

## A DISCOURSE ON FLAPPERS

IT was at a party I met Mr. Moody. It was a curious, haphazard gathering, but the most curious part of it all was Mr. Moody.

Mr. Moody was obviously not a party man. A great shaggy specimen of a male, with a forehead like the dome of St. Paul's — a curly black beard that would have shamed the men of the Ramillies . . .

There was great speculation about who Mr. Moody was, and what he might be. Someone suggested a Bolshevik, but the real explanation left us flat. Mr. Moody was a Professor. He studied something or other.

Now, personally, there is one thing I cannot resist — and that is a person who studies things. To my artless mind there is fascination in such a pursuit.

Consequently, I was in a state of fever till I met Mr. Moody. A little skilful wangling, and I had him in a corner all to myself.

### "Poor Little Fish"

As a light conversationalist, Mr. Moody was not a success. I spoke of the weather, the Centennial Exhibition, and the Lambeth Walk — and Mr. Moody displayed a notable lack of enthusiasm for all three.

Finally I took the plunge.

"They tell me you are a professor, Mr. Moody. What is your particular study?"

He glared as if he might eat me.

"Flappers!" he barked.

My agile mind instantly took a dive to the bottom of the sea. Flat-head — flounders — flapjacks — no, you used *them* to powder your nose. . . . Mr. Moody was rumbling like a subterranean storm.

I caught the words —

"Pernicious pests — should be exterminated. . . ."

I interposed archly —

"Oh, but surely, poor little fish. . . ."

"Fish," he roared, "did you ever call yourself a fish?"

"No-no," I stuttered, with a tremor at my shoe-strings.

"But you once had the misfortune to be a flapper!"

It broke on me like a light. Mr. Moody was referring to flappers — that giddy young section of the present company, who at that moment were engaged in the final high kick of the Palais Glide. Then I considered his statement in its past tense in relation to myself, and felt a stir of injured pride. . . .

In addition to being a professor, Mr. Moody was a thought-reader.

"Don't fool yourself, my girl; you should be thankful to be past it. It is a phase — like measles — equally nasty, and just as contagious."

### Mr. Moody Elaborates

With the memory of Sylvia Pankhurst and other great feminist leaders, I sought now to make a stand.

"Really, Mr. Moody, aren't you a little hard? . . ."

He jutted a belligerent jaw at me.

"Hard, am I? Look at them out there. A pack of giggling, insensate, flat-chested, spindle-legged. . . ."

"Mr. Moody!" I demurred.

"You asked for it," he said. "I've been studying their type for years — they are an excrescence, a pest, a blight on civilisation. They think the world is their football — their own private creation. They



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are even proud of their status. Flappers! Why, they existed hundreds of years before their grandmothers first saw a stork."

Mr. Moody was getting warmed up. The tip of his beard quivered in the most fascinating manner.

I attempted to subdue my excitement.

"How very interesting, Mr. Moody. I always thought we were a post-war product."

"Post-war!" he snorted. "Post-everything! Why, they dug up the skeleton of a flapper in France who is estimated to have lived 25,000 years ago." He gave a contemptuous nod to the prancing couples on the floor. "And she was dolled up with gee-gaws just like them!"

"Femininity," I murmured.

"Femininity, my hat! Watch them in a minute, gorging themselves with cream-cakes and ice-cream. Greedy little morons!"

### Ancient Greed

He turned on me suddenly. "They think they've got all that on their own, too. Well, they haven't. The body of a flapper who died 2000 B.C. was unearthed on the Essex Coast. They found nearly a pint of blackberry seeds tucked in the hollow of her ribs. Died from over-eating. . . ."

I began to feel slightly depressed. Mr. Moody's reminiscences had a mausolean ring. But once in

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his stride, the learned professor had no intention of deserting the trail.

"Because a few feather-brained youngsters land themselves jobs to-day, they think they've got a monopoly of grey-matter. Why, in ancient Babylon, a daughter of a house had equal rights with a son. She could choose her own career, hold properties of her own, manage an estate or run a business. She could even become a female bishop. She had all the advantages of a sound education and artistic background. Yet these present-day ninnies think they've just discovered what it is all about."

"What is it all about?"

He stared moodily before him.

"Shakespeare had a name for it. . . ."

"Don't tell me," I begged, "let me guess. 'Much Ado About Nothing'."

Mr. Moody did not appear impressed by my flash of brightness.

He nodded absently at a pretty lass of eighteen who was repairing her complexion before a small mirror.

### The Greeks Had a Way With Them

"I bet that little numbskull over there thinks she is the original Eve. Why, the ancient Egyptian flappers were brought up on that stuff from their cradles. Beauty to them was an art, and even very young girls had their own make-up box and were trained from that early age to perfect the art."

"Art for Art's sake," I murmured.

Mr. Moody did not appear to hear me.

"It's a pity we couldn't gather the whole lot and parcel of them and transplant them back to ancient Greece. The Greek parents knew how to deal with their children. The flapper, as we know her to-day, simply didn't exist then. Greek girls led a secluded life under strict parental care, and they grew up with one idea — how to become obedient and submissive wives. . . ."

"What about Helen of Troy?" I asked. "She had a way with the sailors."

He turned a scowling gaze on me.

"Levity, my dear lady, is the negation of good taste."

### Enter Delilah

I was in the process of being properly squashed, when an interruption occurred. Pretty little Sally Winters fluttered up, all pink and white and goosy like a birthday cake.

She twinkled her fabulous lashes at Mr. Moody, pouting prettily as she slipped an engaging arm in his own.

"I think it real mean of you, Mr. Moody, to stop away from us all over here on your own. Do come and have some ice-cream? It's simply scrumptious!"

Then I saw a strange thing happen. Mr. Moody's baleful eye seemed to glaze. A fatuous smile spread in a sickly expanse across his broad features. His beard quivered. He rose weakly to his feet, and allowed his pretty little partner to lead him across the dance-floor.

My profound astonishment was shot through with a flash of perspicacity.

"Samson!" I breathed.