

STRANGER IN NEED

Two Helping Hands—and a ring for one of them!

By ROWAN GLEN.

Though there were few customers in the tea-room that afternoon, Alan Denny chose its quietest corner. His mood was as gloomy as the weather in the London street outside, but within a few moments or having given his order to a languid waitress he became interested in someone other than himself.

At a table near his—and alone, as he was—there sat a girl so fresh and pretty that his first casual glance steadied into a gaze which would have been rude had she been able to see it. But she was daintily busy with tea and an iced cake.

At last, as though aware that she was being scrutinized, the girl half turned her head, and for an instant her eyes and his met and held. Then she looked away, and Alan opened his evening paper, laid it beside the wooden tray which had been dumped in front of him, and, gloomy again, turned to the column headed "Situations Vacant—Professional Men."

He found nothing there to cheer him, and presently, instead of reading, he was listening—listening to what Blue-Eyes at the next table was saying in a softly modulated but very troubled voice to the languid waitress.

It was, of course, no business of Alan's, but he chose to make it so. Blue-Eyes was in distress, and the waitress—far from being sympathetic, or even reasonable—was waspish.

"That's all very well, miss, but I've heard the same sort of thing before," she said. "You say you've lost your purse—missed it all of a sudden, like. Well, your bill comes to ninepence—and ninepence I must have. Names and addresses are no good to us. Oh, all right! By all means I'll get the manageress, but she'll say the same as I do. She's there by the door, talking to a customer, but I'll fetch her."

She moved away, and it was at this point that Alan acted. It is to his credit that he did so less because he had been attracted by the girl's appearance than because he believed her distress to be genuine, and was sorry for her.

"Now, do please be sensible," he was saying presently. "Oh, I know you don't want to accept a favor from a stranger, and all that sort of thing! You and I have never seen each other before; most likely we'll never see each other again. The waitress doesn't seem to trust you for ninepence, but I do. I know you wouldn't take it as a gift, but let me lend it to you—more if you need a railway fare or anything. I'd be allowed to help a friend—why not a stranger for once?"

For the second time she met his eyes; hers were still troubled. Then: "You're awfully kind, and I think I'm going to let you help," she said. "There wasn't much in my purse—only a few shillings and the return half of my ticket to Craggsy. The single is one-and-six, so I'd need—let's see—two-and-threepence altogether. I could have phoned my uncle at his office, only he's not there to-day, and—"

Alan had taken a half-crown from his pocket, and, as though the sight of the money had brought all her conventional qualms trooping back, she exclaimed:

"But, after all, I really can't let you. I feel so—so—"

"I can guess. But it's very silly of you," he told her. "The manageress will be here any moment, and you want to avoid trouble. I wish you'd let me help. You don't think I'm trying to buy your acquaintance for half-a-crown, do you?"

"If it makes things any easier for you, you can think of me as an old married man—well, several years married, anyhow. There, that does make a difference, I can see! I—I'll tell my wife all about this—and we'll be eagerly awaiting the half-crown postal order! Buck us up no end—particularly as to-day sees me among the out-of-works."

He pushed the coin towards her, and very slowly the slim fingers fastened on it; slowly the blue eyes ceased to worry, and a minute or so later she was saying:

"I shan't lose the name and address, Mr. Denny—and I think you're the kindest person I've ever met. You can tell your wife I said so. Married men are the nicest. And I'm terribly sorry about you losing that job. It's funny that you should be an architect. My uncle's one, too. Perhaps—I don't know—but perhaps one of these days I might be able to help you."

"I don't want anything of that sort," he assured her quietly. "I don't even want thanks. This is just

the sort of thing one does now and then—or someone does for us."

He was entirely sincere when he said that, but knew a decided thrill when, some thirty-six hours later, he received a brief note signed "Margaret Fraser"—a note which enclosed a half-crown postal order, and then went on:

"If you are still worried about getting a post—not for yourself, I know—please call to see Mr. David Fraser, at 12, Craggan Place, W.1, any afternoon this week—Thursday for choice. I have mentioned you to him, and I think there might be something going. Anyway, it is worth trying. I allowed you to help me, so you must allow me to help you if I can. And I hope you gave my message to Mrs. Denny."

At first Alan permitted himself a foolish hesitation, then moved his broad shoulders and said aloud:

"After all, why shouldn't you have a shot at the thing? If this fellow, David Fraser, has a vacancy for an assistant in his drawing office you're fit for it. You couldn't help Warren and Beamish putting their shutters up in a hurry—and you need a job."

So it came about that, soon after three o'clock on Thursday afternoon, Alan called at 12, Craggan Place. While he was in the waiting-room the door opened, and Miss Margaret Fraser looked in.

"Hallo, Mr. Denny!" she started. "I was told you were here, and I've popped in for just one second. My uncle will be seeing you soon, and afterwards I want you to have tea with me and tell me what's happened. Will you? I'll be at the Palm Tree, across the road, in a little over half an hour. Can you be there?"

"Yes," he answered in some confusion. "And, whatever happens, I want to thank—"

"Oh, nonsense!" she said. "Now I'm off—and here's a clerk coming for you."

The interview between Alan and elderly David Fraser went along with complete satisfaction till the latter, having dealt with such matters as references, salary, and the main work to be done by his newest assistant, said:

"Well, I think that's everything, Mr. Denny, for the time being. Queer the way things happen! You did a kindness to a stranger in whom you had no interest, and the same may be said now of her."

"Peggy—that's my niece—is one of the impulsive kind; but she's got a very warm heart, and I fancy she was thinking as much about your wife as she was about you. She knew that in the department you'll be joining I make it a strict rule to employ only married men, and she's been picturing you going back with good news to Mrs. Denny. So—Why, what's the matter? Anything wrong?"

"I—I'm afraid so," Alan managed very awkwardly. "Do you mean that this job you were giving me must be filled by a married man?"

"Certainly I mean that! Why do you ask?"

"Because—well, you see, I never thought the point would arise, and, indeed, I'd forgotten all about having led Miss Fraser to think I was married. I'm not; I'm single."

"Single? But I don't understand. My niece distinctly told me—"

"Yes, I know, sir. I remember now. It was wrong, of course, but I meant it for the best. She seemed so disinclined to let me help her that I thought if she thought I was married it would make it easier for her to accept. And I think it did. I don't know exactly what to say now. There isn't anything really. It seems as

though, without mentioning it, I've been wasting your time, and I can only hope you'll forgive me."

David Fraser did, but that did not imply a change in his rule about giving certain posts only to married men.

"You meant well in giving my niece that impression about yourself, and I don't blame you," he said. "But you're not eligible for the post, and that's all there is to it. I'm sorry, for I think we'd have got on together, and I don't like sending you away with nothing."

"The best I can offer, in the circumstances, is to fix you up with some special work you can do for a week or two, partly at your lodgings and partly at my house at Craggsy. It won't amount to much, but it will keep you going till something better turns up."

It was a disconsolate and confused Alan who faced Peggy Fraser over a table in the Palm Tree, and the astonishment with which she heard his news did little to put him at ease.

"And to think I wasted all that sympathy on a wife you didn't have!" she said, when his explanations were over. "But putting it that way sounds rude, and I don't mean to be. You were very kind to me, and I should have had more intuition, or whatever it is all women are supposed to have."

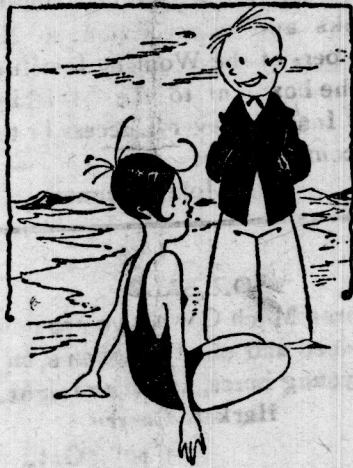
"But I really did believe you were married, and I was so sorry for Mrs. Denny when I thought of her having to hear about your lost position. It was rather mad of me, I suppose, but somehow I'd pictured you and her as being awfully fond of each other. However, all that doesn't matter now. I'm afraid Uncle David won't change his mind, but before you've finished the special work he's given you, you may have found a job by yourself."

Things did not, however, work out quite like that. Instead, when he had known David Fraser for less than three weeks Alan re-applied for the post which had been offered to him and then withdrawn.

"It's different now, sir," Alan said. "I mean about me being single. I am still, of course, but just so soon as I can fix up something good and secure I'm going to get married."

"I know all about it," the other answered, and the gruffness in his voice did not hide the friendliness in his eyes. "Peggy warned me last night—and I'm not going to fill that position till you're qualified for it. And all this has sprung out of what would be called, I expect, thoughtfulness for others. Quite extraordinary, really!"

"Absolutely!" said Alan, and hurried off to the place where he knew Peggy would be waiting. — London "Answers."



He: Do you imagine she's marrying me for my money?
She: If anybody is thinking at all of marrying you it must be for your money.

Told in Brief

To-day more than 14,000,000 people are dependent upon charity in the United States.

Free meals to the number of 62,300,000 were served to 400,000 children in British schools last year.

There are now 147 open-air schools in Gt. Britain; when the movement started in 1910, there were seven.

The British Museum contains the largest library in the world; it has some 5,000,000 books under one roof.

Light civil aeroplanes produced in the United Kingdom are definitely far ahead of those of any other European nation.

So perfect has the system of weather-watching become in Gt. Britain that every day 7,000 facts about the weather are at the disposal of forecasters.

So strenuous is the work nowadays that the "working life" of a chorus girl may begin at sixteen but seldom lasts past the age of thirty.

Four winter schools for the training of cricketers are now open in London. One of them alone has 1,000 pupils, including forty women.

Gt. Britain's supply of home-grown Christmas-trees is not nearly equal to the demand, and will continue in this state for two or three years yet.

An average well-educated person in the United Kingdom will use between 2,000 and 3,000 words; the vocabulary of a farm laborer seldom exceeds 700 words.

As worms have no ears, they cannot hear; but their nervous systems are alive to such sounds as cause vibrations round them.

During its forty-nine years of special work among women, the Salvation Army has provided nearly 11,000,000 beds for homeless women and girls in the United Kingdom.

Girls were first called "flapper" early in the eighteenth century, from a fancied likeness in them to young ducks which make a lot of noise with their wings.

Roads in the United Kingdom are getting crowded. In the course of a recent "census," the Automobile Association counted an average of nearly 70,000 more vehicles per day than in 1932.

While still at school, the young people of Carmel, a small town in New York State, learn the rudiments of any trade or profession, so that they may discover if they are really fitted for it.

In the last three years, more than 101,750 persons have been settled on Canadian farms or given farm employment under the auspices of the Government and the two great railways.

Gt. Britain now ranks third among the telephone-using nations of the world. The United States has 17,547,000; Germany 2,961,401, and Great Britain 2,161,700 instruments in the Post Office system.

Smaller than half an ordinary postage stamp, the world's smallest book has just been produced. It contains twenty-eight pages, and took seven years to produce.

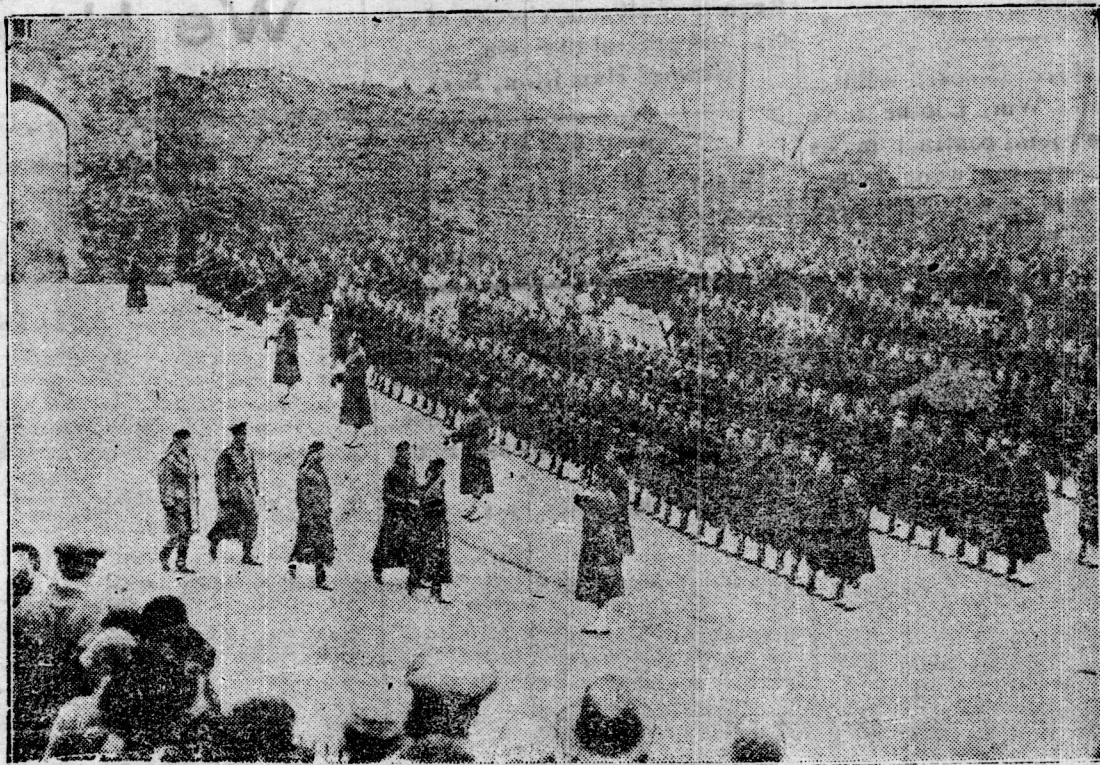
Traffic Officers to Wear Tail-Lights

Sacramento, Calif. — Sacramento police officers directing traffic past congested intersections at night are to wear red tail-lights so they won't get bumped.

This is Superintendent of Traffic Fritz Kaminsky's latest idea on how to reduce the mortality rate among corner traffic directors.

"Motorists complain that they can't see the traffic officers from behind and we can't afford to put in overhead lights," Kaminsky said. "Therefore, we shall hang three-inch red reflectors on the back of the officer's belt."

Prince Inspects Seaforth Highlanders



With the ruined battlements of historic Dover castle providing a fitting background, H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, colonel-in-chief of the Seaforth Highlanders, inspected his regiment before it left on the road to Mandalay and points east.

London-Singapore In Ten Days

Another Link in Projected Empire Air-Lines

Another link in the chain of Empire air-lines which will, ultimately, provide regular air communications to all parts of the Empire, was forged with the departure of the Indian air-mail from London on Dec. 9.

After proceeding over the existing 7,200 miles route to Egypt, Karachi, Calcutta and Rangoon, the service flew on, for the first time, over a new 1,500 miles extension from Rangoon to Singapore, accomplishing in ten days a journey which by the fastest surface transport occupies 20 days.

"An additional interest was imparted to this inaugural flight," explained an official, "owing to the fact that it has been found possible to arrange for the service to carry Christmas mail from this country to the Straits Settlements. This means that those who assembled at Singapore to welcome the arrival of the machine completing the first regular air-link with London had the satisfaction of being able to receive, by this initial flight, seasonable greetings from their relatives and friends in the homeland."

The first return flight from Singapore to London is due to leave Singapore on Dec. 31, and will reach London on Jan. 10.

It has been the aim of Imperial Airways, since its inception nine years ago, to establish link by link a series of long-distance air-mail routes stretching across the Empire. In 1927 the first Empire air-mail was established between Cairo and Basra. In 1929 came the institution of the service of 5,000 miles from England to India. In 1931 the company opened the first sections of the air mail between England and Africa, and by 1932 the complete through route was in operation from London to Cape Town.

This year a further arduous phase of work has borne fruit in the extension of the Indian air-mail towards Australia. In July the air-mail from England began operating over a new 1,500 miles extension from Karachi to Calcutta, bringing Calcutta within 7 days of London by air, and in October the service continued on over another link of 700 miles to Rangoon, the through-flight from London to Rangoon being accomplished in 8 days, as compared with 23 by surface transport. Now, with this further link to Singapore, the position is reached when 8,700 miles of the total route of 11,000 miles from London to Port Darwin, Australia, is in regular operation; while arrangements are being completed for the institution, during 1934, of the remaining 2,300 miles between Singapore and the Australian coast, thus enabling the long-cherished ambition to be realized of a regular flying mail between Australia and the homeland.

British Marriage Rush Helps Trade

London.—The bachelor in Britain is on the run.

Not for many years have churches and registry offices been so besieged with couples wanting to get married as at the present time.

Figures show that the past three months produced 35,000 more bridegrooms than in the previous three months, and 16,000 more than in the same period of 1932.

Economists, whatever the woman-hater might think, see the figures as a valuable indication of improvement in trade while in turn so many more marriages naturally contribute greatly to trade improvement. In house-building, for instance, there are nearly 78,000 more workers employed now than a year ago.

Danes Use Barter To Carry on Trading

Copenhagen.—Use of a barter system in Denmark has been under discussion between France, Germany and Denmark, it is reported.

For the next few months, as an experiment, France will exchange wine and steel railway rails for 400 tons of butter of 8,000 casks, in addition to the usual 10,000 cask contract every quarter to that country. There is also a possibility of using a barter system between Germany and Denmark, the latter country giving horned cattle for German industrial goods.

The Danish currency office has stopped many of the business connections with Germany, some of which have existed for several generations, it is said, and a barter system between the peasant and merchant will help to sustain these for the present.

"A mere puppet can administer the affairs of a nation in good times. It is in hard and critical times that a leader is needed."—Benito Mussolini