

Cucumber Frame

By HAROLD KELLY

If I tell this story it is not that I, Harriet Eliza Meriton, wish to draw attention to myself. I am a spinster—and none the worse for that, I hope—living quietly in this quiet town of Leamington. My name is respected here and I have friends enough. My circumstances are comfortable, and if I have to be thrifty in my way of life, I do not deny myself anything but luxuries. The Meritons have never been wealthy, but neither have they ever been very poor. We have learned to practise thrift and enjoy it, which cannot be said for some of this generation. So I have neither the need nor the inclination to seek for myself the attention of the strangers who read stories. But it seems to me there are some things which one should not keep unknown. This story of Tobias Matthew Starbolt and Jane Matilda Meriton is one of them. It is as much a part of the history of England as well, as the Tower of London is. It is the story of a wonderful love, too. Some people may not think of that as being so important, but I think it is—perhaps even more important. I expect people loved one another long before there was any history and will go on doing so when history is too old to be remembered.

Other people might have told this story before now. If they had they might have told it better than I shall. But they did not, so I have decided to do so. It seems to me less than right that people should not know how one of their greatest monuments came to be built. Nor is it right that dear Uncle Tobias—was my great-uncle really, for I am not so very old—should be forgotten, after he did so much for his country and was so faithful to dear Jane. I was a miniature of Jane, and I must say I am not so very unlike her—but there are no Tobias Starbolts nowadays.

Of course, I have known what I am going to tell nearly all my life. Listening to my mother tell it is one of the earliest recollections I have. But what finally decided me to write it was reading the story of the Taj Mahal. It made me very sad, and although I have never been to India I am sure the place must be very beautiful. And then I thought about the great memorial that Uncle Tobias built to Aunt Jane. Perhaps it is not beautiful, but it is big—bigger than the Taj Mahal, I am sure. Thinking about it made me jealous of poor Jane Meriton. It seemed—and it still seems—unfair that the beautiful Princess who was given the Indian memorial should be remembered, while Jane who was given the English memorial should be forgotten. Perhaps Jane was not beautiful either, but Tobias loved her as if she was.

They were married when they were very young. It was as long ago as 1824, and girls married early in those days. The Meriton family did not consider it a good match for Jane. Tobias Starbolt was only a small shopkeeper—indeed, his shop then was a tiny place in Walworth Road, London. My mother said it when she was young. You entered down two stone steps through a low doorway, and it was always rather dark, although a big oil lamp hung over the counter. There was another tiny room behind with a stone floor like the shop, and a little kitchen and a square yard, just as small behind that again. I often think of Jane going back after her wedding to that queer little place. Their bedroom was above the shop, up a short flight of steep stairs. It makes me sad because it all sounds so dark and quaint, but I expect it was really quite charming because they loved one another so much.

I know Jane married Tobias in spite of all the opposition because she loved him, but she must have thought of the future as well. Tobias was ambitious. He did not intend always to have only a tiny shop. He was determined that some day he would be one of the great business men—and Jane believed in him. She was not afraid of the dark shop and tiny house. Tobias promised her a big house without a shop at its entrance one day, and because she loved him she had faith in him. She believed he would keep his promise and was willing to work and struggle with him while they built their future together.

But the struggle was very hard. Although they worked and kept the shop open from early in the morning until late at night, they could not make much profit. People were poor then. Those who lived round Walworth Road had only a few shillings a week to buy everything, and they did without so many things that Tobias and Jane could not take very much at their little counter, however long they stayed open. Yet they were happy. At night after the shop was closed they would sit together in the tiny room and talk over the great things Tobias was to do later. Sometimes the day had been a good one and then the big house always seemed nearer.

There was one thing about the big house that Jane insisted on. It must have a garden with a cucumber frame. She loved cucumbers almost as much as she loved Tobias. Whenever the day had been really good and cucumbers were in season, she would hurry round to the greengrocer's at the corner will Tobias put up the shutters, and buy a small one, or sometimes half of one. Then they would eat it, sliced and dipped in vinegar, with their bread and cheese for supper, and chat would always seem like a celebration to Jane, and make her think that the struggling days were really coming to an end.

It was the thought of the cucumber frames at the great house, and feeling sorry when the cucumbers were

out of season and Jane could not have them, however much she wished, that gave Tobias his wonderful idea. There must be thousands, perhaps millions, of other women like Jane—but like her in wanting cucumbers when they could not have them. But why should they go without? Wouldn't it be possible to keep cucumbers, to preserve them so that people could buy them at any time?

Tobias was not gifted with brains that moved quickly and lightly—and he was the better for that. I have no doubt. A nimble brain is often not over-careful of which way it jumps. Tobias thought slowly but surely, and he thought about the cucumbers continuously. He did not tell Jane, because he would not rouse her hopes until he could gratify them, but he thought endlessly of how cucumbers might be preserved for Jane to have all the year round—and for others to have all the year round, too. He put Jane first even in his thoughts, but he knew that if he could find a way of selling people cucumbers when no one else could, the new house and the garden with the cucumber frames would not be far away. Perhaps the cucumber frames would not be so important then, he thought, but Jane should have them all the same.

They had been married for nearly seven, and Tobias had been thinking for five years before he thought of the way. Then the great idea came. It was in April, but the weather was more like February. On the day he solved the problem it was snowing, and an icy wind was blowing from the north east. Trade was bad, because no one came out of doors unless they were bound to, and Jane had looked worried. Yet he did not tell her at once, because he wanted together by the fire at night. He waited all day, and then, just before they were ready to shut the shop and Jane was looking most worried, he said, "Jane dear, I've got some good news—some really good news for you." She looked up at him wondering. He was much taller than she was, and if she stood close to him she had to look up.

"Whatever can that be?" she said. "You'll hear as soon as we've shut the shop and settled down," he told her. "But is it really good news, Toby. Is it about—about the shop?" she asked.

"Well—in a way—and about our house, with the cucumbers—I mean the cucumber frames. To-night," he added, proudly, "may be the greatest night of our lives."

"But whatever . . ." she began and then suddenly thought of cucumbers. "Oh, but if that's the case I must have a cucumber. Tobias, I'll just slip round to the greengrocer's and see if I can get one."

"I wouldn't go out on a night like this," Tobias said. "But if it may be the greatest night of our lives I must have a cucumber, Tobias," she pleaded, and because Tobias found it difficult to deny her anything it was possible to get, he said: "All right then, run round quickly and I'll shut the shop while you're gone." Jane hurried out and Tobias got out the shutters and the bar that fixed them in position.

But the greengrocer on the corner had no cucumbers. Jane could not hide her disappointment. If Tobias had such grand news for her it did seem a pity not to have a cucumber to make their supper a real celebration. There was another greengrocer a few streets away, she remembered. But the snow was falling more quickly, the wind was blowing harder and she had run out without a hat and coat. Should she try one more shop or give up and go back empty-handed? Yet even as she wondered she was hurrying on, keeping close to the house walls to gain as much shelter as possible. When she turned the next corner the wind was blowing full in her face, carrying the snow into her hair and eyes and under the folds of her dress. She shivered and knew that it would have been wiser not to come. "But it would be a shame not to have one," she murmured as she hurried on.

She was gone so long that Tobias grew worried and stood by the open door looking up and down the street. "I expected she'd have a bit of gossip with 'Old P,'" he said to himself. Old P. was the greengrocer, but Tobias was merely comforting himself when he said this. He guessed what had happened and wished he had not told Jane about his news until they were having supper. Then at last she came back, shivering in spite of hurrying, and Tobias scolded her, but only gently because he loved her so much and he knew how she loved cucumbers. She had brought one, and when she had shaken the snow from her hair and her dress and taken off her wet shoes, they settled down to supper, sitting one each side of the fireplace. And Tobias told her his great plan, how he would buy thousands of small cucumbers when they were in season and plentiful, and put them with vinegar in sealed jars so that Jane and all the other people who liked them could buy them at any time. People would pay more for them when they were out of season, he said, and he would make a wonderful profit.

"Perhaps we shall be able to sell the shop and buy a small warehouse," Jane said; "then as people get to know about them," she went on, excitedly, "we should sell more and more each year."

"Who knows?" Tobias said. They decided to call them Starbolt's Pickled Cucumbers, and Jane and Tobias went to bed to dream of the great times that would surely come, and the great house with the garden—and the cucumber frames, in spite of

Starbolt's Pickled Cucumbers, because, as Jane thought when she was going to sleep, "There's nothing like the real thing after all."

Next morning they were up early and getting ready to open the shop as though it were an ordinary day, and not the first of a new and more splendid future. But while she was frying the breakfast rashers Jane began to feel cold, as she had when she was facing the wind and snow on the previous night. Then a moment afterwards she felt hot, and finally she began to feel that the little kitchen was turning round and round. Tobias found her leaning against the wall, and the rashers curling up and smoking in the pan on the fire. He helped her up the steep stairs and back to bed, and the shop was opened late because he hurried out to fetch a doctor.

But that cucumber proved to be the most expensive thing Jane and Tobias had ever bought. It cost Jane her splendid future and the big house with the garden and cucumber frames, and it cost Tobias the wife he loved so much. Hurrying through the cold wind and snow without a hat or coat she had caught a chill, the chill settled at her lungs, and within three weeks she had left the quaint little shop with the hanging lamp for the last time.

For some time afterwards Tobias forgot all about "Starbolt's Pickled Cucumbers." He could think only of Jane. Cooking his own rashers in the mornings reminded him of her, customers coming and going reminded him of her because she had often looked out from the little back room where she was working and asked, "Who was that, Tobias?" and counting the takings at night reminded him, because they had always pleased that together and felt extra done if it had been a good day. Whenever he saw cucumbers at the greengrocer's on the corner they reminded Tobias of her because she had been so fond of them. Yet it was some small cucumbers at Old P.'s that reminded him again of his great plan, and he thought that Jane would have liked him to carry it out—which he did.

Tobias and Jane had always expected great things from "Starbolt's Pickled Cucumbers." But they had not expected that a small warehouse would soon be to small and a bigger one and a bigger one again still too small in turn. They had not expected orders to come from towns in the West, the Midlands, the North and even from Scotland. They had never dreamed that the name "Starbolt's" would finally be known all over the world, that Tobias would become a famous merchant, an owner of factories, wharves and even ships, and a personal friend of councillors, statesmen, and people of rank and fashion. Yet within twenty years all this happened. The tall jars with the red label—I have one still in my cabinet—bearing a picture of the little shop-front in Walworth Road and, in a curved band round the top, the words "Starbolt's Pickled Cucumbers," appeared on tables in every part of the world, and in the houses of all sorts of people, from the highest to the lowest. And Tobias Starbolt appeared in the houses and at the tables of the highest among those who used his pickled cucumbers. He even became a friend of the Prime Minister. Yet he did not forget Jane. Whenever he was riding home in his carriage from a great man's house, he would think of her and how proud she would have been to be with him. Then one day he thought of another wonderful plan, and it was Jane who inspired this, as she inspired the first. He was talking with his friend the Prime Minister, Lord . . .

"Ah, Starbolt," his lordship said, "the country needs more things like your cucumbers. Why is it the whole world knows all about them and nothing about the hundreds of other things we might sell them?" "I suppose they've never seen the other things," Tobias answered. His lordship sniffed and said it was time they did then.

Tobias drove home in his carriage thinking about this and about Jane. He had the big house now, and there was a large garden with a cucumber frame, just as he and Jane had planned. He always thought of the cucumber frame as a memorial to Jane. It would have pleased him better if the frame had been larger. She had been so much to him that he would like to have built a frame as big as a house, bigger than a house, bigger than twenty houses, the biggest cucumber frame in the whole world, in fact. Tobias was still thinking about what the Prime Minister had said and about Jane when he passed the cucumber frame on his way through the garden—and it was then that the second grand plan formed in his mind.

When he talked with his lordship next Tobias told him of this plan. He did not speak of it as a plan. He had grown wise in the way of dealing with statesmen and other great men. As he spoke of it, it was a vague suggestion, which might be moulded into a practical proposition if only someone in authority, with power and imagination, would consider it. His lordship sniffed again and Tobias felt more excited than he had felt since that sad night which had seemed so happy, when Jane had run out in the snow and wind to buy a cucumber. For Jane belonged to this plan as he had belonged to the other, and Tobias saw at last a way in which he might build a cucumber frame that would be big enough to be worthy of even the great love he had shared with her—even big enough to be a fitting memorial to her. His lordship sniffed again and Tobias began to make more suggestions—how even made a proposition. And his lordship sniffed even again and mentioned the name of someone even greater than himself to

whom he would mention Tobias and his proposition.

There was a long delay, as there so often is in great matters where the highest and noblest are involved, but at last his lordship patted Tobias on the shoulder again and told him he thought it would be all right—and it was.

There is no need for me, a spinster leading my quiet life in this quiet town of Leamington, to tell about the great Exhibition held in Hyde Park, London, in 1851. All the world knows of it and the great glass palace—Crystal Palace, it has been called—that was built there. But until now, none, except my family, the Meritons, and perhaps a few friends we have told, has known that the Exhibition was the second great plan Tobias Matthew Starbolt conceived and that the great glass palace—Crystal Palace—was the great cucumber frame, the greatest in the world, that he caused to be built as a memorial to Jane Meriton who became his wife. If he had told in this story had not happened, there would have been no great Exhibition of 1851.

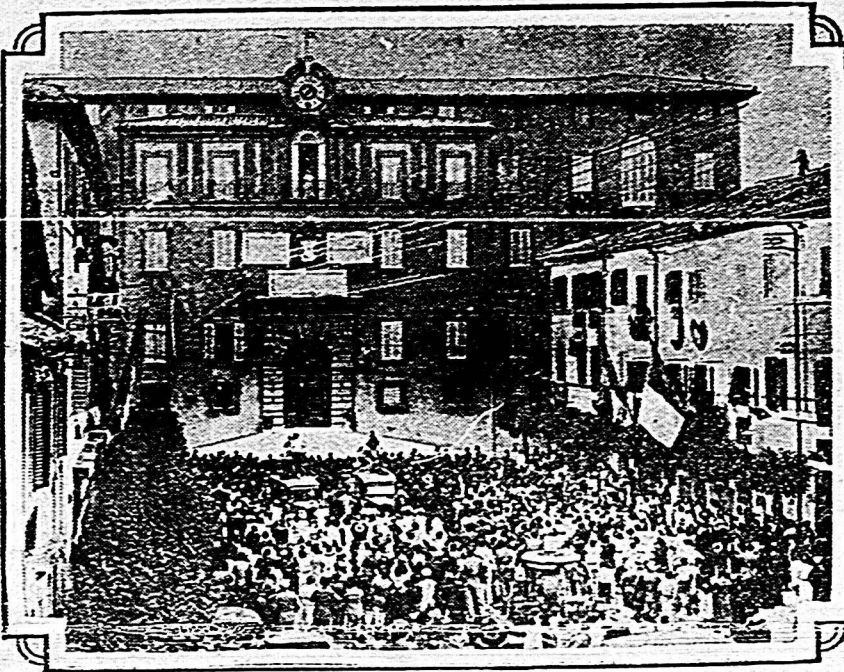
The Crystal Palace has been moved and stands now on Sydenham Hill, as everyone knows. And when this story is printed everyone may know that the palace is a mighty cucumber frame, not built secretly, but built as a secret memorial to Jane Meriton, who died in the little shop in Walworth Road and who loved cucumbers and Tobias Starbolt. Perhaps the Indian Princess for whom that wonderful Taj Mahal was built as a memorial was more beautiful than Jane Meriton, but I do not think she was loved more greatly or more truly, and if the Taj Mahal is more beautiful than the Crystal Palace, it is not a more fitting memorial, and I, at least, do not think its story is more beautiful. But perhaps it will not seem so as I have told it, because I am not very experienced at telling stories in writing. When I am with my friends in the afternoon quietly enjoying a cup of tea, it sounds a far more beautiful tale than this seems as I read it over now.—John O'London's Weekly.

What's in a Name—When it's on a House?

OLD COUNTRY PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO FIND NUMBERS MORE SATISFACTORY

There is at present in progress throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain a feud, says Jean Kel-

Holy Father On His Vacation



Marking the first time since 1870 that a Roman Catholic Pontiff has left the Vatican for a summer vacation, Pope Pius XI, is seen here on the balcony of Gondolfo Palace in Italy's Alban Hills. He is acknowledging the welcome of the mountain residents who greeted him upon his arrival.

vin, in the Glasgow Herald. A very well-behaved feud, certainly, but nevertheless a feud—between the Post Office and the householder. The trouble is that the Post Office strongly disapproves of the growing habit of giving a house a name instead of a number, and the situation has been greatly aggravated by the many thousands of new house-owners arising out of the development of suburban building schemes.

SHOULD BE NUMBERED.

As in all serious feuds there is justice on both sides, it is easy to understand how the new house-owners should prefer the individuality and significance of a name to the commonplace number. It is equally easy to see how the name system complicates matters for the postman: new names are evolved daily, and the only person who gets to know them is the postman on that particular district. When he changes there is a state of chaos at headquarters where a survey is continually being made of the whole area. So the Post Office is all for the simple code of numbers.

How are these two factions to be reconciled? Can the householder be persuaded to forego the sentimental satisfaction of a name? For there is little doubt that among the names, one of those atrocious concoctions sometimes seen, or the blatantly humorous, or the more hoity-toity place names, the attachment is a sentimental one.

It has amused me recently to investigate both an old established suburban district and its neighboring bungalows which have not yet seen the light of two summers. Of course it always has been a popular amusement to see what people call their homes; and one might even endeavor to deduce much therefrom concerning their personalities. But that is by the way. My investigation proved that people like to call their homes after places of which they have fond recollection or with which they have had happy associations. Of course that does not account for all the names. There is Inveraray, the Highlands, Balnacra, Achry, Killinveroran, Balmacra, Bendorlock, and so on. That may be a coincidence, yet I have also known areas where I was surprised to find Clyde resorts meeting me at every gatepost. Does it mean that the incoming householder, seeing the names around him, is immediately reminded of some

rocky shore where he, or she has basked and bathed?

Whatever the reason, I am full of sympathy for the preference for attractive names, and consider it a not very objectionable form of pride which wants to refer to three-roomed "Joanville" in the same way as others speak of their ancestral castles.

That is one side of the picture. But have you ever arrived in a long road of villas on a wet and murky night with only some such inappropriate name as "The Shelling" to guide you, and you know not whether it is on the left side coming down, and you have to tramp for miles, seemingly, before you arrive in a not too amiable frame of mind at your destination? Then you begin to see the value of a consecutive system of numbers, and have a little regard for the memory strain unnecessarily imposed on postmen and others who have to deliver goods.

ILLUMINATED NUMBERS
But this business of house identification may go a step still further. Just this week I learned that it is the ambition of the Electric Lamp Manufacturers' Association to have an illuminated number on the front of every house in Britain. Very wisely, too, conferences have been held between the electrical trade and members of the Architectural Association so that lamps should be built in to harmonize with the decorative scheme.

I wonder if this illuminated number would reconcile people to the loss of their beloved name? I am more inclined to think that instead they might even be anxious to have the name inscribed in glowing letters; then picture the sight of suburbia by night! The poor stars in their courses will have not much chance then.

"War will not come this year, but surely within the course of the next few years."—Emil Ludwig.

The Sunday School Lesson

"Hezekiah Leads His People Back to God"—2 Chronicles, Chapter 30
GOLDEN TEXT—"God is gracious and merciful."

TIME—Hezekiah was born, B.C. 717; became king, B.C. 723; held his great passover, B.C. 722.

PLACE—Perseus in "And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah." The good king was content with the reestablishment of worship in Jerusalem alone, but longed to restore the pure worship of Jehovah on a national scale. "And wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh. These tribes are specially mentioned, not only as being nearest to Judah,

but as being the leading tribes of Israel. "That they should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem." The ancient sanctuary established by the Lord, to replace which in the Northern Kingdom Jeroboam had set up rival sanctuaries at Bethel in the south and Dan in the north, where Jehovah was worshipped with the idolatrous symbol of bulls. "To keep the passover unto Jehovah." The passover is the chief religious feast of the Jews, commemorating the great deliverance of the people of God from the tenth plague in Egypt.

"The God of Israel." Hezekiah did not say, "the God of Judah," but used "Israel," the name of the Northern Kingdom, which was also God-given name of Jacob, and thus of all the Israelites, descended from him.

"For the king had taken counsel, and his princes." Hezekiah was no arbitrary ruler. He did not foolishly think that all wisdom resided in himself. "And all the assembly in Jerusalem." Hezekiah would have a true democracy. "To keep the passover in the second month." The second month of the Jewish year, the month Ziv or Iyar, corresponding roughly to our May.

"For they could not keep it at that time." At the time when Hezekiah reopened the renovated temple, "Because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number." A large number of priests would be required for the sacrifice of so many animals as would be offered up, and those priests must undergo a course of ceremonial purification to meet the requirements of the law. "Neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem." They had not assembled from the villages of Judah, to say nothing of the towns from one end of Palestine to the other.

"And the thing was right in the eyes of the king and of all the assembly." They all agreed to keep the passover once more, to hold it in the second month, and to invite the northern tribes to the feast.

"So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan." Beer-sheba was a town in the extreme south of Palestine and Dan a town in the extreme north, so that the phrase included the entire nation. "That they should come to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel." Hezekiah's reform had its political and social aspects, but he made it essentially and fundamentally religious.

"At Jerusalem." The religious centre of the nation, consecrated by centuries of worship and hallowed by the very presence of Jehovah in the Most Holy Place. "For they had not kept it in great numbers (margin, 'for a long time') in such sort as it is written." Pious families here and there had been observing the sacred feast according to God's explicit directions, but no observance on a national scale had been attempted for many decades.

"So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah." Swift and tireless runners sped along the pathways of Palestine, up the hill and down dale. "And according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto Jehovah." Turn away from your idols and yield once more to God. "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel." That is of Jacob, the God who had led their fathers to that goodly land and had made them a great nation. "That he may return to the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria." God is eager to meet his repentant children. Like the father of the prodigal who ran out to meet him and would not allow him to finish his prepared speech of confession, is our God hastens toward any sinner who turns back toward home.

"And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, who trespassed against Jehovah, the God of their fathers." A strange and significant fact in corroborating history is to be found in 1 Chron. 5: 23-26. "So that he gave them up to desolation, as ye see." The margin reads, "So that he gave them up to an as-tounding." Their pitiful fate amazed all the nations round.

"Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were." Beginning with the day of Jeroboam and Rehoboam, the Israelites had been stiff-necked in their determined opposition to the will of God. "But yield yourselves unto Jehovah." To yield ourselves to the Lord, is to make ourselves over to him giving him the entire possession and control of our whole being. "And enter into his sanctuary which he hath sanctified for ever." Hezekiah refers to the central building of Solomon's temple, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. "And serve Jehovah your God, by worshipping him and bringing him offerings." That his fierce anger may turn away from you. The message is an invitation, but it is also a warning.

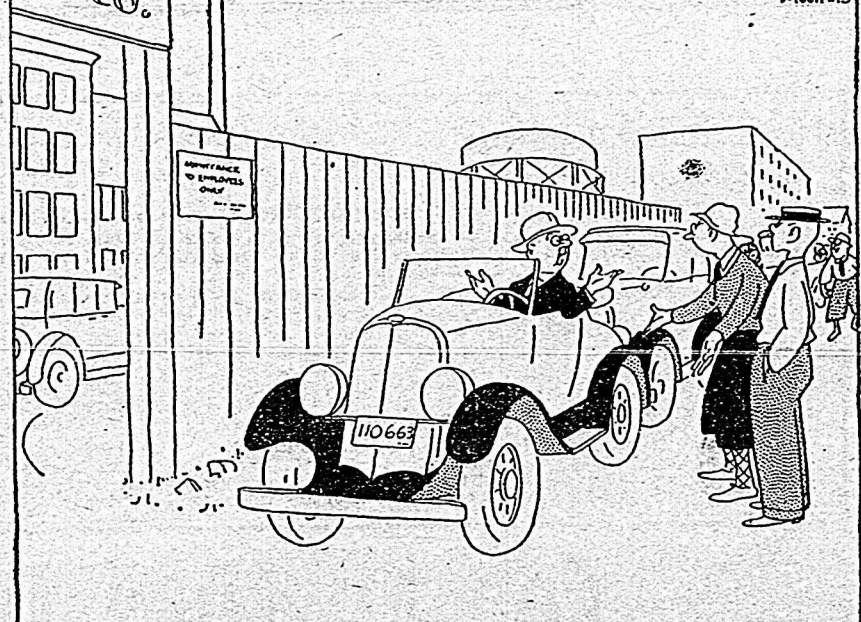
"For if ye turn again unto Jehovah, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that led them captive." Terrible indeed, was the lot of the exiles in Assyria. They were deprived of all their comforts, "And shall come again into this land." That was the one great longing of the exiles, expressed most sorrowfully in such psalms as Ps. 137: "By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept, When we remembered Zion." "For Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful. No one could have said that the Jews deserved to be brought back to their own land. But God's mercy exceeded their desiring. "And will not turn away his face, if ye return unto him." Strong sunny confidence in God shines from the whole message and reaches its climax in the closing assurance that he is merciful and gracious.

"And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month." So called because in memory of the hasty leaving of Egypt, only unleavened bread was used. "A very great assembly." The closing verses of this chapter carry swift and exultant joy, one particular tumbling after another as if the happy chronicle could not race his pen fast enough.

SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

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By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



FOR THEIR ANNUAL OUTING THE MEN'S CLUB DECIDED ON A CLAM-BAKE AT A LAKE THAT FRED PERLEY RECOMMENDED. NO ONE ELSE KNOWING HOW TO GET THERE FRED WAS TO LEAD THE WAY, BUT UNFORTUNATELY ERNIE PLUMER, WHO WAS NEXT BEHIND HIM, GOT CONFUSED IN THE TRAFFIC AND FOLLOWED THE WRONG CAR, THUS LEADING THE MEN'S CLUB EVENTUALLY TO THE WORKS OF THE ROYAL DYE AND WET WASH CO.