

and her hands, knitting and explaining patterns. At the least little pause she broke in with directions for following the one she was doing. She had been explaining it to Mrs. Hooper all day, the same little details over and over again, her calm, heavy mind, as slow-moving as a turtle, anxious to make them understood, unable to think that anyone could be uninterested; when she was interrupted she went on again, later, emphasising each detail.

THE train was slipping quietly along the rails, and the guard leant against the opposite seat, making notes, mysterious. He seemed to Mrs. Pym to wear a smile of contempt for them all, for a moment she felt humble and apologetic for her sex. No wonder he despised us, she thought, all this talk, and talk, meaning nothing. Outside it was absolutely black; they might have left the earth quietly behind, and be riding among the stars; Mrs. Pym leaned sideways a little and peered out, shading her eyes with her hand. It was a very long goods train, trucks and trucks were ahead of them filled with strange shapes under tarpaulins, and huddled sheep standing patiently waiting, and far ahead, ridiculously far ahead it seemed, she could see a little gleam of light in the engine.

A small shudder ran along the train, and slowly, sighing, it stopped; the guard put his book into his pocket, and left without haste; Mrs. Pym thought of the driver and the fireman, far in front, and the guard walking unhurriedly, swinging his lamp, to join them, and she wished she could be there, in the cab of the engine, to hear what they talked of during these long, long waits. There was perfect silence and stillness outside; only inside the carriage, in the little oblong of light, the talk in front of her went on and on, and behind her the small secret silence of the lovers continued. "We can't be shunting," she said slowly, softly, almost to herself. Her saying anything was so unusual that they all stopped and turned their heads to her, and she felt for a moment flattered, elated. "Because there's no noise," she explained, "nothing, in fact, it's rather queer." They smiled so indulgently at her, they so much more practical. "I expect they are, somewhere in front, where we can't hear," Mrs. Hooper said, and they were busy again, contented, the Observed, while she, the Observer, sat back, happily, as pleased with them all, with the whole train, as if she had made them. Her friends were all so ordinary; and yet they were so strange too, there was in them such endless possibilities for her thought.

Now and then their heads came together, voices dropped to whispers, there would be sudden laughter; she knew so exactly what they would be saying; she didn't need to lean closer, but she smiled in sympathy with them; the train started again, and she closed her eyes . . .

"THE Observer, the Observer," the train beat out the rhythm—changed—"The Great Observers" . . . She knew them so well, they were her daily companions, they were so much more real, to her, than these women with whom she spoke, and sat, and ate, that it was no matter of surprise to her when one of them seemed to sit lightly beside her, between her and Miss Horne, although Miss Horne didn't seem to notice; Mrs. Pym squeezed humbly back, against the window-ledge. The woman was very pale and tired, infinitely tired, and ill, but

her eyes were alive and under their bright gaze the carriage changed subtly. It was—yes, Mrs. Pym knew suddenly, it was the Munich express, and the quiet young woman, pretty and shy, over in the corner, with her hands clasped nervously in her lap, was The Little Governess. The Little Governess going to her first position in a doctor's family at Augsburg . . .

"Suddenly from the corridor came a stamping of feet and men's voices, high and broken with snatches of loud laughter. They were coming her way. The little governess shrank into her corner as four men in bowler hats passed, staring through the door and window. One of them bursting with the joke, pointed to the notice, *Dames Seules*, and the four bent down the better to see the one little girl in the corner. Oh, dear, they were in the carriage next door, she heard them tramping about and then a sudden hush followed by a tall thin fellow with a tiny black moustache who flung her door open. 'If mademoiselle cares to come in with us,' he said in French, and she sat very straight and still."

Yes, to Mrs. Pym everything seemed somehow changed, for a moment, even herself—Oh, was she . . . she, filled with this feeling of content, of bliss, going home to find that Stephen, and . . . Miss Horne?—perhaps; that Stephen, her husband, and Miss Horne, behind her back, without her having the slightest knowledge—she laughed at her ridiculous fears, and the spell was broken, and when she looked again, Katherine Mansfield had gone. Someone so very different had taken her place; she was small, and fair and neat, and looking with her eyes Mrs. Pym saw poor Miss Horne as not mysterious any more, no, she was dear, silly Miss Bates talking to Emma . . .

"But about the middle of the day poor Jane gets hungry, and there is nothing she likes so well as these baked apples, and they are extremely wholesome, for I took the opportunity the other day of asking Mr. Perry; I happened to meet him in the street; not that I had any doubt before, Miss Woodhouse. I have so often heard Mr. Woodhouse recommend a baked apple; I believe it is the only way Mr. Woodhouse thinks the fruit thoroughly wholesome. We have apple dumplings, however, very often. Patty makes excellent apple dumplings . . ."

Mrs. Pym opened her eyes again with a start; had the voice sent her to sleep; Jane Austen had gone; was it Emily Brontë there now, scornful and sad? No, of course, Emily wouldn't be here, here with four middle-aged women in a stuffy carriage, coming home after a day's shopping in town; she might have been out there in the dark, out with the stars and the trees, alone but never lonely . . . perhaps her face had been pressed for a moment against the window, white against the blackness . . .

MRS. PYM opened her eyes properly.

The train had stopped, and there was bustle of leaving all along the carriage. "Here we are at last," Mrs. Hooper said. "You were asleep, Mrs. Pym . . ." "Goodbye," "Goodbye," the voices echoed in the quiet station, dimly-lighted and strange in its night-time silence. Mrs. Pym stepping down to the platform, looking round for Stephen, hearing their voices, fading away, their dying footsteps, knew what they were saying, "Poor, dear Mrs. Pym, so very quiet . . . pity . . . so dull for her." She turned to greet Stephen with the small smile he knew.

## Laugh but be Thankful!

A STORY told by Thomas Cadett in the BBC overseas series, *Facts and Figures*, gives an idea of the acuteness of the French housing shortage; it also shows that some people can laugh at their own troubles. A man struggled in the River Seine. A passer-by rushed to the water's edge and said: "Hey, what's your name and address?" The drowning man went on begging for help but the onlooker insisted on getting the information he had asked for. Finally the wretched man in the river gasped out his name and address, whereupon the other man rushed off. When he got there he told the concierge that he had come to take over the flat of Monsieur Dupont who had just been drowned in the Seine. "There are no vacant flats here, monsieur," said the concierge coldly. "M. Dupont's flat has already been taken by the man who pushed him into the river."

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS, Kodaly and Honegger, are three outstanding representatives of the music of our time, covering almost the complete span of the twentieth century. Each composer represents a kind of milestone in the development of modern music. Vaughan Williams is 74 years of age; Kodaly is 64 and Honegger is 54.

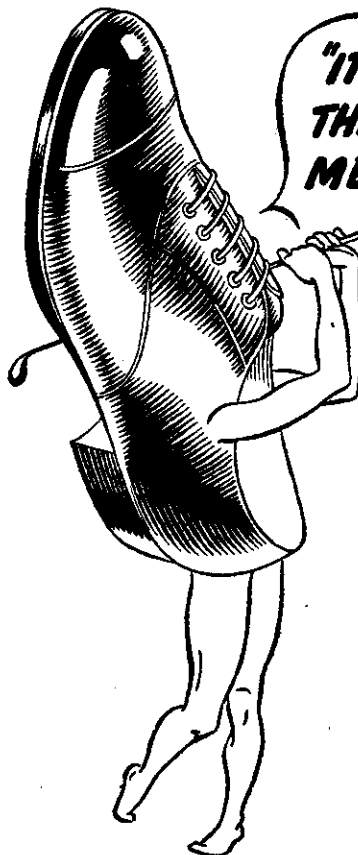
## A Special message to BLONDES



If your blonde hair is going dark and mousy try Stablond shampoo. You will make this amazing discovery . . . that only Stablond can bring back that glorious golden sparkle to darkened blonde hair. Stablond prevents natural blonde hair from darkening and keeps it bright and shining always. For Stablond is made specially for blondes. 153

Fassett & Johnson Ltd., Manners St., Wellington.

**STA-BLOND** THE BLONDES OWN SHAMPOO



THE DAILY DOSE OF NUGGET DOES IT!



# NUGGET SHOE POLISHES

BLACK • DARK BROWN • MILITARY TAN • BLUE, Etc.