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# "PARCELLING UP THE SCRAPS"

(A Short Story  
written for "The Listener"  
by ETHEL FIELDING)

I SUPPOSE there are lots of fellows who would turn their noses up at my job, but I reckon it's the best one I've ever had. It's not a white-collar job, certainly, but when I knock off in the evening, and have a bath, and spruce up, I reckon I don't look any different from any of the other chaps round about. My job has lots of points in its favour. You wouldn't think there was any romance about it, either, would you? Just wait until I tell you.

It is a very interesting job. It has variety. A chap sees hundreds of people daily. Well—I certainly saw hundreds of people daily, when I had my last job, driving a city lift. That nearly drove me crazy—shut up in a moving box, with a lot of people, all day long. But this job is different. You see people as they really are, in hair curlers, and sweeping their back steps, not dolled up, with the false personality they put on with their best clothes.

You soon get to know if they are dinkum or not. Some of them will smile, and wish you "Good morning," when you come around the yard, with the bin on your shoulder, and others will just look through you, as though you were a pane of glass.

They never stop to think of how important the job is, and what they would do, if there were no garbage collectors.

YOU learn a lot about human nature in my job. I can practically tell, from the contents of the bin, what kind of people live in the house.

There are the extravagant ones, the food wasters . . . good food spoiled, and thrown away. Then there are the careless housekeepers. They lose things. I have already a collection of cutlery, and silverware, salvaged from rubbish bins, some of it is good stuff, too.

Cleaned, and polished, and put in cases, it looks good. Emmie will be pleased when she sees it. Long before I met Emmie, I knew from her bin that she was the sort of woman I liked. Neat and natty . . . that's how it struck me. All her bits of foodstuffs, and rubbish, neatly wrapped in paper, and stacked in the bin. It was a pleasure to empty. Almost dainty, it was. I got to wondering what she was like. You gets lots of time for thinking, and noticing things on my job.

We go slowly along, old Blackie, the draught horse, and me, thinking, and taking time to look about. We start our job early in the morning. It is quite a large round, and a not very thickly populated suburb.

IT is surprising, how different things look early in the morning. The puddles of water, left on the road, by the over-



night shower, are tinted from the sunrise, and those little webs the spiders spin on the grass, are all beaded, like tiny spun-glass umbrellas.

I told Emmie the other day about the things I see in the early morning, and she listened very seriously, and said that I was a poet, as well as a garbage collector. Emmie is very practical, and sweet. She tries to see things through my eyes, screwing up her kind, funny little face with the effort.

But I laugh at her, and tell her it doesn't matter, and that it is just as well for one of us to be practical-minded, and not given to seeing more than there is to see.

I WAS driving back to the Depot one evening when the thought came to me that I would like to marry Emmie. By that time I knew her name. I had found it, written on the wrapping paper, around the potato peelings—"Miss Emmie Myers"—and then I remembered part of a conversation I had overheard at the house next door.

Emmie's old father had died that morning. "A good thing," the vicar said, "that girl has given 20 years of her life caring for the old man; ungrateful, he was too!"

Twenty years! That made Emmie somewhere round about my age. I tried to picture her. . . .

"Neat and dainty," I thought, because of her parcelling up the scraps. "Smallish"—I had found a very small glove in the bin one day. . . . "Patient and kind"—she had looked after her ungrateful old father for 20 years.

Well, that was all right as far as it went. I could not marry Emmie by just thinking that I would like to. I had to meet, and speak to her, first of all, and somehow, in all the months, I had not even caught a glimpse of her.

(continued on next page)

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