

EDITOR'S DRAWER

GETTING SQUARE WITH THE LAUNDRY

BY ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

"HELL'S bells!" is my favorite swear word. I don't consider it so very wicked—I don't think it means much of anything. I never heard of any bells in that particular place, and if there are any it can do no harm to mention them occasionally, under sudden and trying circumstances.

I did so, quite sharply, when not so long ago I observed among my freshly laundered shirts, neatly piled upon my bed, a garment that manifestly was not my own. It was the second time this thing had happened, and the first experience still rankled. The laundry had refused to redeem that errant garment—to recognize any mistake—had insisted that there could be none, that the shirt was cer-

tainly mine, even though clearly built for a smaller man. I tried it, repeatedly, nearly choking myself in the attempt to get even, finally working it off on the janitor.

In the present instance I gradually became calmer. Even the briefest examination showed it to be a shirt of excellent quality, correct as to measurements and captivating as to pattern—captivating from my standpoint, I mean. I like shirts to have a good deal of the cosmic urge in them, that gripping quality so often referred to in publishers' advertisements. I saw at once that this shirt had it—that to engage with a shirt like that would be to give life, at once, quite a new and wonderful definition.



MOST OF THE INK LANDED ON MY NEW POSSESSION

"H—b—!" I said again, as I checked off its good points, "I'll wear it—I'll wear it *now!* I'll get even with that bandit, for once."

It certainly was becoming to my style of beauty. When I was enclosed in its rather violent, almost ethiopian, parallels I had a moment of misgiving. Being a commuter, I rode down each morning with many. Suppose some co-traveler should identify his property: it would be inconvenient, even humiliating, to surrender it on the train. Oh, well, there must be more than one of those masterpieces; I would put up a bold front—shirtfront—if one were degenerate enough to make puns. I slipped out, calling good-bye to Elizabeth, who was occupied with the dumbwaiter. Something told me to do this.

Nothing happened on the train—not a thing.

It was different, however, at the office. Being July weather, we were stripped for action, and the boys gathered around to admire me. One said, "It's a hummer!" Yet another said, "Hummer nothing! It's an anvil chorus!" and wanted to know how I expected to be able to sleep in the same room with it. Hammond, in his customary disagreeable way, asked if generally I did my shopping along upper Lenox Avenue.

I was not disturbed by these feeble and ancient jokes. I have the courage of my color-schemes, even of borrowed plumage, though I may have been a trifle spasmodic in flaunting it; for in a moment of testing my fountain pen, to see if it had ink in it, I found that it had—a good deal of it—most of which landed on my new possession, a bit above the waist-line.

The reader will discover nothing amusing in this misfortune, but those imbeciles did, and became less and less considerate in their remarks, the latter quite too silly to repeat, or even to remember. At the end of a loathsome day I went home gloomily—to face a situation.

Elizabeth met me at the door, with no welcome-home expression, her eye nailed to that shirt.

"How in the name of goodness did you come to put that thing on?" she demanded.

"Why—why—" I began, "Why—" and then I seemed to be unable to remember any good reason for putting on that particular shirt on that particular morning. "Why—why—hell's bells!" I wound up weakly, "what's the matter?"

"Matter! Why, the laundry boy has been here three times after it. He brought your shirt, and said he must have the one left by mistake. I told him I could not find it. He is coming again, now, any time."

"Well," I said bitterly, "he carefully failed to make any such manifestation before, when he carried off a perfectly good shirt of mine, in exchange for a miniature mockery, about big enough for a chimpanzee. How did I know he would want this one any more than the other?"

"Well, he does," urged Elizabeth, "and he's going to call for it, very soon."

"It will be necessary for him to call again," I said feebly; "it's in no condition to deliver. I have worn it the space of a long, limp July day; and besides, I squirted my fountain pen on it—quite copiously."

Elizabeth glared at me, as I opened my coat to expose the disaster.

"Heavens!" she moaned, "What shall we do now?"

"Yes," I admitted, "it's something to be thought out."

Elizabeth regarded me accusingly.

"You never got ink on one of your shirts before," she observed, apparently with a growing suspicion that for some unworthy motive I had done it this time purposely. The doorbell rang—she jumped, quite smartly. "There he is, now; what shall I tell him?"

I am rather quick in moments of danger—accustomed to driving in close traffic, as it were.

"Tell him I have been called away—sent for; that I may be back soon, but that my things are locked up—he must await my return. It will give us time—that's what we need, now."

I retreated, and presently heard the alternate voices of Elizabeth and the laundry boy. They seemed to be discussing something. I was not interested to the point even of asking her later how she modified and adapted my invention to suit her emergencies. I merely said when she sought me out:

"They have stuff to remove ink. I will get a pound of it, and work out my salvation. I will eradicate that spot from my life. Then we will send this calamity to Sam Lee's short-order laundry, and have it for that pestiferous youth when he comes again."

I did not sleep on this decision. I am prompt about such matters. I went immediately to the pharmacy and cornered the

supply of Ink-out, and, after a somewhat anxious and hasty supper, set to work on my expiation.

I did not know before that an electric bulb can furnish so much heat. But on a July night, in a still bathroom, it can become positively criminal in its energy. I scrubbed and rinsed; I perspired till my eyes were full, and the fluid of life dripped down, and perhaps helped a little, for the ink really seemed to come out, in astonishing quantities. Elizabeth sat outside on the balcony, and looked at the stars, and occasionally called through the window that there was a nice little breeze out there, and to ask how I was getting on.

"It's coming out in quarts," I told her. "I'm getting quite interested and cheerful over it."

Then suddenly, I suppose, she must have heard my favorite words, for she said:

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

I tried to be calm.

"Oh, nothing," I said, "nothing much. I've rubbed a hole in the Liberian flag—that's all!"

She came in then.

"I thought you might do that," she said, reflectively.

"Oh, you did! You thought I might do that! Well, why didn't you say so?"

She became considerate.

"It's not a very big hole," she said, "just kind of long, like; and I think the stain will wash out, now, with a little salt, or milk, or something. And maybe I can carefully draw the edges together. It seems really very warm in here."

I suppose it was my appearance that made her kind. I was a rag—a rag that has been wrung out.

"Angels could do no more," I said. "Let me get into this tub, and go to bed."

"Our shirt—" I call it "our," for it now became that—was somewhat less promising by daylight. Zones of its glory seemed to have paled with the action of the Ink-out, and there was an area of general vagueness around the former field of offense. Likewise, a very definite rift where I had been a thought too intense in my treatment. There were even other places which might also be termed



"IT'S COMING OUT IN QUARTS"

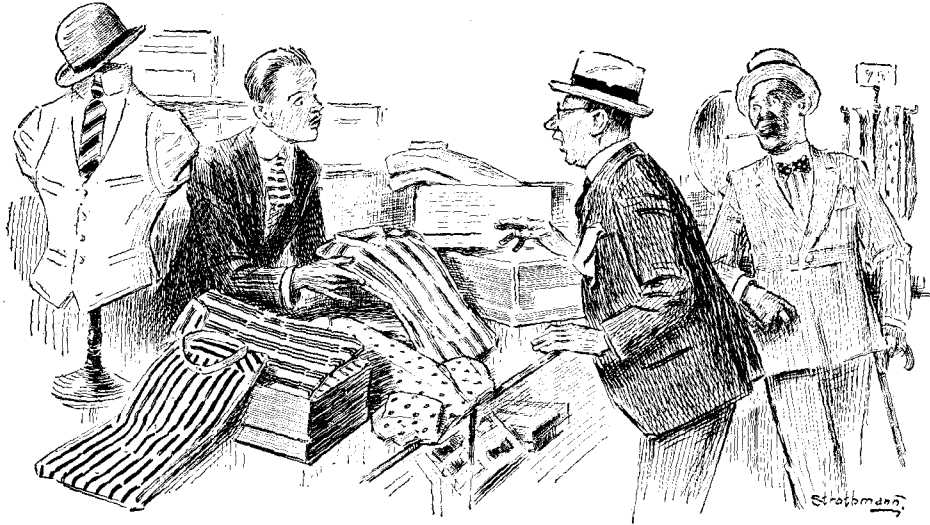
threadbare. Elizabeth said, regarding it doubtfully:

"Don't you think you'd better leave the office an hour earlier and try to find a new one like it. Sam Lee can do it up, so it won't look entirely new. They must carry such things as this in those shops along upper Seventh or Lenox, above 135th Street. Very likely, it's a favorite pattern. You can remember it, can't you?"

Remember it! I couldn't forget it if I tried. She called after me cheerfully that she was sure I could find it.

But Elizabeth was a poor guesser. I left the office even two hours earlier, and put in a season of fearful agony—the hottest hours of a July afternoon—in the shops of that care-free district that now embraces upper Seventh and Lenox Avenues and is extending in dusky fingers down the side streets. Polite clerks of both sexes exposed to me their choicest selections, but all to no purpose. They had nothing drastic enough—violent enough—to fit my case. One polite young female, of the gold-rimmed variety, after declaring that she had nothing so pronounced as I seemed to require, suggested that I try Broadway.

I caught my train at 125th Street, and tried to forget care in the evening comics and scandals. Elizabeth met me at the door,



THEY HAD NOTHING DRASTIC ENOUGH TO FIT MY CASE

unduly radiant, I thought, under the circumstances.

"No," I said, "I could not find it. They have nothing so fierce in stock."

Elizabeth looked rejoicingful.

"I'm so glad," she bubbled, "for I fixed it this morning, and took it right to Sam Lee, with a hurry-up order, and it's just come home. You never could find the place, if you didn't examine closely. It's quite wonderful, really!"

She was right: Elizabeth and Sam together had certainly worked a miracle. But then I happened to discover something—something to give one pause—an unmistakable Chinese identification mark on the inside of the neckband; not just a mark either, but an inscription: three beautifully wrought ideographic characters, probably to convey "Wantee dam quickee!" or some such urgent order.

"Elizabeth," I groaned, "the owner of this thing will see that it has been worn, and washed. He will find out from the laundry boy my shame, and probably charge me with it publicly, some morning on the train. I can never live it down—never!"

Elizabeth was startled, but she said:

"I don't believe men look on the inside of their neckbands. Besides, he may think they have a Chinaman, now, in our laundry, or something. Anyway, we're not going to care what he thinks. We're going to get rid of it."

That is Elizabeth's way, when she really takes a thing in hand. We did get rid of it—on the spot, so to speak—for the laundry boy rang the bell, just then, and Elizabeth, hastily wrapping up our shirt handed it to him, with her most winning smile. . . . One hour later the bell rang again. Something in the clang of it moved me almost to tears.

"It's that accursed shirt again!" I wailed, sweating icewater. Also, probably its owner."

It was the shirt, all right, but not the owner. It was the laundry boy, and he was grinning.

"That ain't the lost shirt, at all," he said. The boss says he never saw that shirt before, and that it must be one of your own, and that it's been to the Chinese, 'cause it's got his mark on it. Says you might-a got it from there."

"But did you show it to the gentleman who has lost a shirt?" This from Elizabeth, quite severely.

"Yes-mam, an' he said—"

The creature hesitated and began grinning again, in a quite idiotic way.

"Yes, well, what *did* he say?"

"Why, he said—he said that as fur as he was concerned you could keep it—that *he* wouldn't wear it to a dog-fight."

But I could not permit this to go on.

"Oh, he wouldn't," I interrupted, quite haughtily; "he wouldn't wear it to a dog-fight! Well, you present my compliments to the gentleman, and tell him that—hell's bells!—we don't attend dog-fights. Just like that!"

PERSONAL AND OTHERWISE

Arthur Ruhl is pleasantly recalled as the author of many brilliant war despatches from the western front and Gallipoli while acting as special correspondent for *Collier's Weekly*. He has recently made an extended trip through our western states, and has written for HARPER'S a series of three articles upon special phases of western life. **Alexander Porterfield**, whose social comedies have brightened several recent issues of the Magazine, is preparing to return to England after a two years' sojourn in this country. **Dorothy Kennard** is introduced to our readers in a note at the head of the first instalment of her letters.

Beatrice Ravenel is a resident of Charleston, South Carolina, and has contributed numerous stories of our Southland to HARPER'S. **Marion Couthouy Smith**, who resides in East Orange, New Jersey, is the author of several volumes of verse, and a frequent contributor to this and other periodicals. **Dallas Lore Sharp** is professor of English in Boston University and the author of several books. During the summer there will appear in HARPER'S a sequence of delightful articles by Mr. Sharp describing his adventures as an amateur bee-keeper.

William McFee, as engineer of the United Fruit Company *Carrillo*, comes and goes between New York and various West Indian ports, where the editors seek to intercept him with proofs of the successive instalments of *Command*. **Charles B. Nordhoff** went to the South Seas two years ago to collaborate with James Norman Hall in writing for HARPER'S a series of articles. These have subsequently appeared in book-form, entitled *Fairy Lands of the South Seas*. Mr. Nordhoff's enchantment with these distant islands has led him to prolong his stay indefinitely. The drawings which accompany the present article ("South-Sea Fishermen") are the work of Oscar Schmidt, who has recently visited the islands of which

Mr. Nordhoff writes. **Carol Haynes** will be recalled as the author of "Aunt Selina" in the March HARPER'S.

Dr. Walter B. Cannon has been an investigator in physiology for over twenty years. The method of using an opaque substance to show the movements of the stomach and intestines by means of the x-ray was first used by Dr. Cannon in the Harvard Physiological Laboratory in 1896, when he was a first-year medical student. It is now employed all over the world in the diagnosis of gastro-intestinal disorders. While studying the processes of digestion with the x-ray he noticed that signs of anxiety or worry were accompanied by total cessation of motions of the alimentary tract. This led him to be interested in the effects of emotion on the body and the relations of emotional stress to the activities of certain glands of internal secretion. The results of the researches at the Harvard Physiological Laboratory on these two general subjects have appeared in two volumes. The first was in a series of medical monographs and was entitled *The Mechanical Factors of Digestion*. The second was first published in 1915 and was entitled *Body Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear, and Rage*. Since the publication of the latter book Dr. Cannon served in France for twenty-one months, working on the nature of wound shock. A monograph on that subject is shortly to appear. At present Dr. Cannon is continuing investigations relative to the control of internal secretions. **Lawrence Housman**, author and artist, is one of England's best known poets, and a frequent contributor to many periodicals.

Miss V. H. Friedlaender has received frequent mention in these pages in connection with her short stories. **Cale Young Rice**, poet and dramatist, is the author of many well-known volumes of drama and poetry which have placed him in the front rank of American writers.