

# OFF DAY:

Written for "The Listener" by "K"

IT never rains but it pours! Indeed yes, Tuesday was one of my worst possible days—a day when Providence (let's masculinise him) seemed to glory in grinding me under his hobnailed boot.

Up town in the afternoon I met Mr. Jenkins—how I hate his false teeth—and as he raised his hat with a flourish, he said, "Well, Mrs. Higgins, I suppose you scraped up the five bob for the Russian Ballet?"

"What a hope," I said. "No, I broke the bathroom basin instead and thought I'd been extravagant enough for one week."

"Not on purpose, I hope," he tittered, and I just gave him one look and marched on.

But the affair of the bathroom basin wasn't my first misfortune. Even before I got up that little imp of a Peter, who was fiddling with the alarm clock, let it fall, breaking only the glass off its face, it is true; but it was an ominous beginning.

\* \* \*

THE trying misadventure with the bathroom basin happened just before lunch. In much too great a hurry I poured a jug of boiling water into the basin and didn't she crack! The scalding water poured through, not quite missing my foot.

"Damn, DAMN," I yelled, and Hig's voice called from the next room, "And what are you up to NOW?" "Oh, you shut up," I muttered, poking faces at

my muddy image in the shaving cabinet. "Fool—silly fool—that's the end of the Ballet."

Breaking a heart is a mere bagatelle compared to breaking a bathroom basin. You won't believe that at twenty, but you very well may at forty if you have three children and less than three hundred a year.

Then, perhaps because of this inauspicious prologue, I had two quarrels with Hig, the worst one just before I was going out in the evening. You can get used to anything—even quarrels—but they don't do anything effective. If they let poison out of the system, they generate more.

As I was putting on my coat, never even bothering to powder my nose, which could shine like a star for all I cared, Hig looked at me with his eyebrows beetling more than ever. "There you go again. For ever on the gad. Why can't you stay at home like other women and do a job or two of work for a change?" This after a big day's work—not only the ordinary arduous routine, but cutting up fruit for marmalade as well, not to mention the hideous job of unpicking an old coat to make pants for Rod. I nearly threw off my coat and subsided into tears. But I was expected at Mimi's. She was sick, and I'd promised to go. I flounced out and banged the front gate extra hard; gates and doors are handy that way.

\* \* \*

FIRST I walked smartly because—have you noticed?—anger makes you frisky; then I thought—what's the use? And the bounce left my feet as I trudged woodenly along. Dash this ministering angel business I said to myself. In a sick room you have to be a little ray of sun and I'm not that kind—especially to-day.

When I went in at the gate I tried my best to clamp on a sunny smile. How could I cheer Mimi with my own good spirits which, like the conjuror with the rabbit, I had to produce out of nothing? In my rage—which I ought to be able to control by now—I had even forgotten to bring a bag of fruit and the Mercury with that exciting article in it.

\* \* \*

WHEN I went in, the room was in that quarter light, highly romantic to them, a little miserly and depressing to me. Mimi was on the couch, with Cora beside her, straining her eyes over the heavily headlined page of the evening paper.

"Hullo, Evie," she said. "You can see Mimi's a little better—promoted to the couch. I was just reading the latest news. And what do you think of the situation?"


"What situation?" I asked. "Is there one—apart from the war I mean?"

"Listen to her, Mimi," said Cora, striking her head hard with one hand. "APART FROM THE WAR. She owns up to the war, but not to a situation. Didn't you know that a war means a nasty accumulation of acute situations? You really are a bright child, you know."

"There's the usual situation in the home," I said tartly, "and that is the only one I know. It's something like war too. Near enough."

"Good for you," said Cora promptly. "Glad you're getting wild. Now don't misunderstand us, Evie—but when we knew you were coming, we were afraid you'd be in one of your exuberant moods. We felt like nothing—we've had a hell of a day—we would cheerfully have strangled you if you'd been bright. But you're in such a nice minor key —"

"Look here," said Mimi. "I've got a bottle of wine hoarded up, and we're jolly well going to have it. Wine is for occasions like this." And seeing the joke of ourselves for the first time that day, we all laughed heartily together. After the wine we laughed more!



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## Sonnet

FEAR not the new, to-morrow  
gives it age,  
Let no time-ravelled usage dim  
your eyes,  
Fresh vision promises fresh heri-  
tage,  
Young seed springs strongest  
where old herbage dies.  
Some cadence which a lonely flute  
begins,  
Echoed by horns again, more  
stridently,  
Shall yet inspire the waiting  
violins,  
And dominant rise to crown a  
symphony.  
This seeming ill the future good  
may be;  
Old customs, too long cherished,  
court decay;  
Time holds no nemesis, his wheel  
spins free;  
Set eager fingers to its formless  
clay,  
Yours the design, and yours the  
fashioning;  
O, brave new generation, wake  
and sing!

—Dorothy Ann Beavis

## HOME FROM CRETE

(Continued from previous page)

There are many aspects of the whole business that I wish to forget, but my pleasantest thoughts are concerned with the kindness and gratitude of the people of Greece. Our wounded will be in good hands."

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