed a taxi in Oxford Street after an afternoon's shopping, fully intending to go straight home. In response to her wares a taxi slid alongside the pavement. The driver impressed one with the fact that he was in a desperate hurry and scarcely took time to listen to her instructions.

And from this point the mystery begins.

The cab turned swiftly and sped off in the direction of Kensington. It duly arrived at Landborough Road, and the driver, in accordance with his instructions, stopped outside Number 7.

He waited for about three seconds, vaguely wondering why his "fare" did not alight. Leaning round the side of the cab he called through the window: "This is Seven Lanborough Road, Miss."

There was no answer. Muttering under his breath, he jumped from his seat, opened the door, and—gasped!

The girl was not there.

"Gone! Vanished!"

The cab was empty.

Speechless, almost doubting his sobriety, the driver stepped into the cab and searched thoroughly under the seats, even removing the cushions.

Suddenly his eye alighted on a white lace handkerchief that was lying on the floor of the cab. Picking it up he examined it carefully before running up the steps to Number Seven and ringing the bell.

"I want to see the lady of the house, particular," he announced breathlessly to the maid.

"She's home."

"Does a young lady dressed in blue with fair hair, live here?"

"She do, but I've told you once she's home."

"Yes, I know that," said the taximan in perplexed tones. "But met me lady in Oxford Street, and she gets into my cab, an' 'ere I am."

"But where's Miss Branton?" asked the maid in bewilderment.

"There you are. That's what I want to know. She ain't in the cab, is she?"

"I believe you're drunk," retorted the maid, with emphasis. "So I'll get the master to speak to you."

Mr. Branton, pompous, peppery, glared down his pink nose.

"Now—now, what is all the bother, my good man? Haven't you been paid enough, or what is it?"

"It ain't that, sir," the driver protested hotly. "It's like this, er—the young lady calls me in Oxford Street, and says, 'Drive to Seven Lanborough Road, South Kensington'—an', an' 'ere I am, sir."

He broke off lamely as if unwilling to give a fuller explanation.

"But where is the young lady?" Branton demanded in amazement.

"There you are, sir," said the cabman, vaguely, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Yes, I know, but the question is, where is your daughter? Good Heavens, man, don't look so helpless. Are you positive she did not alight anywhere?"

"I'd stake me last sixpence she did not, sir. 'Drive to Seven Lanborough Road,' she sez, an' I've drove 'ere."

"Most extraordinary. Can't understand it. Don't you—there is a gentleman who might help us. Good evening, Lipston. You're just come in time," continued Mr. Branton, rapidly.

"A terrible thing has happened, Jenny had been shopping in Oxford Street, and she took a taxi home. The man drove off, and when he arrived here a few minutes ago he found his cab empty, and not a sign of Jenny anywhere."

Arthur Lipston paled.

"Good heavens! But—but what must do something. I'll ring for the police first," he exclaimed.

When, some minutes later, a comfortable looking policeman arrived on the scene, the taximan told his story again.

The officer made copious notes and took possession of the lace handkerchief which had been found in the cab.

"This case, gentlemen," he said, speaking to Mr. Branton and the almost frantic Arthur Lipston, "this 'ere case is of a most peculiar and baffling description. This man 'ere'—he looked at the driver as if undecided whether to arrest him or not—"this 'ere man deposits to 'aving picked up a young lady in Oxford Street at 3.30 in the afternoon of to-day, and driven 'er in his cab to where we now are, namely, Seven Lanborough Road."

"Therefore, gentlemen, under the suspicious circumstances—just mentioned, I think it would be as well if I gave an account of the whole thing to the inspector."

"For goodness sake hurry yourself, then," cried Arthur Lipston, alarmed at the slow-moving law. "Can't we get her description broadcast?"

Arthur Lipston was very much in love with Jenny—had been for a long time—and she with him. They were not engaged, for the simple reason that Mr. Branton, pompous and peppery even where love was concerned, would not yield sufficiently to sanction the match.

When the policeman had departed as quickly as his dignity would allow, Arthur Lipston cross-examined the cabman afresh.

The man told his story for the fifth time, and they were as near a solution of the mystery as ever they had been.

Frantic with anxiety, Arthur sent people flying in all directions to make inquiries.

Mr. Branton forgot his thousand and one complaints against the telephone service and made the wires buzz with spluttering inquiries, while the maid was dispatched on a tour of all Jenny's friends and relatives.

Arthur Lipston rushed off to the West-end to search the shops and streets to which it was known Jenny had paid a visit, but after a vain search he returned to Kensington de-

pressed and dejected, to find Jenny's home full of excited relatives and friends.

The hours dragged by, and still no news came of the missing girl. The evening wore on in gloom, and at ten o'clock the relatives and friends left the disconsolate father and distracted lover to themselves.

When eleven o'clock struck old Mr. Branton went up to bed to try to get some rest. Missing himself a strong whisky and soda, Arthur Lipston paced the dining-room.

He was almost mad with anxiety. What could have happened? Jenny had no enemies that he knew of who would harm her, yet she had vanished—vanished as if the earth had opened and swallowed her.

Suddenly there was a loud rattle at the street door.

Springing to his feet, Arthur dashed into the hall, wrenched open the door—and the next moment a very surprised young woman was being crushed in his fervent embrace.

"Thank Heaven, Jenny," he cried. "Thank Heaven, Jenny, you're returned."

She managed at length to struggle free and stared at him, open-eyed.

"But—whatever is the matter, Arthur? Of course I've returned. You didn't think I had emigrated or anything, did you? Or—has something happened?"

Then, gradually it came out, and with her father prompting her impatiently, she told them the cause of her mysterious vanishing trick.

"I had finished my shopping," she explained, "and intended to come straight home; calling the taxi I gave the man the address, and was just trying to turn the handle of the door, which was very stiff, when the cab suddenly dashed off without warning, leaving me looking silly at the edge of the pavement."

"Just when the taxi started I had my hand inside the window trying to open the door from the inside. It was then that I dropped my handkerchief."

"I was annoyed at first. But in a few moments the humour of the incident appealed to me, and I burst out laughing. I could just imagine the man's look of blank astonishment when he arrived here and found the cab empty."

"Well, after that, I was feeling rather hungry, so I had tea, and whom should I meet in the restaurant but Cousin Molly. She was awfully amused when I told her about the taxi man. So I went—and—here I am safe and sound."

"You should have phoned me, Jenny; it was very irregular of you to go to the theatre without letting me know," said her father, reprovingly. Arthur and I have been terribly worried, and done everything to trace you, and now the police are carrying on with the search."

"I am afraid I want a terrible lot of looking after," said Jenny with a side glance at Arthur.

"Humph! I quite agree with you," grunted her father. "Arthur had better go home and get a night's rest now that you have returned. Perhaps, if he still thinks himself capable of managing you, he will—as, come to dinner to-morrow."

"You remember me tellin' you about that young lady that disappeared outar my baby's said a certain taxi-driver to a colleague a few days later."

"I do," said his friend. "What about it?"

"Well, it's the rummiest thing. I was on the rank yesterday when a chap comes up to me and sez, 'You're the man that drove off in a hurry the other day, ain't you?' I couldn't catch what 'e was drivin' at at first, then I seed the joke. 'Yessir, I ses, 'I'm 'im. 'Well, then, don't do it again,' he sez, 'an' 'ere's something for you,' 'e ses, handing me a quid. 'The young lidy was quite all right, an' it all 'appened for the best,' he ses."

"Then the young lady, she turns up, smilin'; 'You did me a good turn,' she sez, 'an' gives me another quid!' 'Tork about luck—'—London Tit-Bits.

Police to Learn from Thrillers
The steady development of the detective novel from a loosely written and highly improbable, not to say impossible, story to a close-knit, logically reasoned, and ingeniously built-up work of fiction has been one of the most interesting features in the recent history of fiction. Men of the highest intelligence nowadays read detective stories for relaxation. And the leading novelists of the world are catering to their needs as never before.

It has remained for the Paris Surete, however, to discover in these tales something of real practical value. The Surete is now giving its secret service men a daily course in English and American detective fiction, in order that they may gain pointers thereby.

This will come as a surprise to many people who have long been under the impression that the actual detective scoops at the detective of fiction and that the methods of the former are very far removed from those attributed to the latter. But we live and learn.—Montreal Daily Star.

Bridge Wizards



Here are three of five women selected as best female bridge players in the world. Mrs. Hilliard, Mrs. Kerwin and Miss Murdock. Bring on your Culbertsons!

Of Mountains

Then I rose up
And swept the dust of planets from
my eyes,
And wandered shouting down that
shouting hour.
Pausing to pluck a mountain like a
flower
That grew against the skies.
All through the night I am aware
Of hills that are not hills
Beyond my window;
I am aware of night
High, heavy,
Across the sky.
Mountains—
And over them a crumbling moon,
A snow-flake on fire,
Scattered from their frosty tips.
Stone wings.
So sure of the way!
—I had forgotten the green of trees
at dawn, and how
Withdrawn are they from day. I had
forgotten too
How trees stray in their sleep across
deep drowsy
Water, until the first breeze ripples
them away—
Along the shore
Are little boats that dream,
Of little journeymen they will make;
Of journeymen made no more.
—Far up the slopes gleam languid
patches of mid-
Summer snow that never go; dim
flocks of snow among
The rocks of a perched mountain
meadow—
Only the mountains are awake,
Guarding the vague low sky;
And a bird for its own song's sake—
And I!

Grandmother of Us All

Trotting sedately yet swiftly out of
the fog and the deepening twilight,
here is an outsider—you know what
he portends; and I wish I could col-
lect in a phrase the interest, the curios-
ity, the emotion too, with which I
pause and gaze. The Queen used to
pass through Eton on her afternoon
drive not seldom, and it seems to be
generally in mist and mirk that I
saw her; she defied the sky and the
autumn nightfall—as why should she
not, eternal and immutable as she
was? I standing there in the drizzle,
could well imagine the earth with-
out the sky above it as England and
Eton and the castle, as things in
general, without the Queen. Could
anybody living remember a time when
she wasn't there, splendidly secluded,
presiding over things in general? I
could hardly think so, nor even that
except in history transmitted from an-
other age she was ever otherwise than
as we now behold her, full of years
and wisdom, watching over us all, in
spite of her majesty, with a positively
incredible benevolence. How she felt
for us all, that marvelous old lady!—
the depths of her heart were inex-
haustible. I was naturally curious
and interested to see her pass, but
certainly I was also moved; she was
the grandmother of us all.

Let it not be thought, then, that
for us at the end of the century Queen
Victoria was merely a legendary im-
age, seated aloft on a monument—an
ancient fact that had become with

Salt Water Cattle

Manila.—Dr. Emilio Sanson, super-
vising veterinarian of the Philippine
Bureau of Animal Husbandry for the
district of Zamboanga, has submitted
the first formal report on the extraor-
dinary salt water cattle of the Sulu
Islands.

The animals require brackish or
even sea water to survive and have
long been a puzzle to scientists. A
series of experiments was conducted
in which it was established that these
cattle, if removed from the salty
marshes of Sibutu, near Jolo, and put
upon fresh water and normal pastur-
age, die within a short space of time.

Fresh water is not obtainable on the
small islands to which they are in-
digenous, and it is the belief of Dr.
Sanson that they offer an interesting
study in natural accommodation to
prevailing conditions. Converse ex-
periments were conducted and cattle,
carabao, horses and goats taken to
these islands. They are reported to
have accommodated themselves quick-
ly to salt water and the prevailing pas-
ture and eventually to have thriven.
So far, however, all attempts to trans-
plant the truly native stock to other
and presumably more favorable condi-

Puzzle Scientists

A man is what he is, not what men
say he is. His character no man can
touch. His character is what he is
before his God and his Judge; and
only himself can damage that. His
reputation is what men say he is. That
can be damaged; but reputation is for
time, character is for eternity.—John
B. Gough.

Character

Bobby, aged six, had just returned
from school.

"What did you learn today, Bobby?"
asked his mother.

"Grammar."

"What sort of grammar?"

"Well, Daddy, I learnt that cats
and dogs are common hounds, but
you and I are proper hounds."

Schoolboys Breed Butterflies

Duluth, Minn.—Four Duluth high
school boys have turned a hobby of
raising caterpillars into a profitable
occupation. The boys started a
caterpillar "farm" three years ago,
gathering an assortment of rare but-
terflies, moths and caterpillars. This
year they are raising about 1,000
caterpillars, which later will turn
into butterflies and moths. The in-
sects then are to be mounted and
sold to entomologists. Rare speci-
mens have been sold to numerous
collectors.

The brave and wise perform great
actions not so much on account of the
rewards attending them, as on account
of their own intrinsic excellence.—
Cicero.

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When not flying as crack pilot of United Air Lines between New York and Cleveland, H. P. Little likes the country life. Here we see him busy milking one of the cows on his farm.

Continental Tit-Bits Soviet Russia's New Railroad

The Soviet press are issuing rally-calls to speed up the completion of the new Moscow-Donbass railway, which will form a direct connection between the capital of the Soviet Union and the Donetz Basin, Russia's richest coal region.

The work has not moved as fast as some Soviet editors think it should, and they are outspoken in their criticism and explanations.

But in the end they express confidence that the mistakes made so far will be corrected and overcome in true Bolshevik fashion, so that "with the help of the public opinion of the whole Soviet Union," this railroad of paramount importance will be completed within the time limit set by the plan.

The great need for the railroad is plainly shown in Izvestia, official organ of the Soviet Government:

"Our industries require more coal every year. Developing at an unprecedented pace, they make ever-growing demands upon our coal-fields in general, and upon the Donetz Coal Basin in particular."

"In 1912, 25.2 million tons of coal were mined in the Donetz Basin. In 1931, this abundant storehouse of the Soviet Union gave us 50 per cent more than in 1912. This is coincident with the increased exportation of coal from the Basin to the coal-consuming regions in general. The railroads now crossing the Basin, which lead to the cities of Vorontsi and Kursk, are working under great pressure. Yet they can do little to cope with the task of transmitting the new stream of coal from the Basin to the sea."

"This lack has made it imperative to get a new outlet for the Donetz Basin's coal, and thus end the confusion and the congestion of freights on the two existing lines."

So the Soviet Government decided in April 1923, we are told, to begin construction immediately of a powerful double-track railroad, the Moscow-Donbass. The new line is to include a small railway, Valukhi-Ozherelye, built long ago, but to be completely rebuilt. The terminal of the Moscow-Donbass line will be the Nesvyetayevskiy mines.

According to plan, the Moscow-Donbass railroad should be in working order by August 1, 1933, yet Izvestia advises us:

"It must be confessed, however, that its construction proceeds unsatisfactorily. In July and August, for instance, only 28 per cent of track building planned for these months was done. In the same period only 6.9 per cent of the buildings planned had been completed."

"The situation is especially unsatisfactory in the Venevskiy region, where only 17 per cent of the construction work planned for these months is finished. This is all the more reprehensible because the 'ensky portion' of the road was to be ready for operation about October 1, 1932."

Izvestia expresses considerable indignation that the Soviet railway builders are so "disappointingly" unable to live up to the plan.

But, it candidly admits, there is a lack of technical equipment, the work is not sufficiently well organized, and there are certain labor difficulties. In this official organ's own words:

"Our heavy industries and the Chief Administration of Railroad Building have not supplied the builders of the road with even half the equipment which they undertook to provide."

GREIFWALD

The first university lectureship in Germany on the science of journalism has been instituted at the University of Greifswald. Dr. Hans Traub, who conducts the course, stressed in his opening lecture that the study of journalism must reach out beyond newspapers "into all related phenomena, especially periodicals, motion pictures and the uses of the radio," and that its practical task is to re-educate the public to read, see and hear critically.

GERMANY HAS FREAK CYCLONE

Mannheim.—The American brand of tornado is unknown in Germany, but the cyclone that hit Laudenbach recently was quite in the style of a Kansas twister. The path of the storm was so narrow that the southern portion of the village, which houses 2,200 persons, was converted into a mass of wreckage, but the northern half was left almost intact.

CZECHS TO EXPERIMENT WITH NEW TYPE OF CARS

Prague.—Czechoslovakia will introduce Diesel electric trains in the run between Prague and Pilsen. A trial trip will take place on Dec. 15, and will be attended by representatives of the leading European railways, who are greatly interested in the experiment.

BOOK CONFISCATED FOR HYPHEN

Prague.—Beekman's Lexicon, a German book of reference, was confiscated in Aussig, North Bohemia, because it printed the name of the country Czechoslovakia with a hyphen between Czech and Slovakia, a usage prohibited by law. The Czechs assert that the peace treaties fixed the name of the new republic as Czechoslovakia, HOT-DOG STANDS POPULAR ON FRENCH RAILROADS

Paris.—Hot-dog stands on wheels, to the number of twenty, are the latest American innovation to penetrate into France.

A year ago one of the stands was started as an experiment on the Paris-Cherbourg line of the French State Railways, and became so successful that twenty of them are now operated on eight railroad lines.

Beer at 12 cents a bottle is the favorite beverage on these stands, which were created primarily for third-class passengers, but have become popular with the elite of the first class. The menu is not limited to hot dogs, but includes sandwiches, eggs, sauerkraut and salads. Wine is sold for 16 cents a quart, aperitifs are 12 cents and liqueurs are 12 cents a glass. A cup of coffee costs 5 cents.

MUSSOLINI TALKS BY PHONE TO RELATIVES IN SHANGHAI

Shanghai.—Benito Mussolini talks to Shanghai by wireless telephone nearly every evening when the Italian liner Conte Rosso is in port here.

The Conte Rosso, which is on the China-Italy run, spends about six days and nights in this port at intervals of ten weeks, and during that lay-over period Mussolini's son-in-law and daughter, Count and Countess Ciano di Cortellazzo, visit the ship every night and talk to Rome. Frequently Count Ciano, who is the Italian Minister to China, is able to get a connection by land lines from Rome to Romagna, and talk to his aged mother.

Rare Plant Species

One of the oddest plant species in the world has been rediscovered in Madera Creek, in the Davis Mountains of western Texas, according to Science News Letter, a Science Service publication (Washington).

Dr. R. A. Studhalter of Texas Technological College at Lubbock has reported this find to The Scientific Monthly. We read:

"The plant is known as Riella, and has been given the English name 'ruffie plant,' because of its peculiar structure. It consists of a slender stem an inch or so in length, with a thin transparent green wing growing out at one side and curling over its end. The graceful undulations in this green wing caused one American botanist to describe it as 'a ruffie standing on end.'"

"The plant has thus far been found in only two States, Texas and North Dakota. It grows only in sheltered canyons either submerge in shallow water or just above water-level. Since water in this Western country is not always a certainty in any one place, the plant has been very elusive, disappearing from a known habitat and reappearing suddenly elsewhere. Close relatives are known from the old world, growing in the same type of habitat: sheltered shallow waters in semiarid regions. Here also it is an extremely elusive plant."

A Memory of Childhood

In the twilight mother's song
Softened pain and righted wrong,
Made the dying day as sweet
As the place where angels' feet
Climb the sunset's golden stairs,
Bearing heavenward childhood's pray-
ers.

And it still can wipe a tear,
Though no more that voice I hear.

Hear no more? Yet oft it seems
That it comes to bless my dreams;
When my cares are laid to sleep,
And my eyes forebear to weep,
Then the song she loved the best
Is my lullaby of rest.

And the heaven to which she's gone
Seems but little farther on.—
Paul Preston, in Tit-Bits.

Pet Name

A four-year-old boy was asked by an elderly visitor what his name was.

"Jacky," replied the boy.

"But have you no other name?" asked the visitor.

"No," replied the boy.

"But what is your father's name?"

"Daddy."

"No, no; hasn't he another name? What does your mummy call him?"

"Fathhead."

ESTEEM

Anthony Trollope, just before he laid down his pen, never to take it up again, wrote these words: "Amusement is good, truth is better, and love best of all. Love gives itself, and is not bought; but all true love is founded on esteem."



Isn't Jack ever going to propose? "I guess not, he's like an hour-glass." "How's that?" "The more time he gets the less sand he has."