

widower, grass widower, libertine, rake, roue, idler, or—he made himself a third drink—the coming young writer of the country. He could see the papers when his novel appeared.

“—and in this book Geoffrey Chaplin has declared himself. A liberal, a modern—but with a sensitive understanding that permits him to portray, without malice or bias, the opposite point of view. His characters strut stiffly and accurately through his pages, sometimes ludicrous, sometimes pathetic—but always alive and always decisively cut. There seems to be little doubt—”

“That,” he thought, “will show her. I can stand being separated long enough to finish it, and I will go back to her, not with a promise, but with an unmade promise already fulfilled. That’s a nice phrase. I’ll remember it.”

The phone rang. He let it ring four or five times, not knowing whether he wanted to answer it or not, but he finally couldn’t stand the jangle of the bell.

“Hello, Geoff?”
It was Larry Haven. Another beer drinker and—he considered the phrase and then worded it—

“Hello, you bum painter.”
“Not nice words, my boy,” Larry’s voice came over the wire, “not nice words at all. But I can’t complain—I want you to do me a favor. We have a date to burn up, tonight, haven’t we?”

“Yes,” Geoff said. “I’m a trifle singed at the minute. What’s the matter—did your girl back out of the date?”

He and Larry and Joan and Larry’s girl were to go out on a New Year eve bingle which none of them could afford.

“No,” Larry said. “But she wants to bring another girl with her. I want you to think of a guy who’ll do.”

Joan was no longer there. There would be no foursome with Joan and Larry and Larry’s girl—not with Joan sitting in Helen’s apartment, waiting for him to reform. But there might be a foursome, anyway.

“Listen, Larry. Joan is sick—feels terrible. I was going to phone you and let you know. So—tell this other girl she is lucky, and that Geoffrey Chaplin, the first, will be glad to let her bore him for the evening.”

“What makes you think she’s a bore?”
“I know your women,” Geoff said. “And on that count I imagine she’s—”

“She is,” Larry said. “Very. But you’re such a nice boy and such a well behaved young married man that it will all be wasted on you. Tuxedo?”

“Sure,” Geoff said. “I want to be gay.”

HE GOT to Larry’s apartment at 6 and the girls were already there. Larry’s girl, Natalie, was blond and beautiful. His girl, Frankie, was dark and twice as beautiful.

They went to Louis’ for dinner and Chirio, the solicitous little waiter, came over with his face lighted by pleasure.

“Good evening, Mr. Chaplin! How is—”

“I’m fine,” Geoff said, interrupting him quickly. Why should he let him mention Joan’s name? He was not intending to do anything about Frankie, but being married when you were out with people like this spoiled something. Maybe it was only the undercurrent of expectancy and possibility which was ruined by being married, but Frankie was not noticing anyway.

“Manhattans,” Larry said, and after two more Geoff noticed that his voice seemed to be coming from a little further away than was quite normal. But he didn’t have any trouble with words, yet. When he started using the wrong words in the wrong places, then he would have to be careful.

“I feel very gay,” he said suddenly, “does anybody else feel gay?”

Joan was alone in Helen’s apartment and here he was saying he felt gay. He didn’t feel that way at all. He felt cheap and sordid and mean and small. He could see Joan lying on Helen’s couch, looking up at the ceiling and wondering what he was doing on New Year eve. They had planned to have fun; champagne even if they couldn’t afford it; a party like this with Larry and his girl. During dinner he drank three more Manhattans and he knew what was going to happen to him, now that Joan was definitely not there, and now that he knew he would have no fun anywhere, at any time, as long as she wasn’t.

By the time they left Louis’ and went on some place else he was beyond caring

where it was they were going or with whom he was. He dimly remembered hearing Larry say, “Frankie—take care of him. He won’t be any trouble but you may have to steer him a little.” He remembered hearing Frankie say, “I’ll take such good care of him.”

TWELVE o’clock came and the lights went out at the club where they were sitting, and everybody kissed everybody else. He was sitting next to Frankie and was holding her hand and in the darkness he leaned toward her but she had leaned forward first. As he kissed her he felt her hand in his. His head was whirling but he slipped his arm around the back of her chair and over her shoulders and his fingers closed on her arm. She drew her head back a trifle to talk. Then the lights went up and Larry was laughing at him and Natalie was laughing at Frankie.

“I don’t care,” Frankie said, “I like him.”

“I like Frankie,” Geoff said, knowing he was talking thickly, and not caring, and not thinking about Joan at all. He didn’t see Larry lean over and talk to Natalie and look at him. As a matter of fact, from that point, he never remembered seeing anything.

As he woke up he realized he felt a lot worse than he had ever felt before, and a great deal worse than he thought was possible. Through his eyelids he could tell it was light and he thought, “If I open my eyes I’ll go blind. I’ll have to stand on a street corner with pencils and I will look very silly. I will never be able to earn enough money to eat and—” At the idea of earning money he thought of Joan, and that this morning, for the first time in a year, she would not be up ahead of him and getting breakfast.

“I have been a fool,” he said. He was talking aloud to see what his voice would sound like. It had a pleasant hangover huskiness, and he continued. “I, Geoffrey Chaplin, have been a fool. I must reform. I hate like blazes to give in to Joanie, but I must reform. I shall take my place on the wagon—if I live through the torture of being pounded on the back of my head by whoever is doing it. I shall work like blazes, and I shall recover a little of my lost dignity in the eyes of my wife. I love my wife.” That sentence had a ring that pleased him and made him smile. So he repeated it. “I love my wife. A great deal. Enormously. If I could pull my aching self together I would rise, bathe and go over to Helen’s and make her have breakfast and tell her that I, Geoffrey Chaplin, will be a good boy. Yesterday was a lapse. I should certainly never have let her go out of the apartment. I will never be that foolish again. It is New Year—and that, my friends and my country men, is a solemn resolution.”

There was a giggle 6 inches from his head—and no giggle belonged there. He drew in his breath sharply, and in spite of his splitting head he had a feeling of terror. Still he did not open his eyes. It came back to him. Larry and Natalie—and Frankie. Frankie obviously making a play for him, Frankie taking care of him through the evening.

They had evidently gotten home, and the thought filled him with fear. He could not go back to Joan, now. Now, or ever.

He tried to say something and couldn’t. He had to get up, now, immediately, get dressed and go home. He took a deep breath and opened his eyes.

It was Helen’s apartment.
IT TOOK a minute for him to realize where he was, and then he turned his head to look into Joan’s face, which she was trying desperately to keep straight.

“That was quite a speech, darling! Where did you think you were?”

“Home,” he said. “Oh, Joanie—I was so sick!”

“I suppose you have to tell me!” Joan said. “Larry brought you up about 1 o’clock—not that you’d remember. I wasn’t terribly flattered that you hadn’t come by yourself, but Larry said you couldn’t remember Helen’s address. He had to look it up.”

“I don’t know,” Geoff said. “How did Larry know you were here?”

“In your own charming, incoherent

way, you must have told him,” Joan said. “It’s a wonder he could understand you.”

She was silent for a minute and her hand slid to his head. It was cool, and he placed his own over it, pressing it to his forehead. “Did you mean that lovely speech, Geoff?”

“Every word of it,” he said. “Every single, solitary word. I’ve been a fool, Joanie, and I’m sorry.”

“What do you want,” Joan said, “more than anything else in the world?”

“You.”

“Then what?”

“Coffee.”

“Then I guess I’d better get up,” Joan

said. She threw off the covers and went into the kitchenette. She stuck her head through the door.

“I forgot something, darling.”

His head was killing him.

“What?”

“Happy New Year.”

“Happy New Year,” he said. “Happy Old Year, too, wasn’t it?”

“Most of it.”

“Don’t worry about this one.”

“I’m not worrying,” Joan said. “I’m

going to write down all the things you said and make you sign it.”

“I’ll sign it,” Geoff said, “as soon as I have coffee.”

(Copyright, 1934.)

Riding to Hounds, and Vice Versa

When the Dogs Start Running the Wrong Way, There’s Trouble—and Other Things—in the Wind,

SAYS WEARE HOLBROOK

Oh, a-hunting we will go, a-hunting we will go,

A-hunting we will go, and a-hunting we will go—

Tantivy, tantivy, tantivy!

A-hunting we will go.

—From an Old (you guessed it!) Hunting Song.

THE author of the above lyric was nobody’s fool. With fine gusto he announced his intention of going a-hunting. He announced it not once but five times, with a couple of tantivys thrown in for effect. But there is nothing to indicate that he ever actually went. You will observe that he used the future tense throughout—which no doubt explains his enthusiasm. The harsh realities of experience had not shattered his illusions. He was just a kibitzer.

A-hunting should not be confused with mere hunting. You can hunt by yourself almost any place where the population isn’t too dense. All you need is a gun. You can even hunt unarmed in the privacy of your own home for such small game as keys, collar buttons and last month’s gas bill.

But a-hunting is something else again. It is a community enterprise involving horses, hounds, horns, hedges and an occasional fox. It should be done in England to be really effective. Fox hunting is as thoroughly British as the preliminary herring which makes breakfast such a trial for the tourist. It has never become very popular with Americans—or foxes. We haven’t the fens and copses, furze and gorse to furnish a picturesque background for the pink coats. Also the barbed wire fences in our rural districts cannot be hurdled like hedges, and our local peasants display none of that good old feudal forbearance when their social superiors trample the turnips.

WHILE visiting Lord Luvaduck at Ungodleigh Manor, Little Nether-twitch, Nerts, I had the opportunity of taking part in a real old English fox hunt. It was an unforgettable experience. I was awakened at the crack of dawn by the sound of a trumpet outside my bed room door. Jitters, the aged butler, entered with a breakfast tray.

“If I may be so bold, sir,” he said with an apologetic cough, “the ’unt is on today, and it’s ’igh time you nipped around to the stable and got yourself a ’orse, if I may be so bold, sir.” He spoke softly, dropping his aitches like Autumn leaves in Vallombrosa.

“Ra-ther!” I replied, leaping out of bed. “Thanks ever so, Jitters, old bean. I’ll be down in a jiff. Tooodle-oo and pip-pip!”

“Pishy-posh, sir,” replied Jitters, bowing gravely and dissolving through the door. He knew his Wodehouse.

At a trot from the horn we all leaped

into our saddles and galloped out of the stable yard, with the exception of Lord Luvaduck, who got only one foot into the stirrup and had to hop along beside his horse like a runner-up in a three-legged race. While there is no rule forbidding passengers to stand on the platform when the horse is in motion, it is considered dashed bad form. His lordship was quite cut up about it, especially after hopping through the cucumber frames.

When we pulled up to wait for his lordship the hounds disappeared into a beechwood copse, and presently we could hear them baying in the distance. They had evidently got the scent. That was too much for the impatient sportsmen. “M. F. H. or no M. F. H.!” they shouted, “we’re going ahead to see the kill. Yoicks! Yoicks!”

AS ONE who enjoys a good yoick as much as the next fellow, I set spurs to my steed and followed them. Away we went, up hill and down dale, hurdling fences, leaping ditches and splashing through mud puddles. The hounds were still out of sight, but the sound of their barking grew louder as we went on. And before long, rounding a dense thicket of mangel-wurzel, we came upon the pack in full cry. But they were not running away from us. They were running toward us, and behind them came their quarry—a small furry creature that looked like a fox, except for peculiar black-and-white markings along its back.

This was contrary to all the rules of the chase, and for a moment our little band of valliant huntsmen halted uncertainly. It was an unprecedented situation. No one knew what to do. As the yelping pack drew to windward, however, it became apparent that something must be done quickly. The hounds had the scent, and they were all too willing to share it with us.

“Phew, Labor!” cried Lord Twiddelthum, the acting M. F. H. Then he wheeled his horse around, dug in his spurs and headed for the stables.

The rest followed suit. Back over the course we raced—past fens, meres, denes, dells, ha-has, oafs and other appurtenances of the English countryside—with the hounds close at our heels. As an inexperienced rider, I found it impossible to keep pace with the hardened huntsmen around me. Gradually I fell behind. My sense of smell told me that the hounds were gaining on me at every step, and by the time the welcome outlines of the manor house hove into sight I was running neck and neck with the leader of the pack. But a burst of speed on the home stretch put me ahead and I reached the stable yards just as the grooms were closing the gates. I had won by a nose—held tightly between the thumb and forefinger.