

# THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for June, 1922.

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Frontispiece: "Get across! Quick! Quick! All of you. I'll hold this devil off!" He had seized a stout stick and faced the madman, daring him to spring across.

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# The CHAP UPSTAIRS

by

## ROLAND PERTWEE

ILLUSTRATED BY  
W. E. WEBSTER

JOHN HARVEY was preternaturally old, but really quite young. He did not belong to the type that sits on the front seat of an omnibus. His nature was too retiring. He sat behind and did not complain when the flying sparks from the pipes and cigarettes of the gallant and debonaire passengers in front took refuge in his eyes. He was too forbearing. His wardrobe spoke his character in simple phrase. It intoned the word "sobriety." Within were fifteen suits but only two suitings. His ties were numerous, but in pattern identical. They had no pattern. On a shelf in his dressing-room were seventeen pairs of shoes as closely resembling one another as the members of a temperance society.

He had got into a groove.

His favourite sitting-room in the flat was lined with bookcases from floor to ceiling. He read everything, good, bad, or indifferent. To him books filled the place adventure occupies in the mind of the average man of thirty-five. Also they were his friends—his enemies—his source of enlightenment or despair. He was on excellent terms with a number of sturdy figures in literature—men and women too—who in real life would have paralysed him into instant speechlessness. Speech was always a difficulty with John Harvey. Words are winged, and, alas! he did not possess skill as a fowler. When occasion arose and he had the will to talk, behold his sentences died still-born. But he could talk uncommonly pleasant stuff to persons who had no interest in listening. Men who laid carpets or cleaned windows—women whose mouths were full of pins while they fitted loose covers to chairs and sofas—to such as these he was eloquent. But of what avail?

Silence makes for loneliness, and he was desperately lonely, although he would never admit it even to himself.

To allay the poignancy of loneliness he indulged in a secret vice, and, like all other vices, it grew upon him and was his master. He became a devotee of the "movies." Secretly at first, but later with growing brazenness. The movies became part of his life—far more readily than the theatre could have done. The lowered lights gave rise to private thoughts, and it was pleasant to him to see, in this mysterious art, the entire gamut of emotions being ranged without a single spoken word. It provided comforting reflections—it offered a welcome and a refuge to the inarticulate.

Particularly was he attached to pictures of unhappy foundlings who married into very well-furnished rooms. Their courageous ascent from melancholy and uncharitable surroundings to an approved finale in which nothing but their curls could be seen, storming against some good man's breast, was an unending source of delight to John Harvey. It sent him home to his lonely flat feeling right with the world. It was only the screen maiden whose eyes he dared to meet. In their company his courage was immense. He could look them squarely in the face, even when to express the immensity of their emotions the projector had need to multiply their normal proportions by eight diameters. In real life a "close up" would have filled him with terror—but at the cinema he accepted it unflinchingly, and his sympathies were aroused in direct ratio to the grief or gladness reproduced. He found the spectacle of eyes that measured three feet across and shed half-pint tears was particularly moving. But these intimacies taught him no lesson of

valour the which he might apply to everyday life. In female company he remained as self-conscious and retiring as heretofore. In a crowded railway carriage he would only offer his seat to women of advanced middle age, for he did not dare to meet the grateful or reproachful glances of the fair. Here was a failure of courage, not of chivalry, since the agony he suffered while remaining seated drove needles of remorse into his very foundations.

The flat in which he lived was comfortable and expensive, but not so stoutly built as to exclude all neighbourly sounds. Thus, when the youngest daughter of the tenant below, inspired by hopes of a musical career, embarked upon five-finger exercises, her occasional failures to strike the right note were as audible in John Harvey's study as in her mother's drawing-room. If both windows chanced to be open at the same time he could hear the words passing between pupil and teacher—the slaps provoked and the shrill protests.

"*Mon Dieu!* 'ow must I often tell you to keep up the wrists?"

Whack!

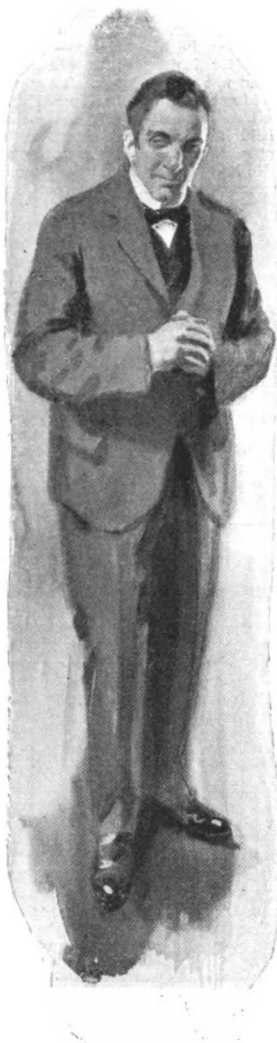
"Woaow! You're a horrid beastly beast! I hate you! I hate all mam'zelles! I wish I was dead."

Tears.

Then John Harvey would close the window, because he did not like tears.

But the sounds that came from above were very different. Quiet footfalls—bath-water—chair springs that squeaked luxuriously—softly closed doors—and never any voices.

John Harvey decided



"I am speaking as a man who has been married himself on sundry occasions."

that the tenant above must be a man after his own heart. Their hours of rising and of retirement synchronized, and in all sorts of silent ways their lives seemed cut from a single pattern. He had never seen the man—never tried to see him—but he devoted an extraordinary amount of time to thinking and making up stories about him. They were attractive stories too, which invested the mysterious unknown with honour and with virtue.

Often John Harvey would suddenly cease reading, cock an ear at the ceiling and listen, with smiling content, to the faint sounds which percolated through from above. It eased his solitude to reflect that a fellow-creature was occupying just such a room as his—following, perhaps, the same pursuits—killing, perhaps, the same idle, unproductive hours—sharing, perhaps, the same queer and wistful loneliness.

"I've half a mind to drop in on the fellow one of these days," mused John. "Still, I suppose I never shall."

"Half a mind" is a retrogressive state. It seldom has been known to mount a flight of steps.

John Harvey was the despair of Roberts, his man-servant. Roberts was an heirloom—part of the personal estate of John Harvey's father. He started his career as a small, silk-hatted, powdered-haired youth, who rode with folded arms on the box of the Harvey brouche, and rose at last to the post of confidential valet. Unlike his son, the late Mr. Harvey was a bit of a blade—he had a roving eye—a

## The Chap Upstairs

pretty taste for neckwear in Spitalfields silk—and an astonishing capacity for remaining unmoved in the presence of mixed drinks.

That John had failed to follow in his father's footsteps was matter for lasting reproach with Roberts. He did not understand such continence, and could not tolerate the spectacle of youth wasted without excesses. As a man who held somewhat Oriental views on the subject of women, he felt called upon to protest. He had done so before, but this did not discourage a fresh attempt.

HE chose an afternoon when Spring was peeping over the edge of its winter coverlet and the sparrows in the square below were celebrating the occasion with appropriate song.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but to see you sitting here day after day—growing older, sir, and nothing happening, sir—breaks my heart, sir."

John was nothing if not oblique.

"Roberts," he replied, "I've a fancy I should like a crumpet for tea."

"I'll look to it, sir, though I believe them to be out of season. But as—"

"An Easter cake would do," said John.

Roberts drew a deep breath.

"I was about to remark, sir—"

John fidgeted.

"Surely this is very poor coal they are sending us."

"Very poor, sir. To claim the privilege of many years' service, it does seem a pity to me, sir, you spend so much of your time alone."

John raised his head sharply and listened.

"Yes, sir?"

John shook his head.

"No—no, I thought I heard the chap who lives in the flat above—but it wasn't."

He picked up a poker and stirred the embers in the grate.

Roberts stuck to his guns.

"I had the offer to-day of a puppy, sir. Very companionable beasts, puppies—I thought, sir, you might fancy a puppy?"

"No, just a crumpet, thanks," said John. "Nothing more."

It was hopeless to argue with such a man, but the gallant Roberts made a final effort.

"Properly speaking, sir, woman is man's true companion. I am speaking again on privilege, and as a man who has been married himself on sundry occasions."

John Harvey shivered protestingly—the Mormonish characteristics of his servant had always provided him with uneasy sensations.

"I dare say all that is very modern and true," he replied; "but I find the subject disturbing."

"It does a gentleman good to be disturbed, sir."

John checked the interruption with a raised forefinger.

"The world, as I see it, is divided into two classes—men who live for themselves, and men who share themselves with the other sex. They might be classified under the headings Bibliophiles and Polygamists. As to which is the more ideal state I would be reluctant to decide, since for my own part I know nothing about women and have never had the temerity to investigate my loss."

Roberts wound up the argument with an eighteenth-century ring.

"Well, sir, it's my opinion that a man can't, properly speaking, call himself a man till he's drunk three bottles at a sitting and had his arm round the waists of a dozen wenches."

Scenting interruption and banishment, he proceeded, swiftly: "It's my motto, sir, and it was your father's before me. 'Cups and kisses—Live hard and die game.'"

"Disgusting," said John Harvey, sternly. "Go away, and never come back in that frame of mind again."

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Roberts, and retired fighting.

As he reached the door an electric bell sounded, followed by a timid knock.

"I am out," said John, and disappeared behind the covers of a gigantic volume of Burton's "Arabian Nights." In the circumstances it was an unhappy choice of literature. A particularly lurid paragraph catching his eye drove him hastily to restore the book to its place in the shelves.

A shaft of late afternoon sunlight pricked a pattern of Spring upon the maroon walls—caught the facets of a cut-glass bowl and blew a spray of rainbows across the ceiling.

The bell rang again, and presently Roberts returned. He said:—

"Sir, there's—"

"I told you I was out," replied John.

"A young lady."

"I am still out, Roberts."

"She wishes to see you, sir—seems to expect to see you."

"Expect? Roberts, I am more than ever out."

"Very good, sir, but I'm afraid she'll be disappointed."

John hesitated.

"Who is this young lady?" he asked.

Roberts said he had no idea. Thought she was from the country—had that wistful look of a country girl.

"H'm!" said John. "I don't like to send her away. Roberts, do you think I should be safe in seeing this young person?"

Roberts's smile was paternal.

"I think it would do you good, sir."

John Harvey looked up for guidance, and there were such a lot of rainbows on the ceiling.



Stammering awkwardly, he stumbled back a few paces—bumped into a bookcase, and stood aghast. The girl, rather breathless and blinking her eyes very fast, presented an astonishing picture.

## The Chap Upstairs

"Show her in," said he.

He was quite unprepared for what was to follow. He had risen with the vague intention of securing a large book behind which he might retire in case of need. He never did look where he was going: not a week in the year went by but that he ran into a lamp-post, the back of a cart, or some other obstruction—it was the penalty of watching his feet rather than their direction. Roberts's announcement: "Miss Mary Mellow," must have synchronized with the girl's entrance. She came in with a sort of run, and John, who was not fitted with efficient brakes, walked straight into her.

It was a most unfortunate introduction.

Stammering awkwardly, he stumbled back a few paces—bumped into a bookcase, and stood aghast.

Roberts had gone out and closed the door. In the centre of the room stood Mary Mellow, rather breathless, and blinking her eyes very fast indeed.

She presented an astonishing picture. It would be difficult to describe what.

She had a great deal of hair—wayward and curly—which was enjoying a riot beneath an absurd little Mercury cap. Her skirt was very short—she wore very large black boots and white stockings, which rucked and stood in urgent need of suspendering. Round her neck was a ridiculous fur boa, with the ends hanging down behind. It looked more like a compress. She had a white blouse with a blue rosette pinned to the left breast, and a pair of carefully-mended white cotton gloves. In her left hand she carried, by a ring that protruded from the top, a large square parcel, done up in American cloth. The conformation of this parcel and the ring by which it was held suggested the accommodation of a wild beast in captivity.

The girl's expression was baffling—at the same time familiar. It contained a happy mixture of expectation and awe. She did not appear to be in any way embarrassed by the oddness of her attire: on the contrary, she seemed quite satisfied about that.

JOHN HARVEY was thunderstruck—he could not believe his senses. He touched the bookcase to reassure himself that he was in his own study and not at the cinema. For the first time in his life he realized the meaning of a "film descending on the eyes." It was the only explanation. He had seen Mary Pickford in "Daddy Long Legs," "Pollyanna," "Soapsuds," and a score of other screen plays. Secretly, too, he had loved her. As we know, the spectacle of beauty arrayed in rags and her father's boots had never failed to touch him with romance. But as a prosaic and practical young man of sane convictions, he had never believed such

characters had real existence—that lovely orphans with a passion for tamed rabbits, and with stockings that refused to keep up, had any being outside the range of the cinema. The discovery of his mistake was staggering.

She stood in the middle of the room blinking and breathing very fast.

Something would have to be done. John took a grip on himself and spoke.

"I—er—Miss Mellow—that is to say—how do you do?"

"Thank you very much," said Mary, as artless as you please.

It was difficult.

"Oh!" said John. "I see. Um! Please forgive me—I er—wasn't for the moment expecting—that is—er—you wish to see me?"

"Yes, please." She nodded.

Her simplicity gave him a measure of self-confidence.

"Well, here I am—at least, I think so." The sentence ended there. He started a fresh one. "Do you sit down—I mean will—won't you sit down?"

And again Mary said "Thank you very much."

Dash it! The girl talked like a sub-title.

He put a chair for her and took another himself, announcing as he sat down:—

"My name is John Harvey."

"Yes, isn't it," said she.

Assuming she had regarded his name as an observation on the weather, he politely subscribed:—

"Very, for the time of year."

"I know," said Mary.

She had pulled off her gloves and was rolling them into a ball. Her hands were surprisingly smooth and white. John marvelled at that. He found himself watching them.

She it was who made the next remark.

"Have you seen lots?"

"Seen lots?" he repeated, dully.

"Wives," she answered.

He presumed it was one of those modern jokes or catches. He knew the one about "Isobel necessary on a bicycle," but "Lot's wife" was new to him. It was only civil to reply in kind.

"No," he said; "she was turned into a pillar of salt before I was born."

His humour was wasted, however, for Mary was occupied staring at the decorations of the room. She did not seem to hear. She had a pleased smile about her lips. To cure himself of noticing these details, John assumed a business-like air.

"You wished to see about—er—"

"About the situation, please."

He screwed up his forehead.

"The situation?"

"Yes, please."

"Whose situation?"

"Yours."

"But I haven't one," he replied. "I have a position of sorts, but no situation."

"The one you offered," she explained.

"I didn't, did I?"

"Advertised for."

"My dear young lady, I've never written an advertisement in my life."

"But you have," said Mary. "I brought it with me."

She started rummaging in the pocket of her skirt.

"I saw it on a piece of paper that Mrs. Carter—she's the old lady who keeps the all-sorts shop at Ponder's End—it's a post-office too, and you can buy string there, and buttons, and there are bottled sweets in the window—greengage bouncers—hull's-eyes—clove balls, and Pevensey humbugs. Ponder's End is in the country—it's where I live, and very pretty."

John Harvey was beginning to feel dizzy.

"I may be unusually dense," he said, "but were all these details printed on this piece of paper to which you refer?"

"Oh, no," said Mary, shaking her curly head so hard that the little Mercury cap fell off and lay unnoticed on the floor. "It was a piece of newspaper, and was wrapped round some Demerara sugar I bought, because the blue bag had a hole in the corner and was leaking. It's in my pocket somewhere. I cut out the advertisement with my scissors—at least they aren't really my scissors—but then no scissors are anybody's really own scissors—are scissors?"

A man's nerves need to be in good order if they are to remain under control after such an utterance. John Harvey stumbled to his feet and made pretence of looking for his glasses, mumbling as he did so:—

"Perhaps you would be good enough to convey to me the substance of this mysterious advertisement." And, as though it were the simplest thing in the world, she answered:—

"You advertised for a wife, and I thought perhaps I would do."

John Harvey knocked over a pyramid of books and upset a vase of tulips. The spilled water trickled into his shoe and calmed him.

Mary had come to her feet to make her announcement, and was picking out the creases in her blouse, smoothing her skirt, and generally presenting herself to the best advantage. The ingenuousness of her actions was inexcusable.

"Good heavens!" gasped John. "Show me this advertisement at once."

A mere glance at the cutting was enough to allay his fears. He turned to Mary with a gasp of relief.

"This is a mistake," he exclaimed. "You've made a serious mistake. The

advertiser's address is No. 9, Melbourn Court—mine is No. 7. You can see for yourself I don't want a wife. Certainly not a newspaper wife."

But Mary did not move. The glad expectancy died out of her face—her mouth went down at the corners, and her chin drooped.

"Will you please tell me what I ought to do?" she pleaded.

He shook his head.

"I really don't know. I—I have very little experience in these matters."

"Should I go up to the flat above and ask there?"

Strange that the bare thought of such a thing should have put him out of temper.

"Certainly not," he replied, "unless you know the man who lives there."

"But I don't. Do you?"

"Not personally. I've heard him moving about, but I've never seen him."

"But he wants a wife," said Mary, "and as I've come all this way—"

John Harvey put out a restraining hand.

"My dear young lady, I forbid you to go about from door to door being a wife at every one of them. It—it isn't decent."

He was surprised at his own valour—so, apparently, was Mary. She raised her eyes with a look of submissive admiration.

"What must I do, then?"

HE pointed at the chair and bade her sit down again. She was oddly willing to obey. As she marched towards it the absurd feather boa fell off and revealed the gentle lines of her throat and shoulders. The absence of the boa and the little Mercury hat made a remarkable difference to her appearance. She was beginning to look less like a picture and more like a human. But for the shortness of her skirt—the domino effect of boots and stockings—and a totally ridiculous piece of ribbon that imprisoned her hair in a knot at the top of her head, she might have passed muster in any company. It was as though a latent homogeneous sense was superimposing upon the characteristics of Los Angeles the simpler seeming of South Kensington. Already she had ceased to appear out of place in John Harvey's flat, a fact which he recognized with uneasiness and alarm.

He cleared his throat.

"Sit down," he said, "and let us consider what is best to be done."

"Yes, but it isn't fair to take up your time," Mary persisted. "You don't want a wife."

He hastened to assure her that this was so.

"No, you don't," she repeated, pathetically. "Do you?"

"I have already told you I do not," he replied.

## The Chap Upstairs

"But he does," said Mary, with a nod at the ceiling.

"Then he must go without," said John Harvey. "A man who has the effrontery to insert such an advertisement has no right to expect applicants. It's a shameful proceeding."

"But if he was lonely?" Mary suggested.

"That has nothing to do with it," he answered, with heat. "I am very disappointed in the man who lives upstairs—and I had formed such an agreeable opinion of the fellow, too."

"Had you—why?"

He turned to answer. The knot of ribbon had disappeared from the top of her head. Her hair, with its crooked side parting, had fallen serenely over her ears. The change it wrought in her was magical, and so surprised John that he lost track of what he was about to say.

"Won't you have some tea?" he said. "You're sure to be tired after travelling—it makes people tired. Do have some tea. There's a crumpet—I know there's a crumpet. We could share the crumpet if you care for crumpets."

Mary looked so pleased.

"I like crumpets," she nodded. "They ring bells for crumpets, the same as for weddings."

ALL conversational roads between the sexes lead to, or away from, the altar. To cover his embarrassment, John Harvey rang a bell—for tea. Robert's satisfaction on receiving the order was too obvious to be tolerated. He inquired whether he should secure the services of a second crumpet.

"Do," said John, severely. And then, with an effort to relax, he remarked, "Are you aware, Roberts, that they ring bells for crumpets, the same as for muffins?"

"Weddings," said Mary, correctively, and Roberts retired with a smile.

A silence followed Robert's departure, broken at last by Mary.

"If I'm to stop, may I please change my shoes? I brought another pair, in case there was a party."

John murmured an inaudible assent, and went and looked out of the window. Night was falling, and the window glass had the impertinence to reflect the room and its occupants. He could not avoid seeing what happened. Mary opened the parcel she had brought, and it was a bird-cage with a pair of slippers inside it. She sat on the floor with her back towards him, and presently he saw her take out the slippers and put the deplorable boots and the pair of white stockings into the bird-cage. This done, she again wrapped it in the piece of American cloth, stood up, and shook out the folds of

her skirt. By some astonishing process it seemed to have increased its length by four inches.

The reflection in the glass revealed a perfectly normal and very attractive young lady, simply clad in a white blouse, a black skirt, black silk stockings, and black satin shoes. The rosette had disappeared altogether.

"I've finished," she announced, and turned for his inspection. "It was kind of you to ask me to tea."

He was too confused to talk sense.

"Tea is not a kindness," he stammered. "I gravely doubt if it is even a courtesy."

Mary shook her head at him.

"Do you always talk round the corner in that funny way?" she demanded.

"Really, I don't know. I have never been round the corner to see."

"And do you live here all alone?"

He admitted the charge of solitude, but added that he had his books for company.

"No friends?" she queried.

"Very few."

She sighed.

"I haven't any friends either. I'm very lonely too."

At which he hastened to reply:—

"I never said a word about being lonely."

"But it is lonely to live all by oneself with nothing but books."

He refused to be drawn, and she proceeded:—

"Still, I suppose in a great big place like London one can't really be lonely—and in a great big place like these flats one can't be lonely either. There must be something very sociable about living in flats."

The denial came from him in spite of himself.

"You're entirely wrong. There is probably no more lonely existence in the world than living in a flat."

And, in answer to the surprise she revealed:—

"You wouldn't understand that because you come from the country, where everyone knows everyone else, and everyone is part of everyone else. But here in London one is only part of oneself—often quite a small part, too."

Tea appeared, which was tiresome—until Roberts disappeared.

"Would you like me to pour out?" asked Mary.

"If you would," said John. "Thanks."

Strange how pleasant it was to watch a woman performing this simple feat. He was quite captivated, and followed the movements of her wrist and fingers with a curious sense of basking. The experience was so novel. As she passed his cup their eyes met.

"Do go on talking," she said.



" Ah, we were discussing loneliness, were we not ? "

" Yes. "

" You wouldn't understand how it feels to live with people to right and left—people above you and below—about whom you know nothing. You meet them, perhaps, in the lift—on the stairs—hear their voices in laughter or raised in argument, and yet they're strangers. It's queer, isn't it ? "

She nodded sympathetically.

" And you don't even know the chap—the man who lives upstairs ? "

" No, he's a mystery to me. "

" Ah, well, " said Mary, practically, " I don't expect you want to know him. "

John Harvey put down his cup with an air of decision.

" It's curious you should say that—you're wrong. I do. I want to know him very much. Until—until to-day his life has interested me extraordinarily. "

He seemed reluctant to proceed, but the kindness in Mary's eyes persuaded him.

" In some curious way I feel there is a bond of union between us. Every morning he gets up at the same time as I do, and he has his bath at the same time as I have mine. I actually enjoy hearing the water splash when he turns on his tap—enjoy it. It gives me a solid sense of companionship. "

He caught a smile flickering at the corners of her mouth and stopped abruptly.

" You are laughing at me. I can hardly blame you. "

" But I wasn't—I wasn't, really, " said Mary. " Do go on. "

SO he went on, and he told of the delight he had to hear the waste water go plonking down the pipe outside his bathroom window.

" It gurgles away so merrily as I rub myself down with a towel. In a way I think it hyphenates his mysterious existence with mine. "

Mary nodded appreciatively.

" Yes, and then— ? " she said.

" And then he walks back to his bedroom. I imagine he must have linoleum in the hall. "

" Why ? "

" Because you can hear his footfalls so distinctly. Light footfalls they are, and, absurdly enough, I try to keep step. Left, right—left, right! But I never succeed, I never can step short enough. Then, click! The bedroom door shuts and a heavy pile carpet muffles all the rest. We shut our bedroom doors at the same instant every morning—only he shuts his gently and I bang mine. "

" Why ? " she asked again.

" Because I think if I bang mine he'll bang his, and so we shall contrive some kind of early

morning greeting. Bang—bang. ' Top of the morning to you, sir, whoever you may be. ' Did you ever hear a stupider idea than that ? "

" I think it's rather pathetic—very pathetic. " And, although there was obviously no reason for them, a hint of tears glistened in her eyes.

" Pathetic ? " repeated John. " I fail to see where the pathos comes in. "

" So far as I can see, " she returned, " it never goes out. Oh, it's very pathetic that anyone could have so little interest in life that they listen to a few poor footsteps overhead—some soapy water splashing down a pipe, and try to get someone they don't know to bang a door. It's very pathetic indeed. "

" I wonder, " said John. " Perhaps it is. "

For the first time he looked at her without conscious uneasiness.

" Do you know, it has been extraordinarily pleasant to me to have met you in this rather unconventional way. I—er—I've never spoken to a woman with any comfort before. "

" Haven't you ? " said Mary.

He shook his head.

" Oh, well, " she said, jumping to her feet, " I think I'd better be going. "

He stretched out a hand to delay her.

" But not upstairs, " he pleaded.

She hesitated—half-hurt—half-doubtful. Then :—

" Well—if—if you say I mustn't. "

" Ah, that's good-natured of you, " he warmly applauded. " I'm sure these rash marriages are a great mistake. Would you, I wonder, let me drive you as far as the station in my car ? It would be a real pleasure. "

" I suppose it would, " she acknowledged, ruefully. Then a sudden twinkle showed in her eyes. She beckoned him to approach.

" I say, do you think, from what you've heard of him—the chap upstairs could have been pleased with me ? "

She raised her chin—their faces were only a few inches apart. It was John Harvey's first experience of a " close up, " and it shook him to the bone.

" I think it's exceedingly probable, " he replied, huskily.

Mary Merrow backed a pace with a ripple of pleased laughter. The sound of it—the sex of it—awoke something elemental in John Harvey's nature that had never proved its being before. A sudden fury possessed him, and he stamped across the room to the door, dragging his cuffs free of his wrists.

" And I think I'll go upstairs, " he cried, " and tell that fellow precisely what I think of a man who acts as he has acted. "

" Oh! please don't, " she implored.

" I feel it a public duty. A man has no right to take short cuts to the state of Holy Matrimony. "

## The Chap Upstairs

He was working himself up nobly.

"Yes, but I was just as bad."

"Nothing of the kind—with you it's entirely different."

"Oh, is it?" said Mary, with the strangest smile. "Is it? Oh!"

The last "Oh!" sounded peculiarly satisfied.

He turned—came back—and took her hand in his

"Are you really so keen on this marrying business?"

"I think everybody ought to be married," she said. "I think it's rather silly not to be married when you can be, and it's certainly very sad not to be, when you can't be."

He sighed, and her hand dropped from his.

"I suppose women look at things in a different way."

"Sometimes they have to," she answered, with her smile again.

"You see, I haven't any bath water running down a pipe outside my window."

The words were spoken innocently enough, but they had the strangest effect on John Harvey. He swivelled round and looked at her—his hands came up from his sides and floated about in the air as though they were trying to find something—he seemed to be drawn towards her. It was only by a miracle he saved himself and—dived for the door.

"Roberts," he cried, "I want a taxi."

But Mary did not move. Her brows had come down a trifle in something resembling a frown.

"Not for me," she said; "I'm going upstairs."

The sentence rang with a note of desperate resolve.

John Harvey turned and faced her, with clenched hands. Then, with unexpected rapidity, he whipped off his coat.

"What ever are you doing?" the girl demanded.

"About this time," he answered, "the chap who lives upstairs generally comes in

and sits on a chair that has a squeaky spring. I—too—am going upstairs."

The meaning was unmistakable.

"I shouldn't," said Mary. "He's sure to be late to-night."

"Why do you say that?"



"What ever are you doing?" the girl demanded. "About this time," he

The meaning

"Because"—she hesitated, approached, and put a hand on his arm. "Because, you poor, lonely, and very old young man, I am the chap who lives upstairs."

"What nonsense! You—"

"I am the chap who lives upstairs, and I hear your bath water splashing into the bath, and I hear your slippers flapping down the passage, and I hear your door bang out its greeting. And all these things have become part of my life in some awfully silly way, that only people who live the awfully silly lives you and I seem to live would understand."

He had sunk into a chair and was staring at her blankly.

"But the advertisement in the paper?"

"I put in that advertisement." She sounded very ashamed of herself.

"Those extraordinary clothes?"

"I've often sat beside you at the cinema and seen how your eyes lighted up when the orphans came in."

He nodded, and she went on:—

"At first I was only mildly interested in you, then I got more interested, and at last dreadfully interested; and when a woman

But he would not allow that.

"As yet we're both poor orphans," said he. "Our fortunes await us."

With a sudden inspiration he raised his head to look at the ceiling.

"You're listening," said Mary.

"No."



answered, "the chap who lives upstairs generally comes in. I too am going upstairs." was unmistakable.

gets dreadfully interested it can't stop there. I didn't know how I could get into this flat and see it—and you—so I thought of this very elaborate, and rather deceitful, and a little bit disreputable plan."

She was staring at the carpet when the confession came to an end.

He rose and took a turn up and down the room. He stopped before her.

"Well," said he, "and now you've seen the flat and its owner, are you sorry you came down from upstairs?"

"No—I'm glad," she answered.

"And are you an orphan?"

She nodded.

"Yes, please. But I had to buy those dreadful boots—mine were too smart. I'm afraid I'm rather a rich orphan."

"Surely you believe I am the chap who lives upstairs?"

"I believe it."

"But you're still listening."

"No, I'm wondering," he replied. "I'm wondering if two flats could be converted into one. I'm wondering if a landlord would approve the idea of a spiral staircase that—" He turned and looked at her fearlessly—possessively. "Shall we sit down and talk this thing out?"

And she answered:—

"Yes, if you please, Daddy Long Legs."

**W**HEN Roberts came in to clear away the tea things a few minutes later they were sitting side by side on the sofa and he was calling her "Pollyanna."