

THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED...

ELSIE is in disgrace today because she is the cause of disgrace to me. Every day I bring her in to the orchard I drop her rope by an elm sucker whose leaves occupy her till I have tied the gate. Then I lead her to the safe places. But today she was in one of those perverse moods that make her almost human. Instead of waiting for me she moved on, and I made the mistake of calling

JANUARY 18 "Whoa!" She then knew that she was free, and bolted. Though she is seven months on the way she galloped through the fruit trees, tramped on a foot-high quick hedge, floundered through a flower bed, over the asparagus, and down a row of peas, kicked out some almost mature lettuce, and then before I could corner her shot under a trailing nectarine tree and down the whole stretch of our staked tomatoes.

By this time I was myself neither normal nor sane, but I could not take short cuts because I was being followed by the heifer. It was three or four minutes before I could grab the trailing rope, ten seconds before I could bring Elsie to a stop, and shorten my hold, and another ten seconds probably before I stopped giving her the free end and discovered that I was being watched, approached at the double, and angrily threatened. Because I had no answer I made none, but I added a defiant and disgraceful wallop to prove that a man is a man. Then I tied Elsie to a post on a short tether and fed the heifer on clover for half an hour while Elsie's eyes rolled and her juices flowed.

I can't make it, even by implication, an edifying story, or clean, or amusing.

It is just true. It must needs be that offences come, but woe to those by whom they come. Problem: parse those.

A SCOTSMAN I met in the Molyneux valley tried to turn me into a Jacobite. It was not, as far as I could judge, anything to do with Queen Elizabeth's visit to New Zealand, or with her title in Scotland. It was historical frustration bursting its bonds in a periodical frenzy.

But I was armed against him. I had left home with Browning in one pocket and Sir Frederick

JANUARY 20 Treves in the other, and although I could not assimilate Browning himself beside the Molyneux, I could still read the vivid exposition of Treves. I had, in fact, just re-read the note on "the large motherly building" in Rome's Via Vittoria to which Treves brings a second runaway wife in 1781—married "by arrangement" in 1772 (like Browning's Pompilia in 1693) to a man more than twice her age whom she saw for the first time on the day that she married him. Here is the man:

The husband was a degraded brute, who treated his young wife with such cruelty that her health was undermined and her life put in danger. He is described as a gaunt man, with a bent back, a purple face, flabby cheeks and watery eyes. He was gloomy, maudlin, foul-mouthed and generally loathsome, for he was a confirmed drunkard. The wife, on the other hand, is said to have been pretty and dainty, with golden hair and dark blue eyes... a "bright, light handful of thistle-bloom," who fascinated everyone. Not the least interesting thing about her was the fact that she signed her name "Louise R." which meant Louise, Queen of Great Britain, France and Ireland. Her husband was no other than Charles Edward Stuart, the

"Young Pretender," the "Bonnie Prince Charlie" of a hundred wild adventures, and the adored of the gallant Flora Macdonald.

The second sight of the Highlanders that so much interested Dr. Johnson was clearly no historical foresight. If it had been I wonder if Boswell would still have been able to say that Macdonald of Kingsburgh kept the Pretender's worn-out shoes as long as he lived, and that "old Mrs. Macdonald took the sheets in which he had lain, folded them carefully, and charged her daughter that they should be kept unwashed, and that, when she died, her body should be wrapped in them as a winding sheet."

WHY, a farmer asked me yesterday, without expecting or wishing for an answer, should A at 25 get £600 for teaching a dozen youngsters, while B at 50 gets less than £500 after 35 years of unremitting labour on the land? I think he knew the answer, but found some satisfaction in

JANUARY 22 uncovering a social injustice. But I am not sure that anyone knows a good answer.

We pay teachers more today than we did because we value them more than we did and demand from them higher qualifications. We pay them more than we pay workers on farms partly because we think their work more important, partly because they can't do it without an expensive period of training, and partly because we can't get them unless we pay them liberally. But there is not one of these reasons that we know for certain to be sound. A teacher on £150 a year 50 years ago was doing just as important work for the people of his day as a teacher on £650 is doing for

society today. It is impossible to prove, and daring to say, that society is now healthier, happier, or in any respect at all more worthy of preservation and improvement than it used to be. It calls for more technical knowledge to keep it going; but our technical knowledge, measured by our capacity to avoid stubbing our spiritual toes, leaves us as far from wisdom as we were when the moon was made of green cheese.

If we were all wise we would all be good, and if we were all good we would not wish to earn more than anyone else or distinguish between higher and lower spheres of usefulness. No one would be interested in what he was earning, everyone in what he was doing, and society would see to it that we received what we needed. We would then, of course, be getting near to Christianity, and the situation has only to be presented in that light to reduce the argument to absurdity.

We are not Christians, but brigands, devilishly clever, stupidly selfish and blind. Whether we pay teachers more than farmers or farmers more than teachers is of no importance at all in a society that pays plumbers more than either group. It makes fools of us merely to ask such a question.

(To be continued)

(Solution to No. 681)

T	S	D	S	P	O	O	N	S
C	H	A	T	T	E	R	A	D
I	R	E	T	A	R	M	O	U
C	R	E	A	S	E	S	E	U
S	I	R	E	N	T	R	A	P
S	T	A	T	E	M	E	N	T
Y	S	I	C	I	S			
T	A	I	N	C	O	G	N	I
R	A	V	I	N	E	U	F	A
E	A	T	P	R	E	L	A	T
P	R	U	N	E	S	A	A	U
A	N	R	A	G	I	T	A	T
N	O	T	I	N	G	E	E	E

Clues Across

- Four a penny drink in a hooped petticoat?
- Threw out.
- When blue, it signifies departure.
- Means tea (anag.).
- Stalk concealed in 11 across.
- Posted out of order by a tyrant?
- "... to speak truth of Caesar. I have not known when his affections sway'd More than his —"
- ("Julius Caesar," Act 1, Scene 3).

Clues Down

- Palm found in a bare canyon.
- A square is a regular one.
- Really.
- Gaze open-mouthed.
- Untruths about a small child? This is an understatement meant for emphasis.
- Juggling with dim green ale.
- Presentiment from little more than tripe and onion.
- Enlarges (anag.).

"THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

- Damage by rough handling.
- "Where the cider apples grow."
- Saturate.
- Ostentatious boldness ending in a fuss.
- Outward movement.
- "'Tis the voice of the sluggard, I heard him complain. 'You have waked me too soon, I must — again' (Isaac Watts).
- Weak point.
- Military cap.
- Most of it is under water.

No. 682 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24

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- "MISTER TAPTOE"
- "I'M WALKING BEHIND YOU"
- "DRAGNET"
- "WHY DON'T YOU BELIEVE ME"
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