

The Free Press' Short Story

A Most Embarrassing Luncheon

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER

MABEL SUTTON surveyed the rent in her brother's coat with the tears making a wide river down her cheeks. She did not say a word; she did not even sob aloud. She just cried silently and steadily. Bob Sutton did not attempt to comfort her, either. He surveyed the sad mutilation with his eyes averted and his mouth a trifle tremulous. Finally he said in an odd, shaken voice:

"Well, that tears it!" He made the pun quite unconvincingly. Mabel went right on crying. It would have been impossible to put into words, then, all she was feeling. She knew that Bob's emotions were almost identical with her own. For his new suit, the coat of which was so badly ripped, was more than a suit. It represented scrupling and hardship and deprivation. It was the savings of a whole winter translated into blue serge.

Mabel thought, as she cried quietly, that not very much was left in the world, materially worth while, that she and Bob had not gone without of late. It was not fair, she told herself, not by any manner of means. Bob had been so shabby all winter, so out at the elbows, so bowed at the knees. They had waited patiently for the postholiday garment sales, laying by a quarter here, fifty cents there, now and again a whole dollar. The first of the year had come, and then February. She and Bob had gone to buy the long coveted suit. They had chosen it carefully and painstakingly, measuring value against value. They had eventually selected a dark room that would not show wear or tear, that would be dressier than miscolored even though it was not quite so warm. They had brought the suit home in a flat box, swathed in tissue, and had hung it breathlessly in the closet. Bob had said:

"I'll christen it on the day of the old gal's luncheon party." His tone endeavored to be light, but it was so crowded with awe that anyone listening would have wondered who the "old gal" could possibly be. This would do well to wonder, for she was Mrs. Hannah Humphrey, sole owner of the great Humphrey Manufacturing plant of which Bob was a minor cog. She was past seventy, and though she made her appearance at the plant only once a year, her gruff, grandiose presence was felt in every business move. She governed the destinies of many from her own drawing room. The visit to the plant, once a year, was a semi-sacred affair, a luncheon to which the heads of the departments alone were invited. These luncheons were awaited with eagerness and a good amount of apprehension, for during the luncheons "the old gal" came to many silent decisions regarding individual careers and advancements. This year marked the initial invitation for Bob. He was for the first time a department head. That his department was the tiniest one in the whole organization did not matter much. That he was included in the list of guests stood for plenty!

Being a department head should have meant that Bob Sutton and his sister had their share of the pleasant things of life, within reason. They did not, however, and through no fault of Bob's salary, either. The last two years had been difficult ones for them. Bob's savings had gone to pay off a mortgage, and he had had to meet the bills that had been outstanding as a result of the death of their parents. Then, with their savings gone, Mabel had come down with a serious attack of appendicitis, and for weeks her life had hung in a balance. There had been hospital, doctor, and nurses bills. They had mortgaged Bob's immediate future. It was a debt that neither Bob nor Mabel could deny, and which haunted them. The next suit Bob's blue serge was their first luxury in years. From that was not a luxury for they had agreed that Bob could not attend the start luncheon in rags.

Now the new suit, the upper part of it, at least was a rag. It was the very morning of the party. Mabel spoke, finally. Her voice was blurred with grief. "It's too dreadful to wear! Bob! How did it happen?" "I don't know exactly. I think there's a nail sticking out of the lapel on my bureau, perhaps the handle. I was leaning against the bureau sort of, to knot my tie. When I drew away something caught and I heard a nasty sound and—"

Mabel started to say, "How could you have been so careless, Bob?" but she was arrested and she held her tongue. She murmured, instead, "Lend me your handkerchief, please. My eyes in slumpe to do some thing. I'll show, of course, but—"

"You're a peach, dot to scold. Yes, a darn will show like anything, but a darn's better than my old suit. I'm actually walking out of that!" Mabel Sutton was an exquisite needlewoman, but despite that fact the darn did show, as plainly as both she and Bob had expected. It made an ugly scar down the length of the blue serge, a scar that was emphasized rather than eradicated by Mabel's neat stitches. When the darn was finished she sighed ever so softly, and helped Bob put the coat on.

"We've had worse things happen than this," he said. "Remember, when you were taken sick? And it's the old lady's going to stare at mended places. It's merely her bad manners! His time for all his bravado, was the time of a small boy who has lost his stick of candy. "She probably won't know what any of you have on; she's very old and probably not too observant. There, now," her voice broke, "you must hurry along. You'll be late to work, and I doubt if they'd accept a darn as an adequate excuse for lateness at the plant, even on a party day!" "Goodness knows what I'd do with you, Mabel!" Bob said as he hurried away. He reached the factory in the nick of time, a split second before a gong rang announcing the beginning of the day's work.

Neighborhood News CAMPBELLVILLE (intended for Last Week)

Miss Margaret Hunter of Bradford is holidaying at her home in the village. The W. M. S. of St. David's Presbyterian Church held its regular meeting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alex. McPhee on Thursday afternoon. The Scripture lesson was read by Mrs. W. Van Sickle and Miss Jean McPhail gave the topic on "Repent." A discussion on conditions as they exist at present was conducted by Mrs. George Inglis and Miss Lottie Moore. Mrs. L. Shurpe who was a delegate to the Presbyterian held in Brockville gave a very fine report. Lunch was served at the house of the meeting and a vote of thanks was rendered Mrs. McPhee for her hospitality.

Mr. Donald Matheson of Dresden spent the week-end at the home of Mrs. Ethel Bell. Mrs. Wm. Colver was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital on Wednesday where she is to undergo a serious operation in a few days. Her many friends in the village wish her a speedy recovery.

Messrs. David McPhail and Herb Garrett both of the R.C.A.F. were home on Wednesday. Mr. Tom Mitchell of Toronto was home over Sunday. Mrs. M. J. Moore R.N. of Toronto, is home for a few days. Miss Lillian McPhail of Milton, has been home on holidays.

EDEN MILLS (intended for Last Week)

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Webb and son of Hamilton, Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Clark and daughter of Georgetown, Mr. and Mrs. Will Webb of Guelph and Mrs. M. Clark of Rockwood, visited in the home of Mrs. T. Webb recently.

Miss Bernice Chapman of Whitby visited over the holiday week-end. Her friends Mrs. Mel Storey and Mr. Storey. Mr. and Mrs. Will Currie and little son of Toronto and Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Currie of Guelph, visited recently in the home of Mr. and Mrs. G. Thomas.

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Coulson and John spent last Sunday in the home of Mrs. Coulson's parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Bradley at Bebovood.

Mr. and Mrs. T. Ingle spent the holiday in Toronto. The regular monthly meeting of the Ladies Aid of the Presbyterian Church was held in the vestry with Mrs. Gordon in charge. A quilt was quilted during the afternoon and several items of business were discussed.

Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Martin have returned to their home in Kilmorie after visiting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Mel Storey.

Mr. and Mrs. George Ramsey and family of St. George visited in the home of Mrs. Ramsey and Mr. Clarence Ramsey on Sunday. Miss Hazel remained for a visit with her grandmother.

Mrs. Will Wilson visited in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Wilson for a few days.

Miss Olive Taylor of Stratford is holidaying in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ed. Taylor.

Mr. and Mrs. Will Wilson visited in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Harold Wilson at Hespier on Sunday and attended the baptism of their infant grandson in the Presbyterian church there.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Lemmer of Guelph visited over the week-end in the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Lowrie.

Mr. and Mrs. George McPhail and little daughter of Sudbury visited in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon McPhail.

Congratulations are extended to Mr. and Mrs. James Gilbertson on the occasion of their 25th wedding anniversary. Members of the families were gathered at their home to wish them many more years of happiness.

London Craftsmen Ship Leaf One 200,000th of an Inch Thick. In London the most advanced machinery that has ever been developed is used in the making of ship hulls. The hulls are made of a material which is stronger than steel and is lighter in weight. The hulls are made in a factory in London and are used in the making of ships. The hulls are made in a factory in London and are used in the making of ships. The hulls are made in a factory in London and are used in the making of ships.

What do you think of it? You can ask me right here, in the whole of Canada. Mrs. Hannah Humphrey said gratefully "I get the fact, well, my father's Hamburg was a splendid one." Bob spoke. What he said surprised even him. "You're a peach," he had heard the head of the Humphrey Manufacturing Plant say.

CUPID SMASHES RULES. LONDON. (C.P.) Regulations governing Polish armaments in Britain say they must not only Polish girls but authorities made an exception of Mary Mason of Wigan who married a Polish wireless operator and "is the happiest girl in Lancashire".

WAR 25 Years Ago

Strong Canadian Offensive Drove Germans from Strategic Positions in the Ypres Salient

BY H. H. GORDON Canadian Press Staff Writer. Sanctuary Wood, Arras Wood, Maple Copse, Mount Sorrel, four spots in the First Great War's battle-line in Northern France and Belgium are sacred to the memory of thousands of Canadians who gave their lives early in June 1916 in the bloody fighting that preceded the Battle of the Somme.

It was in this area of blasted tree stumps, with the appearance of a fire-bombed northern Ontario forest, that the Canadian Corps added fresh laurels to those gained in the Second Battle of Ypres a year earlier. Forced to withdraw from their positions on June 2 in the face of withering artillery fire, the Canadians in bitter hand-to-hand fighting regained the ridges 10 days later.

Heavy losses were suffered when the Germans on June 2 unleashed a terrific bombardment on the Canadian positions between Hooge and Mount Sorrel. In the thick of the fighting, Maj. Gen. M. S. Mercer, Commander of the 2nd Division, fell when a piece of shrapnel pierced his heart and Brig. Gen. V. A. S. Williams, seriously wounded, was taken prisoner.

Orders Ground Broken. Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig decided to reverse the ground in which the enemy had penetrated to a depth of 700 yards. For nine days the Canadians prepared for attack. Artillery support was brought up to replace the guns and guns lost.

For four hours after dusk on June 12 the Germans were pounded in a bombardment that was the equal, if not worse, than the shelling that had forced the Canadians to withdraw early the following morning. The excessive troops advanced behind a deadly barrage.

Signals for help went up from the German trenches and the enemy at

tillery made a powerful reply that rained many Canadian casualties but the attacking battalions had got under way. They charged through Arras Wood, across Mount Sorrel over Observatory Ridge and into Sanctuary Wood. At dawn the Canadians had reached all objectives except for a few yards of relatively unimportant trenches, thus averting the losses of June 2. In Sir Douglas Haig's famous report of the action he said the attack was "thoroughly prepared, well-executed and successfully accomplished by troops on the spot."



CANADA'S telephone traffic is climbing to new peaks. Engaged in all-out war effort Canadians are depending on telephone facilities more than ever. That's why telephone workers are determined to maintain the fastest, most efficient service under all conditions. They are especially grateful for the sympathetic cooperation of all telephone users. Subscribers can aid in making severely-taxed telephone facilities yield maximum service.

- By looking up the number in the directory
- By speaking distinctly directly into the mouthpiece
- By answering promptly when the bell rings

Please be sure, also, to replace the receiver on the hook. Over 120,000 times last year, tele-phones were reported "out of order" because of receivers left off or improperly replaced. These things are what we mean by "co-operation."

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Tomatoes Aylmer 2 15-oz. tins 15c

Desert Layers Christie's 4 for 10c

Layer Cake Cocoanut Ea. 25c

Vi-Tone Choc. Biscuits Tin 24c, 43c

Biscuits Elizabeth Creams lb. 17c

Corn Starch 2 pkgs. 19c

Nescafe Pure Milk tin 22c, 59c

Mayonnaise Blue Ribbon jar 10c, 21c

Lemon Pie Shiraz's Mix pkg. 14c

Pudding Shiraz's Fruit tin 25c

Jam Westalls' Strawberry, with peaches 32-oz. jar 27c

Sardines Pride of Fundy, Smoked tin 10c

California, 80-90

PRUNES 2 lbs. 15c

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Carroll's SOAP FLAKES 4-lb. box 25c

FLOOR WAX Hawes tin 25c, 45c

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Also Fresh Radishes, Strawberries, Cucumbers, Tomatoes, Etc.

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