

Poor Jacko. Such extraordinary arrangements, and in the same house as Nora's ex-fiancé, to whom her engagement had not yet been broken off, whatever that meant. He began to see now why people laughed at the very mention of the Irish, but he felt more dismayed than amused when Nora cried: "Why, it would be the very thing!"

"I can give you the key this minute," said Fiddler. "The lodger gave it to me when he was going, and you can give me a pound in advance. I'll see that the landlady gets it, never fear about that."

"And now that that's settled, would you like some bread and butter with your lunch? For I'll get you some if you want it."

He went off downstairs again. Jacko was quite taken aback. He watched Fiddler disappear and appear again with a plate of bread and butter in his hand. "Queer fish," he observed.

Fiddler began a joking conversation with the girl behind the counter, periodically emphasising the humour of his remarks by thrusting the plate under her chin. Jacko, wanting to finish his meal and get away without any further reference to the room, began to get impatient.

"Damn the fellow," he said, gazing disapprovingly at Fiddler, who hurried across.

"They hadn't much bread and butter," he said. "But I managed to get this bit for you. It'll keep you going for a while. And now I'll give you the bill. I tried to keep it down for you, but I can't do much, as they keep a check on everything. You can give me the pound for the room, and here's the key of the front door. And you'll find the front room on the first floor open."

FOR a rising young businessman Jacko felt he was not holding his end up very well. He had not even asked what the rent was. And an even worse thought struck him on the way to Merriem Square.

"Perhaps we'll be arrested," he said to Nora, "for breaking and entering. Entering, at any rate."

"I'm sure Fiddler knows the police," she replied. "He'll get you out of it."

"That's not the point," he said irritably, "I don't want to be got out

of anything. I'm sure the whole arrangement isn't legal."

However, he was tired, and the thought of some place in the shape of a home made him forget his scruples when they got to the house.

They went in and up to the room Fiddler had told them about. Sure enough, it was open and empty, and all fresh and tidy, which they hadn't expected. Jacko melted.

"Well, I must say it's handsome," he said, looking at the ceiling. "Real Irish Georgian."

Nora didn't know what he meant, but she was sure it was something important. She had married Jacko because she felt sure he was very important. The Irish were all right, but they weren't a bit important. Not like Jacko and the English.

"Well, we're here," she said. "I told you something would turn up. We'll just go off and get our things from the station."

But as they were going out the front door a voice called out from the back: "What are you doing coming into this house?" and an elderly woman in a bonnet and shawl appeared.

"Er, we—" Jacko began, but Nora interrupted—she knew the language better.

"We're not coming into this house, we're going out of it."

"Well, you must have come into it first." "Fiddler said we could. We paid him a pound," said Nora.

"I'll tan the hide out of that Fiddler. More fools you for giving him a pound. Is it a room you're looking for?"

"We're in it already," said Nora.

"Well, if you're in it already you're no need to be worrying, for you can stay there for a fortnight. They're all a bad lot that come here, and I suppose you're no worse than the rest of them. And you'll give me three pound ten, never mind what you gave Fiddler."

"Fiddler says that if you're the landlady you're away," said Nora.

"How could I be away when I came back this morning? Give me the rent for a week and away with you."

NORA and Jacko were taking it easy in their room about 10 o'clock that night when there was a knock. In answer

to their call Fiddler's grave and elegant countenance appeared round the door.

"I have news that will sadden the hearts of youse," he said.

Jacko had made up his mind to be firm when he next saw Fiddler.

"You owe me a pound. We paid the week's rent to the landlady."

"The pound was commission," said Fiddler stoutly.

"But you said the landlady would get it."

"Sure, I meant that I would put it towards my own rent and give it to her that way. It was just a manner of speaking."

Jacko gave in. He was beginning to realise that even a London man like himself could learn something about business from the Irish.

"And what bad news have you?" asked Nora.

"I was sacked this very day," said Fiddler. "Sacked from the job where I had served so faithfully since me last birthday. For carrying on, they said, the lying blackguards, for carrying on with the girls and neglecting the customers. You wouldn't say I had neglected you, would you now?"

Jacko was thinking hard. He suddenly saw a chance to show his generosity and magnanimity to Fiddler and at the same time enjoy a peaceful honeymoon.

"Fiddler," he said, "how would you like a job in London?"

"Why, it's the dream of my heart."

"Well, if you'll go to the packing foreman at the address I'll give you you'll get a job. But you'll have to hurry. You'll have to go on the boat tomorrow."

"Sure, of course I'll go tomorrow," said Fiddler. "And you can give me the commission on the room for next week now so as to save yourself the trouble in the morning, and I'm glad to be able to do it for you with Show Week on and all. I suppose I'll be seeing a lot of you in London."

"I'm afraid not," said Jacko hastily. "You see, the warehouse is a long way from the head office, and you'll want to live near your work. Transport is very difficult."

"IT'S wonderful of you, Jacko," said Nora, after Fiddler had gone. "You must be terribly important. Giving people jobs."

"Oh, I'm always on the look out for staff," he said as casually as he could, for he did feel important—and relieved, too.

"It'll be grand for Fiddler over there with his girl gone over already," said Nora.

"But—but—I thought he was engaged to you. I mean—"

"No, no. That was only when I was in Ireland. It didn't apply to England. He got engaged to someone else when I left. That's what I meant when I said we never broke it off."

Jacko suddenly realised how tired he felt after only one day in a foreign country.

NATURALLY asked Jacko whether Fiddler did come over and get a job with his firm.

"Yes, he did," he replied. "And he got on very well, too. He's now foreman of a department in the warehouse, which is over on the South Bank, and he lives out that way, too—no harm, of course, it's the best he can do at present. Oh, what's more, he got married."

It appeared, too, that Fiddler had gone all political, and was very much concerned about the suppression of hooliganism on the Border and a peacefully united Ireland taking a full place in the Commonwealth—matters in which Jacko hadn't the slightest interest. He was more concerned with getting over to Ireland for his next holidays, for they had gone south after that first week, and the countryside—it just left Jacko speechless, he said, though I doubt if anyone else would have noticed much change in this respect.

"I mean to say, old chap, look here," he would say. "But they tell me the West's the place, and that's where we're going next time."

But going to Ireland for his holidays didn't enter into Fiddler's plans. He was too busy.

"We don't want to lose him, of course," said Jacko. "But I know what he's up to. It's not a far step from wholesale grocery to catering, and with his past experience—well, I wish him luck."

I can only add that these two young men were following exactly a pattern set by a large number of their fellow-countrymen.

KEEPING UP WITH THE JUVENILES

WHATEVER family life may do, it generally does not lead to a calm and placid existence for mother. Caught up in the endless demands upon her time and energy, most mothers begin to feel almost as though peace and quiet were as apocryphal as some statesmen seem to believe. They begin to feel as though the essential qualifications for motherhood are inexhaustible energy and a never-failing sense of humour. Jillian Squire is one mother who seems to have both. Twice before in the *Family Daze* series she has lightly reported the way in which her family has left her somewhat bothered and bewildered, although these effects were not apparent in her writing. Now in *Daze of Our Age* her family is a little older, but the daze, as she says, goes right on, and Mum is still at the centre of things. *Daze of Our Age*, which has been playing in the Women's Hour at 1XH, will start from 2XA and 4ZB on Monday, September 16, and from 2XP and 4ZA on September 30. It will be played later in the Women's Hours of the other Commercial stations.

Jillian Squire is the pen name of Joyce Thom, of Lower Hutt. She was born, as she puts it, "in Nelson, far

too many years ago," and is married to Donald Thom, a tobacco manufacturing executive. They have three children.

"I began writing," she says, "about seven years ago when my youngest child started school, and my father, no doubt trying to fill that gap, presented me with a heap of old iron he called a typewriter. 'Write a few short stories,' he encouraged me. And lied cheerily, 'It's easy.'"

"So from my cosy little domestic rut I wrote about my rut-mates and myself—also the loved ones of my rut-mates, the dogs, cats and guinea-pigs, and about our life and times, all the crises that sometimes seemed funny at the time and sometimes much, much later."

Daze of Our Age was written about three years ago, when Sylvia was 17, Dennis 14, and Alan 9. The four talks begin with Sylvia's decision to choose her own "fashionable" clothes, an occasion many mothers find rather alarming (in fact, Father had to be called in to cope with a duffel-coat). Then Alan shows signs of becoming a successful businessman—especially when his parents find him changing the New Zealand coins in the church collection for Australian ones, saying "God won't know. He'll think I live in Australia."

"In the last seven years," said Mrs Thom, "I've written several hundred short stories, articles and radio scripts, because writing is like drug-taking, you can't stop once you start. I wrote under pressure to achieve a trip to England and the Continent last year—and it surpassed my wildest and most demanding dreams. Since then I have been writing and broadcasting a series of *New Zealand Newsletters* for the BBC Women's Hour, and apart from many letters from people genuinely interested in New Zealand, I've had some amusing ones from discontented housewives who want to leave their husbands and find a new life (and perhaps a new husband) in New Zealand. I try to answer all with tact, if not encouragement."



"Father had to be called in to cope with a duffel-coat"