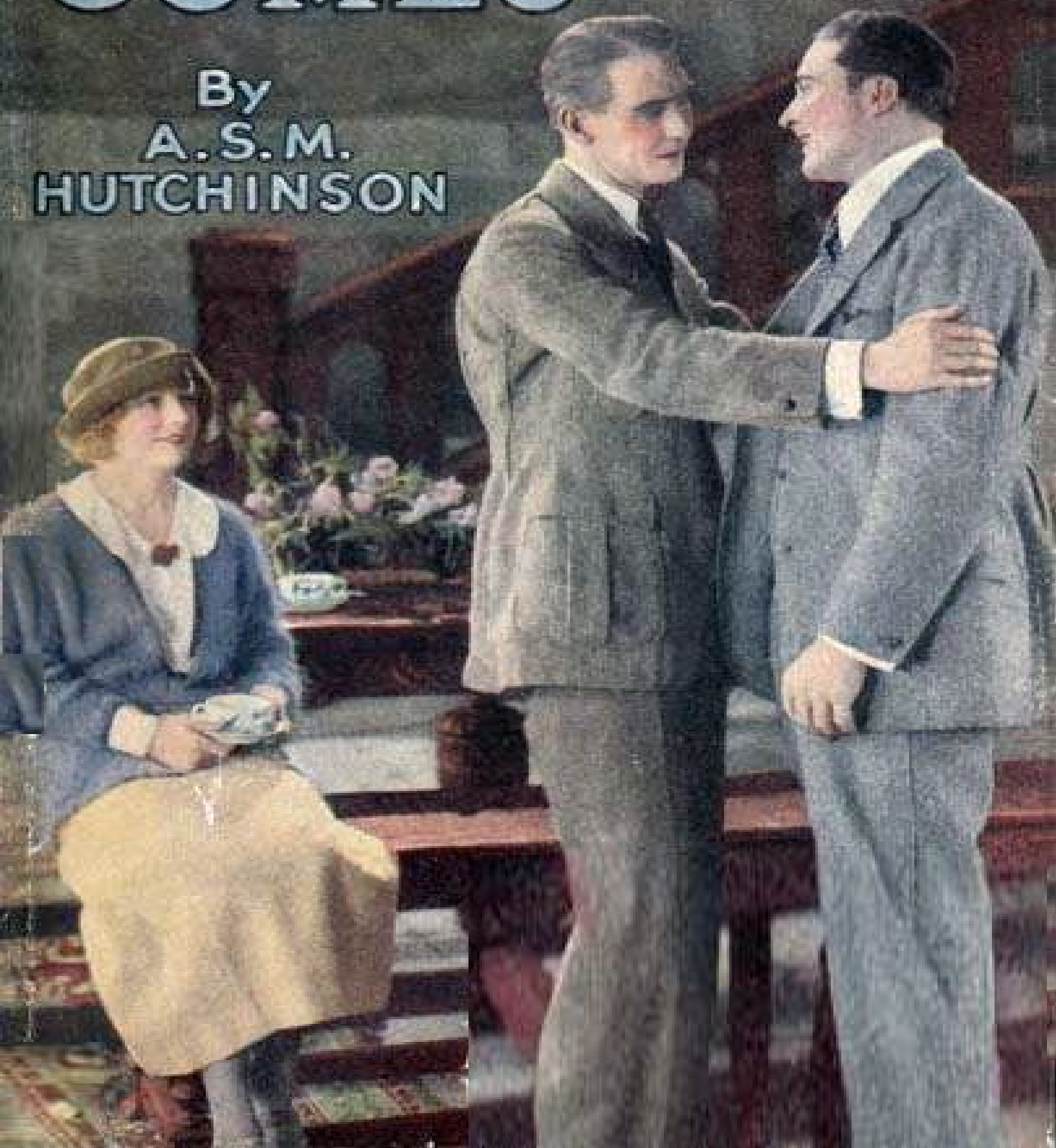


# IF WINTER COMES

By  
A. S. M.  
HUTCHINSON



**IF WINTER COMES**  
**BY**  
**A.S.M. HUTCHINSON**

BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY  
1921

Published, August, 1921  
Reprinted, August, 1921 (twice)  
Reprinted, September, 1921 (four times)  
Reprinted, October, 1921

PRINTED BY C.H. SIMONDS COMPANY  
BOSTON, MASS., U.S.A.

"...O Wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

—SHELLEY

# CONTENTS

## PART ONE

MABEL

## PART TWO

NONA

## PART THREE

EFFIE

## PART FOUR

MABEL—NONA—EFFIE

# IF WINTER COMES

## PART ONE

### MABEL

#### CHAPTER I

##### I

To take Mark Sabre at the age of thirty-four, and in the year 1912, and at the place Penny Green is to necessitate looking back a little towards the time of his marriage in 1904, but happens to find him in good light for observation. Encountering him hereabouts, one who had shared school days with him at his preparatory school so much as twenty-four years back would have found matter for recognition.

A usefully garrulous person, one Hapgood, a solicitor, found much.

"Whom do you think I met yesterday? Old Sabre! You remember old Sabre at old Wickamote's?... Yes, that's the chap. Used to call him Puzzlehead, remember? Because he used to screw up his forehead over things old Wickamote or any of the other masters said and sort of drawl out, 'Well, I don't see that, sir.'... Yes, rather!... And then that other expression of his. Just the opposite. When old Wickamote or some one had landed him, or all of us, with some dashed punishment, and we were gassing about it, used to screw up his nut in the same way and say, 'Yes, but I see what he *means*.' And some one would say, 'Well, what does he mean, you ass?' and he'd start gassing some rot till some one said, 'Good lord, fancy sticking up for a master!' And old Puzzlehead would say, 'You sickening fool, I'm not sticking *up* for him. I'm only saying he's right from how he looks at it and it's no good saying he's wrong.'... Ha! Funny days.... Jolly nice chap, though, old Puzzlehead was.... Yes, I met him.... Fact, I run into him occasionally. We do a mild amount of business with his firm. I buzz down there about once a year. Tidborough.

He's changed, of course. So have you, you know. That Vandyke beard, what? Ha! Old Sabre's not done anything outrageous like that. Real thing I seemed to notice about him when I bumped into him yesterday was that he didn't look very cheery. Looked to me rather as though he'd lost something and was wondering where it was. Ha! But—dashed funny—I mentioned something about that appalling speech that chap made in that blasphemy case yesterday.... Eh? yes, absolutely frightful, wasn't it?—well, I'm dashed if old Sabre didn't puzzle up his nut in exactly the same old way and say, 'Yes, but I see what he *means*.' I reminded him and ragged him about it no end. Absolutely the same words and expression. Funny chap ... nice chap....

"What did he say the blasphemy man meant? Oh, I don't know; some bilge, just as he used to about the masters. You know the man talked some rubbish about how the State couldn't have it both ways—couldn't blaspheme against God by flatly denying that all men were equal and basing all its legislation on keeping one class up and the other class down; couldn't do that and at the same time prosecute him because he said that religion was—well, you know what he said; I'm dashed if I like to repeat it. Joke of it was that I found myself using exactly the same expression to old Sabre as we used to use at school. I said, 'Good lord, man, fancy sticking up for a chap like that!' And old Sabre—by Jove, I tell you there we all were in a flash back in the playground at old Wickamote's, down in that corner by the workshop, all kids again and old Puzzlehead flicking his hand out of his pocket—remember how he used to?—like *that*—and saying, 'You sickening fool, I'm not sticking *up* for him, I'm only saying he's right from how he looks at it and it's no good saying he's wrong!' Rum, eh, after all those years.... No, he didn't say, 'You sickening fool' this time. I reminded him how he used to, and he laughed and said, 'Yes; did I? Well, I still get riled, you know, when chaps can't see—' And then he said 'Yes, "sickening fool"; so I did; odd!' and he looked out of the window as though he was looking a thousand miles away—this was in his office, you know—and chucked talking absolutely....

"Yes, in his office I saw him.... He's in a good business down there at Tidborough. Dashed good. 'Fortune, East and Sabre'... Never heard of them? Ah, well, that shows you're not a pillar of the Church, old son. If you took the faintest interest in your particular place of worship, or in any Anglican place of worship, you'd know that whenever you want anything for the Church

from a hymn book or a hassock or a pew to a pulpit or a screen or a spire you go to Fortune, East and Sabre, Tidborough. Similarly in the scholastic line, anything from a birch rod to a desk—Fortune, East and Sabre, by return and the best. No, they're *the* great, *the* great, church and school-furnishing people. 'Ecclesiastical and Scholastic Furnishers and Designers' they call themselves. And they're IT. No really decent church or really gentlemanly school thinks of going anywhere else. They keep at Tidborough because they were there when they furnished the first church in the year One or thereabouts. I expect they did the sun-ray fittings at Stonehenge. Ha! Anyway, they're one of the stately firms of old England, and old Sabre is the Sabre part of the firm. And his father before him and so on. Fortune and East are both bishops, I believe. No, not really. But I tell you the show's run on mighty pious lines. One of them's a 'Rev.', I know. I mean, the tradition of the place is to be in keeping with the great and good works it carries out and for which, incidentally, it is dashed well paid. Rather. Oh, old Sabre has butter with his bread all right....

"Married? Oh, yes, he's married. Has been some time, I believe, though they've no kids. I had lunch at his place one time I was down Tidborough way. Now there's a place you ought to go to paint one of your pictures—where he lives—Penny Green. Picturesque, quaint if ever a place was. It's about seven miles from Tidborough; seven miles by road and about seven centuries in manners and customs and appearance and all that. Proper old village green, you know, with a duck pond and cricket pitch and houses all round it. No two alike. Just like one of Kate Greenaway's pictures, I always think. It just sits and sleeps. You wouldn't think there was a town within a hundred miles of it, let alone a bustling great place like Tidborough. Go down. You really ought to. Yes, and by Jove you'll have to hurry up if you want to catch the old-world look of the place. It's 'developing' ... 'being developed.'... Eh?... Yes; God help it; I agree. After all these centuries sleeping there it's suddenly been 'discovered.' People are coming out from Tidborough and Alton and Chovensbury to get away from their work and live there. Making a sort of garden suburb business of it. They've got a new church already. Stupendous affair, considering the size of the place—but that's looking forward to this development movement, the new vicar chap says. He's doing the developing like blazes. Regular tiger he is for shoving things, particularly himself. Chap called Bagshaw—Boom Bagshaw.



Character if ever there was one. But they're all characters down there from what I've seen of it...

"Yes, you go down there and have a look, with your sketch-book. Old Sabre'll love to see you.... His wife?... Oh, very nice, distinctly nice. Pretty woman, very. Somehow I didn't think quite the sort of woman for old Puzzlehead. Didn't appear to have the remotest interest in any of the things he was keen about; and he seemed a bit fed with her sort of talk. Hers was all gossip—all about the people there and what a rum crowd they were. Devilish funny, I thought, some of her stories. But old Sabre—well, I suppose he'd heard 'em before. Still, there was something—something about the two of them. You know that sort of—sort of—what the devil is it?—sort of stiffish feeling you sometimes feel in the air with two people who don't quite click. Well, that was it. Probably only my fancy. As to that, you can pretty well cut the welkin with a knife at my place sometimes when me and my missus get our tails up; and we're fearful pals. Daresay I just took 'em on an off day. But that was my impression though—that she wasn't just the sort of woman for old Sabre. But after all, what the dickens sort of woman would be? Fiddling chap for a husband, old Puzzlehead. Can imagine him riling any wife with wrinkling up his nut over some plain as a pikestaff thing and saying, 'Well, I don't quite see that.' Ha! Rum chap. Nice chap. Have a drink?"

## CHAPTER II

### I

Thus, by easy means of the garrulous Hapgood, appear persons, places, institutions; lives, homes, activities; the web and the tangle and the amenities of a minute fragment of human existence. Life. An odd business. Into life we come, mysteriously arrived, are set on our feet and on we go: functioning more or less ineffectively, passing through permutations and combinations; meeting the successive events, shocks, surprises of hours, days, years; becoming engulfed, submerged, foundered by them; all of us on the same adventure yet retaining nevertheless each his own individuality, as swimmers carrying each his undetachable burden through dark, enormous and cavernous seas. Mysterious journey! Uncharted, unknown and finally—but there is no finality! Mysterious and stunning sequel—not end—to the mysterious and tremendous adventure! Finally, of this portion, death, disappearance,—gone! Astounding development! Mysterious and hapless arrival, tremendous and mysterious passage, mysterious and alarming departure. No escaping it; no volition to enter it or to avoid it; no prospect of defeating it or solving it. Odd affair! Mysterious and baffling conundrum to be mixed up in!... Life!

Come to this pair, Mark Sabre and his wife Mabel, at Penny Green, and have a look at them mixed up in this odd and mysterious business of life. Some apprehension of the odd affair that it was was characteristic of Mark Sabre's habit of mind, increasingly with the years,—with Mabel.

### II

Penny Green—"picturesque, quaint if ever a place was", in garrulous Mr. Hapgood's words—lies in a shallow depression, in shape like a narrow meat dish. It runs east and west, and slightly tilted from north to south. To the north the land slopes pleasantly upward in pasture and orchards, and here was the site of the Penny Green Garden Home Development Scheme. Beyond the site, a considerable area, stands Northrepps, the seat of Lord Tybar. Lord Tybar sold the Development site to the developers, and, as he signed the deed

of conveyance, remarked in his airy way, "Ah, nothing like exercise, gentlemen. That's made every one of my ancestors turn in his grave." The developers tittered respectfully as befits men who have landed a good thing.

Westward of Penny Green is Chovensbury; behind Tidborough the sun rises.

Viewed from the high eminence of Northrepps, Penny Green gave rather the impression of having slipped, like a sliding dish, down the slope and come to rest, slightly tilted, where its impetus had ceased. It was certainly at rest: it had a restful air; and it had certainly slipped out of the busier trafficking of its surrounding world, the main road from Chovensbury to Tidborough, coming from greater cities even than these and proceeding to greater, ran far above it, beyond Northrepps. The main road rather slighted than acknowledged Penny Green by the nerveless and shrunken feeler which, a mile beyond Chovensbury, it extended in Penny Green's direction.

This splendid main road in the course of its immense journey across Southern England, extended feelers to many settlements of man, providing them as it were with a talent which, according to the energy of the settlement, might be increased a hundredfold—drained, metalled, tarred, and adorned with splendid telegraph poles and wires—or might be wrapped up in a napkin of neglect, monstrous overgrown hedges and decayed ditches, and allowed to wither: the splendid main road, having regard to its ancient Roman lineage, disdainfully did not care tuppence either way; and for that matter Penny Green, which had ages ago put its feeler in a napkin, did not care tuppence either.

It was now, however, to have a railway.

And meanwhile there was this to be said for it: that whereas some of the dependents of the splendid main road constituted themselves abominably ugly carbuncles on the end of shapely and well-manicured fingers of the main road, Penny Green, at the end of a withered and entirely neglected finger, adorned it as with a jewel.

### III

A Kate Greenaway picture, the garrulous Hapgood had said of Penny Green; and it was well said. At its eastern extremity the withered talent from the splendid main road divided into two talents and encircled the Green which

had, as Hapgood had said, a cricket pitch (in summer) and a duck pond (more prominent in winter); also, in all seasons, and the survivors of many ages, a clump of elm trees surrounded by a decayed bench; a well surrounded by a decayed paling, so decayed that it had long ago thrown itself flat on the ground into which it continued venerably to decay; and at the southeastern extremity a village pound surrounded by a decayed grey wall and now used by the youth of the village for the purpose of impounding one another in parties or sides in a game well called "Pound I."

At the southwestern extremity of the Green, and immediately opposite the Tybar Arms, was a blacksmith's forge perpetually inhabited and directed by a race named Wirk. The forge was the only human habitation or personal and individual workshop actually on the Green, and it was said, and freely admitted by the successive members of the tribe of Wirk, that it had "no right" to be there. There it nevertheless was, had been for centuries, so far as anybody knew to the contrary, and administered always by a Wirk. In some mysterious way which nobody ever seemed to recognize till it actually happened there was always a son Wirk to continue the forge when the father Wirk died and was carried off to be deposited by his fathers who had continued it before him. It was also said in the village, as touching this matter of "no right", that nobody could understand how the forge ever came to be there and that it certainly would be turned off one day; and with this also the current members of the tribe of Wirk cordially agreed. They understood less than anybody how they ever came to be there, and they knew perfectly well they would be turned off one day; saying which—and it was a common subject of debate among village sires of a summer evening, seated outside the Tybar Arms—saying which, the Wirk of the day would gaze earnestly up the road and look at his watch as if the power which would turn him off was then on its way and was getting a bit overdue.

The present representatives of the tribe of Wirk were known as Old Wirk and Young Wirk. Young Wirk was sixty-seven. No one knew where a still younger Wirk would come from when Old Wirk died and when Young Wirk died. But no one troubled to know. No one knows, precisely, where the next Pope is coming from, but he always comes, and successive Wirks appeared as surely. Old Wirk was past duty at the forge now. He sat on a Windsor chair all day and watched Young Wirk. When the day was finished Old Wirk

and Young Wirk would walk across the Green to the pound, not together, but Old Wirk in front and Young Wirk immediately behind him; both with the same gait, bent and with a stick. On reaching the pound they would gaze profoundly into it over the decayed, grey wall, rather as if they were looking to see if the power that was going to turn out the forge was there, and then, the power apparently not being there, they would return, trailing back in the same single file, and take up their reserved positions on the bench before the Tybar Arms.

#### IV

Mark Sabre, intensely fond of Penny Green, had reflected upon it sometimes as a curious thing that there was scarcely one of the village's inhabitants or institutions but had evidenced little differences of attitude between himself and Mabel, who was not intensely fond of Penny Green. The aged Wirks had served their turn. Mabel had once considered the Wirks extremely picturesque and, quite early in their married life, had invited them to her house that she might photograph them for her album.

They arrived, in single file, but she did not photograph them for her album. The photograph was not taken because Mark, when they presented themselves, expressed surprise that the aged pair were led off by the parlour maid to have tea in the kitchen. Why on earth didn't they have tea with them, with himself and Mabel, in the garden?

Mabel did what Sabre called "flew up"; and at the summit of her flight up inquired, "Suppose some one called?"

"Well, suppose they did?" Sabre inquired.

Mabel in a markedly calm voice then gave certain orders to the maid, who had brought out the tea and remained while the fate of the aged Wirks was in suspense.

The maid departed with the orders and Sabre commented, "Sending them off? Well, I'm dashed!"

Half an hour later the aged pair, having been led into the kitchen and having had tea there, were led out again and released by the maid on to the village Green rather as if they were two old ducks turned out to grass.

Sabre, watching them from the lawn beside the teacups, laughed and said,

"What a dashed stupid business. They might have had tea on the roof for all I care."

Mabel tinkled a little silver bell for the maid. *Ting-a-ling-ting!*

## V

The houses of Penny Green carried out the Kate Greenaway effect that the Green itself established. Along the upper road of the tilted dish were the larger houses, and upon the lower road mostly the cottages of the villagers; also upon the lower road the five shops of Penny Green: the butcher's shop which was opened on Tuesdays and Fridays by a butcher who came in from Tidborough with a spanking horse in front of him and half a week's supply of meat behind and beneath him; the grocer's shop and the draper's shop which, like enormous affairs in London, were also a large number of other shops but, unlike the London affairs, dispensed them all within the one shop and over the one counter. In the grocer's shop you could be handed into one hand a pound of tea and into the other a pair of boots, a convenience which, after all, is not to be had in all Oxford Street. The draper's shop, carrying the principle further, would not only dress you; post-office you; linoleum, rug and wall paper you; ink, pencil and note paper you; but would also bury you and tombstone you, a solemnity which it was only called upon to perform for anybody about once in five years—Penny Green being long-lived—but was always ready and anxious to carry out. Indeed in the back room of his shop, the draper, Mr. Pinnock, had a coffin which he had been trying (as he said) "to work off" for twenty-two years. It represented Mr. Pinnock's single and disastrous essay in sharp business. Two and twenty years earlier Old Wirk had been not only dying but "as good as dead." Mr. Pinnock on a stock-replenishing excursion in Tidborough, had bought a coffin, at the undertaker's, of a size to fit Old Wirk, and for the reason that, buying it then, he could convey it back on the wagon he had hired for the day and thus save carriage. He had brought it back, and the first person he had set eyes on in Penny Green was no other than Old Wirk himself, miraculously recovered and stubbornly downstairs and sunning at his door. The shock had nearly caused Mr. Pinnock to qualify for the coffin himself; but he had not, nor had any other inhabitant of suitable size since demised. Longer persons than Old Wirk had died, and much shorter and much stouter persons than Old Wirk had died. But the coffin had remained. Up-ended and neatly fitted with

shelves, it served as a store cupboard, without a door, pending its proper use. But it was a terribly expensive store cupboard and it stood in Mr. Pinnock's parlour as a gloomy monument to the folly of rash and hazardous speculation.

## VI

Penny Green, like Rome, had not been built in a day. The houses of the Penny Green Garden Home, on the other hand, were being run up in as near to a day as enthusiastic developers, feverish contractors (vying one with another) and impatient tenants could encompass. Nor was Penny Green built for a day. The houses and cottages of Penny Green had been built under the influence of many and different styles of architecture; and they had been built not only by people who intended to live in them, and proposed to be roomy and well cup boarded and stoutly beamed and floored in them, but who, not foreseeing restless and railwayed generations, built them to endure for the children of their children's children and for children yet beyond. Sabre's house was of grey stone and it presented over the doorway the date 1667.

"Nearly two hundred and fifty years," Mabel had once said.

"And I bet," Sabre had replied, "it's never been better kept or run than you run it now, Mabel."

The tribute was well deserved. Mabel, who was in many ways a model woman, was preëminently a model housewife. "Crawshaws" was spotlessly kept and perfectly administered. Four living rooms, apart from the domestic offices, were on the ground floor. One was the morning room, in which they principally lived; one the dining room and one the drawing-room. They were entered by enormously heavy doors of oak, fitted with latches, the drawing-room up two steps, the dining room down one step and the morning room and the fourth room on the level. All were low-beamed and many-windowed with lattice windows; all were stepped into as stepping into a very quiet place, and somehow into a room which one had not expected to be there, or not quite that shape if a room were there. Sabre never quite lost that feeling of pleasant surprise on entering them. They had moreover, whether due to the skill of the architect or the sagacity of Mabel, the admirable, but rare attribute of being cool in summer and warm in winter.

The only room in the house which Sabre did not like was the fourth sitting room on the ground floor; and it was his own room, furnished and decorated

by Mabel for his own particular use and comfort. But she called it his "den", and Sabre loathed and detested the word den as applied to a room a man specially inhabits. It implied to him a masculine untidiness, and he was intensely orderly and hated untidiness. It implied customs and manners of what he called "boarding-house ideas",—the idea that a man must have an untidily comfortable apartment into which he can retire and envelop himself in tobacco smoke, and where he "can have his own things around him", and "have his pipes and his pictures about him", and where he can wear "an old shooting jacket and slippers",—and he loathed and detested all these phrases and the ideas they connoted. He had no "old shooting jacket" and he would have given it to the gardener if he had; and he detested wearing slippers and never did wear slippers; it was his habit to put on his boots after his bath and to keep them on till he put on shoes when changing for dinner. Above all, he loathed and detested the vision which the word "den" always conjured up to him. This was a vision of the door of a typical den being opened by a wife, and of the wife saying in a mincing voice, "This is George in his den," and of boarding-house females peering over the wife's shoulder and smiling fatuously at the denizen who, in an old shooting jacket and slippers, grinned vacuously back at them. To Mark this was a horrible and unspeakable vision.

Mabel could not in the least understand it, and common sense and common custom were entirely on her side; Mark admitted that. The ridiculous and trivial affair only took on a deeper significance—not apparent to Mark at the time, but apparent later in the fact that he could not make Mabel understand his attitude.

The matter of the den and another matter, touching the servants, came up between them in the very earliest days of their married life. From London, on their return from their honeymoon, Mark had been urgently summoned to the sick-bed of his father, in Chovensbury. Mabel proceeded to Crawshaws. He joined her a week later, his father happily recovered. Mabel had been busy "settling things", and she took him round the house with delicious pride and happiness. Mark, sharing both, had his arm linked in hers. When they came to the fourth sitting room Mabel announced gaily, "And this is your den!"

Mark gave a mock groan. "Oh, lord, not den!"

"Yes, of course, den. Why ever not?"



"I absolutely can't stick den." He glanced about "Who on earth's left those fearful old slippers there?"

"They're a pair of father's. I took them specially for you for this room. You haven't got any slippers like that."

He gazed upon the heels downtrodden by her heavy father. He did not much like her heavy father. "No, I haven't," he said, and thought grimly, "Thank God!"

"But, Mark, what do you mean, you can't stick 'den'?"

He explained laughingly. He ended, "It's just like lounge hall. Lounge hall makes me feel perfectly sick. You're not going to call the hall a lounge hall, are you?"

She was quite serious and the least little bit put out. "No—I'm not. But I can't see why. I've never heard such funny ideas."

He was vaguely, transiently surprised at her attitude towards his funny ideas. "Well, come on, let's see upstairs."

"Yes, let's, dear."

He stepped out, and she closed the door after them. "Well, that's your den."

As if he had never spoken! A vague and transient discomfort shot through him.

## VII

It was when they came down again, completely happy and pleased, that the servant incident occurred. Mabel was down the stairs slightly before him and turned a smiling face up to him as he descended. "By Jove, it's jolly," he said. "We'll be happy here," and he kissed her.

"You'd better see the kitchen. It's awfully nice;" and they went along.

At the kitchen door she paused and began in a mysterious whisper a long account of the servants. "I think they'll turn out quite nice girls. They're sisters, you know, and they're glad to be in a place together. They've both got young men in the village. Fancy, the cook told me that at Mrs. Wellington's where she was, at Chovensbury, she wasn't allowed to use soda for washing up because Mrs. Wellington fussed so frightfully about the pattern on her

china! Fancy, in their family they've got eleven brothers and sisters. Isn't it awful how those kind of people—"

Her voice got lower and lower. She seemed to Mark to be quivering with some sort of repressed excitement, as though the two maids were some rare exhibit which she had captured with a net and placed in the kitchen, and whom it was rather thrilling to open the door upon and peep at. He could hardly hear her voice and had to bend his head. It was dim in the lobby outside the kitchen door. The dimness, her intense whispers and her excitement made him feel that he was in some mysterious conspiracy with her. The whole atmosphere of the house and of this tour of inspection, which had been deliciously absorbing, became mysteriously conspiratorial, unpleasing.

"...She's been to a school of cookery at Tidborough. She attended the whole course!"

"Good. That's the stuff!"

"Hush!"

Why hush? What a funny business this was!

## VIII

Mabel opened the kitchen door. "The master's come to see how nice the kitchen looks."

Two maids in black dresses and an extraordinary amount of stiffly starched aprons and caps and streamers rose awkwardly and bobbed awkward little bows. One was very tall, the other rather short. The tall one looked extraordinarily severe and the short one extraordinarily glum, Mark thought, to have young men. Mabel looked from the girls to Mark and from Mark to the girls, precisely as if she were exhibiting rare specimens to her husband and her husband to her rare specimens. And in the tone of one exhibiting pinned, dried, and completely impersonal specimens, she announced, "They're sisters. Their name is Jinks."

Mark, examining the exhibits, had been feeling like a fool. Their name humanized them and relieved his awkward feeling. "Ha! Jinks, eh? High Jinks and Low Jinks, what?" He laughed. It struck him as rather comic; and High Jinks and Low Jinks tittered broadly, losing in the most astonishing way

the one her severity and the other her glumness.

Mabel seemed suddenly to have lost her interest in her exhibits and their cage. She rather hurried Mark through the kitchen premises and, moving into the garden, replied rather abstractedly to his plans for the garden's development.

Suddenly she said, "Mark, I do wish you hadn't said that in the kitchen."

He was mentally examining the possibilities of a makeshift racket court against a corner of the stable and barn. "Eh, what in the kitchen, dear?"

"That about High Jinks and Low Jinks."

"Mabel, I swear we could fix up a topping sort of squash rackets in that corner. Those cobbles are worn absolutely smooth—"

"I wish you'd listen to me, Mark."

He caught his arm around her and gave her a playful squeeze. "Sorry, old girl, what was it? About High Jinks and Low Jinks? Ha! Dashed funny that, don't you think?"

"No, I don't. I don't think it's a bit funny."

Her tone was such that, relaxing his arm, he turned and gazed at her. "*Don't* you? Don't you really?"

"No, I don't. Far from funny."

Some instinct told him he ought not to laugh, but he could not help it. The idea appealed to him as distinctly and clearly comic. "Well, but it *is* funny. Don't you see? High Jinks alone is such a funny expression—sort of—well, you know what I mean. Apart altogether from Low Jinks," and he laughed again.

Mabel compressed her lips. "I simply don't. Rebecca is not a bit like High Jinks."

He burst out laughing. "No, I'm dashed if she is. That's just it!"

"I really do not see it."

"Oh, go on, Mabel! Of course you do. You make it funnier. High Jinks and Low Jinks! I shall call them that."

"Mark." She spoke the word severely and paused severely. "Mark. I do most earnestly hope you'll do nothing of the kind."

He stared, puzzled. He had tried to explain the absurd thing, and she simply could not see it. "I simply don't."

And again that vague and transient discomfort shot through him.

## IX

Sabre awoke in the course of that night and lay awake. The absurd incident came immediately into his mind and remained in his mind. High Jinks and Low Jinks *was* comic. No getting over it. Incontestably comic. Stupid, of course, but just the kind of stupid thing that tickled him irresistibly. And she couldn't see it. Absolutely could not see it. But if she were never going to see any of these stupid little things that appealed to him—? And then he wrinkled his brows. "You remember how he used to wrinkle up his old nut," as the garrulous Hapgood had said.

A night-light, her wish, dimly illumined the room. He raised himself and looked at her fondly, sleeping beside him. He thought, "Dash it, the thing's been just the same from her point of view. That den business. She likes den, and I can't stick den. Just the same for her as for me that High Jinks and Low Jinks tickles me and doesn't tickle her."

He very gently moved with his finger a tress of her hair that had fallen upon her face.... Mabel!... His wife!... How gently beneath her filmy bedgown her bosom rose and fell!... How utterly calm her face was. How at peace, how secure, she lay there. He thought, "Three weeks ago she was sleeping in the terrific privacy of her own room, and here she is come to me in mine. Cut off from everything and everybody and come here to me."

An inexpressible tenderness filled him. He had a sudden sense of the poignant and tremendous adventure on which they were embarked together. They had been two lives, and now they were one life, altering completely the lives they would have led singly: a new sea, a new ship on a new, strange sea. What lay before them?

She stirred.

His thoughts continued: One life! One life out of two lives; one nature out of two natures! Mysterious and extraordinary metamorphosis. She had brought

her nature to his, and he his nature to hers, and they were to mingle and become one nature.... Absurdly and inappropriately his mind picked up and presented to him the grotesque words, "High Jinks and Low Jinks." A note of laughter was irresistibly tickled out of him.

She said very sleepily, "Mark, are you laughing? What are you laughing at?"

He patted her shoulder. "Oh, nothing."

One nature?