

THAT TERRIBLE FISCAL QUESTION

BY JEROME K. JEROME

THREE weeks ago, travelling on the Underground Railway, I met a man who has one of the saddest-looking men I have seen for years. I wanted to know him well in the old days when we were journalists together. I asked him, in a sympathetic tone, how things were going with him. I expected that his response would be a flood of tears, and that in the end I should have to fork out a dver. To my astonishment, his answer was that things were going exceedingly well with him. I did not want to say to him bluntly, "Then what has happened to you to make you look like a mute at a temperance funeral?" I said, "And how are all at home?" I thought that if the trouble lay there be



He tried to find something funny in the fiscal question.

would take the opportunity. It brightened his brain somewhat, and the necessity of replying to the question. It appeared that his wife was in the best of health. "You remember her," he continued, with a somewhat cheerful expression, "she is cheerful, nothing seems to put her out, not even—"

He ended the sentence abruptly with a sigh. His mother-in-law, he learned, was still in the hospital, and had been there I had last met him, and had left them a comfortable little addition to their income. "I am married," he explained, "it is entirely a love match," he explained; "and he is such a dear, good fellow that I should not have made any objection to his coming in." "Of course," he said, "I am naturally all the more content." The boy, having won the Mottile scholarship, was going up to college in the fall. "My wife is in good health," he told me, had greatly improved, and a novel he had written in his leisure time promised to be one of the successes of the season. Then it was that I spoke plainly—

"If I am opening a wound too painful to be touched," I said, "tell me." If, on the contrary, it is an ordinary case of trouble, in which the sympathy of a fellow-worker may fall as a balm, let me hear it." "So far as I am concerned," he replied, "I should be glad to tell you. Besides, you are a woman, and your words may lead me—I am always in hopes—an idea. But, for your own sake, if you take my advice, you will not press me." "How can it effect me?" I asked. "It is nothing," he said, "but I am sure you will have nothing to do with you," he answered. "If you are sensible enough to keep out of it, if I tell you, from this time onward it will be your trouble also. And, if it is not a matter of sympathy in two separate cases. If you like to be the fifth and complete the half dozen of us, you are welcome." But, remember, I have warned you. I have said, 'I am not doing any other way.' I demanded, "It has changed them from gloomy, companionable persons into cheerful, one-sided boys," he told me. "They think of but one thing, and that is to get out of it, they dream of but one thing. Instead of getting over it as time goes on, it takes possession of them more and more. There are men, of course, who would be unaffected by this, but I am not sure I can warn you against it in particular, because, in spite of all that he said, I am convinced you have a sense of humor; and that being so it will lay hold of you. You will play it off on him. You will see what it has made of me. Three months ago a lady interviewer described me as of a sunny temperament. If you know your next question you will get out of me a new edition and take care to keep me for the next six months."

I wish now I had taken his advice. As it was I allowed my curiosity to take possession of me and begged him to explain. And he did so. "It was just about Christmas time," he told me. "We were discussing the Drury Lane pantomime—some three or four of us—in the smoking-room of the Devonshire Club, and young Gould said he thought it would prove a mistake, the introduction of a subject like the fiscal question into the story of



What has happened to make you look like a mute at a temperance funeral?

"Humpty Dumpty. The two things, as you see, are not connected. I have nothing to do with one another. He added that he entertained a real regard for Dan Leono whom he had once met on a steambot but that there were other topics upon which we could discuss. I was under the politician's guidance. Nettleship, on the other hand, declared that he had no sympathy with the argument that artists should never intrude upon public affairs. Which, I thought, was not a high standard of us. He said that, whether we agreed with their conclusions or not, we must admit that the nation owed a debt of gratitude to Mrs. Brown Potter and to Mr. Nettleship for their willingness to do the benefit of their conviction. He talked with both ladies in private on the subject, and was convinced they knew nearly as much about it as he did most people. But he was not so sure. He then contended that if sides were to be taken a pantomime should surely advocate the free-fish cause, seeing it was a form of entertainment supposed to appeal primarily to the masses. He then handed the matter over to me. Then I came into the discussion. The fiscal question, I said, is on every body's tongue. Such being the case, it is fit and proper it should be referred to in connection with the political standpoint to be regarded as a review of the year's doings. But it should not have been dealt with from the political standpoint. The proper attitude to have assumed toward the subject is that of a rational discussion on all trace of partisanship. Old Johnson had strolled up and was standing

behind us. "The very thing I have been trying to get hold of for weeks," he said, "a bright, amusing resume of the whole problem that I shall give the whole world to read. You know our paper," he continued; "we steer clear of politics, but, at the same time, try to be up-to-date; it is not always easy. The treatment of the subject, on the lines you suggest, is just what we require. I do wish you would write me something." He is a good old sort, Johnson; it seemed an easy thing; I said I would. Since that time I have been thinking how to do it. As a matter of fact, I have not thought of much else. Maybe you can suggest something?"

I was feeling in a good working mood, and next morning "Pops" said to me, "We're going out to see the theatre, and the show does not need anything bolsterously funny. A few playfully witty remarks on the subject will be the ideal. I lit a pipe and sat down to think. At half past 12, having to write some letters before going out, I wrote the following fiscal question from my mind. But not for long. It worried me all the afternoon. I thought, maybe, something would come out of it. But it didn't. I wasted all that evening and I wasted all the following morning. Everything has its amusing side. I told myself Jokes by the hundred are built on sudden death, and I thought of the famous funeral eulogies about weddings. Hardly a misfortune that can happen to mankind but has produced its comic literature. An evening at the theatre, said the old Aiden, if I am not committing a breach of confidence—once took a contract from the editor of an Insurance Journal to write four humorous stories. One was to describe a man who was killed by a cyclone, the third with a flood and the fourth with a thunderstorm. And more amusing stories I have never read. What was the fourth? The same fatal question. I myself have written lightly on bimetalism. Home rule we used to be merry over in the '80s. I remember one delightful evening at the Codger's Hall. It was a party of some 150. The first speaker for a raw-boned Irishman, who rose toward 11 o'clock and requested to be informed if any other speaker was wishful to make any more jokes on the subject of home rule. Because, if so, the raw-boned gentleman was prepared to save time by waiting and dealing with them altogether. But if not, then—so the raw-boned gentleman said—let me know it was to go for the last speaker and the last speaker but two at once and without further warning. No other humorist coming, the raw-boned gentleman said, "I shall make his little joke with the result that the fun degenerated somewhat. Even on the Boer War we used to whisper jokes to one another, in quiet places. In the Boer War, I remember, the question was: Where is it?"

For days I thought of Little else. My indignation, as well as all in me to sample—noticed me, trouble me. Mrs. Wilkins'—
"confessed," "I am trying to think of something innocently amusing to say on the fiscal question." "I have heard about it," she said, "but I don't have much to say to read the papers. The 'want to make us pay more for our food, don't they?' 'For some of it,' I explained. 'But then, we shall pay less for other things because of the system. It will be more at all.' 'There don't seem much in it, either way,' was Mrs. Wilkins' opinion. 'Just so,' I agreed, 'that is the nature of the system. It will cost nobody anything and result in everybody being better off.' 'The pity is,' said Mrs. Wilkins, 'that nobody ever thought of the money that would be saved.' 'To—' I explained, 'has been the foreigner.' 'Ah,' said Mrs. Wilkins, 'I never heard much of that. It is a use for almost everything.' 'These foreigners,' I continued, 'these Germans and Americans, and the like, are the ones who are the worst.' 'What's that?' Remanded Mrs. Wilkins.

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE

Letters Between Commanders at the Front by "Si Pipe."

SINCE the earliest dawn of human history it has been asserted, sometimes facetiously and then again as a serious sociological fact, that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Rebecca of old understood it when she devised the scheme that enabled her favorite son, Jacob, to feed poor old blind Isaac a dish of savory meat while Esau was away in the hills. The minister of the old blind man was so fond. Her scheme was a cunning one. Isaac loved Esau rather than Jacob. He was his first-born and a hunter by instinct, and kept the old man supplied with venison during the open season and "mountain sheep" when it wasn't lawful to call it venison. Jacob was smooth-skinned while Esau had to shave every other day and had whiskers all over back of his hands. Everybody remembers the story of Jacob, the younger of the kid on his hands and, approaching his blind old patriarch of a father with a sort of two-step bubbling over with filial affection and a Svengali expression on his countenance, he knelt down before the old blind Isaac and carelessly tossed papers the old gentleman's bewhiskered countenance with his hands. Rebecca meanwhile was peering through the bushes, and when the instant couldn't wait to peek because Isaac couldn't have seen her anyway, and Esau the while is perceiving as he teases over the hills and returns after a long absence, the distant kelpie after the elusive deer. He returns with a pair of delicious hams, hoping to nestle close to old Isaac's heart; he wipes the perspiration from his brow, and drains the contents of the two buckets that hung in the well, and, pausing a moment under the bamboo tree to formulate a message of filial love, goes into the presence of the old patriarch and, with a flourish, scratches the old gentleman's countenance with the backs of his hands by way of identification and to talk deer-meat. But Jacob had already been there, and Esau, old man and his face was still a little tender. With a slight whim he inquired as to the cause of all this unusual message and then it is that the truth is revealed with shocking rapidity. Isaac was blind and the first one to reach his stomach was the inheritor of his blessing and his estate. And Esau was to be the servant of the younger.

So early was the hands of toll made to serve the cunning and crafty. As we look back in the Garden of Eden Eve discovered that the most direct if not the exact way to get to the heart of Adam was through his stomach. Adam one day seemed to be seized with acute melancholia. Absolute ill-fitness accompanied by overreaching, irascible, and morose, and a depressing influence. Eve's womanly qualities of mind and heart asserted themselves. She did not do as some women would have done, add to Adam's misery by telling him that he needed eatable clothing, although, according to both the King James and the revised version, she might have truthfully done so. In the presence of Adam and Eve the first human "pop-overs" for breakfast.

SPEAKING of the stomach as the way to a man's heart, modern surgeons reasoned that if the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, why not get through his stomach, or abdomen, for access to his internal organs, and so operations for appendicitis came into vogue. It took a few years before the surgeons discovered that the human anatomy are somewhat meager. The Creator with so much to

"I tell me that they just throw it out and leave them there," queried Mrs. Wilkins. "Of course not," I replied; "when I say they dump these things upon our shores, that is a figure of speech. What I mean is they sell them to us." "But why do we buy them, if we don't want them?" asked Mrs. Wilkins. "We're not bound to buy them, are we?" "It is their artfulness," I explained; "these Germans and Americans—and the others: they are so crafty that they can outbid our own industry in selling us these things at less price than they cost to make." "It seems a bit silly of them," "What's dumping?" "Well, it's dumping," you know. You take things and you



I do wish you would write something.

don't like." "You don't mean surely to do it," thought Mrs. Wilkins; "I suppose you mean to say that it's a bad thing, but it ain't naturally got much sense." "It does seem silly of them," if you look at it in that way," I admitted; "but what's the harm in it? The money the foreigner is doing us." "Don't see how it can do us much harm," argued Mrs. Wilkins; "seems a bit of luck, so far as we are concerned. I don't see more harm in it than they'd be welcome to dump round my way." "I don't seem to be putting this thing quite in the right light to you, do you think?" I asked. "I don't see the argument, and you might not be able to follow it; but you must take it as a fact now generally admitted that the money you buy for goods is more than the money you give for them." "I don't see how," by allowing the foreigner to sell us all these things at about half the cost price, he is getting richer every day and we are getting poorer." "I don't see how," I said, "in a country like ours on paying at least 20 per cent more for everything we want it is calculated that in a very few years England would have half the population." "Round that topey round," suggested Mrs. Wilkins. "I may surmise so," I answered; "but I fear there can be no doubt of it." "I don't see it conclusively," "Well, God be praised, we've found it out in time," ejaculated Mrs. Wilkins, plausibly. "It is a matter of congruence, and a matter of common difficulty that a good many other people say that far from being ruined, we are doing very well, indeed, and are growing richer." "I don't see that," I answered; "you say that," argued Mrs. Wilkins, "when, as you tell me, those trade returns prove just the opposite." "Well, they say that," I answered. "The Board of Trade returns prove just the opposite." "Well, they can't both be right," said Mrs. Wilkins. "You would be surprised to find how many people say that the Board can be proved from Board of Trade returns. But I have not yet thought of that article for Filson."

J. M. JEROME.

(Copyright, 1904.)

couldn't be expected to anticipate all of the demands of modern surgery. He might have created man on a sectional plan with water-tight compartments, his vital organs in one, his digestive tract in another. In rule, surgeons have been fairly conscientious in operating for appendicitis, but have, with a few exceptions, put everything riding on a single organ in jeopardy every now and then some post mortem episode reveals a lung missing or a liver where the heart ought to be, or vice versa, giving rise to the old adage that surgeons in operating for appendicitis, need to be more careful to replace all the human giblets where they belong. Great inconveniences may be caused by a rule in rule reversal. No man who has submitted to the appendicitis expert is absolutely certain how many of his vital organs are present. Color Joe who has been attempting to perform a Roux-Léclapart operation, and the medical legislation is talked of, a bill for an act defining the crime of larceny from the interior is called for. It may be done, but does it mean that the pancreas, what in the name of goodness does it own? In cases of tonsillitis, laryngitis, peripharyngitis and epiglottitis, operations for removal of the tonsils and epiglottis may be interesting and even diverting, but where surgery hauls an object from the thoracic cavity out through an artificial incision, the patient is not allowed to palpitate and squirm it is, to say the least, "far fetched."

RECENTLY a man was operated on for appendicitis in Chicago. He had been tongue-tied and irreligious from his birth and the operation was deemed imperative. After the surgeons sewed the patient up nicely it was discovered that a valuable pair of forceps and a sponge had been left inside. The doctor created little inconvenience, but the forceps seemed useless and ill at ease. A second or supplemental operation was agreed upon as necessary to save the poor man's life. The "highly technical" forceps and the sponge being both recovered. The patient died still tongue-tied, but glad to return the lost property to its rightful owners. Apparently the forceps had taken hold of his conscience.

The discoveries of modern surgery are amazing. When the skilled surgeon uses to take out a section of the human skull with a Dwyer's Scalpel, he is using a man's thimble and after sprinkling with Dr. Meeman's Borated Talcum, guarantee it for three years. The world stock exchange today surgery is revealing operations for appendicitis and there's denying the fact that the operation has taken a firm grip on the hearts of the American public. It matters little whether the patient is Democrat or Republican. The Presidency voted for the Chicago or Kansas City platforms in 1896 and 1900. The convention will finally nominate a man who has been vaccinated and has been operated on for appendicitis. **SIX PAGES**

From the Book of Fairy Tales.

New York Sun.

The Sleeping Beauty had just been awakened.

"Begone!" she announced. "O'ff! he yes! to know O'ff'll get up whin O'ff's ready or lave!"

Praying to intrude life's harsh reality on the infant mind, a different version has been introduced.

Jack the Giant Killer put on his crown of wisdom.

"You see," he explained, "it makes me know as much as a college youth think."

Thus we can easily see how our beloved hero was absolutely invincible.



\$2.50

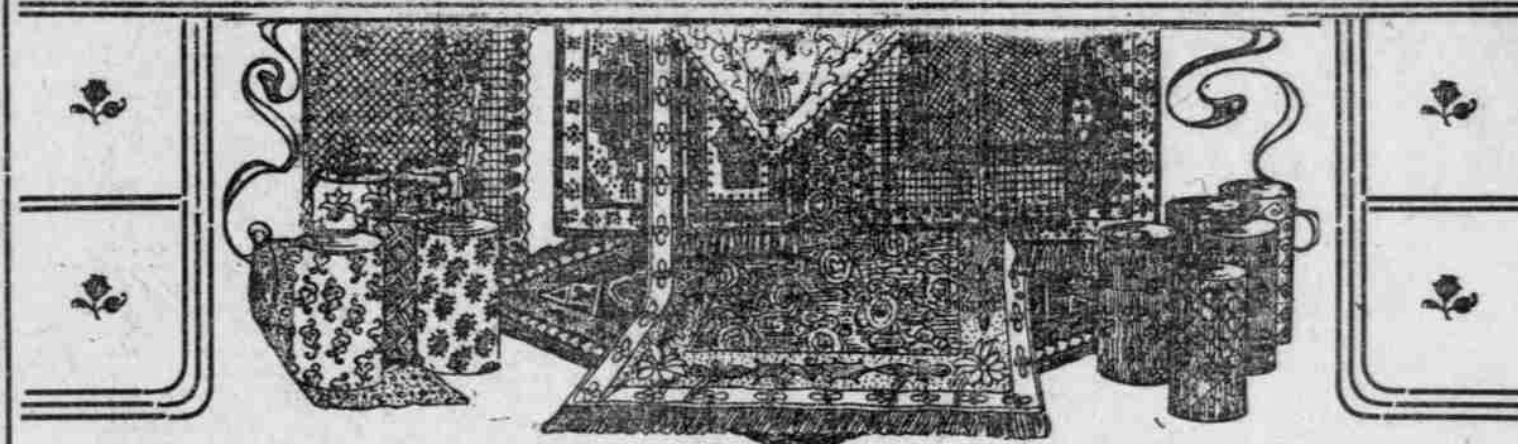
**SPECIAL
SALE OF
FINE OAK
ROCKERS
TOMORROW**



\$2.50

Thirty fine highly polished Golden Oak Library Rockers. Five different designs to select from. All have high embossed backs with turned spindles and shaped wide arms. Some have saddle seats, some cobbler seats and some the comfortable opera seats. They are all well built, finely finished and highly polished. On sale tomorrow only. Regular values from \$4.50 to \$5.50

SPECIAL PRICE \$2.50



DRAPERY AND CARPET DEPARTMENTS

ATTRACTIVE SPECIAL IN LACE CURTAINS

For tomorrow we shall have a Special Sale of dainty curtains that will give the prudent housewife a chance to put up new Spring hangings at little cost.

Pretty "Snow-Flake" Curtains with Roman stripe design, three colors; light, yet serviceable. Regular \$3.00.....	\$2.05
"Snow-Flake" Curtains with all-silk stripes in rich red and yellow on a soft tan field. Regular price \$3.60.....	\$2.40
Dainty "Scrim" Curtains with pretty Roman stripes in red, green and blue; very appropriate for cottage decoration. Regular \$4.00.....	\$2.65
A bargain in Grenadine Curtains with Roman stripes in Oriental combinations of red and green. Regular \$2.25.....	\$1.60
New design mercerized striped "Snow-Flake" Curtains; stripes are in red, blue and green; <u>very</u> effective. Regular \$5.50..	\$3.75
Rich effect silk striped "Snow-Flake" Curtains; stripes in light and dark green, red and yellow. Regular price \$8.00....	\$5.75

HERE'S A BARGAIN

FINE AXMINSTER CARPET
SEWED, LAID AND
LINED, PER YARD **\$1.42½**

Six handsome new floral and Oriental patterns reserved especially for this sale. This carpet is made of a very fine grade of worsted and the colors are as fast as dye can be set in a yarn. Another strong point in its favor is its weight. It weighs six ounces more to the yard than any other carpet on the market for \$1.50. You can have it with or without borders.

“WILTON AXMINSTER”

Here's a new fabric, never before shown on the Coast. Comes in beautiful colorings and designs especially adapted for parlor or reception room. Made of finest French worsted and has all the luster of finest Axminster. Wears like iron.

YOUR CREDIT IS GOOD

TULL

COMPLETE HOUSE-FURNISHERS

GIBBS

MAKE YOUR OWN TERMS

MAKE YOUR OWN TERMS