



"FATHER would lead the way plying the slasher."

(continued from previous page)

Going over to him mother would dig him in the ribs.

"Dad—Dad! Wake up! Aren't you going to show us around?"

"Oh! He's terrible," she would say to us. "Sleeping away like that. We'll never see a thing." Mother was a great one for keeping us all on the move, and she always believed in doing what we came to do. We didn't want to see anything particularly. We just wanted to be on the road home.

Then with a snort dad would wake up. He would stare around wildly with the whites of his eyes showing, and then he would take us in.

"Can't a man have five minutes' rest without you pushing at him," he would demand. "I don't even get stretched out before you're at me to do something . . ."

Dad was always a little livery when mother woke him up in the afternoons. "You'll be sorry, Ellen, waking me suddenly like that . . . One of these days I'll just go off—it'll be too much for my heart." He would rise slowly to a sitting position and slide one hand inside his waistcoat. "It's racing now." Dad always liked to think that he might go off suddenly.

"Oh, nonsense, Dad. Your heart's as sound as a bell. If you didn't sleep the sleep of the dead there wouldn't be all this fuss. I thought you wanted to have a look around."

"Well—so I was. So I was. I was dreaming of the good old days!"

With an exclamation of disgust mother would get to her feet.

"Well—you might show us around a bit before it gets too late."

And off we would tramp. At least the sandflies weren't so bad when we were moving.

FATHER would lead the way, plying the slasher, with the rest of us bringing up the rear, in perspiring Indian file, threading our way through the blackberry. Then dad would halt and begin examining the skyline for landmarks. He would take elaborate cross-bearings off the hills and mutter to himself.

"This'll be Graham Street, where we are—the bank'd be over there now . . ." His mind would slip back 50 years.

Pushing his hat to the back of his head he would look around musingly.

"Old Johnny Green," he would murmur. "That's his place over there . . . Old Johnny. He was a queer old cove, now . . . us kids were scared stiff of him. He only had one eye, and every evening you'd see him sitting on guard outside his hut with his gun."

We would feel some slight interest in this.

"Did he shoot anyone, Dad?"

"Not old Johnny. He was so shaky he couldn't aim a gun if he tried. But he used to sit there every night . . . He'd had the deuce of a row with an Italian down at the diggings and a few

nights after, the Italian broke into his hut and old Johnny's eye was gouged out in the fight. The Italian got off with all of Johnny's gold—the gold that Johnny'd been stacking away to take him back to the Old Country. Johnny never got over that—every night he'd be out there guarding the gold he didn't have anymore. And we kids were frightened to walk past his hut after dark I can tell you. . .

* * *

WE stared at the tangled skein of second growth where Johnny's hut had been, and tried to imagine the poor crazed old digger sitting there in the dusk with the loaded gun by his side waiting for the thief who would never come now. We even began to feel a little of the past in the melancholy scraps of wreckage left around us.

Then, dad, who had been taking another good look around, would suddenly throw us off balance.

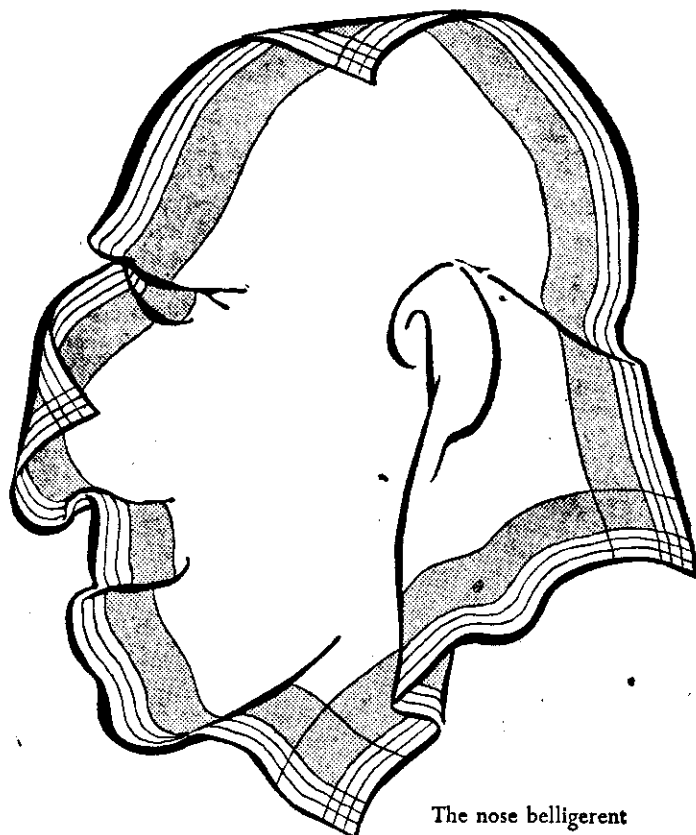
"I'll be damned if it is! That's Graham Street over there. . . That's it. This must be Jack's Corner where the old boarding house was that old Jenny Samson kept. An old corker she was, too . . ." Father would chuckle at the thought of Jenny Samson, but mother, who had been carefully following the fortunes of old Johnny, would fail to see any joke.

"Oh, Dad," she would say in exasperation. "I don't think you know where you are."

"Anyway," father would continue, "we'll go on and have a look at the old Palais de Venice where the dancing girls were. I was never allowed in there in my young days—it was one thing my parents were strict about. We used to creep around and look in through the windows sometimes, though. . ." Here father would affect a mildly lecherous look as though it was expected of him, while we would be amazed that anyone who had always seemed as old as father could ever have been interested in dancing girls. We were interested to see the remains of the notorious Palais de Venice though.

Once again father would take his bearings, then, with us in tow, would strike off through the scrub.

(continued on next page)



The nose belligerent will fight for . . .

PYRAMID HANDKERCHIEFS

Trade Mark

In white and coloured for men and women

A TOOTAL PRODUCT

See Registered Trade Mark Label on every handkerchief



TOOTAL GUARANTEED

what was that about being a little hoarse?

Seriously, Lixoids are very, very good for husky vocal chords and dry throat. 10d. a tin.

LIXOIDS

15.8 Stacey Bros. Ltd., 385 Khyber Pass, Auckland.

