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ONE PENNY



HUGGIN LANE.

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PROPINQUITY *



. . . Also the story finds Colonel Musgrave in the company of his sister on a warm April day, whilst these two sat upon the porch of the Musgrave home in Lichfield, and

Colonel Musgrave waited until it should be time to open the Library for the afternoon. And about them birds twittered cheerily and the formal garden flourished as gardens thrive nowhere except in Lichfield, and overhead the sky was a turkis-blue, save for a few irrelevant clouds which dappled it here and there like splashes of whipped cream.

Yet, for all this, the colonel was ill-at-ease; and care was on his brow, and venom in his speech.

“And one thing,” Colonel Musgrave concluded with decision, “I wish distinctly understood, and that is, if she insists on having young men loafing about her—as, of course, she will—she will have to entertain them in the garden. I won’t have them in the house, Agatha. You remember that Langham girl you had here last Easter?” he added, disconsolately—“the one who positively littered up the house with young men, and sang idiotic jingles to them at all hours of the night about the Bailey family and the correct way to spell chicken? She drove me to the verge of insanity, and I haven’t a doubt that this Patricia person will be quite as obstreperous. So, please mention it to her, Agatha—casually, of course—that in

Lichfield, when one is partial to either vocal exercise or amorous dalliance, the proper scene of action is the garden. I really cannot be annoyed by her.”

“But, Rudolph,” his sister protested, “you forget she is engaged to the Earl of Pevensey. An engaged girl naturally wouldn’t care about meeting any young men.”

“H’m!” said the colonel, drily.

Ensued a pause, during which the colonel lighted yet another cigarette.

Then, “I have frequently observed,” he spoke, in absent wise, “that all young women having that peculiarly vacuous expression about the eyes—I believe there are misguided persons who describe such eyes as being ‘dreamy’—are invariably possessed of a fickle, unstable and coquettish temperament. Oh, no! You may depend upon it, Agatha, the fact that she contemplates purchasing the right to support a peculiarly disreputable member of the British peerage will not hinder her in the least from making advances to all the young men in the neighbourhood.”

Miss Musgrave was somewhat ruffled. She was a homely little woman with nothing of the ordinary Musgrave comeliness. Candour even compels the statement that in her pudgy swarthy face there was a droll suggestion of the pug-dog.

“I am sure,” Miss Musgrave remonstrated, with placid dignity, “that you know nothing whatever about her, and that the reports about the earl have probably been greatly exaggerated, and that her picture shows her to be an unusually attractive girl. Though it is

* From *The Rivet in Grandfather’s Neck*. By James Branch Cabell. Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.

true," Miss Musgrave conceded after reflection, "that there are any number of persons in the House of Lords that I wouldn't in the least care to have in my own house, even with the front parlour all in linen as it unfortunately is. So awkward when you have company! And the Bible does bid us not to put our trust in princes, and, for my part, I never thought that photographs could be trusted, either."

"Scorn not the nobly born, Agatha," her brother admonished her, "nor treat with lofty scorn the well-connected. The very best people are sometimes respectable. And yet," he pursued, with a slight hiatus of thought, "I should not describe her as precisely an attractive-looking girl. She seems to have a lot of hair,—if it is all her own, which it probably isn't,—and her nose is apparently straight enough, and I gather she is not absolutely deformed anywhere; but that is all I can conscientiously say in her favour. She is artificial. Her hair, now! It has a—well, you would not call it exactly a crinkle or precisely a wave, but rather somewhere between the two. Yes, I think I should describe it as a ripple. I fancy it must be rather like the reflection of a sunset in—a duck-pond, say, with a faint wind ruffling the water. For I gather that her hair is of some light shade,—induced, I haven't a doubt, by the liberal use of peroxides. And this ripple, too, Agatha, it stands to reason, must be the result of coercing nature, for I have never seen it in any other woman's hair. Moreover," Colonel Musgrave continued, warming somewhat to his subject, "there is a dimple—on the right side of her mouth, immediately above it,—which

speaks of the most frivolous tendencies. I dare say it comes and goes when she talks,—winks at you, so to speak, in a manner that must be simply idiotic. That foolish little cleft in her chin, too——"

But at this point, his sister interrupted him.

"I hadn't a notion," said she, "that you had even looked at the photograph. And you seem to have it quite by heart, Rudolph,—and some people admire dimples, you know, and, at any rate, her mother had red hair, so Patricia isn't really responsible. I decided that it would be foolish to use the best mats to-night. We can save them for Sunday supper, because I am only going to have eggs and a little cold meat, and not make company of her."

For no apparent reason, Rudolph Musgrave flushed.

"I inspected it—quite casually—last night. Please don't be absurd, Agatha! If we were threatened with any other direful visitation—influenza, say, or the seventeen-year locust,—I should naturally read up on the subject in order to know what to expect. And since Providence has seen fit to send us a visitor rather than a visitation—though, personally, I should infinitely prefer the influenza, as interfering in less degree with my comfort,—I have, of course, neglected no opportunity of finding out what we may reasonably look forward to. I fear the worst, Agatha. For I repeat, the girl's face is, to me, absolutely unattractive!"

The colonel spoke with emphasis, and flung away his cigarette, and took up his hat to go.

And then, "I suppose," said Miss

Musgrave, absently, "you will be falling in love with her, just as you did with Anne Charteris and Aline Van Orden and all those other minxes. I *would* like to see you married, Rudolph, only I couldn't stand your having a wife."

"I! I!" sputtered the colonel. "I think you must be out of your head! I fall in love with that chit! Good Lord, Agatha, you are positively idiotic!"

And the colonel turned on his heel, and walked stiffly through the garden. But, when half-way down the path, he wheeled about and came back.

"I beg your pardon, Agatha," he said, contritely, "it was not my intention to be discourteous. But somehow—somehow, dear, I don't quite see the necessity for my falling in love with anybody, so long as I have you."



PLUMS FROM J. B. P.'s CHRISTMAS PUDDING*

* * *

... And we may say that there is a central core in Mr. de la Mare's imagination that has "kept innocence," though his spirit should walk the awful borderlands and proclaim its despair; a man has *felt* the world he shows us, but a child's eyes have *seen* it, lit with strange stars or bright with unknown birds. . . .

* * *

... Comedy demands a world of its own. The merest hint of war, famine, or pestilence would shatter, say, a story

by Jane Austen, and so she took care to create a world in which the visit of somebody's niece or the engagement of the neighbouring vicar is an event of the highest importance. Mr. Jacobs presents us with a world just as small, bright, and artificial as that of Jane Austen. Knowing exactly what he wanted to do, the kind of effect he wanted to make, he took away and refashioned the slender stock of material necessary for his setting, and boldly left out all the rest, all the darker crimes, the devastating passions, the bleak tragedies that are found everywhere in this world and that would have shattered his tiny comedies into minute fragments. . . .

* *From Figures in Modern Literature.* By J. B. Priestley. Demy 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.