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A Broken Broom-Stick

By P. BEAUFOY.

No woman—no girl—nothing feminine, in fact, except the charwoman, who was reputed to be ninety at least—had ever passed the portals of the offices of Mr. Geoffrey Ware, merchant of Lime Street, London, E.C.

It therefore came as a surprise to the said Geoffrey Ware when, on entering his private room one morning, he found a tall, somewhat alluring-looking girl seated in his best chair.

"Who are you, and how dare you enter this office?" he asked angrily.

Most men of forty-two or thereabouts, with fairly attractive faces and without any responsibilities in the shape of a wife or family, would have welcomed this unexpected visitor. But Geoffrey Ware never looked at a woman if he could possibly help it—never spoke to one if he could avoid it. He hated the sex with a force and consistency worthy of a better cause.

The girl did not seem at all abashed.

"Perhaps I have made a mistake," she said, sweetly. "I was told that this was the private office of Mr. Ware the marine engineer."

"His office is on the next floor," snapped the other Mr. Geoffrey Ware. "You have made a foolish mistake. Can't you read? Couldn't you see the word 'Merchant' printed after my name on the doorplate?"

Then, suddenly blazing with anger, he almost shouted:—

"If he cares to engage you—for I suppose you have come after a situation—that's his business. As for me, I wouldn't have a woman clerk in my office if she paid to be allowed to work. You understand?"

"You have made yourself fairly clear, Mr. Ware," the girl replied with a slight flush. "And you have really interested me. May I ask why you object so much to my unfortunate sex?"

"I don't know that I ought to humor you," snapped Ware, "but perhaps it's as well you should hear the truth for once. You girls are so accustomed to the sugar-plums that you don't often realize the bitter things. Well, my objections to women-labor in offices are several. In the first place, I consider that they give an office an unbusinesslike appearance. Secondly, they are nearly always unpunctual; and thirdly, they are frequently ill, or imagine they are ill. Generally speaking, they are a nuisance."

He flung himself into a chair and took up some papers.

"I won't detain you any longer," he said.

The girl bit her lip.

"Then I'll detain myself," she replied. "I've heard your opinion of girls. Perhaps you would like to hear mine about some kinds of men."

"No, thanks; I've no time for feminine sermons. Please get out of my office."

"I would rather not go untill I have told you. Come, be fair. I listened very patiently to you."

"I have told you to go!"

"And I have refused to go. There!"

She stamped her foot. She had to do something definite like that, or she might have been foolish enough to start crying.

He pressed an electric bell, and a clerk came quickly to the room.

"Jerrold, show this person out."

The clerk held the door open. The girl did not stir. The man grinned foolishly.

"If she won't go, Jerrold, send for a policeman," thundered Ware.

The clerk made a movement as if to carry out the order. Mary Blake realized that she had persisted long enough.

"Don't bother about the policeman, Mr. Jerrold," she said. "I'm going now. But—but I shall write to you," she added, and she gave Ware a furious glance.

"You can do what you like so long as you get out of this office."

The moment the girl had gone, he turned angrily upon the clerk.

"Now, Jerrold, understand me. If ever a woman finds her way into my private room again, I'll sack the lot of you. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied Jerrold, meekly. When he reached the other side of the door he grinned.

"The governor is awfully down on women," he reflected. "He must have had a nasty knock when he was young."

* * * *

On the following morning Geoffrey Ware found a letter on his desk. He opened it and read:

Fern Villa, Lake Road,
Wimbledon, S.W.

"Sir,—I cannot tell you what I think of your abominable conduct this morning. I know that, nowadays, women don't expect to receive quite the treatment of a bygone time, but such rudeness as you showed me would have been inexcusable even if I had been a man. Surely, you might have told me that you didn't want my presence without insulting me as you did.

"Hoping that you are thoroughly ashamed of yourself, I am yours truly,
"Mary Blake."

Utterly disgusted, he seized a pen and wrote these words:

"Madam,—I have received your note. It is absurd to talk about my having insulted you. A man surely has a right to say who shall and shall not enter his own office. If you had not entered a room where you were not invited, this would never have occurred.

"The rudeness you speak of was certainly present, but obviously it was your own fault, for you should have left the office directly you discovered your mistake. Had I been guilty of rudeness without justification, I would have apologized. As it is, I consider that I did the right thing, and I remain,
Yours obediently,
"G. Ware."

He hoped that he had done with Miss Mary Blake. But that he was unduly optimistic was proved next morning, when another note from the young lady lay on his desk:

"Sir," it said—"Thanks for your letter. It leaves me quite unconvinced. However, I shall not attempt to argue with you, for as my mother says, one may as well try to sweep a floor with a broken broom-stick as to argue with an angry and unreasonable man.

"Your faithfully,
"Mary Blake."

When he came to the words "A broken broom-stick," Geoffrey Ware uttered a little ejaculation.

"By Jove," he muttered, "I wonder how many years it is since I last heard that expression."

"One might as well try to sweep the floor with a broom-stick as to . . ."

The office faded. The roar of the city failed to reach his ears. Geoffrey Ware was twenty-two years old again and he was on the sands by the Devon sea, with a girl beside him.

He was fond of girls in those days. There was one girl whom he was trying very hard to make his wife—but she had suddenly turned him down and married someone else. He had accepted his disappointment with resignation, but it made him a bitter man.

And now those trivial words about the broken broom-stick had recalled to him the one woman on earth who had ever mattered. It was her saying—a little proverb invented by her and never used, he was certain, by any other woman. How came it, then, that Mary Blake had used it in her letter?

There could be only one explanation. In that moment the heart of the bitter man of forty-two became as the heart of a boy. The misery of embittered years rolled away like a cloud, and behind it he saw the glamor of the days of one-and-twenty!

So Mary—his Mary—was still alive.

As he sat there, his thoughts turning youthwards, there suddenly came upon Geoffrey Ware a wild, dominating impulse to seek out his old love. He tried to turn his attention to his work, but all his efforts were useless.

He rose and paced the room with wild steps.

"I'm mad, I suppose," he muttered, "but I must see her. I must——"

Five minutes later he was in a taxi on the way to Wimbledon.

Throughout the journey his brain worked swiftly. Perhaps he was travelling on a fool's errand Perhaps it was not Mary after all. Proverbs—even home-made proverbs—had a knack of getting repeated.

Would the journey never end? He was absurdly impatient—he wondered at his empetuosity. It seemed like a miracle that he, Geoffrey Ware, should be speeding with passionately beating heart to seek out the one woman who had caused all his regrets.

The cab stopped at the door of a pretty little house covered with ivy.

"Is Mrs. Blake at home?" he asked the maid who opened the door.

"Yes, sir. What name, please."

"My name is Ware—Geoffrey Ware. But one moment. Is Mr. Blake here also?"

"Mr. Blake died three years ago, sir."

She beckoned him into a small room. He saw some photographs on the piano. One of them was of the girl whom he had treated so rudely. The other was the Mary of his boyish love. So he was right after all.

Footsteps sounded outside. He went towards the door and held it open. The woman come in.

"You?" she said, with a little catch in her voice, as she took his hand and held it. "I—I wondered if you would ever come back."

He did not speak for a moment. He led her to the little sofa, and they sat down.

"You're husband is dead," he said, at length.

"Yes, it wasn't a happy marriage. It may sound wicked to say so, but I am glad I am free. I see now what a mistake I made when I married him."

"Why did you do it?" asked Ware, hoarsely.

"Why do we ever do mad, foolish things, Geoffrey? I was just nineteen at the time—and—I thought that money was better than love. But I have learned my lesson since, and learned it only too well."

Suddenly she rose, put her hands to her face, and went out of the room. When she came back she placed something in his hand. It was a sprig of rosemary.

"You sent it to me the last time you ever wrote," she whispered. "That time when you were in Scotland. You remember?"

"I remember. And you have kept it all this time?"

"I shall always keep it, Geoffrey. I—I was looking at it only yesterday when I was going through some old treasures. Rosemary for remembrance."

He took her hand.

"I had never forgotten," he said, simply.

* * * *

"Just fancy," wrote Miss Mary Blake, to a girl chum a few days later, "Mother is going to be married to an old flame of hers—a man who treated me abominably when I went to his office about a situation. But I've found out since that he's quite a good sort, and it was really all mother's fault that he ever got so disagreeable to our charming sex.

"And there's another thing. It was really me who brought them together. For when I wrote him a very nasty little letter to put him in his place, I used a proverb which mother had invented about a broken broom-stick. Directly he read the words he guessed who mother must be, and then he made up for lost time."

And so it was. If the broken broom-stick proverb had served no other purpose, it had at least brought together two hearts which might otherwise have beaten in loneliness to the end!

(The End.)

The "Human" Side of Plants.

In a recent book, Royal Dixon maintains that plants have "a human side." He tells of plants that walk, plants that fly—or at least use airplanes to enable their seeds to fly, of plants that fish, that keep servants and domestic animals, that use animals for transportation, that forecast the weather and tell the name of day and accomplish many other marvels that seem to ape human intelligence.

We know, of course, that plants are not really "human," as that term is usually understood, and that they are not even on a par with the animals that we consider so far beneath us. But it is admittedly hard to tell just where to draw the line between plants and animals and men, and the more one studies nature with an open mind, the more there does seem to be some sort of intelligence and feeling common to all living things.

Samuel Butler, in one of his books, maintains that both plants and animals actually do possess intelligence, not merely of a human sort, but in some particulars above the human standard. He accounts for all such marvels as those mentioned above by explaining that the plants know exactly what they are about—that they do what they do because, in the course of long and shrewd experimentation, they have found that that is the best way for them to get along. Likewise with animals. The chicken creates an egg, he says, because the chicken has learned exactly how to do it, with a definite purpose in view; and the egg in turn creates a chicken because the egg knows by oft-repeated experience just how to go about that wonderful task. The acorn produces an oak because it wants to do it, and knows how. The flowering plant knows all about bees, and produces flowers especially designed to attract them and have them distribute its pollen.

The knowledge of the plant or animal is all the more perfect, Butler argues, because it is so largely "unconscious." We ourselves only know perfectly, he reminds us, those things that we have done so often that we have learned to do them automatically. That is the way with the bees and ants. When you are conscious of knowing a thing, he says, you do not know it absolutely.

There is infinite interest, recreation and stimulation to be found in observing our plant and animal brethren. The world is a great deal bigger, more varied and more wonderful than any petty round of business, society and politics.

Who Invented Pianos?

Although the Germans claim to have invented the piano, there seems to be no doubt that the honor belongs to Italy.

There are in existence two of the first pianos made by a harpsichord maker—Christofori, in Florence—early in the eighteenth century.

The first public notice of a piano is in a Covent Garden playbill, and the first use as a solo instrument was in June, 1768. England has had its full share in the improvement of what our grandfathers called a pianoforte. The original Broadwood is said to have been the first to adapt pedals to the piano in 1783.

Seaplanes to Hunt Whales.

Business men at Aalesund, north of Bergen, Norway, intend this summer to use seaplanes for seal and whale hunting in Denmark Strait, between Iceland and Greenland, says the National Tidende. The first machine will probably be sent up in a week or so. Many ships are already in the strait.

In Glasgow they tell of a resourceful clergyman who is never at a loss for a retort. He was once called to the bedside of a very wealthy but stingy man. "If," he gasped to the clergyman, "If I leave several thousands to the church, will my salvation be assured?" Whereupon the divine responded, "I wouldn't like to be too positive, but it's well worth trying."

Keep Minard's Liniment in the house.

They Paid the Mortgage.

After the sudden death of their parents in a railroad accident, Alice Tucker and her sister Mildred faced the world with a $1,500 mortgage on the 60-acre farm. There were three horses, four cows, a flock of chickens and two pigs. The house was well built and roomy.

The girls' equity in the farm was less than $500 and for a miserable week they almost decided to sacrifice the equity, sell off the stock and go to the city. Mildred was seventeen. Her sister, a trained nurse by profession, would have to be away from the rooms they intended to rent and hesitated to leave her sister so much alone in the large city.

The girls "put their heads together" and disregarding the comments of free advice givers, went ahead with a plan of their own.

The two horses and such part of the farm equipment as would be used with a team, were sold. This money was spent at once in putting in a bedroom and clearing away several unsightly buildings. Then a tennis court was built. Alice, the nurse, made a trip to the city and called on two or three doctors who knew her work, and to them she explained a plan which met with their hearty approval and promise of support.

The girls were going to be ready to board convalescents who could afford to pay a good sum weekly for room and board in the country and attention from a registered nurse.

Before long, six convalescents were sent to the Tucker homestead. They found a large airy house comfortably furnished. The yard was shady and the rooms cool. There were plenty of good chairs and lounges, magazines and books; those who felt strong enough could play tennis.

The meals were a constant delight: delicious country ham and chicken, fresh crisp vegetables, home-grown fruit, good milk, cream and butter. The food was prepared by Mildred who was an excellent cook.

Alice, in white uniform, gave special attention to such convalescents as needed counsel—or comfort.

The expense of the establishment was not large. A neighbor's boy did the errands, milked the cows, fed the pigs and went to town for supplies.

The first year proved very successful from every standpoint. The girls made money and the convalescents were full of praise for the enterprise. It was not long before there was a waiting list.

Part of the profits of the first year were used in improvements. The house was painted and two new bathrooms were put in. A man and his wife were hired to do the hard work. The man does the work on the farm and puts in a large vegetable garden which cuts down the food expense. His wife does the cooking under the supervision of Mildred.

Last year, there were twelve guests all summer, and before winter came, the "Tucker girls" drove their car into town and, at the bank, paid off the mortgage on the farm. The free advice givers have nothing to say and all their friends rejoice.

Have Some Summer Kisses?

The following recipes will give you three of the very nicest summer kisses, warranted to melt in your mouth and not to cause either heartache or stomache ache after indulgence in them:

Daisy Kisses—4 egg whites, 1¼ cups powdered sugar, ½ teaspoon lemon juice, ¼ teaspoon vanilla. Beat whites until stiff. Add sugar gradually. Continue beating. Add vanilla and lemon juice. Drop from the spoon on a baking sheet covered with damp paper, or on buttered paper. Bake in a very slow oven for thirty minutes, or until brown.

Sea-Foam Kisses—2 2-3 cups brown sugar, 1½ cups water, 2 egg whites, ¼ teaspoon vanilla. Boil the sugar and water until the syrup will form a soft ball when dropped from the spoon into cold water. Beat the whites of the eggs very stiff and beat them into the warm syrup. Beat the mixture until it begins to thicken and then drop on buttered paper. As the first spoonful flattens, pour a second on top of it. The addition of a nut meat to every piece makes very attractive candies.

Divinity Kisses—2 cups sugar, 2 tablespoons gelatin, 1 cup water, ½ cup cold water, 1 lemon, 1 cup nut meats. Boil the sugar and water together until it reaches the soft-ball stage—that is, until the syrup forms a soft ball when dropped in cold water. Then add the grated rind and strained juice of one lemon and the gelatin which has been soaking in one-half cup of cold water for two hours. Beat until it begins to harden, add the nuts, and pour in shallow dishes to cool. When cold cut in dice or heart shapes, and roll in confectioner's sugar.

Looking Your Best.

Fashion still calls on you to reveal your neck. Therefore give a thought to its appearance. An ordinary washing once a day isn't good enough for it unless it's a real good neck—and, alas, how few real good necks are seen!

Take a peep at your own neck. If it's dingy and wrinkled, the chances are that you treat it like the bad stepsister of the face. But just a little kind care and attention will make it fresh and pretty. The constant daily use of a good lotion whitens the neck and banishes the telltale wrinkle. You can buy these lotions in the drug store, or you can make them right in your own kitchen.

Here's one used by a famous Spanish beauty: To the white of an egg add an equal quantity of strained lemon juice. Boil them to a soft jelly, and apply to the neck in an upward and outward motion. Of course you know that all motions in beautifying must be upward and outward, because as the years slip by the muscles sag inward and downward. Let this lotion stay on all night, and wash it off in the morning with cold water. The lemon juice acts as a bleach, while the egg is an astringent and irons out the wrinkles.

It's not only in your kitchen that you can find cosmetics for your neck. Step into your vegetable garden. The juice of those ripe tomatoes will beautify any neck. Or else pick a cucumber. Cut it in pieces, cover it with cold water, and slowly boil it down to a pulp. When this is strained and cooled you'll have a delightful lotion. It can be used on a refractory face, too.

There are preparations to remove liver or moth patches from the neck. Peroxide or a paste of borax and water faithfully used for several nights may lighten them.

Just because you're thin, don't congratulate yourself that you will escape the double chin. It's a mean old thing that sneaks upon you unaware. A few good exercises practiced every day will soon send it about its business. Slowly but rhythmically toss your head backward and forward, and then from side to side. Then twist it, still slowly, as far around your body as you can.

The too-thin neck and shoulders can be improved by massage with a heavy nourishing cream, and by deep breathing. Anything that aids in building up the general health will have a good effect upon the neck. You seldom see a woman of vigorous health with a scrawny neck—now, do you?

If you powder your face, put a little on your neck. Then the line where the powder ends won't show, and the skin will look pretty in a natural way. And, as I said before, a pretty neck goes far in aiding you to look your best.

For a neck that is darker than the face, or discolored by furs and high collars, there is a wonderful bleaching cream.

Canada, measuring nearly 4,000,000 square miles, is the largest British possession; the smallest is Gibraltar, less than two miles square.

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TWO ZEPP RAIDERS "SUNK" IN THE AIR

DURING LAST ATTACK ON ENGLAND.

Observer Describes Thrilling Battles of Final Air Offensive, Aug., 1917.

The last serious attempt to raid England by a fleet of Zeppelins, which was made in August, 1917, is described in an article published in connection with the opening of the Aero Exhibition at Olympia, London. The writer says:

The coming of the Zeppelins was quickly made known to our air stations on the East Coast, and without an instant's loss of time a fleet of aircraft hurried into the air and away out to sea in search of the raiders. Among these aircraft were machines built for sea work and able to float if they had to come down on the water; but there were also land machines with wheeled under carriage and no device of any sort for keeping them afloat if for any cause they had to come down in the sea.

As our machines, in answer to the alarm of "Zepps reported," proceeded far out to sea on their search, bad weather began to blow up and add to their difficulties. Wind, thick weather and misty rain storms all added together to make flying over the sea a dangerous task, and hunting for Zeppelins in the darkness an almost impossible one. But the skill and perseverance of the airmen and the stanchness and reliability of their machines and engines won in the end.

Zeppelin is Quickly Set on Fire.

The Zeppelin fleet was sighted and some of our machines closed for action. It was a two seater machine fitted with Rolls-Royce engine that tackled the first Zeppelin. The pilot quickly secured a favorable position for attack and the observer opened fire. The action was short and sharp; the first few rounds took effect and a small flame was seen to appear and run flickering along the port side of the ship's envelope. Quickly the flicker leaped to a gust of flame that swept along the side of the airship, and in a few seconds she was ablaze from stem to stern. Her bow swung upward for a moment, then dipped down again, and the airship, enveloped in a roaring torrent of flames, went plunging down toward a layer of thick clouds 5,000 feet below.

As she fell these clouds caught and threw back the lurid reflection of the blaze and lit up with quivering waves of hot, red, glowing light the whole circle of sky, the Zeppelin destroyer machine, and the two men in it leaning out overside and staring down fascinated to watch the finish of their handiwork. Next instant the remains of the airship plunged down into the clouds that closed solidly over her, shutting off the blazing light and leaving the airmen circling over a darkness that by contrast was black as pitch.

Second Foe Craft is Shot Down.

Meantime the other raiders were being pursued, and a second one was closed with and brought to action, and again the machine that overtook her was a two seater fitted with Rolls-Royce engines. This Zeppelin also was shot down, according to the evidence of both pilot and observer on the two seater, although unfortunately there was some hitch or delay in crediting them with their victory.

The reason for this was perhaps that where the first Zeppelin destroyer returned at once and made a report which was at once published, our second machine after the action had considerable difficulty in finding a way back and only made a landing far from the air station and too late for report to catch up to the first in publication. The second Zeppelin was pursued and fought a good many miles further out to sea than the first, and thick, rainy weather made it hard for the pilot to pick a course and find the land. He reached it at last and made a successful descent when his petrol was running down to its last gallons.

Just Fancy!

Potatoes seldom grow larger than marbles in Greenland.

In the interior of an ordinary piano there is about a mile of wire.

Spain has fewer daily newspapers than any other European country.

Bees will suck over 3,000,000 flowers in gathering one pound of honey.

A snail, crawling without a pause, would occupy fourteen days and five hours to travel a mile.

Although there is a steady demand for long human hair, the clippings from men's heads have no commercial value.

New York Museum has a specimen of the largest bird's egg in the world, that of the extinct aepyornis of Madagascar. With a shell one-eighth of an inch thick and twenty-six inches in circumference it has a holding capacity of two gallons.

A new method of checking fires in mines is by means of boxes of fine rock dust suspended across the roof of the tunnel. Any shock due to an explosion is sufficient to cause them to break away from their supports, and the finely-divided dust falls into the passage and prevents the flames from spreading.

If you would see deep you must climb high and look clear through.

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