

PATRICIA BRENT, SPINSTER

**BY
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WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT

Patricia Brent is a "paying guest" at the Galvin House Residential Hotel. One day she overhears two of her fellow "guests" pitying her because she "never has a nice young man to take her out."

In a thoughtless moment of anger she announced that on the following night she is dining at the Quadrant with her fiancé. When in due course she enters the grill-room, she finds some of Galvin Houseites there to watch her. Rendered reckless by the thought of the humiliation of being found out, she goes up to a young staff-officer, and asks him to help her by "playing up."

This is how she meets Lt.-Col. Lord Peter Bowen, D.S.O. The story is a comedy concerned with the complications that ensue from Patricia's thoughtless act.

PATRICIA BRENT, SPINSTER

CHAPTER I

PATRICIA'S INDISCRETION

"She never has anyone to take her out, and goes nowhere, and yet she can't be more than twenty-seven, and really she's not bad-looking."

"It's not looks that attract men," there was a note of finality in the voice; "it's something else." The speaker snapped off her words in a tone that marked extreme disapproval.

"What else?" enquired the other voice.

"Oh, it's—well, it's something not quite nice," replied the other voice darkly, "the French call it being *très femme*. However, she hasn't got it."

"Well, I feel very sorry for her and her loneliness. I am sure she would be much happier if she had a nice young man of her own class to take her about."

Patricia Brent listened with flaming cheeks. She felt as if someone had struck her. She recognised herself as the object of the speakers' comments. She could not laugh at the words, because they were true. She was lonely, she had no men friends to take her about, and yet, and yet—

"Twenty-seven," she muttered indignantly, "and I was only twenty-four last November."

She identified the two speakers as Miss Elizabeth Wangle and Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe.

Miss Wangle was the great-niece of a bishop, and to have a bishop in heaven is a great social asset on earth. This ecclesiastical distinction seemed to give her the right of leadership at the Galvin House Residential Hotel. Whenever a new boarder arrived, the unfortunate bishop was disinterred and brandished before his eyes.

One facetious young man in the "commercial line" had dubbed her "the body-snatcher," and, being inordinately proud of his *jeu d'esprit*, he had

worn it threadbare, and Miss Wangle had got to know of it. The result was the sudden departure of the wit. Miss Wangle had intimated to Mrs. Craske-Morton, the proprietress, that if he remained she would go. Mrs. Craske-Morton considered that Miss Wangle gave tone to Galvin House.

Miss Wangle was acid of speech and barren of pity. Scandal and "the dear bishop" were her chief preoccupations. She regularly read *The Morning Post*, which she bought, and *The Times*, which she borrowed. In her attitude towards royalty she was a Jacobite, and of the aristocracy she knew no wrong.

Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe was Miss Wangle's toady; but she wrapped her venom in Christian charity, thus making herself the more dangerous of the two.

At Galvin House none dare gainsay these two in their pronouncements. They were disliked; but more feared than hated. During the Zeppelin scare Mr. Bolton, who was the humorist of Galvin House, had fixed a notice to the drawing-room door, which read: "Zeppelin commanders are requested to confine their attentions to rooms 8 and 18." Rooms 8 and 18 were those occupied by Miss Wangle and Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe. There had been a great fuss about this harmless and rather feeble joke; but fortunately for Mr. Bolton, he had taken care to pin his jest on the door when no one was looking, and he took the additional precaution of being foremost in his denunciation of the bad taste shown by the person responsible for the jest.

Patricia Brent was coming downstairs in response to the dinner-gong, when, through the partly open door of the lounge, she overheard the amiable remarks concerning herself. She passed quietly into the dining-room and took her seat at the table in silence, mechanically acknowledging the greetings of her fellow-guests.

At Galvin House the word "guest" was insisted upon. Mrs. Craske-Morton, in announcing the advent of a new arrival, reached the pinnacle of refinement. "We have another guest coming," she would say, "a most interesting man," or "a very cultured woman," as the case might be. When the man arrived without his interest, or the woman without her culture, no one was disappointed; for no one had expected anything. The conventions had been observed and that was all that mattered.

Dinner at Galvin House was rather a dismal affair. The separate tables heresy, advocated by a progressive-minded guest, had been once and for all discouraged by Miss Wangle, who announced that if separate tables were introduced she, for one, would not stay.

"I remember the dear bishop once saying to me," she remarked, "My dear, if people can't say what they have to say at a large table and in the hearing of others, then let it for ever remain unsaid."

"But if someone's dress is awry, or their hair is not on straight, would you announce the fact to the whole table?" Patricia had questioned with an innocence that was a little overdone.

Miss Wangle had glared; for she wore the most obvious auburn wig, which failed to convince anyone, and served only to enhance the pallor of her sharp features.

In consequence of the table arrangements, conversation during meal-times was general—and dull. Mr. Bolton joked, Miss Wangle poured vinegar on oily waters, Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe "dripped with the oil of forbearance." Mr. Cordal ate noisily, Miss Sikkum simpered and Mrs. Craske-Morton strove to appear a real hostess entertaining real guests without the damning prefix "paying."

The remaining guests, there were usually round about twenty-five, looked as they felt they ought to look, and never failed to show a befitting reverence for Miss Wangle's ecclesiastical relic; for it was Miss Wangle who issued the social birth certificates at Galvin House.

That evening Patricia was silent. Mr. Bolton endeavoured to draw her out, but failed. As a rule she was the first to laugh at his jokes in order "to encourage the poor little man," as she expressed it; "for a man who is fat and bald and a bachelor and thinks he's a humorist wants all the pity that the world can lavish upon him."

Patricia glanced round the table, from Miss Wangle, lean as a winter wolf, to Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe, fair, chubby and faded, and on to Mr. Cordal, lantern-jawed and ravenous. "Were they not all lonely—the left of God?" Patricia asked herself; and yet two of these solitary souls had dared to pity her, Patricia Brent. At least she had something they did not possess—youth.

The more she thought of the words that had drifted to her through the half-closed door of the lounge, the more humiliating they appeared. Her day had been particularly trying and she was tired. She was in a mood to see a cyclone in a zephyr, and in a ripple a gigantic wave. She looked about her once more. What a fate to be cast among such people!

The table appointments seemed more than usually irritating that evening. The base metal that peeped slyly through the silver of the forks and

spoons, the tapering knives, victims of much cleaning, with their yellow handles, the salt-cellars, the mustard, browning with three days' age (mustard was replenished on Sundays only), the anæmic ferns in "artistic" pots, every defect seemed emphasized.

How she hated it; but most of all the many-shaped and multi-coloured napkin-rings, at Galvin House known as "serviette-rings." Variety was necessary to ensure each guest's personal interest in one particular napkin. Did they ever get mixed? Patricia shuddered at the thought. At the end of the week, a "serviette" had become a sort of gastronomic diary. By Saturday evening (new "serviettes" were served out on Sunday at luncheon) the square of grey-white fabric had many things recorded upon it; but above all, like a monarch dominating his subjects, was the ineradicable aroma of Monday's kipper.

On this particular evening Galvin House seemed more than ever grey and depressing. Patricia found herself wondering if God had really made all these people in His own image. They seemed so petty, so ungodlike. The way they regarded their food, as it was handed to them, suggested that they were for ever engaged in a comparison of what they paid with what they received. Did God make people in His own image and then leave the rest to them? Was that where free will came in?

"——lonely!"

The word seemed to crash in upon her thoughts with explosive force. Someone had used it—whom she did not know, or in what relation. It brought her back to earth and Galvin House. "Lonely," that was at the root of her depression. She was an object of pity among her fellow-boarders. It was intolerable! She understood why girls "did things" to escape from such surroundings and such fox-pity.

Had she been a domestic servant she could have hired a soldier, that is before the war. Had she been a typist or a shop-girl—well, there were the park and tubes and things where gallant youth approached fair maiden. No, she was just a girl who could not do these things, and in consequence became the pitied of the Miss Wangles and the Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythes of Bayswater.

She was quite content to be manless, she did not like men, at least not the sort she had encountered. There were Boltons and Cordals in plenty. There were the "Haven't-we-met-before?" kind too, the hunters who seemed cheerfully to get out at the wrong station, or pay twopence on a

bus for a penny fare in order to pursue some face that had attracted their roving eye.

She sighed involuntarily at the ugliness of it all, this cheapening of the things worthy of reverence and respect. She looked across at Miss Sikkum, whose short skirts and floppy hats had involved her in many unconventional adventures that one glance at her face had corrected as if by magic. A back view of Miss Sikkum was deceptive.

Suddenly Patricia made a resolve. Had she paused to think she would have seen the danger; but she was by nature impulsive, and the conversation she had overheard had angered and humiliated her.

Her resolve synchronised with the arrival of the sweet stage. Turning to Mrs. Craske-Morton she remarked casually, "I shall not be in to dinner to-morrow night, Mrs. Morton."

Mrs. Craske-Morton always liked her guests to tell her when they were not likely to be in to dinner. "It saves the servants laying an extra cover," she would explain. As a matter of fact it saved Mrs. Craske-Morton preparing for an extra mouth.

If Patricia had hurled a bomb into the middle of the dining-table, she could not have attracted to herself more attention than by her simple remark that she was not dining at Galvin House on the morrow.

Everybody stopped eating to stare at her. Miss Sikkum missed her aim with a trifle of apple charlotte, and spent the rest of the evening in endeavouring to remove the stain from a pale blue satin blouse, which in Brixton is known as "a Paris model." It was Miss Wangle who broke the silence.

"How interesting," she said. "We shall quite miss you, Miss Brent. I suppose you are working late."

The whole table waited for Patricia's response with breathless expectancy.

"No!" she replied nonchalantly.

"I know," said Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe, in her even tones, and wagging an admonitory finger at her. "You're going to a revue, or a music-hall."

"Or to sow her wild oats," added Mr. Bolton.

Then some devil took possession of Patricia. She would give them something to talk about for the next month. They should have a shock.

"No," she replied indifferently, attracting to herself the attention of the whole table by her deliberation. "No, I'm not going to a revue, a music-hall, or to sow my wild oats. As a matter of fact," she paused. They literally hung upon her words. "As a matter of fact I am dining with my fiancé."

The effect was electrical. Miss Sikkum stopped dabbing the front of her Brixton "Paris model." Miss Wangle dropped her pince-nez on the edge of her plate and broke the right-hand glass. Mr. Cordal, a heavy man who seldom spoke, but enjoyed his food with noisy gusto, actually exclaimed, "What?" Almost without exception the others repeated his exclamation.

"Your fiancé?" stuttered Miss Wangle.

"But, dear Miss Brent," said Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe, "you never told us that you were engaged."

"Didn't I?" enquired Patricia indifferently.

"And you don't wear a ring," interposed Miss Sikkum eagerly.

"I hate badges of servitude," remarked Patricia with a laugh.

"But an engagement ring," insinuated Miss Sikkum with a self-conscious giggle.

"One is freer without a ring," replied Patricia.

Miss Wangle's jaw dropped.

"Marriages are——" she began.

"Made in heaven. I know," broke in Patricia, "but you try wearing Turkish slippers in London, Miss Wangle, and you'll soon want to go back to the English boots. It's silly to make things in one place to be worn in another; they never fit."

Mrs. Craske-Morton coughed portentously.

"Really, Miss Brent," she exclaimed.

Whenever conversation seemed likely to take an undesirable turn, or she foresaw a storm threatening, Mrs. Craske-Morton's "Really, Mr. So-and-so" invariably guided it back into a safe channel.

"But do they?" persisted Patricia. "Can you, Mrs. Morton, seriously regard marriage in this country as a success? It's all because marriages are made in heaven without taking into consideration our climatic conditions."

Miss Wangle had lost the power of speech. Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe was staring at Patricia as if she had been something strange and unclean upon which her eyes had never hitherto lighted. In the eyes of little Mrs. Hamilton, a delightfully French type of old lady, there was a gleam of amusement. Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe was the first to recover the power of speech.

"Is your fiancé in the army?"

"Yes," replied Patricia desperately. She had long since thrown over all caution.

"Oh, tell us his name," giggled Miss Sikkum.

"Brown," said Patricia.

"Is his knapsack number 99?" enquired Mr. Bolton.

"He doesn't wear one," said Patricia, now thoroughly enjoying herself.

"Oh, he's an officer, then," this from Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe.

"Is he a first or a second lieutenant?" enquired Mrs. Craske-Morton.

"Major," responded Patricia laconically.

"What's he in?" was the next question.

"West Loamshires."

"What battalion?" enquired Miss Wangle, who had now regained the power of speech. "I have a cousin in the Fifth."

"I am sure I can't remember," said Patricia, "I never could remember numbers."

"Not remember the number of the battalion in which your fiancé is?" There was incredulous disapproval in Miss Wangle's voice.

"No! I'm awfully sorry," replied Patricia, "I suppose it's very horrid of me; but I'll go upstairs and look it up if you like."

"Oh please don't trouble," said Miss Wangle icily. "I remember the dear bishop once saying——"

"And I suppose after dinner you'll go to a theatre," interrupted Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe, for the first time in the memory of the oldest guest indifferent to the bishop and what he had said, thought, or done.

"Oh, no, it's war time," said Patricia, "we shall just dine quietly at the Quadrant Grill-room."

A meaning glance passed between Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe and Miss Wangle. Why she had fixed upon the Quadrant Grill-room Patricia could not have said.

"And now," said Patricia, "I must run upstairs and see that my best bib and tucker are in proper condition to be worn before my fiancé. I'll tell him what you say about the ring. Good night, everybody, if we don't meet again."

"Patricia Brent," admonished Patricia to her reflection in the looking-glass, as she brushed her hair that night, "you're a most unmitigated little liar. You've told those people the wickedest of wicked lies. You've engaged yourself to an unknown major in the British Army. You're going to dine with him to-morrow night, and heaven knows what will be the result of it all. A single lie leads to so many. Oh, Patricia, Patricia!" she nodded her head admonishingly at the reflection in the glass. "You're really a very wicked young woman." Then she burst out laughing. "At least, I have given them something to talk about, any old how. By now they've probably come to the conclusion that I'm a most awful rip."

Patricia never confessed it to herself, but she was extremely lonely. Instinctively shy of strangers, she endeavoured to cover up her self-consciousness by assuming an attitude of nonchalance, and the result was that people saw only the artificiality. She had been brought up in the school of "men are beasts," and she took no trouble to disguise her indifference to them. With women she was more popular. If anyone were ill at Galvin House, it was always Patricia Brent who ministered to them, sat and read to them, and cheered them through convalescence back to health.

Her acquaintance with men had been almost entirely limited to those she had found in the various boarding-houses, glorified in the name of residential hotels, at which she had stayed. Five years previously, on the death of her father, a lawyer in a small country town, she had come to London and obtained a post as secretary to a blossoming politician. There she had made herself invaluable, and there she had stayed, performing the same tasks day after day, seldom going out, since the war never at all, and living a life calculated to make an acid spinster of a Venus or a Juno.

"Oh, bother to-morrow!" said Patricia as she got into bed that night; "it's a long way off and perhaps something will happen before then," and with that she switched off the light.

CHAPTER II

THE BONSOR-TRIGGS' MENAGE

The next morning Patricia awakened with a feeling that something had occurred in her life. For a time she lay pondering as to what it could be. Suddenly memory came with a flash, and she smiled. That night she was dining out! As suddenly as it had come the smile faded from her lips and eyes, and she mentally apostrophised herself as a little idiot for what she had done. Then, remembering Miss Wangle's remark and the expression on Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe's face, the lines of her mouth hardened, and there was a determined air about the tilt of her chin. She smiled again.

"Patricia Brent! No, that won't do," she broke off. Then springing out of bed she went over to the mirror, adjusted the dainty boudoir cap upon her head and, bowing elaborately to her reflection, said, "Patricia Brent, I invite you to dine with me this evening at the Quadrant Grill-room. I hope you'll be able to come. How delightful. We shall have a most charming time." Then she sat on the edge of the bed and pondered.

Of course she would have to come back radiantly happy, girls who have been out with their fiancé's always return radiantly happy. "That will mean two *crèmes de menthes* instead of one, that's another shilling, perhaps two," she murmured. Then she must have a good dinner or else the *crème de menthe* would get into her head, that would mean about seven shillings more. "Oh! Patricia, Patricia," she wailed, "you have let yourself in for an expense of at least ten shillings, the point being is a major in the British Army worth an expenditure of ten shillings? We shall——"

She was interrupted by the maid knocking at the door to inform her that it was her turn for the bath-room.

As Patricia walked across the Park that morning on her way to Eaton Square, where the politician lived who employed her as private secretary whilst he was in the process of rising, she pondered over her last night's announcement. She was convinced that she had acted foolishly, and in a way that would probably involve her in not only expense, but some trouble and inconvenience.

At the breakfast-table the conversation had been entirely devoted to herself, her fiancé, and the coming dinner together. Miss Wangle, Mrs. Mosscrop-Smythe, and Miss Sikkum, supported by Mrs. Craske-Morton,

had returned to the charge time after time. Patricia had taken refuge in her habitual breakfast silence and, finding that they could draw nothing from her her fellow-guests had proceeded to discuss the matter among themselves. It was with a feeling of relief that Patricia rose from the table.

There was an east wind blowing, and Patricia had always felt that an east wind made her a materialist. This morning she was depressed; there was in her heart a feeling that fate had not been altogether kind to her. Her childhood had been spent in a small town on the East Coast under the care of her father's sister who, when Mrs. Brent died, had come to keep house for Mr. John Brent and take care of his five-year-old daughter. In her aunt Patricia found a woman soured by life. What it was that had soured her Patricia could never gather; but Aunt Adelaide was for ever emphasizing the fact that men were beasts.

Later Patricia saw in her aunt a disappointed woman. She could remember as a child examining with great care her aunt's hard features and angular body, and wondering if she had ever been pretty, and if anyone had kissed her because they wanted to and not because it was expected of them.

The lack of sympathy between aunt and niece had driven Patricia more and more to seek her father's companionship. He was a silent man, little given to emotion or demonstration of affection. He loved Patricia, but lacked the faculty of conveying to her the knowledge of his love.

As she walked across the Park Patricia came to the conclusion that, for some reason or other, love, or the outward visible signs of love, had been denied her. Warm-hearted, impetuous, spontaneous, she had been chilled by the self-repression of her father, and the lack of affection of her aunt. She had been schooled to regard God as the God of punishment rather than the God of love. One of her most terrifying recollections was that of the Sundays spent under the paternal roof. To her father, religion counted for nothing; but to her aunt it counted for everything in the world; the hereafter was to be the compensation for renunciation in this world. Miss Brent's attitude towards prayer was that of one who regards it as a means by which she is able to convey to the Almighty what she expects of Him in the next world as a reward for what she has done, or rather not done, in this.

Patricia had once asked, in a childish moment of speculation, "But, Aunt Adelaide, suppose God doesn't make us happy in the next world, what shall we do then?"

"Oh! yes He will," was her aunt's reply, uttered with such grimness that Patricia, though only six years of age, had been satisfied that not even God would dare to disappoint Aunt Adelaide.

Patricia had been a lonely child. She had come to distrust spontaneity and, in consequence, became shy and self-conscious, with the inevitable result that other children, the few who were in Aunt Adelaide's opinion fit for her to associate with, made it obvious that she was one by herself. Patricia had fallen back on her father's library, where she had read many books that would have caused her aunt agonies of stormy anguish, had she known.

Patricia early learnt the necessity for dissimulation. She always carefully selected two books, one that she could ostensibly be reading if her aunt happened to come into the library, and the other that she herself wanted to read, and of which she knew her aunt would strongly disapprove.

Miss Brent regarded boarding-schools as "hotbeds of vice," and in consequence Patricia was educated at home, educated in a way that she would never have been at any school; for Miss Brent was thorough in everything she undertook. The one thing for which Patricia had to be grateful to her aunt was her general knowledge, and the sane methods adopted with her education. But for this she would not have been in the position to accept a secretaryship to a politician.

When Patricia was twenty-one her father had died, and she inherited from her mother an annuity of a hundred pounds a year. Her aunt had suggested that they should live together; but Patricia had announced her intention of working, and with the money that she realised from the sale of her father's effects, particularly his library, she came to London and underwent a course of training in shorthand, typewriting, and general secretarial work. This was in March, 1914. Before she was ready to undertake a post, the war broke out upon Europe like a cataclysm, and a few months later Patricia had obtained a post as private secretary to Mr. Arthur Bonsor, M.P.

Mr. Bonsor was the victim of marriage. Destiny had ordained that he should spend his life in golf and gardening, or in breeding earless rabbits and stingless bees. He was bucolic and passive. Mrs. Bonsor, however, after a slight altercation with Destiny, had decided that Mr. Bonsor was to become a rising politician. Thus it came about that, pushed on from behind by Mrs. Bonsor and led by Patricia, whose general knowledge was of the greatest possible assistance to him, Mr. Bonsor was in the

elaborate process of rising at the time when Patricia determined to have a fiancé.

Mr. Bonsor was a small, fair-haired man, prematurely bald, an indifferent speaker; but excellent in committee. Instinctively he was gentle and kind. Mrs. Bonsor disliked Patricia and Patricia was indifferent to Mrs. Bonsor. Mrs. Bonsor, however, recognised that in Patricia her husband had a remarkably good secretary, one whom it would be difficult to replace.

Mrs. Bonsor's attitude to everyone who was not in a superior position to herself was one of patronage. Patricia she looked upon as an upper servant, although she never dare show it. Patricia, on the other hand, showed very clearly that she had no intention of being treated other than as an equal by Mrs. Bonsor, and the result was a sort of armed neutrality. They seldom met; when by chance they encountered each other in the house Mrs. Bonsor would say, "Good morning, Miss Brent; I hope you walked across the Park." Patricia would reply, "Yes, most enjoyable; I invariably walk across the Park when I have time"; and with a forced smile Mrs. Bonsor would say, "That is very wise of you."

Never did Mrs. Bonsor speak to Patricia without enquiring if she had walked across the Park. One day Patricia anticipated Mrs. Bonsor's inevitable question by announcing, "I walked across the Park this morning, Mrs. Bonsor, it was most delightful," and Mrs. Bonsor had glared at her, but, remembering Patricia's value to her husband, had made a non-committal reply and passed on. Henceforth, Mrs. Bonsor dropped all reference to the Park.

On the first day of Patricia's entry into the Bonsor household, Mrs. Bonsor had remarked, "Of course you will stay to lunch," and Patricia had thanked her and said she would. But when she found that her luncheon was served on a tray in the library, where Mr. Bonsor did his work, she had decided that henceforth exercise in the middle of the day was necessary for her, and she lunched out.

Mr. Bonsor had married beneath him. His father, a land-poor squire in the north of England, had impressed upon all his sons that money was essential as a matrimonial asset, and Mr. Bonsor, not having sufficient individuality to starve for love, had determined to follow the parental decree. How he met Miss Triggs, the daughter of the prosperous Streatham builder and contractor, Samuel Triggs, nobody knew, but his father had congratulated him very cordially about having contrived to marry her. Miss Triggs's friends to a woman were of the firm conviction

that it was Miss Triggs who had married Mr. Bonsor. "Ettie's so ambitious." remarked her father soon after the wedding, "that it's almost a relief to get 'er married."

Mr. Bonsor was scarcely back from his honeymoon before he was in full possession of the fact that Mrs. Bonsor had determined that he should become famous. She had read how helpful many great men's wives had been in their career, and she determined to be the power behind the indeterminate Arthur Bonsor. Poor Mr. Bonsor, who desired nothing better than a peaceable life and had looked forward to a future of ease and prosperity when he married Miss Triggs, discovered when too late that he had married not so much Miss Triggs, as an abstract sense of ambition. Domestic peace was to be purchased only by an attitude of entire submission to Mrs. Bonsor's schemes. He was not without brains, but he lacked that impetus necessary to "getting on." Mrs. Bonsor, who was not lacking in shrewdness, observed this and determined that she herself would be the impetus.

Mr. Bonsor came to dread meal-times, that is meal-times *tête-à-tête*. During these symposiums he was subjected to an elaborate cross-examination as to what he was doing to achieve greatness. Mrs. Bonsor insisted upon his being present at every important function to which he could gain admittance, particularly the funerals of the illustrious great. Egged on by her he became an inveterate writer of letters to the newspapers, particularly *The Times*. Sometimes his letters appeared, which caused Mrs. Bonsor intense gratification: but editors soon became shy of a man who bombarded them with letters upon every conceivable subject, from the submarine menace to the question of "should women wear last year's frocks?"

Mr. Triggs had once described his daughter very happily: "Ettie's one of them that ain't content with pressing a bell, but she must keep 'er thumb on the bell-push." That was Mrs. Bonsor all over; she lacked restraint, both physical and artistic, and she conceived that if you only make noise enough people will, sooner or later, begin to take notice.

Within three years of his marriage, Mr. Bonsor entered the House of Commons. He had first of all fought in a Radical constituency and been badly beaten; but the second time he had, by some curious juggling of chance, been successful in an almost equally strong Radical division, much to the delight of Mrs. Bonsor. The success had been largely due to her idea of flooding the constituency with pretty girl-canvassers; but she had been very careful to keep a watchful eye on Mr. Bonsor.

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