

SOCIAL SECURITY CHARGE

November Instalment: The second instalment of the charge of 1/6 in the £ on income other than salary or wages derived during the year ended 31st March, 1956, falls due on 7th November, and must be paid on or before 7th December to avoid the 10% penalty for late payment.

Companies and other corporate bodies are required to pay the full year's charge within one month from 5th February, 1957.

Wages Tax: All employers are notified that severe penalties are provided for failure to deduct and account for wages tax (1/6 in £) from all salaries, wages or other remuneration paid to permanent or casual employees, whether on a time, piece-work or similar basis.

Pay sheets, wages books and receipts for wages, salaries or other classes of income subject to deduction of the charge at the source, must be retained for a period of not less than 5 years, and made available for inspection by any person authorised by the Regulations to inspect books or other documents.

F. G. OBORN,
Commissioner of Inland Revenue.

THE new tennis court lay dazzled in the sunlight; the fat white lines trafficked neatly across the asphalt; the net, carefully measured for height, stretched across the centre, in readiness; and a new tennis racquet lay at each end of the court, with two furred tennis balls resting upon the nylon strings of the racquet nearest the superintendent.

The patients looked at the racquet and at the superintendent, and cried out in anticipation. Hurrah, Hurrah.

The superintendent, who was sitting in a blue velvet chair in the new pavilion, stood up to give a speech. He shaded his face from the sun.

—Ladies and gentlemen—

Everybody clapped. The patients, at a discreet distance, clapped hardest of all, and cheered, waiting for afternoon tea time, and the left-overs. Seven trays of cream cakes had been carried down from the bakehouse—roughly twelve dozen on each tray—and more—enough surely, for everybody, even for the not so polite people who would start grabbing.

—Hurrah. Hurrah.

The patients cheered like children at a cowboy film.

—Ladies and gentlemen—

The superintendent inclined his head towards the macrocarpa hedge and the

I GOT A SHOES

A Short Story by J.F.

lawn and the pavilion, and the other places where seats had been put for the visitors.

—On this auspicious occasion, I should like to offer a vote of thanks—

And there they were, being thanked, the members of the committee: those who had worked so hard to raise funds, with concerts and dances and guessing competitions and raffles. They all gazed at the new tennis court, and they all looked so happy and proud.

Everybody clapped once more, and the superintendent raised his hand for silence.

—selflessly, for the good of all—a common benefit—shoulders to the wheel—monetary reward—you know I have a little story that may interest you—it concerns—

The story was long and uninteresting. —And now I propose to desecrate the court by treading in the wrong shoes—

He stared down, accusingly and playfully, at his brown suede shoes.

—and play the first ball of the season—

Everyone watched eagerly while the superintendent stepped carefully on to the court, took the racquet nearest him and, smiling self-consciously, tossed the ball into the air. He meant it to travel across the net, and then he would have made some remark about his wife taking the other racquet; but the ball bounced, with a muffled sound, high into the air, and fell like a tight wad of white flannelette at the superintendent's feet. He picked it up and placed it once more upon the nylon strings of the racquet.

—I officially declare the tennis court open to all.

He smiled, and with pretended guilt, glancing down at his shoes, he sneaked from the court. There was a further burst of clapping and cheering, and those in charge of refreshments took advantage of the applause to hurry away into the club rooms at the end of the pavilion and turn on the boiler for tea, place the cups, and arrange the cakes for the official party. Talking and laughing like a general or a king or an actor at a première, the superintendent moved with his wife and the official party towards the club rooms. As soon as they had disappeared, the remainder of the crowd began to wander restlessly about, some gazing at the new tennis court as if they were reading it, like a face or a newspaper or a teacup or a crystal; others, feeling hungry and thirsty and rebellious, aware that there wasn't enough room for them in the club rooms, and that cakes and sandwiches were being eaten, and cups of tea drunk, and more provision should have been made for the common audience. In their seats by the macrocarpa hedge the patients talked among themselves and thought, dismayed, that nothing would be left over, not even scones or sandwiches, or if there were sandwiches they would be fish paste and pickle ones, with the tomato and ham eaten. Some of the children from the village began to race round and round the outside of the court, while the boldest ones walked near the edge, and the boldest ones of all played tig on the court itself. But they were stopped smartly.

Presently it was discovered that a few scones and sandwiches were being handed round, and there was shuffling and pushing; and finally the patients saw a few pastries coming towards them, and set up a cheer, and were told to

be quiet or they would be taken back to the ward, and not allowed such a privilege another time, privileges could be abused too easily. And still the crowd stayed, staring stupidly and expectantly at the hard drab asphalt court, as if they expected it to behave in an entertaining or even miraculous way, and not just lie there aloofly and obscenely sweating tar and grains of sunlight. There was a notice up to say that only sandshoes could be worn on the court.

Only a few people wore sandshoes; they had come to play the first game; they displayed their white shoes, walking freely up and down on the court, with the crowd watching them with envy and admiration and feeling out in the cold, and having no share; so that soon everybody but the four people in tennis shoes and clothes gradually walked away, as if in disdain, but really in disillusion; and soon all were gone but a few stragglers. Soon the official party came from the clubrooms. The superintendent looked about him at the almost deserted lawn and the empty seats, and the patients walking up the path back to the hospital, and an expression of uneasiness crossed his face. It was all over, and he had spent some time preparing his speech, and what a litter the crowd had made, you would have thought there would be more consciousness of social obligations. Toffee papers, chewing-gum wraps, sandwich crusts. Why did people have to be eating all the time? He brushed the crumbs from his best suit and shrugged his shoulders. If only he had rallied for a while, with his wife using the other racquet they would have seen his forehead drive then. What nonsense, what a waste of time over a tennis court.

All the human race wanted was spectacle, spectacle all the time. There was a sparrow on the edge of the court, struggling with a piece of sandwich. Another bird joined in, and they began a tug of war. The superintendent felt angry to see them there, and he waved and clapped his hands. Then he raised his voice, speaking to the first assistant about the state of the country roads and the alarming number of potholes; and the official party left the tennis court, the wives totting up calories and regretting their cream cakes, the husbands reflecting that the whole thing was nothing but a lot of tomfoolery; and all of them feeling dissatisfied. With all the speeches and food, and everybody staring at the tennis court, you would have expected something to happen, they thought, but nothing had happened, it was the same old story.

The tennis players, and one man sitting on a seat by the hedge, and a few anonymous small boys were the only people left when it started to rain. It rained big drops, pelting down hard, like a punishment. For one minute, two minutes, it teemed as if from nowhere. It had not been forecast, there had been nothing in the paper or over the radio about sudden rain; but scarcely had it started than it stopped, and the sun shone again, and the steam rose in soft grey smoke as if the court were breathing; and the two young men (the other two had gone when it rained) set upon the three big dappled puddles to remove them with brooms.

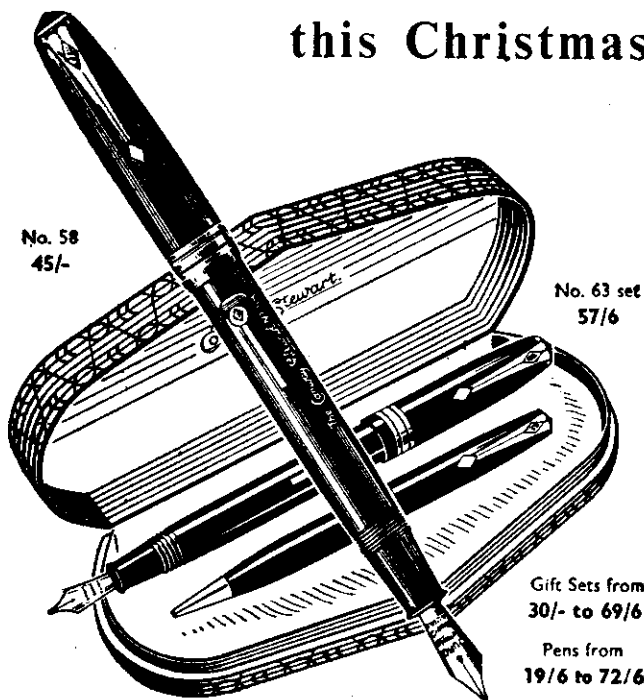
—It can't be level, one said, if it makes puddles like this.



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