

# ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

by Walter Brookes

"WE have to work hard here," Mr O'Flanagan told me when I first came to South Molton Street. "Fierce competition in business in London, you know."

To those who have questioned whether all this about South Molton Street is truth or fiction I would point out that there is a great deal of truth in what he said, as the following story will show. Though I wouldn't show it to the people in South Molton Street or they will say it's all a pack of lies and that I shouldn't have said anything at all about it—after working with them so long too.

But as Miss Blossom often said there is a grain of truth in everything, though it may seem hard to trust her view of a statement she made which must, to judge by the appearance of things, seem an utter and complete fiction—that my wife hadn't any curves any more than she had herself.

Intriguing as this subject may seem I shall ask you to bear with me while I deal with one or two other matters first. Another critic told me in an anonymous letter that I have exalted South Molton Street above its station, that it is not Bond Street and never would be, let alone be above it, as I said, and anyhow what did I mean by Bond Street? Old Bond Street or New?

Fortunately I had asked Miss Blossom about the first question. "Miss Blossom," I said, "Is South Molton Street above Bond Street?"

"Let me see, now," she replied. "You come to Bond Street after this as you go down to the City. So this must be above it. Yes. Isn't that right, Coralie?"

"Yes," said Coralie, "and you come to this after Bond Street as you come up from the City. So—"

"Yes, it's above Bond Street whatever way you look at it," said Miss Blossom.

Yet as well as being above it South Molton Street—either it or Davies Street—may actually be Bond Street, which my critic denies, and I just cannot have exalted it above its station, extraordinary as all this may sound. My authority is none other than, well, the London Transport Authority, and it would be hard to find a better authority than that. It takes you where you want to go, and if it doesn't know where, I mean to say where you want to go is—how could it get you there?

Now the Bond Street tube station is just above the corner where South Molton Street and Davies Street run into Oxford Street from different angles. And Bond Street, New Bond Street if you like, let alone Old Bond Street, is quite a distance away. I asked Miss Blossom about this too.

"Perhaps," she said, "It's because when they were digging out the underground they came up at the wrong place, and that would be quite easy because it's easy enough when you're merely travelling by underground, and it must be much harder when you're digging it—I mean harder to dig it but easier to come up at the wrong place."

As for Old and New Bond Streets that is simply explained by saying that there is no such place as Old Bond Street, only Bond Street and New Bond Street, and if you are in Bond Street you say you are in Old Bond Street and if you are in New Bond Street you just

say you are in Bond Street. And Old and Bond Streets are each one end of the other and vice versa.

And now that we know exactly where we are—I like to have everything exact in my accounts of my travels, just as Baedeker said he did—I can say that I was in Gieves' in Old Bond Street. Old. Gieves, of Plymouth, you know. Not New Plymouth. Old Plymouth—that is—I mean—well, ordinary Plymouth. Naval tailors. I did not say military tailors or anything. Naval tailors. But in their Bond Street—Old Bond Street—branch they cover civilians too, both men and women.

I was thinking about something I had read in the paper that morning. It said there were a lot of Australian girls in London and it had asked them their opinion of various things, but particularly their opinion about men in England. And they had said that Englishmen wore trousers that were too narrow and that they gave evasive answers when asked what they did for a living.

Well, I thought, when in Rome, etc., and when in England, etc. So when asked that day—by a New Zealander—what I was doing I did not say I was delivering gowns, but that I was engaged in expediting the despatch of—oh, wasn't this English climate dreadful? Someone had just told me that they had nine months' winter and three months' bad weather. That was a good one, eh? Ha, ha, ha!

But I still wore trousers that were not too narrow—there was no getting away from that. So on the way back I slipped down one of those little side streets which the town-planning committee (or whatever they had) made when they planned the layout of London, so as to hide tailors' shops which people don't like to see disfiguring the main thoroughfares, and went into one and explained who I was and all about it, and asked him if he could possibly make my trousers too narrow for me.

"Oh, dear," he said, "they should be of course, but if I make them as they ought to be they won't go with the rest of you and people will know you've had them altered, and you should have a new suit you know. But considering you're from the colonies I'll do this for you, and I know exactly what I'll do—I'll make them just right. You see they were worn too wide for years and now they're worn too narrow, but they've never

"But," the tailor said, "if I make them as they ought to be they won't go with the rest of you"

been worn just right—not as long as I can remember anyhow. Then people will think you're merely eccentric, and that is perfectly correct and you can get away with anything."

So I told him I would leave them with him next day, and rushed back so as not to waste any time—I always remembered what Mr O'Flanagan had said about the fierce competition.

"Miss Blossom," I said when I got in, rather breathless, "do you know where Old Gieves Street is—I mean New Taylor Street, no, what I meant was—there's a piece of material at Gieves' that my wife wants made up, and if they do it they might give it too naval a look and besides it would be terribly dear if it had to go to Plymouth, you know—that is, could you arrange to have it tailored into—"

"Tailored?" She looked at me with horror. "You simply can't get a material that will tailor properly, and besides to have a thing tailored you have to have curves, and she simply hasn't any, has she? Any more than I have."

This information about materials, my wife, and Miss Blossom all at once was

a little staggering at first. But I soon realised that although it might be regarded as fiction from one point of view yet truth had many angles or something like that, and at any rate Miss Blossom was, as she often said herself, a practical woman, and this probably was the statement of a practical truth as opposed to—well, it was practical, anyway.

"Do you mean, Miss Blossom," I said, "that things will be worn straight this summer—that straight things will be fashionable?"

"Fashionable?" She looked at me as though she did not know the meaning of the word. "If you mean that everybody will be wearing them—yes. Oh, but tell her she needn't worry. She'll be quite safe to wear them for the next two months. Nobody will be wearing them then, and she can go about in them quite happily."

"But couldn't she wear straight things when everybody's wearing them?" I asked. "I thought that would be the right time."

"Not when everybody's wearing them," she replied. "She wouldn't feel comfortable."

There. I had never realised that things like that made your clothes feel comfortable or not, but evidently they did.

"She can make them up herself too," said Miss Blossom. "Because straight

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