

NATIONAL CLERK ON THE DIVORCE COURT

BY IRVING S. COBB

"WHAT'S NEW in the paper?" asked the House Detective, as he put his elbows on an onyx desk-slab in the Hotel St. Regis, and gazed meditatively down Cockatoo Lane.

"Not a great deal," said the Hotel Clerk. "The religious department has an essay on the duty of the clergy by a well-known puglist, and on the sporting page there's a short talk from the Rev. Dr. Peterson J. Madfers on the subject of the New Short-Arm Jolt. Mr. Edwin Foy Fitzgeraid, late Foy, the noted serious actor, persists in his determination to play Hamlet, for which I honor him. It's not many comedians that find out in time they were intended by Nature for tragedy. It is reported that he will be supported by May Irwin as 'Ophelia.' I use the word support in this case advisedly, Larry. May Irwin ought to play Ophelia with great success if she'd only play it by the pound. I can't think of anyone of the profession who could beat her out unless it's a member of the Elephant Quadrille at Barnum's. There's also an item from Chicago saying a Divorce Club has been organized out there in that Far Western City, by a lady who has mislaid divers of her husbands from time to time."

"Only them that's been divorced is eligible, I take it?" guessed the House Detective.

"Yes, that's the rule," said the Hotel Clerk. "So of course there's some people in Chicago that'll be barred out, though not a great many at that. The Club is going to hold social sessions every week at the Coliseum or under a large tent or out on the Lake Front, or some place that's roomy enough for everybody to assemble, and give the members a chance to introduce former members of their immediate families to the present incumbents, as it were. 'Are you related to that lady?' one member will say to another. 'Only by marriage,' the second one will reply. 'My husband used to be her husband one Summer.' And then there'll be joint debates on such timely and interesting subjects as 'Resolved, That married men make the best husbands,' or 'Resolved, That it is harder to keep a wife than a cook.'

"It ought to be a very successful organization, Larry. I think myself that they should extend its scope and make it general in character."

"We could furnish a purty tolerable chapter right here in New York," said the House Detective.

"We could so," assented the Hotel Clerk. "I think we'd have the banner lodge inside of two months. It'd be our own fault if we didn't, considering the excellent team work on the part of our Judges. This is no bush

league, Larry. We've hardly got a divorce Judge on the bench that didn't bat well above .300 last season.

"You may recall how it was at our large legal department store, called a Courthouse, during the rush to clear the docket for the recent holidays. The papers had quite a piece about it. On one side of the building sat the overworked Judges, dissolving matrimonial knob-knocks sketch teams at the rate of 18 pairs per minute, which

siding Justice helps him into a chair, tucks a cloth around his neck like a Butte millionaire getting ready to eat a grape-fruit for breakfast, and runs his hand over the new-comer's face. 'You have a tender skin,' says the Judge. 'Do you want a close divorce or just once over?'

"In the body of the court up rises a

lawyer. 'May it please the court,' he says, 'not that it makes a hangid bit of difference,' he says, 'whether it pleases the court or not, but anyway, as we say, may it please the court, I represent the defendant in this case, and I desire to insist, in the name of that solemn rite known as the marriage contract, that—'

"'Back up,' says the Judge, interrupting him. 'Who told you marriage was a contract?'

"'Well, it used to be,' says the lawyer.

"'Maybe it did,' says the Judge,

is almost up to the best record of the factory where they make the \$2 shoes. On the other side of the same massive structure sat the marriage clerk, busy as a Swiss bellringer, turning out new licenses for applicants who had just been dissolved, so to speak. 'Twas off with the old and on with the new. A short married life, and a merry one.'

"Picture the scene, Larry. In comes a stout, sinewy gentleman, with an under jaw like a car-fender and a pair of melting eyes that have run together after they melted. The pre-

but not any more. It's now a 90-day option. I refer the learned barrister to the latest authority on this subject—'Three weeks.'

"Then turning again to the plaintiff: 'Go on, my good man,' says the Judge; 'what are the grounds for your suit?'

"'Cruelty and inhuman conduct,'

"I'm an animal-tamer by profession," says the weak-spirited plaintiff. "In the Summer I handle a troupe of performing hyenas down at Coney Island, and in the Winter I break Western horses for a local livery stable."

"You have my sincerest sympathies," says His Honor, as he reaches

it's a very expensive gown, while he's quite the contrary, and we're people of moderate means; and Mr. Putnam Asunder, the lawyer who does all my divorce business for me, is taking the case at a bargain, so here I am. It'll be a great favor to me, Judge, if you'll kindly hurry up the details, because the gentleman who's going to be my next husband is waiting outside, and he's got to get back to his job."

for the bay rum bottle and a blank decree. 'Well, better luck next time, Erush. Next case.'

"Up trips a fair litigant, who favors the court with a rare smile.

"'And what's your trouble, my dear?' he inquires, in a soothing manner, combing down his mustache and reaching around to see if the pocket of his sliken gown of office is misbehaving.

"'Incompatibility,' says the lady. 'My husband's hair doesn't match the color of my new Princess gown. I'll have to give up one or the other, and

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"'It is,' says the lady, 'with buttons all the way down the back and a low-necked neck.'

"'I'd admire to see you in it some of these days,' says the kindly Judge, eyeing her judiciously, and at the same time fixing his tie. 'Maybe I'd better take your address,' he says.

"'So with that they're divorced and live happily ever afterward, as they say in the new brand of Elinor Glyn

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When You Go Hunting For Rooms.

Furnishings That You See in Portland, and Landladies and Cheerful Atmospheres and Things

Good Lord, deliver us. From little gas heaters with big gas meters.

Good Lord, deliver us. From festooned decorations of pine cones, var-colored paper linked in ropes, or cheesecloth drapery across the top of the dresser.

Good Lord, deliver us. (Of course, Mr. Rentrooms, I know that it hides the cracked place in the mirror, and I appreciate the fact that it catches the dust so nicely that you are saved extra work, but it offends my aesthetic sense.)

From calendars left on the walls by former occupants.

Good Lord, deliver us. (Can't you just see those calendars, John Henry? Billious girl, painfully smiling ladies, children in unnatural and stiff poses, vases of flowers, always over colored, over hard and invariably over the commode.)

From pictures done by friends or relatives of the family.

Good Lord, deliver us. From Scripture text and illuminated motto cards, especially those pertaining to Home.

Good Lord, deliver us. From a statuette of Cupid suspended from the gas jet.

Good Lord, deliver us. From next door roomers who hash over their marital troubles after I am started on the road to bye-bye.

Good Lord, deliver us. From leaky roofs, good Lord, deliver us. (See, Augustus, you are right, the bed is invariably placed under the leak, and the owner of the property undoubtedly works by that old theory; when it rains he can't sleep, and when it is dry it don't need fixing.)

From a steam radiator, that hisses and spitters viciously when the heat is turned on, and walls sucking steam a few minutes later when the thoughtful janitor turns it off.

Good Lord, deliver us. (Yes, I know, John Henry, I ought to be thankful he turned it on at all.)

From closets without hooks, doors minus locks, locks minus keys, stoppers windows, transoms on a strike, dresser drawers ditto, from faucets that drip, from rugs that trip, from cracked drinking glasses, from wobbly chairs, from rockers that shriek protestingly when you sit in them, and from wads of gum left on the under side of the tables, and chairs and along the door casings.

Good Lord, deliver us. From landladies with amphibious habits, who carry with them an all pervading air of dampness and the appearance of having just been wrong out; from the landlady with an inquiring turn of mind; from the landlady who loatheth on the beer when it foameth, and from the one who appears in court papers and a long and wrapped held together solely by the first pin the Masons' work.

Good Lord, deliver us. So enough, my litany.

I have answered advertisements all over: from bungalow cottages on Portland Heights to snows on the river front with water privileges, for the cultivation of ducks and fever and ague. This afternoon I'm going out to view the following:

TO LET—A small grass plot at the south end of Fulton corner, fine view, quiet neighborhood.

TO LET—To a quiet person with references, the entire upper part of a finely situated ash barrel, located in Williams' Heights; water and gas (and a hydrant and gas lamp being on either side).

TO LET—The alleyway of a new 6-story hotel on the East Side, to responsible parties. Entrance through alley gate.

TO LET—A large, airy closet, newly papered and painted, situated on 4th floor of house in Albina. No objection to dogs; no children allowed.

you adopt, after you are snugly snoring in your comfortable bed, on a cold night, and are suddenly ousted out of it to go down on the parlor floor, or the kitchen lounge, because some of your friends or relatives miss their car after the theater.

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away"). I can admire a dresser that is a swell dresser (No, Henry, I'm talking of furniture, and I love my bed (especially late in the morning). I can even look up to the pictures, and smile at the mirror, the chairs possess attractions for me and I have heard of people becoming attached to a gas jet—but, really, I can't even get enthusiastic about a commode. It invariably holds a bowl and pitcher, a soap dish and a drinking glass, at least I suppose it's a drinking glass, though the former tenant may have used it for his toothbrush and to hold his false teeth at night.

And the green roses on the bowl and pitcher would drive Luther Burbank wild with envy.

And always there is a folded towel, evenly laid across the top of the pitcher, and two others draped across the top rung of the commode. (As usual, John Henry, you are right; they use the three only for bait; after they catch you it's a lucky thing if you get even one each day.)

And if there's a shelf anywhere in the room, there's always a tall vase with impossible flowers on it, and sometimes in it, with very often a Dutch shepherdess dancing the can-can on one end of the shelf, flanked by a boy in skin-tight trousers posed à la Napoleon.

They are rarely inviting. I defy you to

find me one furnished room that spells comfort and breathes home, when you view it for the first time, in its unattended-to state. The lodger before you has always just left, and the room may be a bit untidy, the landlady tells

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your rooms in the softening glow of a gas jet or a kerosene lamp with a smoked chimney?

The family and other roomers will all be home then, and can ask all they care to about yourself and your down-sitting and up-rising, your belongings, your occupation, if you are from the East (and the lord be with you; if they discover you know some one back in Missouri who is almost a relation of theirs). The children of the house can ascertain if you have any little boys and girls, or (hopefully) a dog for them to play with; you may perhaps be lucky enough to meet the other roomers, or some of the neighbors, or Clara's young man.

Then too the charitable gas light will not penetrate to the farther corners, and show you the frayed carpet and the ink splotch under the table, you cannot tell whether the curtains are that fashionable ecru color or merely need soap and water; the soiled wallpaper shows softened and mellow and as your landlady plants herself over the hole in the carpet in front

gloomily on the room and its contents you find your voice and ask what the rent is.

She names her price; you hesitate, then feeling that perhaps you can do better, tell her so.

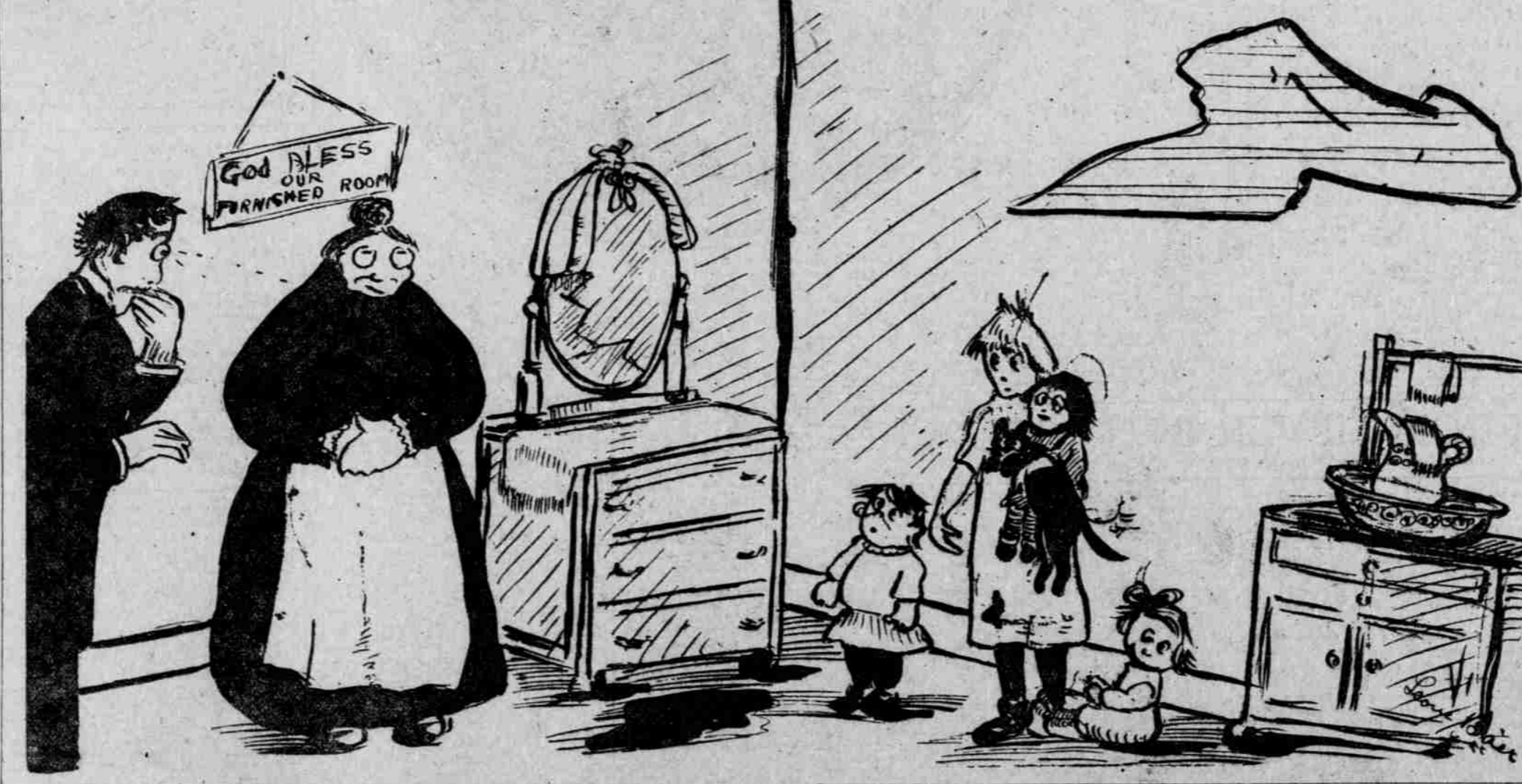
"Do you think they are too high?" They always come at you with this question and it is really wonderful the amount of injured surprise they put into their voice and face.

"You feebly answer that you think it a bit higher than you want to pay.

And then they spring that moss-grown, worm-eaten chestnut of how much they have always got for that particular room, and that it really is worth more, but that they thought they were doing you a favor in letting it go so reasonably, all of which makes you marvel greatly, and wish you could sink into the pavement as you feel their eyes boring through your back, in leaving.

This is what I call a Litany for a hunter of furnished-rooms.

From a towel folded heavily and laid across a pitcher.



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