THE HOTEL CLERK ON TRUE SPORT.

BY IRVIN S. COBB.

"I HAD to lick my boy, Marty, today," said the House Detective of the St. Reckless.

"What's Marty been doing now?" asked the Hotel Clerk.

"Readin' them foolish nickel libraries," said the House Detective. "I ketched him with one called 'Young Kit Badger, the Boy Trapper.' If he wants to read somethin' about Young Kid Broad, the Bay Scrapper, that'll improve his mind and learn him somethin' about usin' his hooks, all well and good. But not them Wild and Wooly West stories for a son of mine. Next thing he'll be wantin' to run away to Kansas City and shoot buffaloes."

"Tell him not to do it," said the Hotel Clerk. "A friend of mine that sells neckwear on the road just got back yesterday from his first trip to the coast and he was in here last night nursing a bunch of disillusionment the size of a baby grand. He said the only man he saw wearing long hair and leather pants with chenille fringes on 'em was traveling with a medicine show from Portland, Maine, and the only real wild and wooly thing he got up against was a flannel union suit he bought in Butte. The union suit was wooly and it made him wild to wear it."

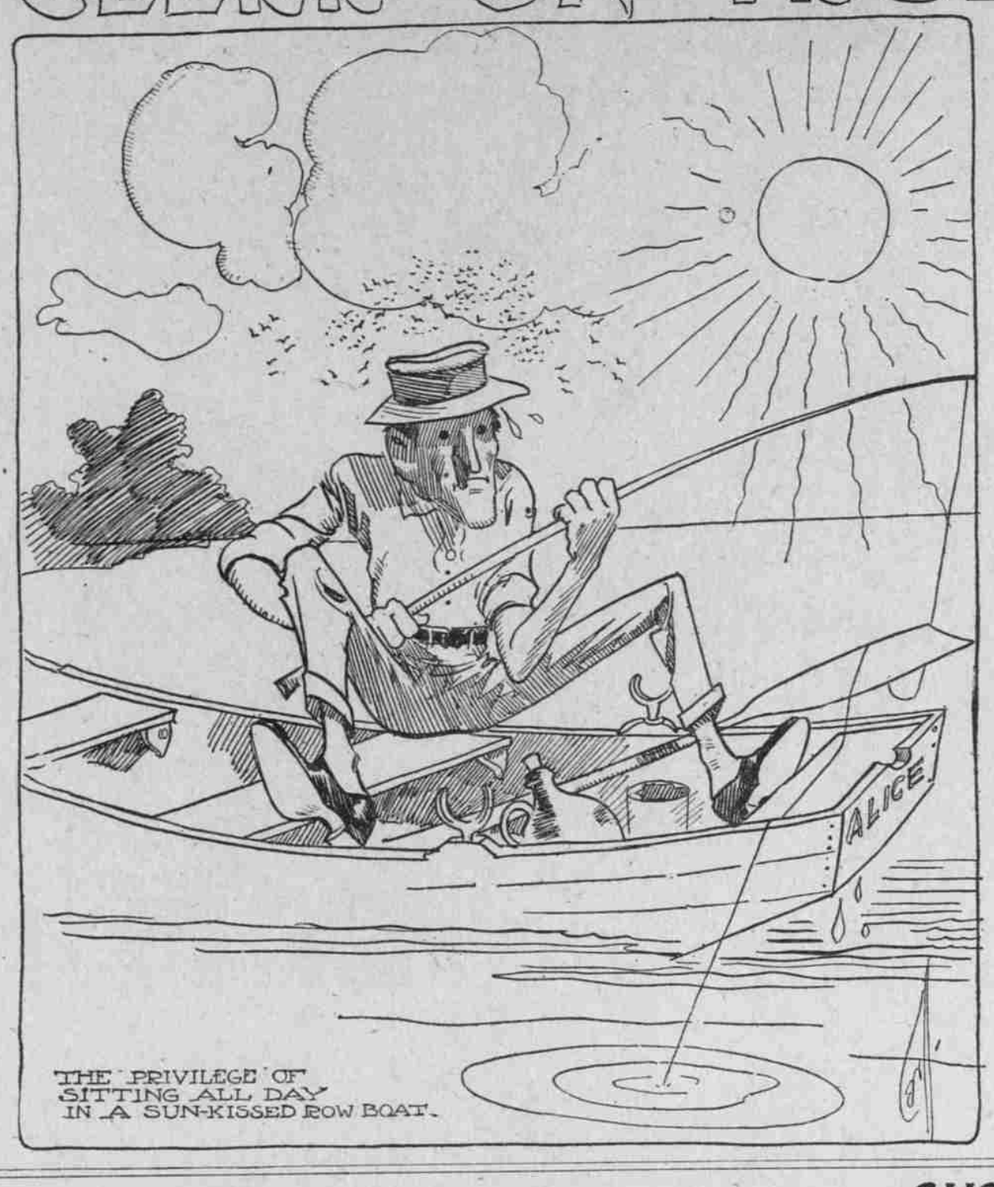
"You tell Marty to stay right here if he's looking for the real frontier life. I can show him more Indians on Broadway every night than he'd find on the Rosebud reservation in a month. And when it comes to scalping the paleface stranger, we've got a few ticket speculators and all-night cabmen in our midst that would make old Sitting Bull in his scalpingest days look like a green hired girl trying to slice ham with a safety razor.

Old Ephraim, the original fierce and untamable grizzly bear with the long black nails, doesn't reside in the heart of the Sierras any more. He takes a square meal every night at the table right next to mine. I know it must be a square meal because the corners scratch his tender places going down and then he growls at the waiter in the manner peculiar to grizzly bears dining out. When he takes his soup it reminds you of an obstruction in the mouth of a sewer, and his way of eating asparagus on the hoof would be worth three columns alone to Ernest-Thompson-Seton-and-repeat-the-Thompson.

"Your lad, Marty, will find when he's a bit older, if he hasn't already found it out, that there's a blame sight more war paint used on the female face divine in a chorus than there is at a Siwash squaw dance, although possibly not so artistically done. And as for the feathers and pelts and jingle bells and other adornments of the barbarian, that's where the Fifth avenue promenader puts it all over the brick-dusty sister down in the territory. Little Juanita Water-on-the-Knee, bewitching daughter of Chief John Bright's disease, tribal head of the Punk Rivers, is more'n likely these days to be running the leading dressmaking establishment of Wichita Falls with her hair slicked back and her houth full of pins and a diploma from Carlisle framed on the wall. But the patrician members of some proud old coal and coke, or street railway family of New York and Pittsburg, goes swirling through the Waldorf any afternoon with one of those self-made complexions, done in a white and red color scheme, and a form-fitting garment that seems to fasten with one large button, like a henhouse door, and rattling with curtain rings and gold trace chains, like a brewery horse, and touched up hither and yon with mink scalps and bird heads and ermine skins, until you get to thinking she must have escaped from the taxidermist before he had finished. Why one good look at her would make the last surviving widow of the late Spotted Tail strip off her cheap necklace of salmon cans in a frenzy of jealous rage and seek a boiled suicide's grave in a hot geyser. You tell Marty, for me, to stick around awhile. A couple of years from now he can get more thrills joining the Eagles than he could pursuing the wild loping Rocky Mountain chamois, which there isn't any, to its lofty snowcapped lair, which it hasn't any. A kid that's been raised in a great city isn't intended by nature and environment for the chase, unless it's being chased by a cop, and anyway, he can stay right home and get some real big game hunting if he only knows where to look for it."

"I guess you ain't very strong for them strenuous outdoor sports," said the House Detective reflectively.

"Oh, you bet your life I am," said the Hotel Clerk. "I'm strong for all forms of sport in their proper place, which is the newspaper. I can get all the excitiment my nature craves out of the active sporting life just from reading about it. Take fox hunting, for example. For 1 cent I can enjoy a spirited account of the annual hunt of the Meadowbrooks, consisting of two columns about the prominent people present and an inch and a half touching on the last hours of the fox. But to actually accomplish the destruction of this ferocious brute in the prescribed manner must take a lot of trouble. Before you can go about the work of properly eradicating the ravaging creature known as the red fox, you have to get together a flock of bay-voiced hounds and a troupe of short-tailed horses and a master of the hunt and an extra drink mixer on duty all the night before at the clubhouse bar, and a lot of society gentlemen in pink pill coats and half Morocco pants, and a bevy of society ladies in derby hats and stock collars. The ladies have their riding habits on, of course, and the gentlemen have their habits on, too, frequently, which, however, is neither here nor there. And then when you get a few truck farms and hot-beds to ride over, and a fox—all the best authorities insist on a regular live fox—why, then, everything is ready and, a-winding the merry horn, off they go with a view halloo and various other things. You'd think from all these preparations, that a fox ought to be as big as a rhinoceros. But he's not. I've often seen him on his native heath, which is in the perfumery ward up at the Zoo, next door to the cage where the civit cats do their light housekeeping. He's about the size of one of those marked-down-to-$2.98 fur boas that you see over in Sixth avenue, and not near as fierce-looking.



THE PRIVILEGE OF SITTING ALL DAY IN A SUN-KISSED ROW BOAT.

"And then there's the simpler, less expensive pastimes of the middle classes, called fishing and hunting. But why should a city dweller awake at an hour when nobody has any right to be out of bed except the early-rising condemned man, and ride 20 miles on a crowded excursion train for the privilege of sitting all day in a sun-kissed rowboat and catching one small, pallid fish that immediately expires with a convulsive gasp and then begins to smell eccentric? Then also, there's the gibes and sneers of the unsoaped populace when you return home at eventide. You can go through a crowded street carrying a walking stick, or a baby, or a bunch of bananas, and nobody'll say a word, but come along with a jointed rod under your arm and perfect strangers have a perfect right to hold you up and jeer at you and ask you what you caught, besides a cold. You may have noticed it. And why should you save up for two months in order to spend a damp, unhappy week in the North Woods, poking around in the unkempt underbrush, shooting at random and having Random shooting at you while a gloating guide that you're paying five plunks a day to, gets a sweet and lasting revenge out of you for what happened to him when he came down to the city by appointment, and had dealings of a financial nature with Tender Lawrence and Broad Wayte, the Green-Goods Twins of Forty-second street."

"Well, Roosevelt was born in this town, and yet he's goin' right into the heart of the jungle, soon as his term's up," said the House Detective. "How do you figure that out?"

"There's quite a perceptible difference," said the Hotel Clerk. "When the ordinary citizen takes his Adams express rifle in hand and hikes for the high grass after big game and small chiggas, he doesn't have the United States Government and the Smithsonian Institution and the Amalgamated Rough Riders' Officeholding Association and the Outlook Magazine and the National Museum of Natural History and a few other societies and administrations and things plugging it along for him. I might go to colored Africa, too, if there was a trainload of responsible persons trailing along to size up the rigors of the chase and carefully remove all the rigs from them. The Bloodsweating Behomoth would have a good excuse for the sweat then, I tell you that.

"Anyway, Larry, I don't think the hunting of big game, from bank presidents down to colored soldiers, is going to be as popular during the administration that's coming on as it was during the latter part of the one that's almost over. We'll be going in more for the simpler pleasures of the chase that you can reach for 5 cents on a Broadway car. In the fastnesses of Wall street the hardy adventurer will again pursue his shrinking quarry, and not only his shrinking quarry, but his shrunken railroad stock and his disappearing mining shares. Up town the sad-faced but resolute dramatic critic will shoot the struggling young playwright behind the ear with a fatal volley and then smile a chastened smile of quiet content. For a dramatic critic, you know, Larry, weeps aloud when a show is a hit, but he smiles when he brings it down, weltering in its gore. Some day they'll make the true classification of dyspeptics. 'Twill be like this: Plain dyspeptics, hopeless dyspeptics and New York dramatic critics.

"In the courts also, from time to time, rich, plump coveys of love letters will be flushed, thereby giving great satisfaction to the reading public. All the world loves a lover, Larry, but it loves better to get something on a lover. A love letter in a book is a beautiful and a sentimental thing, and a love passage in a play is calculated to make a matinee girl push the caramel back on her palate and suspend chewing, but a love letter that comes out in a breach-of-promise suit, especially if 'twas written by an elderly widower with long gray whiskers, makes us show our teeth in a grin of pure joy until we look like a xylophone in the face.

"And in the White House there'll be a large President with rounded corners, who never hunts anything except the shady side of the porch and hasn't faced any wild game of recent years except the baked possum; and altogether things will be much quieter."

"D'ye think the possum will be popular when Big Bill goes in?" asked the House Detective.

"I hope so," said the Hotel Clerk. "The possum ought to make a fine National bird for a prosperity year. He's the only animal I know with a pocket."

SADIE PLAYS A FOUR-FLUSH

SHORTY McCABE'S ACCOUNT OF A BRILLIANT INTERNATIONAL FUNCTION WITH A SUBSTITUTE STAR.

BY SEWELL FORD.

FIRST I knew of this Mrs. Jumna Jhin business was when I strolls into the Perazzer's gold reception-room the other afternoon, huntin' for Sadie, and finds her just shakin' by-by with a couple of light tans, as polite as you please. And maybe I wa'n't some jarred for a minute or so! Not that I've got it in for the colored race; but I do draw the line at makin' parlor comp'ny of 'em. Sure, he has a silk lid and a frock coat on, and she is wearin' a regalia that's more or less suited for happy days; but there was the smoky tint, just the same.

Well, I stands there watchin' the break-away with my mouth openin' wider 'n' wider, especially as Sadie gives the lady Topsy one of her friendly waist squeezes, and when they've sailed toward the elevator I steps out from behind a pillar and waves the flag.

"Gee, Sadie!" says I, "but you're gettin' democratic! Who are your cafe au lait friends, anyway?"

"Why, Shorty!" says she, "Haven't you heard about them? That's the Maharaja of Khelat and the Maharenee."

"I'm all lit up now," says I. "But are they cakewalk artists, or do they travel with Williams and Walker?"

"The idea!" says she, lookin' shocked. "Why, they're from India—a native Prince and Princess—and they're on their way to be entertained at Buckingham palace."

"G'wan!" says I. "You don't mean to tell me that pair of near-brunettes is headed for the king-row?"

She does, though. And she says the Maharenee, which is just Kipling for Princess, has the finest collection of precious stones outside of a museum—a whole trunkful of pearl necklaces, and sapphire belts, and diamond dog collars, and so on.

"And you can't guess what I've done," says Sadie.

"Yes, I can," says I. "You've borrowed the trunk key."

"There," says she, "don't ttry to be humorous! I've got her to promise to attend a dinner party at Mrs. Purdy-Pell's tomorrow night."

"Mrs. Pell know it?" says I.

"No; but she soon will," says Sadie. "And we shall invite Mrs. Boomer Day."

"What then?" says I.

"Why, you know how that fat old freak always loads herself with jewels?" says Sadie. "She'll not miss this chance, you can bet! Well, we'll just spring the Maharenee on her, that's all."

"Oh!" says I. "This is to be a case of luggin' in a ringer on the Boomer Day person, and makin' her look like a night lamp under a Welsbach burner? And that's why you're so chummy with her royal joblots?"

"She isn't as entertaining as she might be, I will admit," says Sadie, "and she does dress a bit freakish; but she'll be something of a card to announce, and when she gets all her family heirlooms on she ought to be a perfect blaze; that's the main point."

"Nothing like being kind to strangers, eh?" says I. "How'd you come to get next? Just butted in?"

"Indeed I did not!" says she. "When I found they were stopping here I sent for a note of introduction from the wife of the British Consul. And I guess the Maharenee was glad to have some one to talk to besides that strutty little Prince."

Well, that's the way it started. After hearin' Sadie and Mrs. Pell plan it all over the phone, I don't get any more details until late the next day, when Pinckney blows into the studio, with that sunny twinkle in his eye that's a sure sign there's something doing. He don't say much, but just balances himself on the corner of my desk, rubs his chin with that silver-headed stick of his and does the silent chuckle.

"Ah, say, Pinckney," says I, "some day one of those funny thoughts of yours will get crossways of your windpipe and you'll choke to death! Why the inward joy?"

"Better wait until you get home," says he. "I fear I couldn't do the subject justice."

"Oh, you couldn't, eh!" says I. "Well, suppose you make a stab at it before I drag you in on the mat and get dust on the back of that new Spring coat. Is it something about Sadie?"

Then he gives up. The dinner party programme had been all fixed up, and everything was runnin' lovely, with Mrs. Boomer Day swallowin' the bait like a pet lizard boltin' a blue bottle fly—when the Maharenee up and sends word that she can't come. She's got a pain in her toe, or she's afraid it'll rain, or some such serious thing as that.

Anyway, she's scratched her entry, and she's stickin' to it, for all Sadie has coaxed her for an hour, tryin' to show her how half the topnotchers in town are dyin' to meet her, and how disappointed them that's been asked will be when she don't show up. But it's no go. This made-in-India Princess ain't interested a little bit. She don't think much of this country, anyway, and she sails tomorrow for England, where they know how to treat a crowned head when they see one.

Now maybe I couldn't figure out just how wrathy Sadie would be after being stung like that! Seems they'd spread the news around reckless about this dinner to a real live Maharenee, and the idea had caught on in great style. Folks had been called up by wire as far away as Newport and Lenox, and they'd tumbled over themselves to send word they were comin'. The worst of it was, it was too late to stop 'em now; and it was up to Sadie and Mrs. Pell to conduct the obsequies over a grand fizzle, somethin' neither of 'em had ever been up against yet.

"But of course you'll be there to help them out," says Pinckney, givin' me the cheerful wink.

"I'd be a lot of help, wouldn't I?" says I. "And it's right in my line, ain't it? Say, you're gettin' to be a reg'lar comic section, Pinckney. G'wan!"

"By which you intend to convey, I suppose," says he, "that you will be unavoidably detained down town on business?"

"Something like that," says I.

"Then I'll be the business," says he. "I engage you right now to supply me with an appetite for dinner, and then help me to order the same. Come on, Shorty."

So, while the chilly frost was threatenin' to blight the buds up around Fifth avenue, and the park entrance, me and Pinckney was havin' an old-time warm-up with the gloves. We'd had a rub, and was just leavin' the studio to get into our dinner clothes when we runs into this kitchenette tragedy in the lower hall.

Course, we didn't know it was that, first off. All we sees is a female party slumped on the bottom stair with her face in her hands, havin' a good hearty cry all to herself.

"Hello!" says I, stoppin' to look her over. "Is that real woe, or is it a bid for contributions? Well, cheer up Lizzie; you've won half a dollar. There you are; Now turn off the tears."

She don't take any notice of the coin, though, but just hunches her shoulders and goes on with the sobbin' business. And say I'm always a mark when that's sprung on me.

"Ah quit!" says I. "Don't weep on the wall there, lady, or you'll loosen the plaster. What's the sad tale, anyway?"

With that I pulls her shoulder around, and she jumps up like I'd touched a spring. Then I sees shes' one of the creole brand, just tinted up enough to see her face has the dusky look, with the red showin' through from underneath. And mad! I see in a minute it wa'n't plain grief that ails her, but a grouchy brain storm.

"Go way, man," says she, "or I'll—"

"Why," says Pinckney, steppin' up—"why it's Laurine, isn't it?"

GIVES HIM A GLANCE CHILLY ENOUGH TO HANG ICICLES ON HIS SOUL.

It was. Laurine happens to be Mrs. Pinckney's pet parlor maid, and she'd disappeared from Soundmere the day before without sayin' why. She'd been such a prize that they was talkin' of advertisin' a reward to anyone that would bring her back. And the minute Laurine sees Pinckney her chin drops and she stands there lookin' sheepish and meek.

"Is this your idea of enjoying a vacation?" says Pinckney.

It didn't take Laurine lone to tell the tragedy. And it all centers about a coffee-colored head waiter by the name of Billings. She'd met up with this Mr. Billings when she was doin' hotel work, and he was a real elegant party, with a curly black mustache and a hair part that looked like it had been done with a straight-edge and a gouge. He'd whispered tender words to her, Mr. Billings had, and he'd asked her to be his true lady love on three separate and distinct occasions, and she givin' him the affugacious turn down every trip, havin' her own ideas about the uncomfluity of head waiters as a set.

It was to keep him from pesterin' her with his assimerations that she'd left the hotel and taken up with the parlor maid job; and she suttingly did have to own that Mrs. Pinckney had used her nice. But this Billings man was as much of a letter writer as he was a converser.. He put in poetry out of a book, and he disservated that he was ready to fly with her on demand. Also he sent a twelve by fourteen photograph, full length view, taken in his dinin'-room costume.

And it was the picture that turned the trick. Laurine had kept it standin' on her bureau, where she could see it when she got lonesome. That and the lack of excitement and refined colored society out at Soundmere worked on Laurine so that early one morning she packed her grip, sneaked out the back way and took a commuter train for the city with the idea of allowin' herself to be made Mrs. Jackson Billings before night. It happened that Billings had resigned his head waitership, on request of the management, but the new man gave her his street number—and Laurine had discovered him dining ong fam-meal with a two-hundred-and-fifty-pound wife and four kids. Hence the brain agitation.

"Hones', Mistah Pinckney," says she, "Ah could a cut his heart out jes' then!"

"Really!" says Pinckney. "And how do you feel about that sort of thing now?"

"Huh!" says she, throwin' her head back and doin' the scornful hand wave. "Ah wouudn't cas' mah eyes on such black trash no mo'! Will the missus take me back?"

"Will she!" says Pinckney. "Why—er—well, she might, you know."

"Ah'll do anything if Ah can get took back," says Laurine.

"Shorty," says he, pullin' me off one side, "what do you think about it?"

"Me?" says I. "All I can think of is how much she looks like that balky Princess of Sadie's, only this is a live one."

"The Maharenee!" says he. "You says Laurine looks like her? Why—why— By Jove, Shorty, I have an inspiration."

When Pinckney is struck with a thought like that he ain't got time for explanation. First he has to rush into the studio and do a lot of telephonin', and when he comes back he's all business.

"Laurine," says he, "you're to come with us. We are going to take you to Mrs. McCabe, and if you can do exactly as she tells you for the next few hours probably you'll get your place again. Do you want to try it?"

Laurine grins. Sure! Inside of three minutes Pinckney has whistled up a roomy taxicab, and we're humming down Broadway.

At the first fake jewelry shop we hauls up and me and Pinckney plies out. Ever in one of them Bridgeport gem dispensaries? Say, they're wonders! They showed us a four-foot rope of fishskin pearls, every one as big as the end of your thumb, all for three and a half.

"I'll take that," says Pinckney. "Now some diamond tiaras."

He blows in a couple of twenties and gets what looks to be a million dollars' worth of stuff—rubies and emeralds and sapphires, and every piece set in warranted gold wash.

"No wonder they have to run the glass factories all night!" says I.

Twenty minutes more and we've landed Laurine at the Perzazzer.

"She'll do," says Sadie, givin' her one look. "And I have a gown that will be just a fit."

"Easy, Sadie," says I. "Don't get let in for any fool stunt you're goin' to be sorry for."

"It's the only thing left for us to do," says she. "And it's such sport!"

Well, you can guess! It was nearly 9 o'clock, and the front room at Mrs. Purdy-Pell's was jammed with swell folks, waitin' for the missin' guest. They'd all seen Countesses and Duchesses and so on, but a Princess from India was a new sensation.

"I do hope she'll tell us something about those delightful native courts," says one.

"Why, she doesn't speak a word of English," says another. "I heard Mrs. Pell say so."

They had plenty of time to talk it over, for they'd been waitin' nearly an hour, when there's a stir at the door, and the stuffed Englishman the Pells has for a butler, shouts out:

"'Er 'Ighness, the Maharenee Jumna Jhin of Khelat!"

"Will they stand for it?" thinks I.

But say, this is the one spot on the map where they do! You flash the real thing on this town, and you've got to back it up with seven kinds of proof and a bunch of affidavits; but you spring a good fake, and they don't even stop to read the label. And for a just-as-good, Laurine was the best that ever happened. Why, I finds myself climbin' on a chair to get another glimpse.

Does she look the part? Say, in that fancy dress of Sadie's, and with all that phony decoration on, this Laurine girl has the Queen of Sheba lookin' like a suffragette on a rainy day. And talk about your walkin' lighthouses! She was as brilliant as a set-piece at a fireworks exhibit. It's nothin' but cut glass backed with silver foil, of course; but under the electric lights who can tell the difference?

And it all matches up so well, too. Them blue and green and yellow stones against that tinted skin of hers just seem to belong there; and the big pearls around her neck, and the tiara on top of all that black hair—well, the whole combination was all to the Cleopatra. Maybe Sadie, all pink and white and red, and not a sign of jewelry on her, don't show up some graceful in contrast. Sadie's towin' her in, and throwin' the happy smiles right and left. And say, when you're chuckin' a bluff, there's nothin' like doin' it well.

I never knew whether they put up the whole game, or if it just happened that way; but right under the big chandelier they meets Mrs. Boomer Day, with all her war paint and furniture on. She's wearin' her pearl rope; but it ain't more'n half the size of the one the fake Maharenee's spor..n'. It's the same with her sparks and other gems. She's hung on the whole collection, and lookin' as decorated up as a Christmast tree; but when she stacks up against the other one her color scheme goes all to the bad. And there wasn't anyone in the crowd knew it quicker than Mrs. Boomer Day. She turns turkey red from her shoulders up, makes a big bluff at shakin' hands, and then edges off into a corner, pretendin' not to see the smiles that goes around.

At dinner they plants the dummy Princess between Mrs. Pell and Pinckney, makin' a sort of chocolate layer, so no one can surprise her into givin' away the part; and the folks has a lovely time tellin' each other what a real royal lookin' lady she was and makin' gueases as to how many hundred thousand dollars' worth of fancy harness she's wearin'.

Perhaps you think Laurine is stunned by all ...? Never a stun! She holds her chin up like the real article, gets away with her share of fancy food, takes a sip of every kind of wine that's circulated, and acts generally like she was bein' mildly amused by a lot of half-civilized freaks. For an amateur performance it was equal to anything an English lady novelist could put up.

Her get-away was the slickest, though. Just when they'd got to coffee Mrs. Pell announces that Her Highness presents her best compliments and begs to be excused. That's the signal for me to send for the carriage.

I've just passed the word to an outside flunky, and am coming back through the front hall when I meets the procession escortin' her out. As Laurine steps through the draperies, one of the extra waiters comes in with the cordial tray. He's a big, fine-lookin' mahogany-colored gent, with a curly mustache and a front like Lew Dockstader. He arrives just in season to almost collide with the imitation Princess, and for a second they stand there dodgin' each other. Then he breaks out, and we sees what a narrow squeeze we've had.

"Foh de land's sakes! Miss Laurine!" says he. With that he throws up both hands, and about two dozen glasses of kummel go to smash on the hardwood floor. But you should have seen Laurine. She draws herself up until she's about a foot taller, pokes her nose into the air, and gives him one of them droop-eyed, below-zero glances that ought to have been chilly enough to hang icicles on his soul. Then she grabs up her long skirt, swings a bare shoulder under his chin, steps around the mess on the floor, and sweeps out where the maid is waitin' with her wraps.

"Pinckney," says I, "that must have been the Romeo Billings person who got the harpoon glance. Wa'n't it?"

"Sh-h-h!" says Pinckney.

Accordin' to later reports, though, it was; and Laurine's sentiments was to the effect that now she was perfectly satisfied to hold down the parlor maid job for the rest of her life.

"But," says I to Sadie next day, "wouldn't the real Mrs. Jumna Jhin be some surprised if she could read all this in the papers about her dinin' out in sty'e? Too bad her sailin' so early made her miss it."

"Perhaps she won't," says Sadie; "for I had marked copies mailed to her home address. She'll know all about it when she gets back to Khelat."

Eh? Sure! That's what I call being real thoughtful.

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"IS THAT REAL WOE, OR IS IT A BID FOR CONTRIBUTIONS?"