



St Michael

HOWERD'S HOWLERS

 'O-oh don't laugh...it really happened!'

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY FRANKIE HOWERD

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FRANKIE
HOWERD

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First published in Great Britain in 1985 by

Octopus Books Limited
59 Grosvenor Street
London W1

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Text and illustrations © 1985 Hennerwood
Publications Limited

Editor: Moira Eminton
Art Editor: Frances McKay
Jacket Designer: Fiona Carpenter
Designer: Design 23

ISBN 0 86273 510 3

Printed in Great Britain
by Richard Clay (The Chaucer Press) Limited
Bungay, Suffolk

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INTRODUCTION

Dear You,

This is what is known as the Preface, which means it's supposed to tell you what this book is about – not *all*, of course. Then, there would be no point in reading it.

First let me reveal who did it . . . I did. I accept full responsibility. Next, let me give you another tantalizing piece of information. This book has a connection with cookery. 'Cookery?', I hear you exclaim. (Out loud if you are on your own, silently if people are around you.)

Now, I used the word 'tantalizing' a few sentences ago because I do not intend to reveal the cookery connection for the moment, but fear not – all will be revealed in good time!

The word 'Howlers' appears in the title, so I suppose you are saying to yourselves 'what exactly are Howlers?'. Cats? – *they* howl, mostly in the night, of course. Is it a book about cats? No. Babies? – no. The wind? *That* howls – no.

It is, in fact, a book about grown-up people. Mind you, grown-up people were once babies, and sometimes keep cats, *and* get the wind. Are you getting confused? – especially since the book has a connection with cookery. So, why not take a five minute break. You'll feel better. All right now? Good.

I shall now stop teasing and tell you that Howlers could also be described as Blunders. Big Blunders. This is a book about people who make Blunders. Although I have to admit that sometimes Blunders make people – if you *know* what I mean!

Of course, not only individual people make Howlers (or if you prefer, Blunders). Large bodies of people also do, like Governments. For instance, *our* Government made a Howler when it invited me to join the army during the war and wouldn't take no for an answer. It made a Howler out of me too. I howled all night! What

annoyed me was that they never would admit their mistake. In fact, at the end of the war, my Commanding Officer was still ranting and raving at me. I rounded on him. 'How dare you!', I said haughtily. 'You're being most unfair! After all, we won, didn't we?' To which he had the cheek to say, 'If it hadn't been for you, we would have won two years ago!'

You see what I mean. That was an example of a Government making a Howler and refusing to take the blame for it. Mind you, I have to admit in all honesty that I myself have made some Howlers in my time. Once (I can feel the shame of it still), I went swimming in our new baths – very modern – a sauna – or rather two ... one for men and one for women. After swimming two or three hundred laps, I dashed into the changing rooms – with water still dripping over my eyes – peeled off my swimming trunks, and rushed into the sauna with a towel in my hand. There I stood – confronted by rows of equally naked women. Honestly, I didn't know where to look! Apparently, *they* did!

It was a Howler all right – they howled! ... with laughter! I can't think why, and if you can, kindly keep your thoughts to yourselves, and try and puzzle out what this book has to do with cookery.

And now please read on, remembering all the time, that these Howlers are all true – and even if they're not, you can't prove it!

All the very best,

Frankie Howard

THE MEDIA



This is one of the worst categories in which to make Howlers since it often involves the full glare of public attention. For instance, I have made several records or albums in my time. June Whitfield and I made a record sending up a sexy disc called 'Je t'aime'. Ours was called 'Up Je t'aime'. Though the whole thing was a bit saucy, we certainly didn't think it offensive and we recorded the song in all innocence.

To my astonishment DJ's were banned from playing the record. This was very unfortunate from our point of view, since the publicity given by DJ's in their programmes is essential. It was only when I played the record again and realized the implication of just one line that I saw we had made a Howler. The line had an implication we had not realized or intended. Did such innocence go unrewarded? — Yes!

This is a true story. Here are others ...

By Any Other Name . . . ?

There are scholars who have been beavering away for years trying to prove that Shakespeare didn't write Shakespeare and that Bacon wrote Shakespeare instead. Laurence Olivier scotched these theories once and for all.

'What self respecting actor would be prepared to be a member of the Royal Bacon Company?' he asked simply.

One Upmanship

'Do you know Keats well?'

'Oh yes, he came to dinner only last week.'

'Nonsense. Keats died over 150 years ago.'

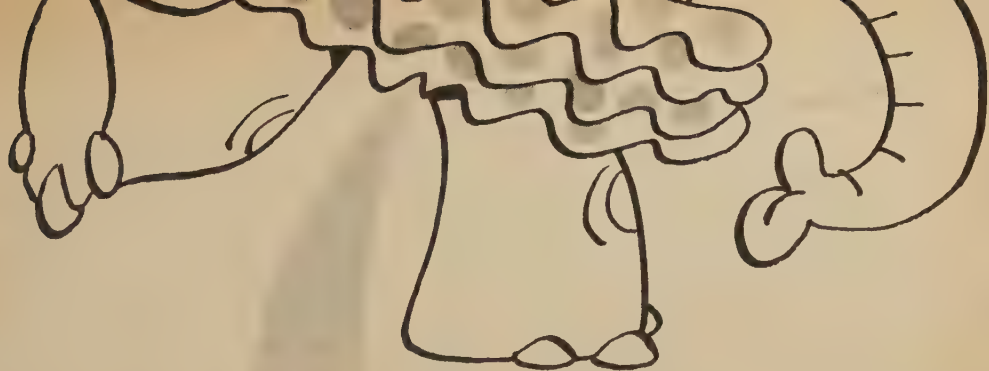
'I thought he was quiet.'

New Boy

Some of those MPs will do anything to get on television. After the last election one of the new faces was so anxious to make his mark that he contacted all the TV stations offering to come and talk about anything they cared to name. At last he got a bite; Granada wrote inviting him to join a late night discussion and asked if a £50 fee would be acceptable. He wrote back by return of post: 'Perfectly acceptable. I enclose cheque for £50.'

Perfect Part

Actress Coral Browne, booked to play *King Lear* in Moscow, asked if there was a part going for her ex-husband and was told there was nothing that would suit him. Insisting that she had seen the very role, she thumbed through the script to prove her point. 'There you are,' she announced triumphantly, as she reached the right page. 'A camp near Dover.'



Big Trouble

Bringing live animals on stage in panto is great for the kiddies but it can make backstage life a bit smelly. I mean, you can't housetrain Cinderella's ponies! When Tania the baby elephant starred with Billy Dainty and Charlie Drake in a production of *Aladdin* a few years back, everyone knew they were living dangerously. The strict rule was: no drink for Tania for a couple of hours before the performance.

All went well until the night that Charlie stuck her trunk in the rubber pool which was used in one of the scenes, and she drank the lot with one mighty 'Srrrrr'. She was on stage, standing on her hind legs and doing one of her twirls, when she suddenly gave a great bellow and began to pee. On and on it went while the orchestra sheltered under their music sheets and the people in the first six rows fled for cover. The stage was awash. Out came the buckets and mops and they sloshed the Jeyes fluid around but the smell was horrendous. Billy says he'll never forget trying to say his lines without breathing in!



Mirror Image

One year when my fellow comedian Les Dawson was playing panto dame in *Babes in the Wood* the police were called in after a Peeping Tom had been spotted lurking round the girls' dressing rooms.

Les was holding forth to one of the policemen about the degeneracy of modern society.

'I don't know what the world's coming to, nothing but transvestites and perverts wherever you look. Disgusting, I call it.'

The policeman was gazing open-mouthed. Les then caught sight of himself in the mirror, complete with pink knickers, padded bra and curly wig!



Nothing but the Truth

A would-be author spent three years slaving over his novel until it was six chapters longer than *War and Peace*, then saved up for the postage for three months and sent it to the publishers. On the title page he wrote: 'The characters in this novel are purely fictitious and bear no resemblance to any real person, living or dead.' When it came back a week later the publisher had added a single pithy line. 'No need to tell you what's wrong with this, you've said it all.'

Early Ambition

As the circus performer sawed the lady in half to tumultuous applause, a woman in the audience was telling everyone sitting near her that that was her son down there.

'He always wanted to join the circus. When he was only a tiny tot, his ambition was to saw people in half.'

'You must be very proud of him,' said one of her neighbours. 'Is he your only child?'

'No, I had two other boys and two girls but they're scattered around the country.'

Home from Home

Everyone who has ever toured in variety has favourite tales about theatrical landladies. There's the one who was so fanatical about cleanliness she put newspapers on the floor of the cuckoo clock, or the one who was so mean she begrudged the money for a telly so we used to sit in front of the fridge and take turns opening it to watch the light come on.

One summer season I got digs on a smallholding just outside the town; the landlady boasted that she always served home produce. The first weekend she killed a hen and we had chicken casserole, the second weekend she killed a pig and we had pork chops. The third weekend her husband died and I didn't stay for dinner!

Cut Price

There was a well-known leading lady who liked the look of a new recruit to the company. His love life she was told, was a bit of a question mark, so another actor bet her a fiver that her well-known charms wouldn't get her anywhere. Next morning she came in looking a bit down in the mouth.

'I owe you £3.50,' she told him.

Too Trendy

An enthusiastic actress was telling the American playwright George S. Kaufman more than he wanted to know about the play she was rehearsing, one of those trendy little pieces where you come out of the theatre wondering what you've seen. There was no scenery, she told him, and in the first scene the audience had to imagine that she was in a crowded restaurant. In the second scene she would run to the other side of the stage and the audience had to imagine that she was in her own sitting room. 'And the second night,' said Kaufman crushingly, 'you'll have to imagine there's an audience out front.'

Hard Times

Business is very bad in the cinemas these days. Down at our Odeon they don't put up programme times any more: they ask you when you can make it. We used to have a pretty usherette with a torch. Now there's a one-eyed cat who walks down the aisle backwards.

Past It

Two ladies sat watching the sorry spectacle of an elderly tenor still playing the lead in a touring musical and not making any of the high notes.

'I suppose,' one remarked to the other, 'he's had his face lifted so often he can't afford to raise his voice.'

Top Price



Edith Evans was a great one for the crushing quip. In the early 1940s, during the war, she bought some fruit at Fortnum and Mason and was charged seventeen and six – a small fortune then. She handed over a pound note and waved away the change, saying regally:

‘Keep it. I trod on a grape on the way in.’





Don't Play, Maestro

A critic wrote of a Jack Benny violin concert: 'Jack Benny played Mendelssohn last night, Mendelssohn lost.' Undeterred, he went to the White House to play for the President. A security guard stopped him and asked what was in the case.

'It's only a machine gun,' Benny quipped.

The guard sighed with relief.

'Thank goodness. I was afraid it might be your violin.'

Popular Demand

A well-known Hollywood director died after years of making life miserable for everyone who worked with him. He had divorced three wives, who all hated him, his children hadn't spoken to him for years and he didn't have a friend in the world. His secretary went along to his funeral out of duty, expecting to be the only person there. She was amazed to find the church packed.

'I don't understand it,' she whispered to one of the ex-wives, who was sitting next to her. 'He must have been the most unpopular man in the business, so why have all these people come to his funeral?'

'Like he always said: if you give people what they want, they'll come,' said the ex-wife tartly.



Special Request

They say the media can brainwash you. The little boy next door is hooked on disc-jockeys and when he says his prayers he says:

'God bless Mum and Dad, and this request also goes to Auntie Flo in Scunthorpe, all at 10 Railway Cuttings and not forgetting Snoopy the cat.'

Proof Positive

Victor Mature once applied for membership of a snooty golf club in California but they turned him down saying they didn't accept actors as members. He wrote back saying, 'I am not an actor and I enclose my press cuttings to prove it.'

Damp Squib

There's nothing new about disaster in show business. When the famous eighteenth-century theatre manager David Garrick organized a great 'do' to celebrate the bicentenary of Shakespeare's birth it rained so hard that none of the fireworks would light and the dancers splashed ankle deep in water. As a singer trilled, 'Soft thou gently flowing Avon' in a marquee on the lawns, the river burst its banks and the whole tent floated off downstream. After all that they found they'd got the date wrong and it wasn't Shakespeare's birthday anyway!

Eek!

The film director was livid when the camera man walked off the set in the middle of a day's shooting.

'Was it something I said?' he asked.

'Yes. I've just had a vasectomy and I can't stand the way you keep shouting "Cut!"'



Put Down

When Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn met for the first time on the set before they began shooting a film together, Hepburn looked down her nose at Tracy and said chillingly:

'I'm afraid I'm a little tall for you, Mr Tracy.'

'Never mind,' grinned Tracy. 'I'll soon cut you down to my size.'





Spare a Copper

On a tour of Dubrovnik with the Hallé Orchestra, Sir John Barbirolli took time off from rehearsals for a little sightseeing. By the time he came out of the cathedral he was tired and hot, so he decided to take a short siesta on the steps. He put his hat and cane down beside him and lay back for a snooze behind his dark sunglasses. By the time he woke up he had collected £3.50 worth of small change from members of the congregation, taking pity on such a needy soul.



Dropping In

The film was a tense thriller but the enjoyment of the whole audience was spoilt when a man in the middle of the stalls kept groaning loudly. They shushed and tutted at him but it made no difference, so someone called the manager.

'If you can't be quiet sir, I'll have to ask you to leave,' he said sharply, but the only answer was a deep-throated gurgle.

Deciding that the man must be the worse for drink, the manager thought it might be best to call him a taxi.

'Come along now, you'll be better off at home,' he said soothingly.

'Where do you come from?'

'From the balcony,' groaned the man.

Unwilling Partners

John Barrymore was one of those Hollywood actors who got more and more cantankerous and eccentric as he got older. The young Katherine Hepburn, playing his daughter in a film in the early 1930s, had to put up with plenty of bad temper and unpredictable behaviour.

'Thank goodness I don't have to act with you anymore,' she told him as filming finished.

'I didn't know you ever had,' he told her icily.

At a Price

In the James Bond film *For Your Eyes Only* Jack Hedley plays two parts – the villainous yacht owner *and* the parrot. Jack says the parrot had marginally more lines to say than he did and one or two animal impressionists had already had a go at the bird's voice, without success. When one day the studio rang to ask him if he would mind dubbing in the parrot's voice, he bridled immediately: a serious actor, dubbing a parrot – ridiculous! Then they named the astronomical sum they were thinking of paying.

'Who's a pretty boy, then!' squawked Jack hastily.

Liquid Lunch

Wilfred Lawson was having a lunch time snack in a pub near the Arts Theatre, where he was appearing in a very successful play. When Richard Burton walked in, the two actors had a drink together – and a drink together – and another drink together. Burton went back with him to the theatre to see the matinee and Lawson, who didn't appear in the opening scene, insisted on sitting with his friend in the stalls, keeping up a whispered commentary on everything that was going on and annoying everyone for rows in either direction.

'This bit's good,' he hissed enthusiastically. 'This is where I come in.'

Close Call

The late Dame Cecily Courtneidge decided to get her own back on her husband Jack Hulbert after a tiff. They were playing together in a light comedy and she talked the stage manager into having the telephone on stage ring at Jack's elbow, in the middle of his most important speech. It rang, Jack ignored it, it rang again. Jack picked it up, paused a moment then, with a sweet smile, he said:

'It's for you, dear.'

Disposable

When Noel Coward's musical *After the Ball* did its pre-West End tour all the critics raved about the new young actress who played the juvenile lead. Actress Irene Browne, used to claiming all the attention, wasn't exactly thrilled. She kept her irritation well bottled until one night the girl in question missed her cue and arrived on stage late. Afterwards Irene was all set to read the riot act when another member of the cast, alarmed by her fury exclaimed:

'Oh, don't hit her Irene, the poor little thing's as thin as a match!'

'Exactly,' Irene growled. 'She should be struck and thrown away.'

Roles Reversed

Dress rehearsals for the local drama club's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* went on past midnight and the leading actor, whose wife was already grumbling about the time he'd been getting home, decided not to stop to take off his Mr Hyde make up. He was driving along, complete with fangs, claws and shaggy hair all over his face, when a police car flagged him down.

A perplexed-looking police constable put a breathalyser in his hand: 'Excuse me, sir, would you mind holding this while I blow into it?'



Growing Problem

The film director gazed in despair at his male star's ever-growing girth.

'You'll have to go on a diet or your costume won't fit by the time we're half way through shooting. If that stomach was on the leading lady I'd say she was pregnant.'

'I've got news for you, chum,' the actor grinned. 'It has been and she is.'

Faithful Friends

The actor's wife was very suspicious about his carryings-on when he was away on tour. She was forever ringing his hotel and getting no answer from his room but when she asked him where he'd been, he always had a good excuse: he had stayed overnight with good old Charlie or his mate George had put him up.

Next time it happened, she was determined to catch him out so, instead of asking him where he'd been when he was missing from the hotel, she wrote seven letters, one to each of the buddies who might have put him up, asking, 'Did Terry spend the night of Wednesday, 12 February with you?' Seven letters came back, each saying 'Yes'.

Crowd Scene

The director was in despair over the group of toga-clad robots who were supposed to be playing ancient Romans in the crowd scenes in *Julius Caesar*, so he gave them a pep talk about acting naturally, behaving just as they would in any crowded street. Next night the production came to a hilarious halt when one of the extras turned towards the wings, calling loudly 'Taxi!'

In the Script

Lord Grade tells a story of the time he gave a newspaper interview about his coming production of *Jesus of Nazareth*. The reporter, trying to catch him out, asked if he could name all twelve disciples.

'Peter, Paul, Mark and Luke,' said Lord Grade briskly. 'I haven't finished reading the script so I can't tell you the rest.'

Good Laugh

Lady Diana Cooper, who was playing the Virgin Mary in a sober religious drama, met Noel Coward, whose frothy comedy had just opened.

'I saw your play,' she told him. 'But I didn't laugh once.'

'Didn't you darling? I saw yours and simply roared.'

Accurate Forecast

The TV weather man was up in court yet again for being drunk and disorderly. The judge fined him £200 but warned that it was his last chance. One more lapse and he'd go to prison.

'Here is the forecast,' intoned the judge. 'Fine today – cooler tomorrow.'

Underestimate

One of the most unsuccessful plays of all time must have been *Half Way to Hell*, which opened in the West End in 1926 and closed half way through because the audience had all walked out. James Agate wrote: 'The author of *Half Way to Hell* underestimates the distance.'

**THE
SPECIAL
OCCASION**



Howlers at special occasions are more rare, mainly because special occasions are more rare, otherwise they wouldn't be special, would they? Nevertheless, they can be extremely embarrassing because such occasions should often be Beautiful, or Dignified, or Heart Warming.

For instance, I was chosen on three occasions to be Best Man at a wedding. (If I was the Best, can you imagine the worst!) Suffice it to say, that on each occasion it was touch and go whether or not divorce proceedings started, even before the end of the wedding reception; and I'm not just talking about the bride and groom – their relatives as well.

Still, I meant well – as did the following.

P.S. Have you guessed yet what this book has to do with cookery? No? Never mind, carry on reading.

Night to Remember

When the secretary found out that it was her boss's birthday and he had no one to help him celebrate, she decided to make it an extra special day.

'If you come round to my flat at about ten o'clock, we'll have a lovely party,' she promised.

He arrived promptly and his secretary, looking very sexy in a clingy dress, gave him a drink and asked him to relax for a few minutes, while she attended to a few things in the next room.

After ten minutes she called, 'Ready now. You can come in.'

He opened the door and stood stock still in amazement – there were all his staff, champagne glasses raised, breaking into 'Happy birthday to you'.

He felt a bit of a fool, wearing nothing but his socks.

Animal Origins

Two well-known ladies of the theatre, our own Irene Vanburgh and the American Ruth Draper, met head on at a first night, both dressed to kill. Ruth Draper glared at Irene Vanburgh's full-length kid gloves.

'Skin of a beast,' she remarked disapprovingly.

Vanburgh enquired what she was wearing and was told, 'Silk, of course.'

'Entrails of a worm,' sniffed Vanburgh.

Special Reduction

When the great Irish tenor of the 1930s, John McCormack, was asked to sing at a New York society reception that sounded more than usually dreary, he thought he could get out of it by asking for the exorbitant fee of \$2,000. To his horror, the hostess agreed without wincing but told him haughtily:

'Please remember that I don't allow the entertainers to mingle with my guests.'

'Oh well, in that case my fee will only be \$1,000,' said the relieved McCormack.

Good Laugh

It was one of those upper-crust weddings where they lay out all the presents in rows so that they can show up the meanies. In pride of place was a handsome cheque from the bride's father and the guests were a bit taken aback when one man picked up the cheque, read the amount, then doubled up with laughter.

The bride's new mother-in-law looked down a very long nose: 'Who is that horrid little man?'

'Daddy's bank manager,' replied the bride in a small voice.



Hands Off!

Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, was a great hit in Australia when she made a state visit, with another member of the royal family. Everywhere they went they were mobbed by great beefy Australians, all wanting a closer look. At a garden party, when the enthusiastic guests were pressing closer and closer, the Queen Mother was heard to mutter sweetly:

'Please don't touch the exhibits.'



At Home

George Bernard Shaw didn't suffer face-aching hostesses gladly. One of London's leading socialites sent him a card saying: 'Lady X will be at home on 21 April.'

Shaw returned it with an even briefer message: 'So will G.B. Shaw.'

Run of the Mill

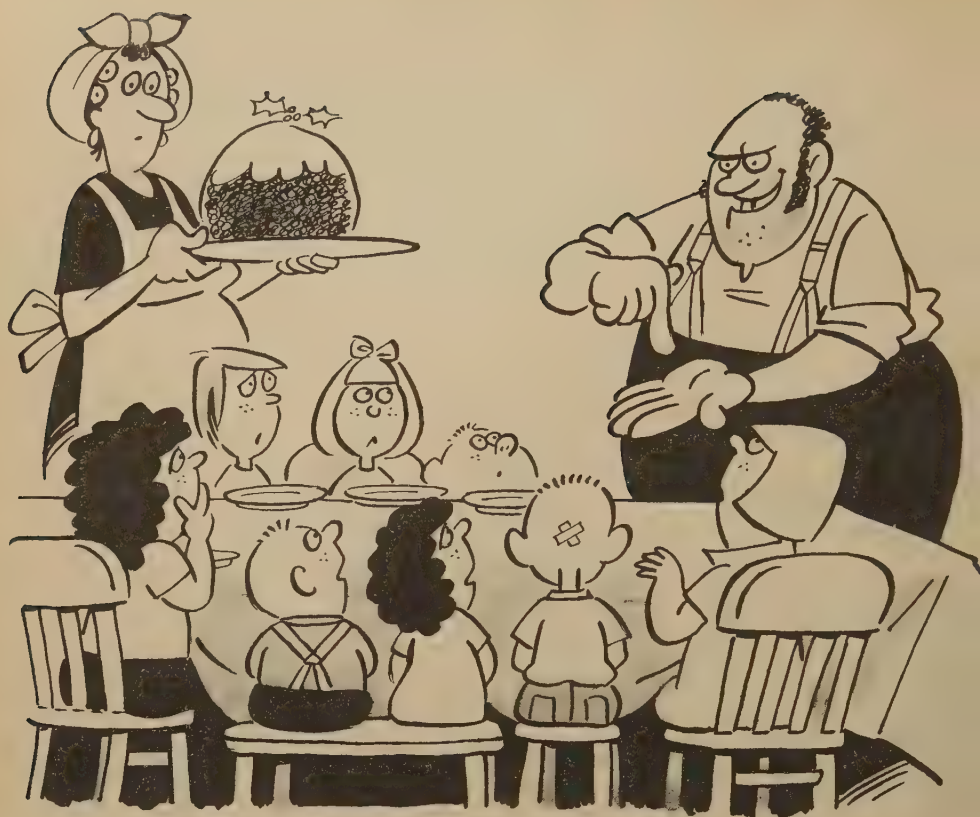
King George IV invited one of the Labour Party's cabinet ministers to a sumptuous dinner at Buckingham Palace, served by liveried footman from silver salvers. When the brandy was served, he offered round the cigars. 'No thank you, your Majesty,' said the politician politely. 'I only smoke on special occasions.'

Dead Ringer

It was the firm's annual 'do' and the booze was flowing freely. One of the director's wives was horrified when a drunk came up behind her and blew in her ear. Realizing his mistake, he apologized immediately: 'I thought you were my wifel'

'Thank heavens I'm not married to a disgusting, drunken lout like you,' she told him sharply.

'Good grief,' exclaimed the drunk. 'You *sound* just like her too.'



Stretching the Budget

The father of a family of eight hit on a sure-fire way of cutting Christmas costs. When the puny chicken arrived on the festive dinner table he offered 20p to every child who went without chicken. They didn't get their hands on 20p apiece very often, so they all chose the money instead of the chicken, thinking that they'd much rather fill up on plum pudding anyway. Mum and Dad munched their way through plates piled high with chicken and by the time the pudding came the children were all starving, so just the sight of it steaming away had them all drooling.

'Now,' said Dad. 'Who wants 20p worth of pudding?'

Old Haunt

A wife whose husband was forever working late at the office got thoroughly fed up with sitting alone every night. When her birthday came round she put her foot down and insisted they went to the best nightclub in town.

'Hello Bert!' said the commissioner as he held the door open for them.

Suspicious, the wife asked her husband if he'd been to the club before.

'Oh no, no – when would I have time for nightclubs, working all hours the way I do?' he reassured her. 'That's the commissioner from the office, just earning a bit extra in his spare time.'

'Hello Bert,' said the hat-check girl.

'Just one of the secretaries doing a bit of moonlighting,' he explained.

But when the stripper from the cabaret walked past saying, 'Hello, Bert,' the wife stormed out in a rage and flagged down a taxi.

'I could just about believe the stories about the commissioner and the hat-check girl,' she berated him. 'But when it comes to the stripper being one of the telephonists – *no!* Definitely *no!*'

The taxi driver turned round and said: 'Blimey, that's a tough one you've got tonight, Bert.'



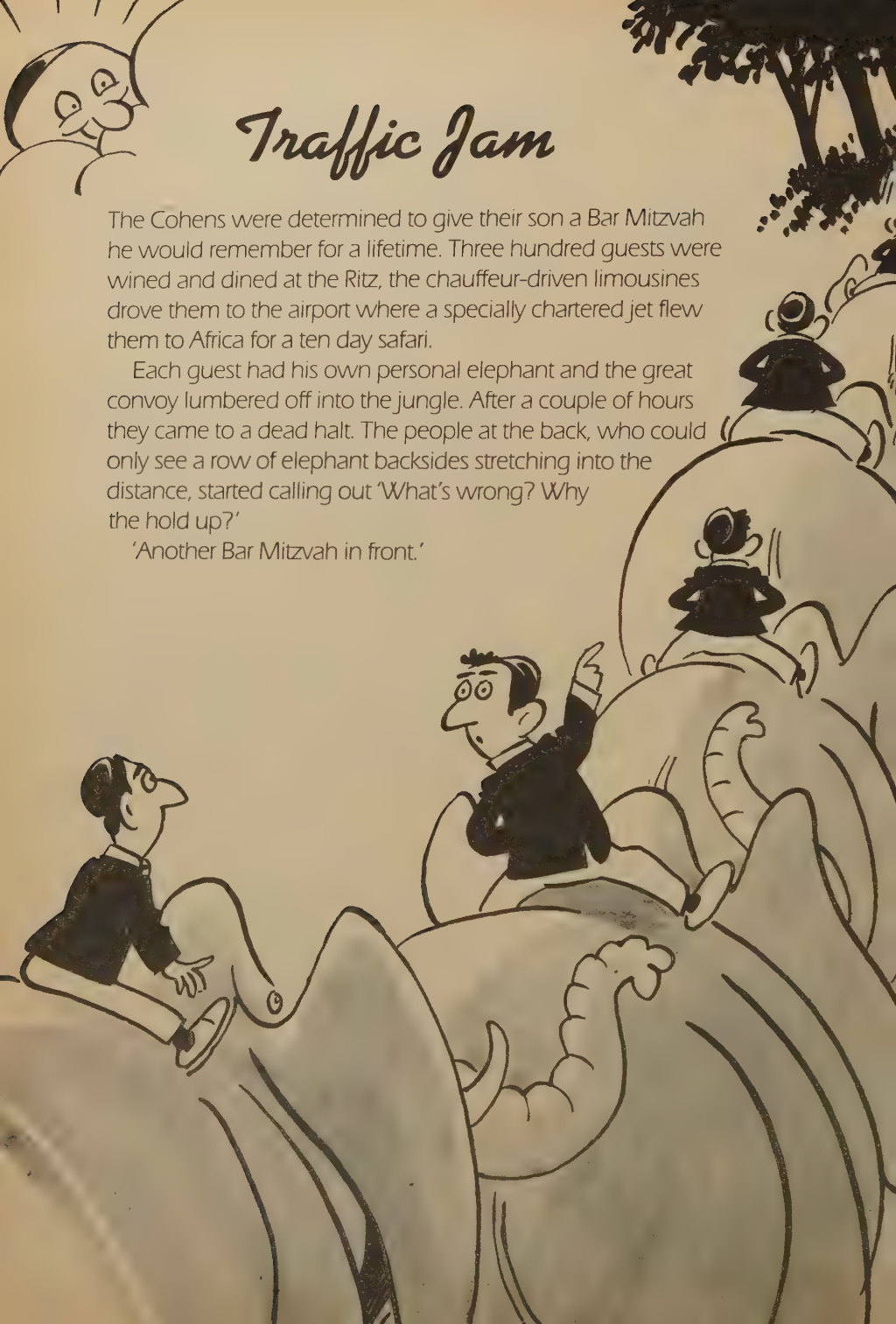


Traffic Jam

The Cohens were determined to give their son a Bar Mitzvah he would remember for a lifetime. Three hundred guests were wined and dined at the Ritz, the chauffeur-driven limousines drove them to the airport where a specially chartered jet flew them to Africa for a ten day safari.

Each guest had his own personal elephant and the great convoy lumbered off into the jungle. After a couple of hours they came to a dead halt. The people at the back, who could only see a row of elephant backsides stretching into the distance, started calling out 'What's wrong? Why the hold up?'

'Another Bar Mitzvah in front.'



No Love Lost

The usher stood at the church door, showing the guests to their places. A jolly, beery crowd settled themselves on the groom's side of the church. Behind them came a lady with a flowery hat and a jaw set stiff in disapproval.

'Er – are you a friend of the groom?' asked the usher hesitantly.

'I am *not*,' snapped the po-faced woman. 'I'm the bride's mother.'

Change Partners

Hollywood actresses seem to change husbands the way the rest of us change socks. One complained that her son had stayed away from school so often to attend her weddings that he was listed as a habitual truant. Then there was the star who put in for a divorce from her fourth husband saying: 'He wasn't the kind of husband I'm accustomed to.'

You can't help feeling sorry for the men. When reporters asked Brigitte Bardot's third husband how he viewed his coming marriage he said plaintively:

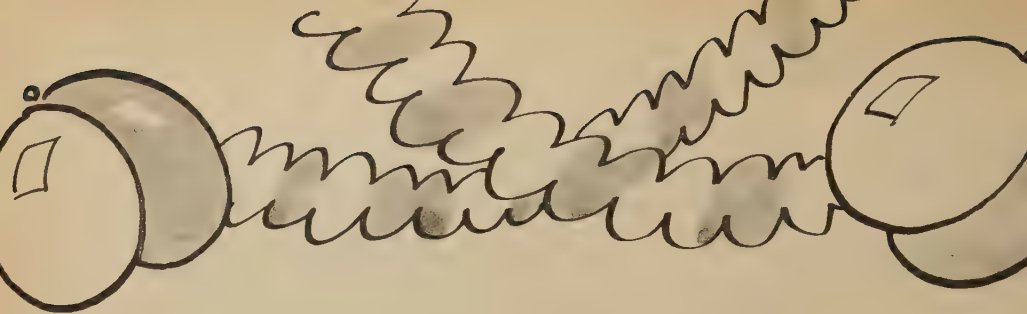
'I know what I'm supposed to do, but it's a question of how to make it more interesting.'

My Mistake

A member of a trade delegation to Buenos Aires was invited to a formal reception and ball at the ambassador's residence. Drink flowed freely and by the time the dancing started he was well under the weather. But he was determined to mingle and do his bit for international understanding so he made his unsteady way towards a striking creature in a long purple gown.

'May I have the pleasure of this waltz?' he asked.

'There are three good reasons why I must refuse,' came the answer in impeccably polite English. 'Firstly, you are drunk. Secondly, this is not a waltz, it is the national anthem. Thirdly, I am the Cardinal Archbishop.'



Christmas Box

A local radio station rang the British ambassador in Washington, a few days before Christmas.

'What would you like for Christmas, Mr Ambassador?'

'Oh, I couldn't possibly . . . ' the ambassador demurred.

'It's all right, sir, we're asking all the foreign ambassadors the same thing.'

The ambassador was touched and said he would like a small box of after-dinner mints. The next morning he turned on the radio to hear:

'We asked three visiting ambassadors what they would like for Christmas. The German ambassador said he would like to see a greater understanding of the plight of the developing countries. The French ambassador said he would like to see a permanent end to all wars and peace on earth. The British ambassador said he would like a small box of after-dinner mints.'



Quite a Score

His wife was in hospital, about to produce their first child and the test match was at a crucial stage. As far as he was concerned, the two events just about rated equal. While he paced the hospital corridor he held his little transistor to his ear, listening to the commentary. His mother-in-law came hurrying

in, anxiously demanding the latest news and he announced excitedly:

'Six are out already and the last one's a duck.'

ERNITY



Never Satisfied

It was the grandest charity ball the city had ever seen: everyone who was anyone was there, top international stars were flown in for the cabaret and the dancing went on until 4 a.m. As a wealthy society lady, wrapped in mink and dripping diamonds, stood on the hotel steps waiting for James to bring the Rolls, a poor old tramp hobbled up to her, his feet wrapped in newspaper.

'Can you spare a few pence for a starving man?' he asked feebly.

'Are you people never satisfied?' she exclaimed in disgust. 'I've been dancing my feet off for hours for your benefit and you *still* want more.'

Related

When Queen Victoria celebrated her Golden Jubilee it was such a great event that visiting royalty came from all over the world. Among them was a queen from the Hawaiian islands who showed great interest in everything about the English royal family. She told the astonished Queen Victoria that they were blood relatives.

'My grandfather ate your Captain Cook,' she explained.

Social Gaffe

Have you ever ended up with egg on your face when you've said the wrong thing at a party? Prime Minister Disraeli's wife, Lady Beaconsfield, did it all the time. At one society party she heard a group of people discussing the wit of Dean Swift.

'Who is this Dean Swift?' she asked her hostess. 'Perhaps I could ask him to my next party.'

'Hardly,' replied her hostess. 'Some years ago he did something which meant that he could never appear in society again.'

Scenting a juicy scandal, Lady Beaconsfield pressed for details: 'Goodness, whatever did he do?'

'He died,' came the answer.

Christmas Spirit

Some of these rich folks think the world revolves round them. One pampered old trout gorged herself on Christmas pud, turkey and mince pies until she felt quite poorly, then summoned the doctor late Christmas night. It was nearly two hours before he got home, fighting his way through the blizzard. He told his wife that he had summoned the old lady's priest, her lawyer and all her close relatives.

'Oh dear,' his wife was all sympathy. 'Is she that bad?'

'No,' said the doctor. 'But I didn't see why I should be the only one whose Christmas was ruined.'

A Trouble Shared

The office bore buttonholed the receptionist at the annual staff party and told her all his troubles at excruciating length.

'Talking to you has really done me good,' he said at last. 'I had a terrible headache when I came in and now it's completely gone.'

'No it hasn't,' she told him. 'I've got it.'

Up the Aristocracy

If you're going to go in for the society hostess lark, you've got to do it right; put the wrong people in the wrong seats and the evening's in ruins. So a hostess who was entertaining the Aga Khan, plus an assortment of home-grown aristocracy, wrote to Debrett's for guidance. They wrote back saying:

'The Aga Khan is believed by his millions of followers to be a direct descendant of God. An English duke takes precedence.'

Nothing to Say

A father rose unwillingly to make a speech at the wedding hastily arranged to cover his daughter's embarrassment.

'I feel I should be saying a few kind words about -er- Tony, but I'm like the unhappy dog in a street full of lamp-posts: short of material and not a leg to stand on.'

Expensive Package

A disconsolate father sat watching as his daughter tried on one wedding dress after another, each one more expensive than the last.

'I don't mind giving her away,' he muttered to his wife. 'But do I have to gift wrap her as well.'

No Small Talk

T.E. Lawrence, of Arabia fame, had little time for party chit-chat. At a cocktail party in Cairo his heart sank as a middle-aged matron known for 'collecting' celebrities bore down on him, twittering merrily about the weather.

'Ninety-two today, Colonel Lawrence! Just imagine, ninety-two today.'

'Many happy returns, Madam,' growled Lawrence.

THE PROFESSIONS



There are so many professions that one could go on forever quoting Howlers made. The following are some of the better ones – or the worst, whichever way you want to look.

Professional Matter



A vicar, a doctor and a lawyer were sitting in a leaky lifeboat after their ship went down and they knew they would sink if they didn't lighten the load. So they drew lots to choose who should dive overboard and swim for it, hoping he hit land before the sharks got him. The lawyer lost and over he went. Suddenly there were sharks fins as far as the eye could see but instead of dividing him up for dinner, the sharks lined up on either side of him as a protective escort. The vicar thought it was a miracle, the doctor thought it was just professional courtesy.



Medical Know-How

I had a neighbour who believed in do-it-yourself medicine. He was forever reading medical books and the more he read, the more illnesses he thought he had. He died last week, killed by a misprint.

I believe in going to the doctor when there's anything wrong with me. Last time I went I told him I was exhausted from lack of sleep. Night after night I'd wake up laughing at something. He cured me: told me to wear pyjamas.

Night Howler

The residents of Snooty Villas got together to complain about a ginger tom whose love life was keeping everyone awake at night, so the owner took him along to the vet and had him neutered. They were horrified to find that it made not a bit of difference. He was still out there every night, yowling away at the top of his lungs. When they formed a lynch mob and went after him, they found all the young toms of the neighbourhood gathered round him in the back yard.

It only goes to show that if you can't do the job you can always become a consultant.

Special Plea

A bright young barrister was defending a client with a record as long as your arm. She was blonde and shapely but she was the biggest swindler out and on all the evidence, it looked as though she would go to prison for years. When his turn came to sum up, her barrister addressed the all-male jury: 'It's up to you, members of the jury. Is this warm, friendly woman going to spend the next five years in a cell with only women for company or is she going back to her comfortable flat at 53 Acacia Avenue, telephone number 362 0524?'

Long Distance

When a middle aged man went to the doctor complaining that his love life wasn't what it used to be, the doctor told him to cut out cigarettes, cut down on beer and take up jogging – just ten minutes the first day, building up gradually to an hour a day.

'Give me a ring in about three weeks to let me know how it's going,' he said jovially. 'By then you should feel a new man.'

Three weeks later he had a phone call from the patient.

'I did just what you said, doctor. I haven't smoked a cigarette since I saw you, I don't have more than half a pint a night and I run for an hour every morning. I feel so much better, it's amazing.

'How's your love life now?' asked the doctor.

'I don't know about that. I'm 150 miles from home!'

Slow Torture

I go to this posh dentist in the West End – all aquariums and classical music to drown the screams. There's one thing you can say about his charges – they keep your mind off the pain.

'You're never going to charge me ten pounds to pull a tooth out,' I said to him. 'It only takes you twenty seconds.'

'For you, I'll make a special deal,' he said. 'I'll pull it very, very slowly.'

No Expert

The trendy vicar was asked to give a talk at the local girls' school about the Christian attitude to sex, as part of their sex education programme. Knowing his wife wasn't so trendy about such things, he told her he was giving them a talk on sailing. When the headmistress met the vicar's wife a few days later she was full of praise.

'The girls enjoyed his talk very much and he handled their questions so well.'

'Well, I am surprised,' said the vicar's wife. 'I didn't know he knew anything about it. As far as I know he's only done it twice. The first time he was sick and the second time his hat blew off, so he decided not to bother again.'

Quick Cure

In the 1920s there was a well-known doctor called Dennis Kirby who found the perfect cure for uncontrollable chatter. A woman patient was babbling on and on about her symptoms, going into every detail of her inner workings, while he tried vainly to get a word in edgewise. Finally he thundered 'Madam! Put your tongue out.' Obediently she stuck out her tongue. 'Now keep it there until I've finished talking,' he told her.



Cut Short

The bishop, whose long-winded sermons were dreaded far and wide, announced his intention of visiting a country parish the following Sunday.

'I shall talk on the milk of human kindness,' he told the vicar.

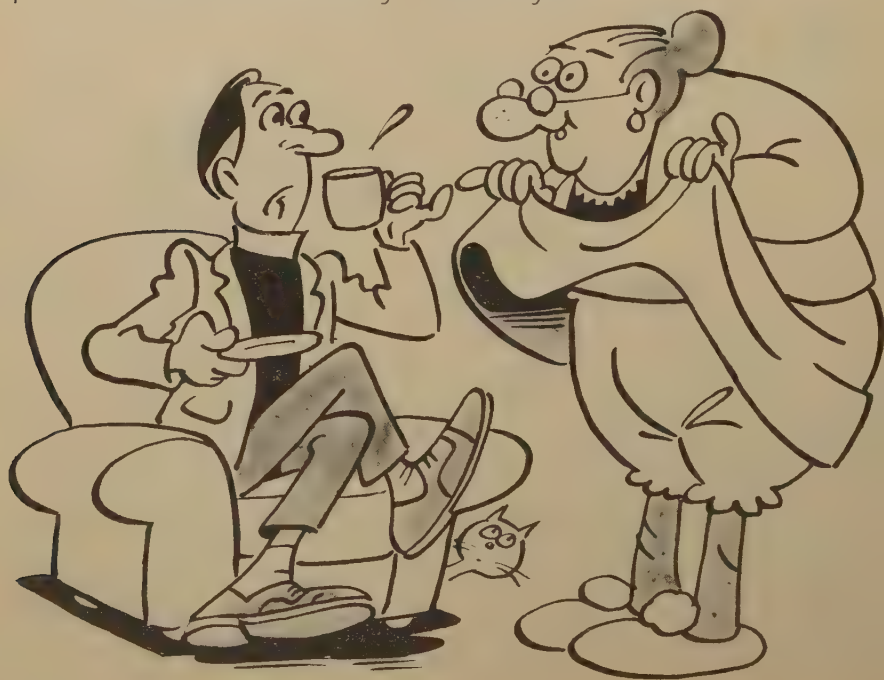
'Condensed, I hope?' sighed the vicar.

Chilly Reception

We had a new curate in our parish last autumn but the poor lad was so shy with women that he could never think of anything to say to them. The vicar thought he'd break him in gently by sending him round visiting the old folk. At the first house an elderly lady welcomed him in and gave him tea and he sat there, nibbling his fairy cake and tweaking the antimacassars, desperately trying to think of a suitable remark.

'Er – winter draws on then, Mrs – ' he blurted out at last.

'As a matter of fact I put them on this morning,' snapped his appalled parishioner. 'But I don't see it's any business of yours.'



Caught Out

On a visit to Ireland, Henry Ford I promised a donation of \$5,000 to a new Dublin hospital. Next day, the newspaper headlines announced 'Ford promises \$50,000 for new hospital'. One of the civic dignitaries rang, full of apologies but pointing out, ever so tactfully, that correcting the mistake would give a rather unfortunate impression.

Knowing a con when he saw one, Henry Ford forked out the \$50,000 but suggested a suitable plaque for the new hospital doorway: *I was a stranger and ye took me in.*

Stiff Climb

The woman next door fell over in the street and hurt her leg. The doctor strapped it up and warned her that it was going to take quite a long time to heal.

'Get as much rest as possible,' he told her. 'And, whatever you do, avoid going up and down stairs.'

Last week she went back and he took the strapping off and told her that she could get back to normal. What a relief! She was making an awful racket scrambling up and down the drain pipe.

Health Hazard

A young naturist went to teach in a comprehensive school and every lunch hour she nipped up on to the roof to sunbathe in the nude. At the end of her first week the headmaster called her into his study and gave her the sack.

'You're a threat to the children's health and morals,' he told her.

'But the roof's out of bounds to pupils, so no one can possibly see me – and as for a health threat, I've never heard anything so ridiculous!' she protested.

'I've got news for you,' said the headmaster. 'You've been lying on the skylight over the dining hall and the boys haven't eaten for a week.'

Fleeced

There was a man awaiting trial for fraud and all the evidence seemed stacked against him.

'I'm determined to prove my innocence,' he told his lawyer. 'Never mind the cost, I've got £30,000 put away.'

'Don't worry,' said the lawyer. 'You won't go to prison with that amount of money.'

He didn't. By the time he got there he was broke.

First Claim

A surgeon, a lawyer and a politician were arguing over which profession was the oldest. The surgeon reckoned he had the best claim because when God made Eve for Adam's rib, he must have carried out a surgical operation. The lawyer argued that before Adam and Eve arrived on earth, God had to make order out of chaos and that needed a legal mind. But the politician won hands down.

'Someone had to make the chaos in the first place!' he pointed out.

Accident Prone

The sister in the casualty ward was taking details from a patient who had been brought in with a huge bump on his head, a badly burned behind and two broken legs.

'Well you see, sister,' he explained. 'I was having a quiet read and a smoke in the smallest room and when I threw my fag-end down the loo, not knowing that the wife had tipped turps down the bowl in mistake for bleach, there was a tremendous bang, I rocketed up in the air and banged my head on the ceiling. That's how I got the bump and the burned behind.'

'And you broke your legs when you hit the ground?' prompted the sister.

'Oh no, that was later. I was telling the ambulance men what had happened as they carried me out on the stretcher. They laughed so much they dropped the stretcher and I fell from top to bottom of the stairs.'

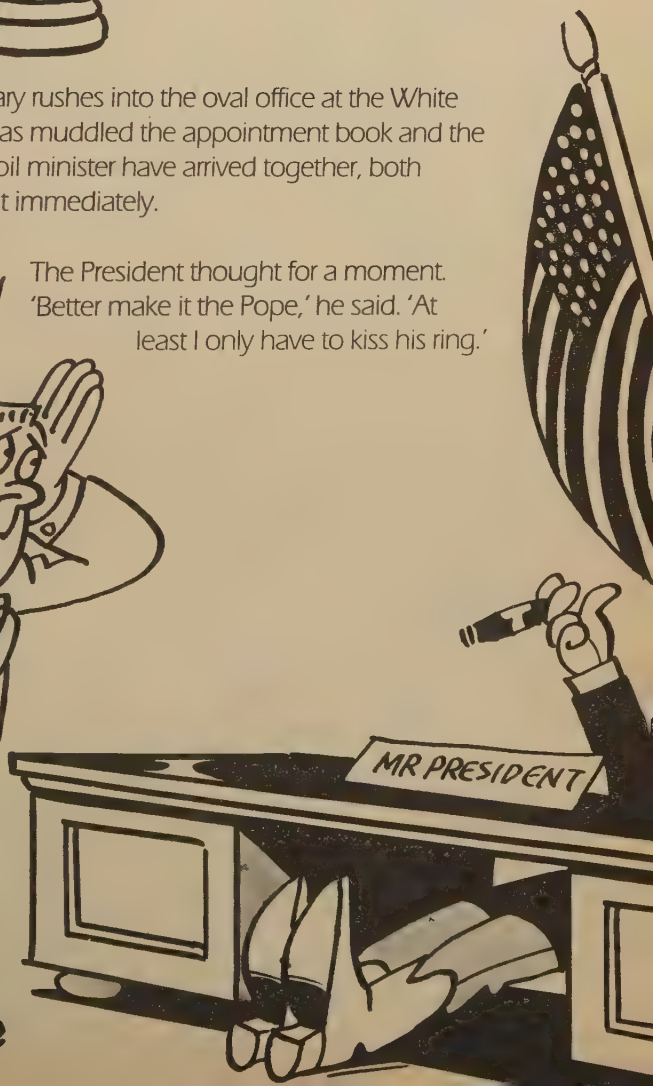


Due Respect

The President's private secretary rushes into the oval office at the White House in a terrible state, he has muddled the appointment book and the Pope and the Saudi Arabian oil minister have arrived together, both expecting to see the President immediately.

'Who shall I let in first?'

The President thought for a moment.
'Better make it the Pope,' he said. 'At least I only have to kiss his ring.'





Interrupted

When my next door neighbour put out her milk bottles last night, she found a dog and a bitch locked together on her doorstep, having a whale of a time. She shouted and shooed but they were well away and they didn't take a scrap of notice. She went for a broom and tried to sweep them off the step but she couldn't budge them. Next she threw a bucket of water over them but they were still having too much fun to care. So she rang the vet.

'I've tried everything. I've shouted, I've hammered them with a broom, I've doused them in cold water but nothing works,' she told him.

'Have you told them they're wanted on the telephone?' asked the vet.

'Well no,' the woman was astonished.

'Will that stop them?'

I don't know, but it certainly stopped me!

Prime of Life

Sociologists are those people who get grants of our money to do great research projects which end up telling us what we knew all along. One of them announced the other day that he'd proved that a man does his best work at fifty. You can bet he's the same one who, ten years ago, proved that a man does his best work at forty.

Any Empties

I found a little boy crying outside the undertakers. Poor little fellow, I thought, there must have been a death in the family. So I patted him soothingly on the head and asked him to tell Uncle Frank all about it.

'That nasty man gave me a clip round the ear!' he wailed, pointing to the undertaker in the doorway.

'And that's not all he'll get if he comes here asking for empty boxes again!' said the undertaker.

Vet Visit

'My dog bit my wife so I took it straight to the vet.'
'Did you have it put to sleep?'
'Good Lord, no. I had its teeth sharpened.'

In the House

Two Russians came to Britain on a trade mission and wanted to get an idea of all sides of British life, but the day they were due to visit the House of Commons and a lunatic asylum, their interpreter fell ill. They decided to go ahead with their programme as best they could but, not speaking a word of English, they were soon thoroughly confused.

They sat for an hour watching in wonderment while on the Commons poor members shouted, boo-ed and cat-called and waved their order papers. Then a bell rang and everyone made for the lobbies.

'Ah, now I understand,' said one to the other. 'One of the inmates has escaped.'

Repeat Performance

We must have the laziest vicar in the world at our church. He uses the same sermon, word for word, two Sundays running. There's only one difference: the second Sunday he takes his teeth out.

Pay Up

At a party, a doctor was cornered by a woman who wanted to ask his advice about twinges in her back. No sooner had he escaped than another woman pinned him against the wall with a long tale of woe about her sinuses. By this time he was thoroughly fed up.

'What do you think I ought to do?' he asked a solicitor friend.

'Send each of them a bill,' said the solicitor promptly. 'That will teach them not to try to get free professional advice at a party.'

'Good idea. I'll do it tomorrow,' said the doctor.

Next day, when he arrived at the surgery, he found a bill on the mat: *Ten pounds for legal services.*

Reverse Truth

A keen young journalist who prided himself on writing nothing but the complete truth began a detailed article about the goings on behind the scenes on the local council beginning 'half the councillors are crooks.' The editor hauled him in, gave him a lecture on the libel laws and told him he would have to rewrite it. The journalist thought long and hard, then wrote, 'half the councillors are *not* crooks.'

Only Polite

A Birmingham nurse got the sack for spitting at the matron. But she appealed to the Industrial Tribunal and told them it was all a misunderstanding. What she had done was all in the cause of good manners: she had been removing her chewing gum before speaking to a superior.

Great Event

A bossy mother dragged her protesting teenage daughter off to the doctor, who had to break the news that the girl was pregnant.

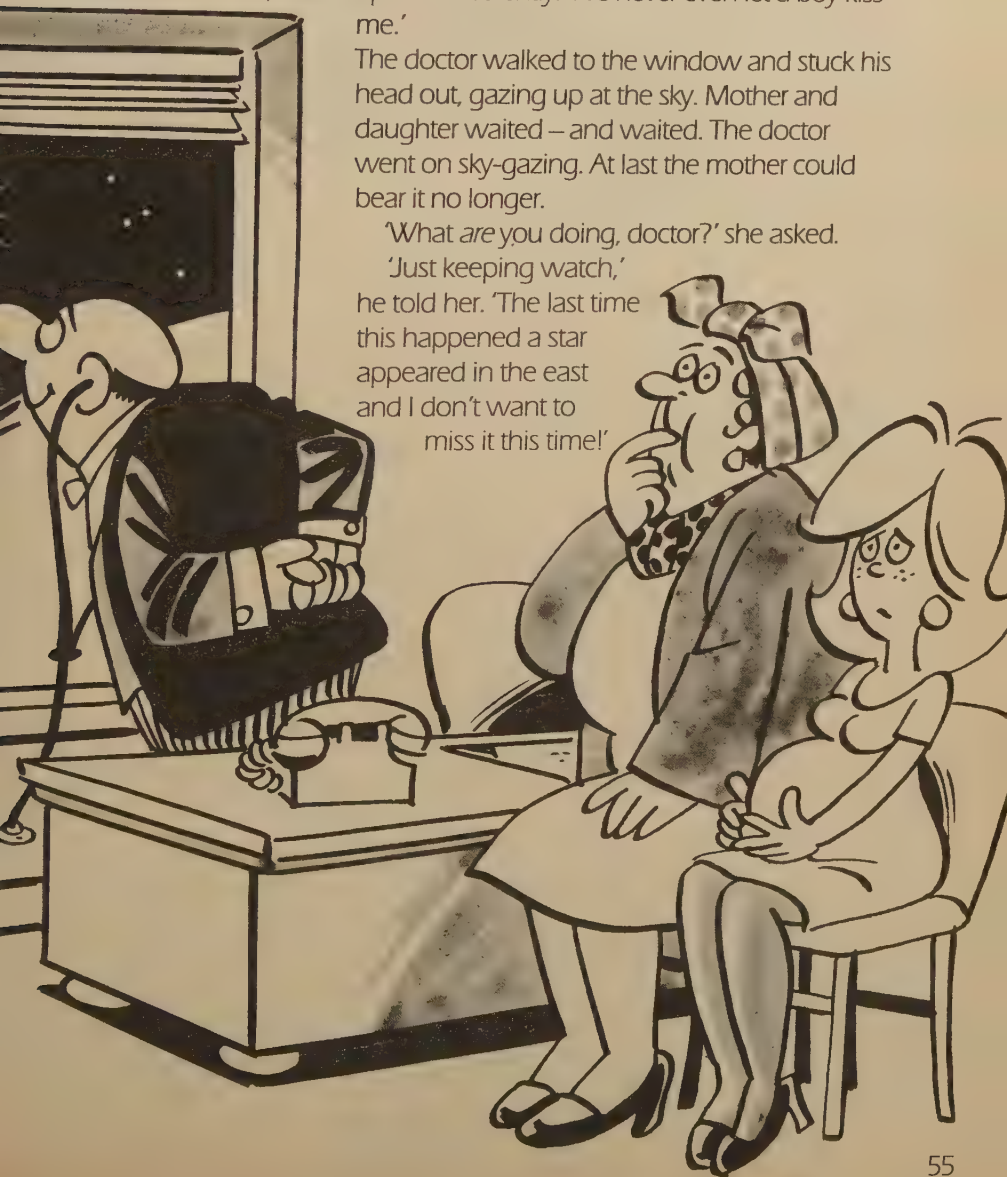
'That's nonsense, doctor. You don't know my little girl,' she told him angrily. 'She would never let a boy go too far, would you Daphne?'

'No, mother never,' said Daphne obediently. 'I've never even let a boy kiss me.'

The doctor walked to the window and stuck his head out, gazing up at the sky. Mother and daughter waited – and waited. The doctor went on sky-gazing. At last the mother could bear it no longer.

'What are you doing, doctor?' she asked.

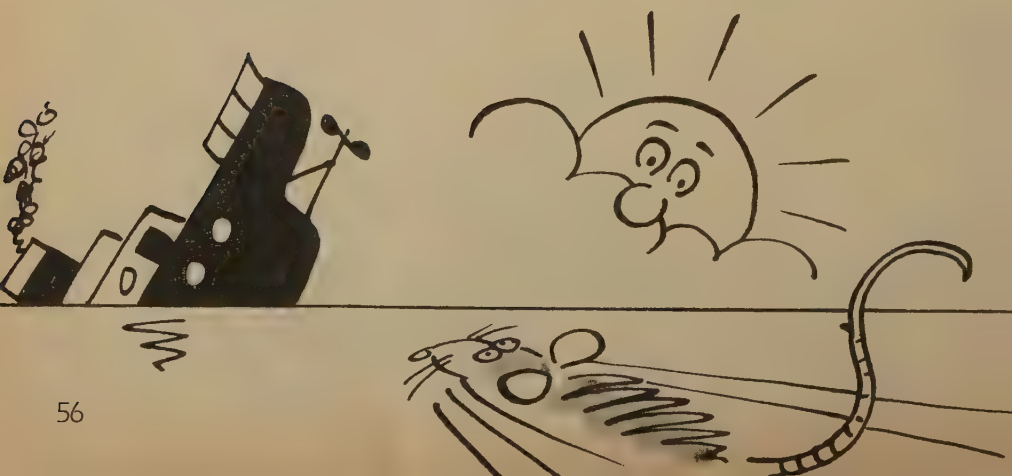
'Just keeping watch,' he told her. 'The last time this happened a star appeared in the east and I don't want to miss it this time!'





Deserter

MPs can be a troublesome lot but Winston Churchill always managed to keep them where he wanted them. When one of his backbenchers took a dislike to a government bill and crossed the floor of the Commons to sit with the Opposition, he growled: 'Gentlemen, this is the first time I have seen a rat swimming *toward* a sinking ship.'



Thoughts of Mao

Chairman Mao's little pearls of wisdom were always something to treasure so when the British foreign secretary visited China he took the opportunity to chat over dinner about all the important world events of the past few years, and how the course of history might have been changed if things had gone differently.

'I wonder,' mused the foreign secretary, 'what would have happened if it had been Krushchev, not Kennedy, who was assassinated.'

Mao pondered for a few minutes. 'I don't think Aristotle Onassis would have married Mrs Krushchev,' he concluded.

Easy Money

A man went to a Harley Street psychiatrist but he was so shy that he couldn't bring himself to talk about his problems. Week after week he turned up, and lay on the couch for an hour while the psychiatrist waited patiently, anxious not to force him before he was ready. At the end of each hour he paid over his £30 and left, still without speaking. At the end of two months, he said:

'I want to ask you something, doctor.'

The psychiatrist, thinking that here was the great break-through at last, told him:

'I want you to feel free to ask me anything that comes into your head.'

'Do you want a partner?' asked the patient.

Short-Sighted

An elderly spinster, ill in bed, was delighted when the bedroom door opened and her niece ushered in what she thought was the vicar, even though without her glasses he was just a blur.

'Wasn't it nice of the vicar to come round?' she asked her niece afterwards.

'That wasn't the vicar, that was the doctor,' her niece told her.

'Oh dear,' said the spinster, disappointed. 'I thought the dear vicar was rather familiar.'

Problem Solved

The secretary came into the MP's office and found him leaning back in his chair, staring out of the window. She left a pile of letters for him to sign and came back an hour later. The letters were still untouched and the MP was still gazing down the street.

'You know, I can now see exactly why the country is in an economic mess,' he said. 'I've been watching those work men sitting round a hole in the road and they haven't done a stroke of work for a whole hour!'

Special Deal

The shop steward in the car factory had spent all his life campaigning for the rights of the workers; he could negotiate his way out of anything. When he fell ill and the specialist told him he had only a week to live, he couldn't believe it.

'Surely you can do better for me than that?' he protested.

'Well, seeing it's you, we'll make it a five day week,' said the specialist.

Last Check

Every morning the vicar saw the teacher cross himself as he passed the church on his way to school which was odd because, after many an argument, he knew that the teacher was a devout atheist. One day his curiosity got the better of him and he asked the teacher if it was a habit left over from childhood.

'I've never crossed myself in my life,' the teacher told him. 'But just before I get to school I always say to myself: "You've got your handkerchief, you've got your wallet, your tie's straight and thank goodness your flies are zipped".'

Sin Shocks

A woman went into the confessional and was just about to begin when she heard a stranger's voice on the other side of the curtain.

'You're not Father Flynn!' she exclaimed.

'No love, I'm the carpenter, come to mend the floorboards.'

'Where's Father Flynn, then?'

'I don't know but if he's been hearing the sort of hair-raising stories I've heard in here this morning, I should think he's gone for the police.'

Camera Case

In the middle of an assault case, the judge decided that to protect the reputation of the young lady involved, he should hear the rest of the evidence in camera. As the court cleared, the prisoner protested suspiciously:

'I don't understand what all this camera business is about!'

The judge said frostily: 'I understand what it means, learned counsel understand what it means and the jury understands what it means. All you have to do is go on with your evidence.'

'Like I was saying, there we were, all alone in her flat so I thought I was in with a bit of a chance . . . 'A bit of a chance?' The judge looked pained.

'And what might that mean?'

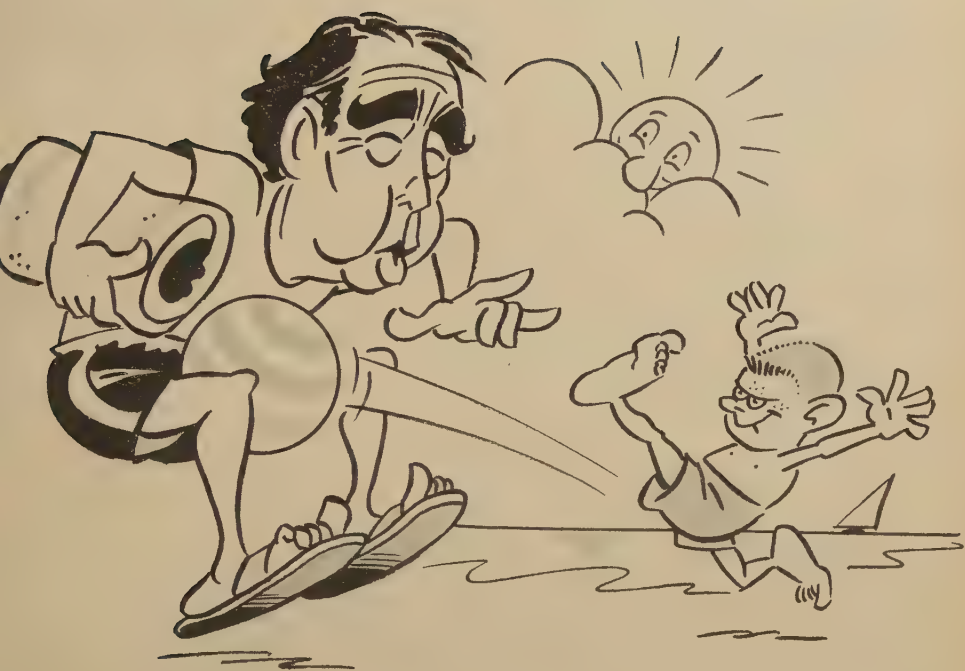
'Well your honour, I know what it means, learned counsel know what it means, the jury knows what it means – and if you'd been there with your perishing camera, you'd know what it means!'

Snap Diagnosis

'This patient limps because one of his legs is shorter than the other,' the consultant told his new intake of medical students. 'Now you, Smith, what would you do in a case like this?'

All alert, Smith replied: 'Oh, I guess I'd limp too!'

SPORT



It is an extraordinary thing how many people (mostly men) are obsessed with *balls*. They kick them, poke them with long sticks, hit them with rackets, pat them, punch them – and so on and so forth. Almost anything that can be done to balls is done – while the rest of us sit and watch.

Poor balls! They get no respite, even on holiday. No – they are never allowed a minute's peace on the beach to sunbathe like the rest of us. Therefore, it will come as no surprise to you that most of the stories you are now about to read concern these much abused objects.

Expert Tip

As the golfer arrived at the clubhouse after his usual lengthy round, the professional asked him if it was his ball that had sailed over the hedge at the eleventh tee.

'That's right,' agreed the golfer. 'I couldn't be bothered to go and search for it.'

'Well, that ball landed on the head of a horse grazing in the field and the horse bolted into the road; a car coming round the corner swerved across the road and hit the side of a bus, which overturned. Twenty-three people were taken to hospital, the car was a write-off and the horse had to be destroyed.'

'But that's terrible! Whatever shall I do?'

'Just what I've been telling you to do all along. Hold your right hand nearer the top of the shaft.'

Reading the Signs

One well-known cricketer sometimes played right-handed, sometimes left and he seemed to do as well either way. When one of his team mates asked him how he decided which way he was going to play that day, he explained.

'If my wife is lying on her right side when I wake up in the morning, I bat right-handed. If she's lying on her left side, I bat left-handed.'

'But what if she's lying on her back?'

'Then I ring up the captain and say I'll be an hour late.'

Quick Innings

Sir Leary Constantine had a favourite after-dinner story of his cricketing days. He was just going out to bat in an important match at the Oval when he heard a team mate answering a call meant for him.

'Well I can't catch him now, he's just going in to bat. Why don't you hang on for a minute until he gets back?'



Cheers!

Comedian Vic Oliver vowed that his racehorse trained on regular shots of whisky, rum and brandy. He might not have been the best horse in the race but he was certainly the happiest.



Rough Game

A patient limped into the doctor's surgery, obviously in great pain.

'Take a look at my shins, would you, doctor? They're in such a state I can hardly walk.'

'Good lord,' said the doctor, examining the cuts and bruises. 'It looks as though someone's kicked you black and blue. It must have been quite a game. What was it, soccer or rugby?'

'Bridge.'



Never a Winner

No matter what the race, Albert always had a tip for it and no matter what the result, Albert was always wrong. Then came the day when Albert's horse came within a nose of winning, only to stumble a few yards from the post. It was all too much for old Albert and he dropped dead in the middle of the betting shop. His body was taken to the mortuary and his closest friend, Bill, was summoned to identify him. The mortuary assistant was new and he'd got his drawers in a muddle, so Bill was shown one body, then another and another, but none of them was Albert.

'Just like the silly old fool,' said George fondly. 'Never in the first three.'

Cricketing Butlers

Cricket has always been a game enjoyed by the nobs and many a great man had his butler in attendance at the pavilion. The Duke of Arundel's dignified butler Meadows was pressed into service as umpire in one match, when the Duke's team was playing the Sussex Martlets. The Duke was having a good innings until he tripped while making a run and went feet over face in the middle of the pitch, so that he was easily beaten by a return to the wicket keeper.

'How's that?' roared the fielders.

Everyone looked at Meadows, wondering if he would be able to bring himself to give his master out. Meadows drew himself up to his full height, stared impassively in front of him and announced:

'His Grace is not in.'

When former England cricketer Sir Aubrey Smith played matches in later life, his man Hetherington was always ready on the side-lines. In the middle of one match, when he fumbled an easy catch, he called the butler to bring his spectacles, which Hetherington duly bore on to the pitch on a silver salver. All play was suspended while he presented them to his master with a correct little bow. Sir Aubrey put them on his nose, signalled for play to start again – and missed the next catch completely.

'You idiot, Hetherington!' he shouted angrily. 'These are my *reading* glasses!'

Good Deal

An old regular arrived at the clubhouse one day with a brand new set of golf clubs.

'Got them for the wife,' he told his friend at the bar.

'Really? By Jove, you got a good bargain there!'

No Threat

A girl reporter sent to interview boxer Terry Downes was determined to show that she had just as good a grasp of the sport as her male colleagues.

'Tell me,' she said. 'When you're out there in the ring and you're trying to keep one step ahead of your opponent all the time, do you watch his eyes or his gloves?'

'His gloves every time,' Downes told her. 'I've never been hit by an eye in me life!'

Double Bluff

The boss and his pretty secretary had been working late so the least he could do was ask her out to dinner and drive her home afterwards, then the least she could do was ask him in for a nightcap. One thing led to another and the next thing he knew it was morning and he was waking up starkers next to his starkers secretary. In a panic he leapt out of bed, scrambled into his crumpled clothes and told his secretary to sprinkle whisky on his lapels and dust him down with some billiard chalk he happened to have about him.

When he got home his wife was waiting for him, face like thunder.

'And just exactly where do you think you've been?'

'Well darling, I have to tell you the truth. I took my secretary home and spent the night with her.'

'How could you tell me such a pack of lies when it's obvious that you've been out playing snooker with those disgusting friends of yours again.'



Scratched

A police car flagged down a horse-box which had been bombing down the M4, overtaking everything in its path.

'Sorry officer, but I'm terribly late for the race meeting,' the driver explained.

The constable decided that he had better take a look at the horse, to make sure it had suffered no ill effects from its headlong journey. When he opened the box he found that it was empty.

Unabashed, the driver told him: 'Someone has to carry the non-runners.'



Friday Fixture



George and Jim lived for football. They both played for the local team, they watched every match on television and argued endlessly over every kick and every goal. One day they got to discussing whether or not there would be football teams in heaven.

'Bound to be,' George said. 'It wouldn't be heaven without football.'

Next Saturday, George ran full-pelt across the road because he was afraid he was late for the kick-off and he was run over by a bus. Jim thought this was his big chance to find out about football and heaven, so he went to a medium and asked her to contact his old pal.

'Is it good news or bad news from up there, George?' he asked.

'Well, there's good news and bad news,' his friend answered. 'The good news is that there's a great team up here, real first division stuff – well-fitting boots, a pitch that never gets muddy, fantastic choir singing "Abide with me", the lot. The bad news is, you're down to play next Friday.'



Previous Engagement

It was the Rugby Union final and the ground was packed. In the whole stadium there was only one seat empty. Dai Thomas had put his coat and sandwiches on it. A man from the row behind tapped him on the shoulder.

'Why the empty seat? My brother tried everything to get a seat here today and they were all sold out weeks ago.'

'That's the wife's seat,' Dai told him.

'What's the matter, is she poorly?'

'More than poorly. She died last week.'

'Oh dear, I'm very sorry to hear it. But surely one of your friends could have come with you?'

'No. They're all at the wife's funeral today.'

Two of a Kind

Every other ball ended up in a bunker. The caddie was fumbling about, never able to find the right club.

'You must be the worst caddie in the world,' exploded the exasperated golfer.

'No way,' said the caddie. 'That would be too much of a coincidence.'

Make Believe

There was a golfer who never missed his weekly round, though he never hit a golf ball in his life. He went solemnly round the course, with his caddie carrying his imaginary bag of clubs. At each hole, the caddie would make great play of selecting the right iron and handing it to the golfer, who then made his stroke with great care. A new member, who had never seen this strange performance before, stood amazed.

'What on earth is going on?' he asked the caddie.

'Ssh!' the caddie hushed him. 'This is the best round he's had in ages.'

'But he's got no clubs, no ball, nothing. It's pointless, pretending to play like that.'

'I know that and you know that but don't tell him. He hasn't got a car either but he pays me £5 a week to clean it.'

Two to Go

The English cricket team were touring the Middle East when they were entertained to a banquet by a wealthy sheikh who spent most of the evening talking about his many wives.

'There are 198 beautiful, voluptuous women in my harem and I manage to satisfy them all,' he bragged.

'Only two more and you're entitled to a new ball,' muttered the captain.

Weak Spot

Fred Trueman was batting for Yorkshire with a cricketer who was strong on bowling, weak on batting. As the first ball rocketed towards him, Fred's team mate went to hit it on the leg-side, only to see it flying past on the off-side.

'I think this fellow's found my weakness, Fred,' he said unhappily.

The second ball zoomed past the leg stump as he hit out to the off-side.

'Looks like he's found both of 'em now,' said Trueman heavily.

No Win

Every Saturday, the priest and his elderly parishioner played a round of golf but however well the priest played, his parishioner always managed to beat him.

'Never mind, father,' said the parishioner comfortingly. 'Priests always win in the end. You'll be burying me one of these days.'

'Even then,' said the priest gloomily, 'it will be your hole.'



Namesake

It was one of those football matches where there's far more action on the terraces than on the pitch. It started with pushing and scuffling but soon it was full-scale war with beer bottles flying as rival team supporters tried to pulverize one another. The only thing that stopped the home supporters from stringing up the visitors by their own striped scarves was a thin blue line of policemen. But there was one weakness in the line: a young constable who ducked every time a bottle came near him.

'You're a disgrace to the force, weaving about like a ballerina,' a constable from another station jeered at him. 'Look at it this way – if a bottle's got your name on it, that's your lot.'

'That's just the trouble,' the lad told him. 'My name's Worthington.'



No Miracles

The vicar was a keen member of the local tennis club but his sermons were a lot better than his service so he lost every match he played. Most people were far too polite to comment on yet another defeat, except for one pushy young man who had been throwing his weight about ever since he joined, set on convincing everyone that he was a terrific player.

'No miracles today, vicar?' he called as the vicar came off court after being beaten 6-0, 6-0, 6-0, as usual.

'I can't work miracles,' replied the vicar pleasantly. 'But if your parents come along to church some time I can marry them.'

Ouch!

Freddie tended to forget everything when he was with his cronies at the tennis club but he was under strict orders from his mother to be back promptly to welcome the guests for her cocktail party. He forgot, in his hasty scramble to change at the club, that he had stuffed two tennis balls into his pockets. It was only when one of the guests, a rather fanciable young lady, kept giving him odd looks that he realized his mistake.

'Oh, er – those are just my tennis balls,' he explained, red-faced.

'Ooh dear,' said the girl sympathetically. 'I bet that's far more painful than tennis elbow!'

Difference of Opinion

Our local newspaper reported the heated skirmishes that broke out at the Boxing Day meet, ruined by hunt saboteurs who kidnapped the fox and spooked the horses. In the end Sir Edwin Uffington-Jones was so enraged that he laid about one of the saboteurs with his whip and the poor man was taken off to hospital, pouring blood. A reporter asked the Master of the Hunt for his view of the goings-on.

'Whipping a saboteur is just like wife-beating,' he remarked.

'They are both private matters between two people with strong views on the same subject.'

Beginner's Mistake

An up-and-coming young man was told that he should join a golf club to meet the right people. So, though he knew nothing about the game, he paid his membership fee, went along and hired a set of clubs from the club shop. Ten minutes later he was back, banging his bag of clubs on the counter in fury.

'You charged me £5 to hire these clubs and I've been robbed!'

'Is there anything wrong with them, sir?'

'Well, just look at them. They're not even all the same length!'

No Bet

The world snooker champion was getting in a bit of routine practice at a northern club where he was playing an exhibition match when one of the members challenged him to a game for £25. It was no contest: the champ cleared the table, maximum break. The other fellow shelled out £25.

'Right, now let's get down to some serious stuff. This time I'll bet £50 that you can't beat me again.'

Same thing again the champ cleared the table and collected his £50. The other fellow wasn't discouraged.

'Let's make it £100 this time,' he suggested.

'Ah no, I don't think I'd want to risk that much,' the champ shook his head. 'I mean, I haven't seen you play yet.'

Safe Place

The golfer took a swing at the ball, missed completely and his club ploughed into the turf. He took another swing: a divot of turf went flying off down the course but the ball stayed where it was. He tried again and another divot of turf flew up. Said one ant to another:

'We'd better get back on the ball quickly before he kills us.'

Umpire's Decision

W.G. Grace, batting one day in a high wind, refused to believe that the crafty bowler had managed to send a ball past him and flick the bails off the wicket.

'Very windy today, umpire,' he said hopefully.

'Very windy indeed,' agreed the umpire. 'Careful it doesn't blow off your cap on the way back to the pavilion.'

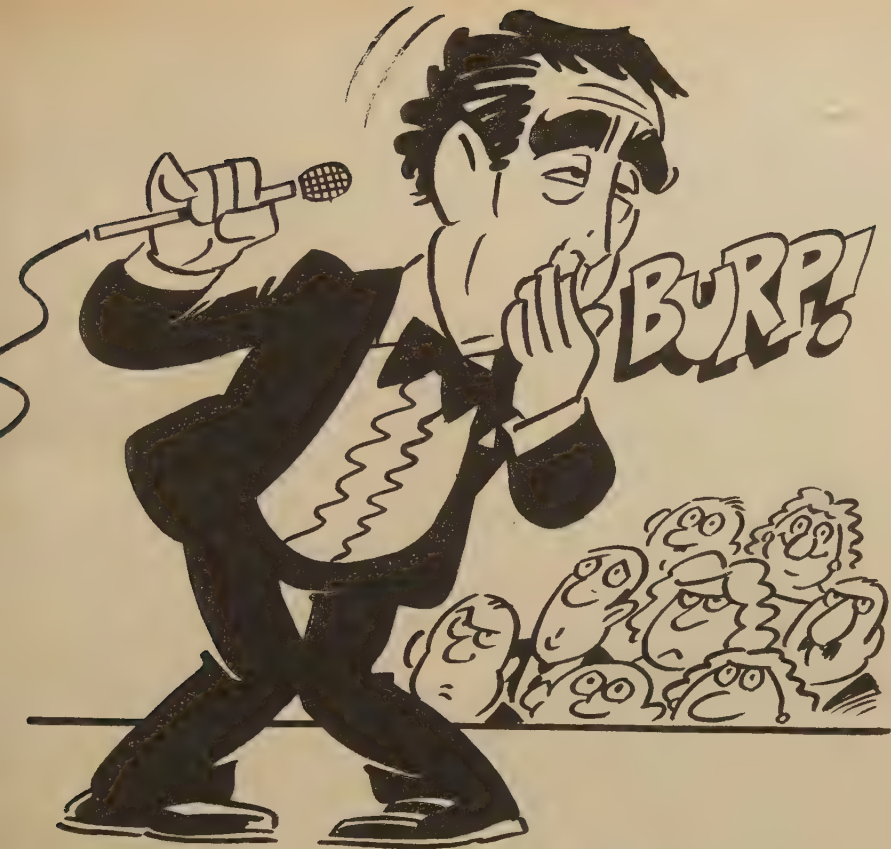
Quick Quotes

Sports stars are always coming out with quick quips that any scriptwriter would be proud of. Golfer Lee Trevino always produces a clever quote. As he got ready for a particularly delicate shot, he promised it would land 'like a butterfly with sore feet' and when he was told that his opponent was only 27-years-old he exclaimed: 'I've got socks older than you and they're still in perfect working condition.'

Soccer manager Tommy Docherty reckoned that a lot of players were so nolly-coddled that they thought manual labour was the Spanish president.

Star footballer George Best, in his heyday, was always a bit too fond of a good time and he always had a cheeky answer to good advice: 'People say I shouldn't be burning the candle at both ends. Maybe *they* haven't got a big enough candle.'

**FOOD
AND
DRINK**



Of course, in this category, Howlers are often made, not *about* food and drink, but because of them.

I remember Billy Cotton, the famous band leader, telling me he would never employ musicians who drank heavily. As he said, 'Their minds tell them they are playing *one* thing, but their instruments tell us they are *not*.'

As far as we actors are concerned, it is much safer to drink *after* a performance, otherwise our speeches can be interrupted by strange noises. Please read on.

P.S. Have you *still* not guessed what this book has to do with cookery? No? Never mind, don't get disheartened – it won't be too long now!

Bad Example

Late one Saturday night, Jones was tottering home on rubbery legs, wondering what his wife was going to have to say this time, when a dirty old tramp accosted him:

'Can you spare a quid for a meal, guv'nor? I haven't had a hot meal for three days.'

Jones wasn't born yesterday and he didn't believe a word of it, but he was in a generous mood.

'Never mind about food, I'll give you a pound to have a drink on me.'

'No, no, I've never been a drinker. I just want a good meal.'

Jones was amazed. 'Well then, I'll give you a pound to buy yourself some cigarettes.'

'Very kind of you, guv'nor, but I gave up smoking twenty years ago.'

Jones was filled with pity for such a miserable existence.

'Look,' he said. 'Take a fiver and find yourself a woman.'

The tramp shook his head. 'I'm not bothered about women; I'd rather have a good feed any day.'

'Right. I'll give you £10 if you come home with me.'

'Ten quid. What for?' asked the tramp suspiciously.

'I want my wife to see what happens to a man who doesn't drink, smoke or chase women.'

Waiter, Waiter!

There's nothing all that funny about either waiters or soup, but put them together and the jokes go on for ever.

'Waiter, what on earth is this stuff?'

'It's bean soup, sir.'

'I don't care what it's been, I want to know what it is.'

'Waiter, I can't possibly eat this soup.'

'But sir, we are famous for our soup. International stars, cabinet ministers and even princes come here specially to eat it.'

'Well, do you give *them* a spoon?'

'Waiter, this soup isn't fit to feed to pigs.'

'I'm so sorry, sir. I'll bring you some that is.'

Welcome Snack

When the great Cyril Smith was taken ill, his doctor told him he was killing himself with his teeth and the only way to get back to health was to go on a strict diet. His secretary had a whip-round at the office and sent a huge bouquet of flowers. Cyril replied with a telegram: 'Many thanks for the flowers. They were delicious.'



Pill-Picking

The fat man came home from the doctor's surgery with a huge bottle of pills.

'Goodness!' said his wife. 'How many do you take at a time?'

'I don't have to take any of them,' he explained. 'The doctor told me to spill them all over the floor three times a day and pick them up one at a time.'



Squelch

When you're mixing with the toffee-nose set, you have to know how to hold your own. Lord Birkenhead once sat next to one of those ever-so-county snobs at a formal dinner.

'I'm Mrs Porter-Porter – with a hyphen.'

'Really? I'm Mr Whisky-Whisky, with a syphon.'

Sniff, Sniff!

Mince was served up in the works canteen. The workers sniffed it and sent it back, saying it was off. The canteen supervisor sniffed it and said that it was perfectly good. The works manager was called in as arbitrator; he sniffed it and said it seemed all right to him. The medical officer was summoned. He sniffed it and said there was nothing wrong with it. Then they threw the lot in the bin. Too many people had sniffed it.

Morning After

Seeing the late Winston Churchill a bit the worse for wear after a dinner, outspoken Liverpool MP Bessie Braddock announced disapprovingly:

'Winston, you're drunk.'

'Bessie, you're ugly,' came the answer, quick as a flash. 'But tomorrow, I shall be sober.'

Habitual Drunk

They say marriage is a lucky dip and it's certainly true that you don't know what you've got until it's in daily use at home. Take the bride who walked out on her husband after only six weeks.

'I can't stay with him a minute longer. It's his terrible drinking,' she confided to a friend.

'But why did you marry him if he drinks so much?' asked the friend.

'I didn't know he drank until one night he came home sober!'

Playing Truant

The son pushed away the breakfast his mother had cooked for him and announced that nothing would make him go to school any more. When she pressed for a reason, he told her:

'I'll give you three good reasons. The boys hate me, the masters hate me and what's more the food they give us isn't fit for pigs.'

'But there are two better reasons for going,' his mother pointed out reasonably. 'You are 49-years-old and you are the headmaster.'

Big Impression

The next customer was a nervous young man who asked for a brace of pheasants. When the butcher told him that pheasants were out of season, he asked for a hare.

'We don't get much call for hare,' the butcher explained patiently. 'But we've got some excellent home-made pork pies.'

'Well, I want to impress my girlfriend when she comes to supper. Do you really think pork pie would do instead of hare or pheasant?' the young man asked doubtfully.

'No question. Our pies are unbeatable.'

The next day the customer came back, full of angry indignation.

'That pork pie of yours lost me my girlfriend!'

'We've never had any complaints before. What was the problem?'

'She wouldn't believe I shot it!'

Repeat Order

A businessman goes down to breakfast in a five-star hotel – one of those places where the waiters are trained to make you feel inferior. He asks the waiter to bring him soggy cornflakes, watery scrambled eggs, burnt toast and stewed tea. The waiter looked down his long, thin nose.

'That's impossible, sir. We don't provide that type of food in this establishment.'

'Why not? You did yesterday.'

Pay Up

Joseph Kennedy, father of the late President Kennedy, walked into a club in Wall Street, New York's financial district, and ordered a double bourbon.

He lifted his glass. 'When Kennedy drinks, everyone drinks.'

All the other men at the bar ordered double bourbons, murmuring appreciation. Kennedy drained his glass, took out two dollars and slapped them on the table.

'When Kennedy pays,' he announced, 'everyone pays.'



Tall Story

HMCUS



Gilhooley was on his way home from a visit to Lourdes when the customs officer asked him to open his suitcase and found it packed tight with bottles.

'Sure, that's a year's supply of Lourdes water for me poor rheumatics,' said Gilhooley.

Suspicious, the customs officer uncorked one bottle and sniffed it. Then he did the same with another bottle and another.

'Water, my eye. That's whisky!' he snapped.

Gilhooley dropped to his knees and raised his eyes skywards.

'Saints be praised, a blessed miracle!' he exclaimed.

The Lion's Share

A missionary in darkest Africa went for a walk in the jungle and lost his way. Suddenly – horrors – he found himself face to face with a lion. The missionary closed his eyes to say a last prayer and when he opened them again he was amazed to find the lion with his eyes closed and his paws clasped together.

'Thank heavens,' he exclaimed in relief. 'A God-fearing lion!'

'Quiet,' roared the lion, 'while I'm saying grace.'

Unable to Oblige

It was the middle of winter but there were punnets of fresh strawberries in the window of the high-class fruiterers. Tempted, a customer asked the price.

'Three pounds a punnet, sir!' the assistant told him.

'Good grief, that's robbery. You know what you can do with them, don't you?'

With unfailing politeness the assistant replied: 'I'd like to oblige you, sir, but I'm just dealing with the previous customer's complaint about the price of a pineapple!'

Not Responsible

The defendant's counsel had made a moving plea for his client who was charged with smashing up the saloon bar of the local pub. His wife had left him, he had lost his job and the building society was about to repossess his house. The jury found him guilty just the same.

The judge looked down at the prisoner in the dock and said sorrowfully:

'Young man, it is drink and drink alone that is responsible for your personal problems and for your appearance here today.'

The prisoner brightened up immediately.

'Oh thank you very much, your honour! Everyone else says it's all my own fault.'

Good Customer

A drunken customer was still fast asleep with his head resting between the gorgonzola and the cream crackers when the early morning cleaning staff arrived to sweep the restaurant.

'What a cheek – you want to throw him out,' one of them told the proprietor.

'Do you think I'm daft?' he retorted. 'Every time I wake him up he pays his bill.'

Crossed Wires

Shirley found Mabel with her mouth full of doughnut in the Cosy Corner tearshop.

'Guess, what!' she confided. 'I'm having an affair.'

'Really? Who's doing the catering?'

Eager Customer

The pub landlord was jolted out of sleep when his phone rang in the middle of the night.

'Wha time duzza pub open?' a drunken voice asked.

'Are you mad,' he growled. 'Walking me up to ask something like that?' and slammed down the phone.

He had just drifted off to sleep when it rang again and the same slurred voice asked:

'Wha time duzza ruddy pub open?'

The landlord, now wide awake was seething with rage, 'If you don't get off the phone I'll call the police,' he roared. 'If you're awake all night worrying about when you can get into a pub, you need to talk to a doctor, not a landlord.'

'I don't wanna get *in*,' replied the drunkard on the other end of the line, 'I wanna know when I can get *out*!'

Caught Out

Towards the end of the day, a customer came into the butcher's shop and inspected a three pound chicken, the only one left on the counter.

'Do you have one just a little bigger?' she asked.

'Certainly Madam,' lied the butcher. 'If you'll just wait a minute.'

He smuggled his one remaining chicken into his cold room, stuffed it with giblets wrapped in five layers of greaseproof paper, plumped it out as much as he could and took it back into the shop.

'There you are, lady!' he announced triumphantly. 'I was saving that for my dinner, but the customer always comes first.'

'Oh, thank you very much,' said the customer. 'I'll take the other chicken as well, please.'



Skewered

Doris Day, having dinner with Jimmy Durante in a Chicago restaurant, was amazed to see a waiter running through the restaurant with what looked like a blazing sword – the restaurant's speciality of shish kebab.

'What the heck is that?' she asked.

'Just a customer who only left a \$10 tip,' said Jimmy.





Sunday Snack

Tommy spent the weekend with his grandmother who took him along to the harvest festival at the local church. Granny was a bit deaf so they sat in the front pew and right in front of Tommy was a great bank of fruit and vegetables leading up to the altar. He had never been to church before so he wasn't too sure what it was all about but while Granny snoozed through the sermon, he helped himself to the nearest bunch of grapes and scoffed the lot.

'How did you like church, Tommy?' his dad asked when he got home.

'Great. I had a big bunch of grapes and just when I was wondering where to spit the pips, they passed me a plate.'

Proud Father

The vicar was invited to Sunday lunch at the farm of one of his parishioners; roast chicken and all the trimmings. Afterwards the farmer offered to show the vicar round the farm and as they stepped outside the door, a rooster strutted across their path.

'Goodness, what a proud looking fellow!' remarked the vicar.

'He's got everything to be proud about,' grinned the farmer. 'One of his sons has just entered the ministry.'

Last Offer

A Scottish restaurant owner was going out of business because his patrons were so mean: they always ordered the cheapest items on the menu, haggled over the size of the portions and never left tips. So he put up a big notice saying:

'Special closing down offer. Chicken dinners 25 p.'

The restaurant was packed with eager diners, so keen to take advantage of a cheap meal that they brought their wives, their children, their cousins and their grandparents. The owner, all smiles, dished out the dinners: a handful of dry corn to each plate.

Poor Tibby



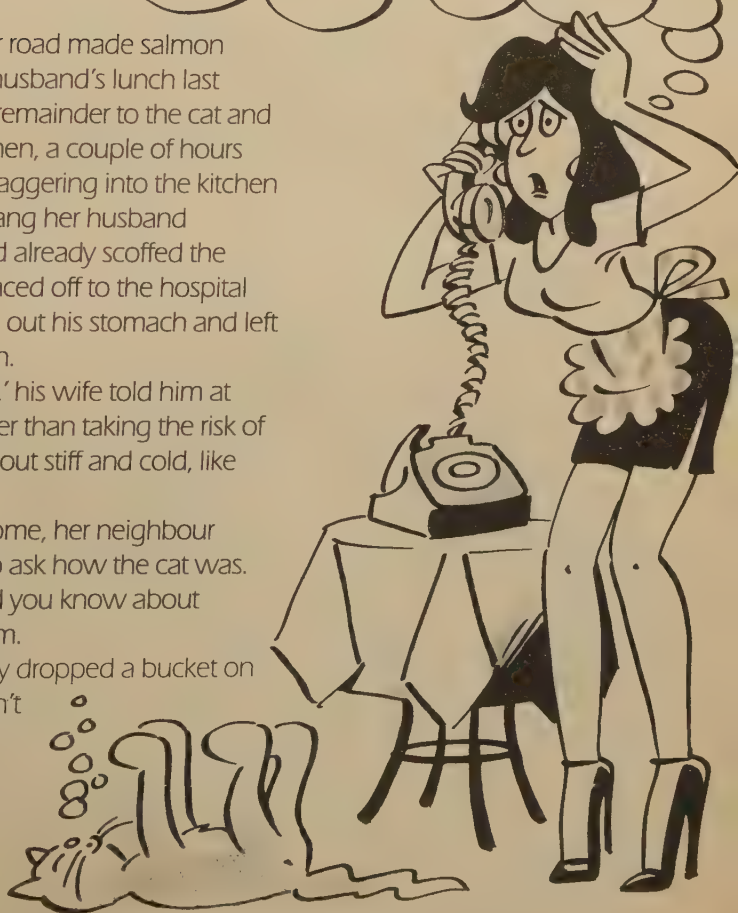
A woman down our road made salmon sandwiches for her husband's lunch last week. She gave the remainder to the cat and she was horrified when, a couple of hours later, the cat came staggering into the kitchen and collapsed. She rang her husband immediately but he'd already scoffed the sandwiches, so he raced off to the hospital where they pumped out his stomach and left him feeling like death.

'Never mind, dear,' his wife told him at visiting time. 'It's better than taking the risk of ending up stretched out stiff and cold, like poor Tibby.'

As she reached home, her neighbour came hurrying out to ask how the cat was.

'How on earth did you know about Tibby?' she asked him.

'Well, I accidentally dropped a bucket on his head and he didn't look too good afterwards,' her neighbour admitted.



Driver's Revenge

A long distance lorry driver went into a transport cafe and ordered sausage and chips and a piece of apple pie, and while he was waiting for the food he chatted to the pretty waitress. Just as his order arrived, the door crashed open and in came three great hulking motorcyclists, skulls and crossbones on their helmets and muscles bulging under their leather jackets. They overturned chairs, they shouted rude remarks at the waitress, then they noticed the lorry driver in the corner. They stood round him in a circle and the leader took a fork, speared the sausage off his plate and ate it. The second grabbed a handful of his chips and the third tucked into his apple pie. The lorry driver didn't say a word, he just got up and walked quietly out of the cafe.

'That soon got rid of him,' the leader leered at the waitress. 'Not much of a man, is he?'

'He's not much of a driver, either,' remarked the waitress. 'He's just backed his lorry over three motorcycles.'



On the Line

Two old soldiers were rolling home after a reunion dinner, well-oiled with whisky and wine. They were in no state to notice when they wandered on to a disused railway track. When they'd been going for half an hour, the man in front called over his shoulder:

'This is the longest set of steps I ever did climb. Why the devil did they build the steps so far apart?'

'It's my back that's aching,' said his friend. 'The handrail's so — low!'

Table Manners

A cannibal was teaching a little cannibal manners.

'Stop making faces at that man. How many times do I have to tell you not to play with your food!'

Special Reduction

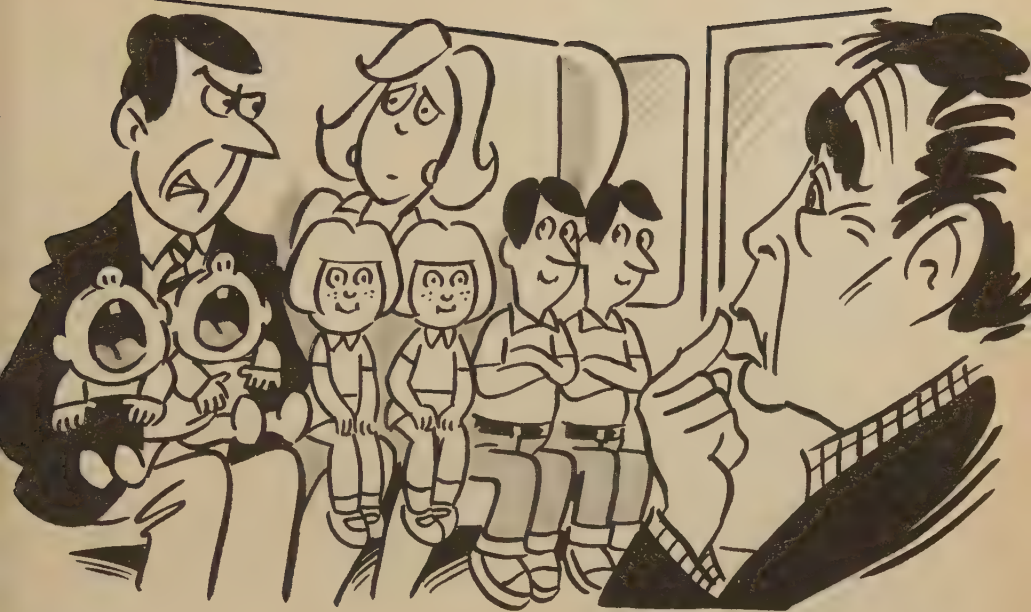
A woman asked the butcher the price of his stewing steak.

'It's £1.50 a pound today.'

'Goodness, that's expensive. They only charge £1.30 at the supermarket over the road but they've run out today.'

'Lady, if I'd run out, I'd charge £1.30.'

THE FAMILY



Within the family I find that it is children who make the most Howlers since they tend to tell the truth or speak their mind. As they get older, they usually learn to lie, better and more often. Of course we call that TACT or GOOD MANNERS, both of which are desirable. Perhaps we should also add GOOD BUSINESS, WOOLING and – oh dear, the list would take half a page.

I enjoyed one Howler last year in a railway compartment, travelling down from the north. A man and woman got in, presumably husband and wife because they brought in six children with them. Very quickly I observed they were three sets of twins. The man and woman obviously wanted to chat, so I started the conversation by asking, 'Excuse me! Do you and your husband always have twins?' And, without thinking, the woman replied, 'Oh no! Sometimes we don't get anything!' Her husband gave her such a glare that she shut up for the rest of the journey. Pity really.

If that story didn't grab you, perhaps the following will.

Under Instruction

St Peter came on duty to open up the gates of heaven one morning. One gate had a notice saying: 'All men who were henpecked by their wives in their lifetime, queue here.' As usual, the line of men stretched away in the distance. At the other gate, under the notice 'All men who were not henpecked by their wives, queue here,' stood one mild-looking little man.

'I must congratulate you,' St Peter told him. 'We don't get many husbands waiting at this gate. You'll have to tell me your secret.'

The little man looked perplexed. 'Oh, you'll have to ask the wife about that,' he said. 'She told me to stand here.'

Unwelcome Guest

Nigel and Samantha hadn't been married long when Samantha's mother came to stay. The first week Nigel was considerate, the second he was polite and by the third he was desperate. Samantha came home from shopping one morning and found her mother standing in a bowl of water with her finger in the light socket. Nigel was just reaching for the light switch.

'What on earth are you doing?' she shrieked in alarm.

'Nigel is such a darling, he's worked out a new cure for my rheumatism,' her mother told her.

New Insight

Two spinsters, Tilly and Trudy, lived together with their cat Wellington. They both doted on Wellington, never going to bed before he was safely shut in the warm kitchen for the night. Then, out of the blue, Tilly met Arthur at pottery classes, fell in love and married. She promised to write from her secret honeymoon hotel and tell Trudy what married life was like. Three days after the wedding, Trudy received a postcard with a five word message:

'Let Wellington stay out tonight.'

Don't Despair

The wife couldn't understand why her husband was in a deep depression.

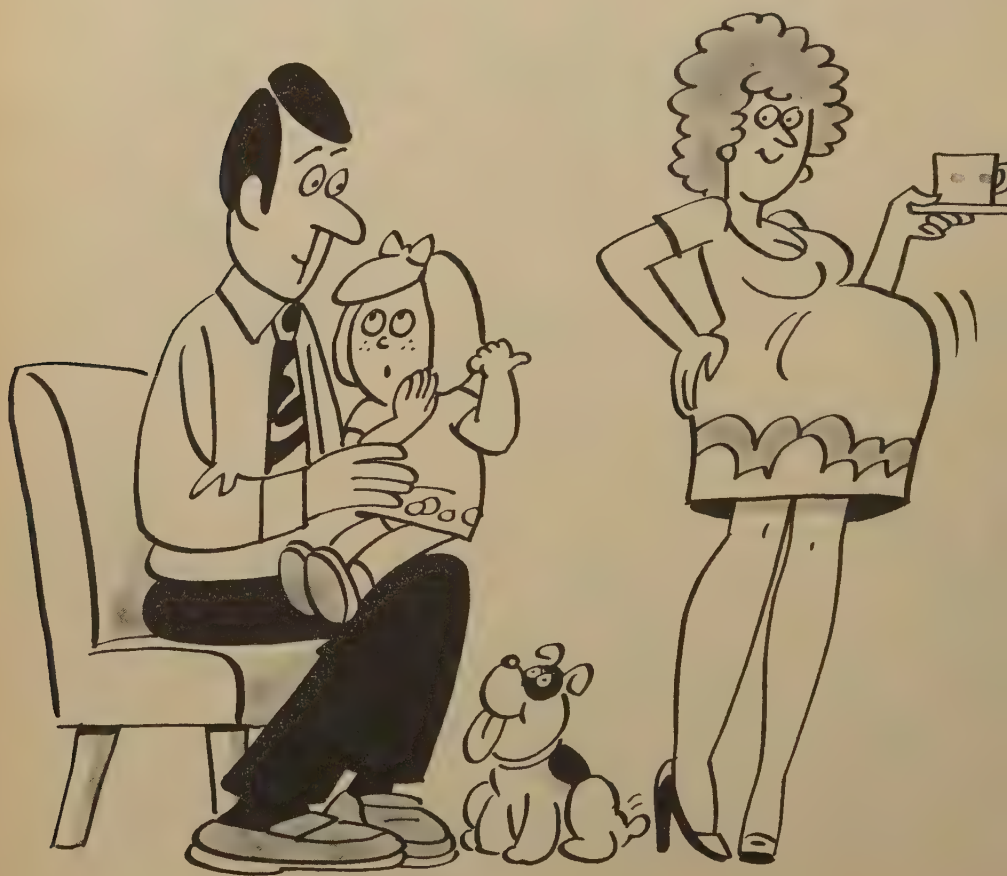
'What do you mean you've got nothing to live for? The house isn't paid for, the car isn't paid for, the deep freeze isn't paid for ... !'



Unwelcome Visit

When a young couple found they were expecting their second child they gave a lot of thought to the most tactful way of explaining the situation to their five-year-old daughter, who was far too young to understand the facts of life. So the father took her on his knee and told her that he had asked the stork to come down the chimney and visit Mummy.

His daughter listened wide-eyed, then she said anxiously: 'I don't think you ought to frighten her like that when she's pregnant!'



Generous Gesture

A young girl was about to take the veil and was confessing all the sins of her life before she entered the convent.

'I was greedy and vain; I loved everything materialistic. I had a flashy sports car, fashionable clothes, expensive jewellery and perfumes but when I saw that they were only dragging me down to hellfire, I gave them all to my sister.'

World Tour

A young man from Scunthorpe went hitch-hiking round the world in search of adventure. He wasn't much of a letter-writer but every now and then his mother received a postcard from some exotic spot. The first was from the Arctic saying that he had shot a polar bear which had attacked the camp. The second was from Polynesia, saying that he had fallen in love with a beautiful Tahitian girl in a grass skirt. The third was from a hospital in Southampton and read:

'Can't tell you what's wrong with me on a postcard but the doctor says it would have been better if I'd fallen in love with the polar bear and shot the Tahitian girl.'

Just Checking

Fred was regular in his habits; he was always home by 6 p.m and by 7.30 p.m he was in the local playing darts with his mates. But one evening he was feeling a bit under the weather and he decided to stay at home for a cosy evening in front of the telly with his wife. He'd only been settled for about ten minutes when the phone rang.

'How should I know?' his wife heard him saying into the receiver. 'Try the meteorological office or the AA.'

'Who was that, Fred?' she asked when he came back into the sitting room.

'Some fool wanting to know if the coast was clear.'

Good Employee

An ambitious company man who put all his energies into climbing the executive ladder took work home every night and shut himself up in the spare bedroom-cum-study, putting in hours of overtime. One day he was horrified to find that he had left some important papers at home, so in the lunch hour he dashed back to get them. He was just coming out of the spare room when, through the open bedroom door, he caught a glimpse of his wife and his boss in bed together. Back at the office, he confided his shock to one of his colleagues.

'What a rotten thing!' exclaimed the colleague. 'What are you going to do now? Go home at the same time tomorrow?'

'Good grief, no! I was lucky he didn't see me this time!'

Division of Responsibility

An old couple down our road, a regular Darby and Joan, threw a party to celebrate their golden wedding. I couldn't resist asking the husband what he thought was the secret of staying happily married all those years.

'There's only one sure way,' he explained. 'You let your wife decide all the trivial things but you take all the big decisions yourself.'

It sounded like a good, old-fashioned view of marriage, so I asked him what decisions he left to his wife.

'When to move house, which car to buy, how many children to have, where we go for our holidays and so on.'

I wanted to know what big decisions that left for him to make.

'Oh, when the pound should be devalued, whether oil prices should go up or down, whether to outlaw trade unions – things like that.'

Mother's View

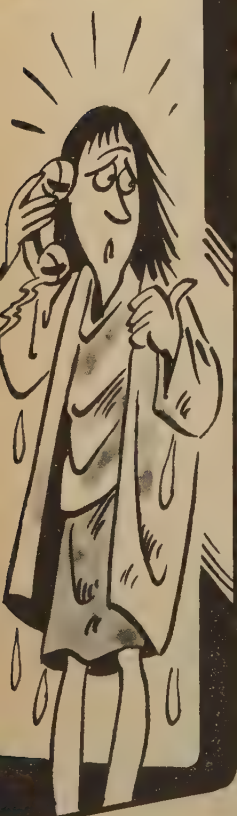
Mrs Budget's son and daughter married within a few weeks of one another and a couple of months later an old friend asked how the two marriages were going.

'June's married the most wonderful man in the world,' she enthused. 'She never has to get out of bed before 11 a.m., he's bought her all the labour-saving gadgets you can think of and he cooks the dinner every night, so all she had to do is mix the martinis.

'But as for Roger, that's another matter altogether. That poor boy is saddled with a terrible slut of a wife. She never gets up before 11 a.m., he's had to fork out for all sorts of gadgetry so that she doesn't have to do a hand's turn and every evening he has to slave over a hot stove while all she does is mix cocktails!'



Telephone



Damp Problem

The woman rang her husband at his office.

'I'm afraid I'm having a bit of trouble with the car, dear.'

'It was fine when I used it yesterday. What's the matter?'

'Well – the plugs are probably a bit damp.'

'All right, I'll arrange for someone to come and look at it. Where is the car at the moment?'

'In the river.'



Dubious Parenthood

Gladys had been feeling poorly for weeks, so she went to the doctor. He checked her over and told her she was going to have a baby. It came as quite a shock; Gladys was forty-eight and her husband Harry nearly seventy. She couldn't wait until she got home to break the news so she phoned Harry from a call box.

'You'd better sit down, Harry. I've got the most amazing bit of news for you. I'm pregnant. You're going to be a father.'

'Well, well, well!' exclaimed Harry, amazed but proud. 'And *who* is that speaking?'

Wrong Man

Albert died and his widow, son and daughter sat in the front pew at his funeral service. The minister launched into a splendid eulogy about the late lamented: what a great loss he was to his family and the community at large, what a kind and loving husband he had been, what a generous and responsible father. Albert's widow stood up looking flustered and shooed her children out of the pew.

'I must have got the time wrong,' she told them. 'This isn't Albert's funeral at all.'

Simple Pleasures

Some families have the sort of family that would make you glad to be an unmarried orphan. I met an old mate in the street the other day and he was hobbling along, his face all twisted up with pain.

'Whatever's wrong?' I asked him. 'You look as though you're in agony.'

'It's these shoes,' he groaned. 'I bought them last week and they're murder.'

'Then why don't you take them back and get a more comfortable pair?'

'Not likely! Look at it this way: my son's in borstal, my daughter's turned into a punk with safety pins in her nose, my wife's run off with an encyclopaedia salesman and my father-in-law's given me the sack. The only bit of pleasure I've got left in life is taking these b_____ shoes off!'

Bad Luck

My brother is the unluckiest man in world. As a child he went to sleep with his head under the pillow and the fairies came and took out all his teeth. Only last year he caught an incurable disease from a faith healer. When his marriage ran into difficulties, he went to marriage guidance and who did he find in charge of the office – his mother-in-law.

Fun-in-Law

You've only got to mention the word mother-in-law – the one depicted with the face like a Toby Jug and a heart like Lucretia Borgia – and everyone falls about laughing. Maybe what mothers-in-law think about sons-in-law isn't repeatable but the men have certainly managed to get in their two pennyworth.

'I'm not saying she's nasty but she was sacked from the Gestapo for cruelty.'

'When she wears a white dress, we show home movies on her.'

'She was knocked down in the street the other day; it wasn't that the driver didn't have room to go round her, he just didn't have enough petrol.'

'Have you heard the one about the cannibal who toasted his mother-in-law at his wedding reception?'

'The definition of mixed feelings: when your mother-in-law drives your car over a cliff.'

'What a mouth! Instead of tonsils she has a fan-belt.'

'When she first met me, my mother-in-law thought I was effeminate. Next to her, I am.'

'I don't know what I'd do without my mother-in-law. But I spend many a happy hour dreaming about it.'

Occupied

The Gumms rented a pretty little country cottage by the river for their summer holiday; it came cheap because there was no indoor sanitation, only a little wooden privy at the bottom of the garden. Young Archie Gumm soon got fed up with the country and, anything for a laugh, he threw the privy in the river.

When he went in for his tea, there was his dad, red-faced with anger, demanding to know if he was the one who uprooted the privy.

'No Dad, I never touched it.'

Then his dad sat him down and told him the story of George Washington, who chopped down his father's cherry tree.

'And when his father questioned him, George Washington owned up and said "Father, I can't tell a lie. I did it." His father was so impressed by his son's honesty that he didn't have the heart to punish him. Now I'll ask you just once more – did you throw the privy in the river?'

Archie pulled himself up to his full height and said:

'Dad, I can't tell a lie. I did it.'

So his dad belted him one.

'That's not fair!' said Archie as he picked himself up. 'George Washington's father didn't hit him when he told the truth.'

'When George Washington cut down the cherry tree, his father wasn't sitting in it.'

Cheapskate

A local councillor had the chance of an all-expenses paid trip to London – the only snag was, he couldn't get out of taking his wife with him. On the first day she was keen to go shopping in Oxford Street so he pretended that he had some business to attend to and nipped off to Soho to find himself a pretty 'model'. He saw a likely-looking girl smiling and beckoning from a doorway and thought this was his lucky day, until he heard the price.

'£15, that's far too much!' he exclaimed. 'I'm not paying more than five.'

The girl stopped smiling and shoved him out of the doorway and that was the end of that. In the evening he took his wife to a restaurant and as they were reading the menu, who should walk past the table but the 'model' he had met earlier.

'Serves you right,' she said as she passed. 'That's what you get for five pounds.'

Domestic Trouble

You can't get domestic staff these days. A middle-aged couple were so delighted when they found a good cook that they were horrified, a few months later, to find her in tears.

'I'm afraid I'll have to give notice,' she told them. 'I'm going to have a baby.'

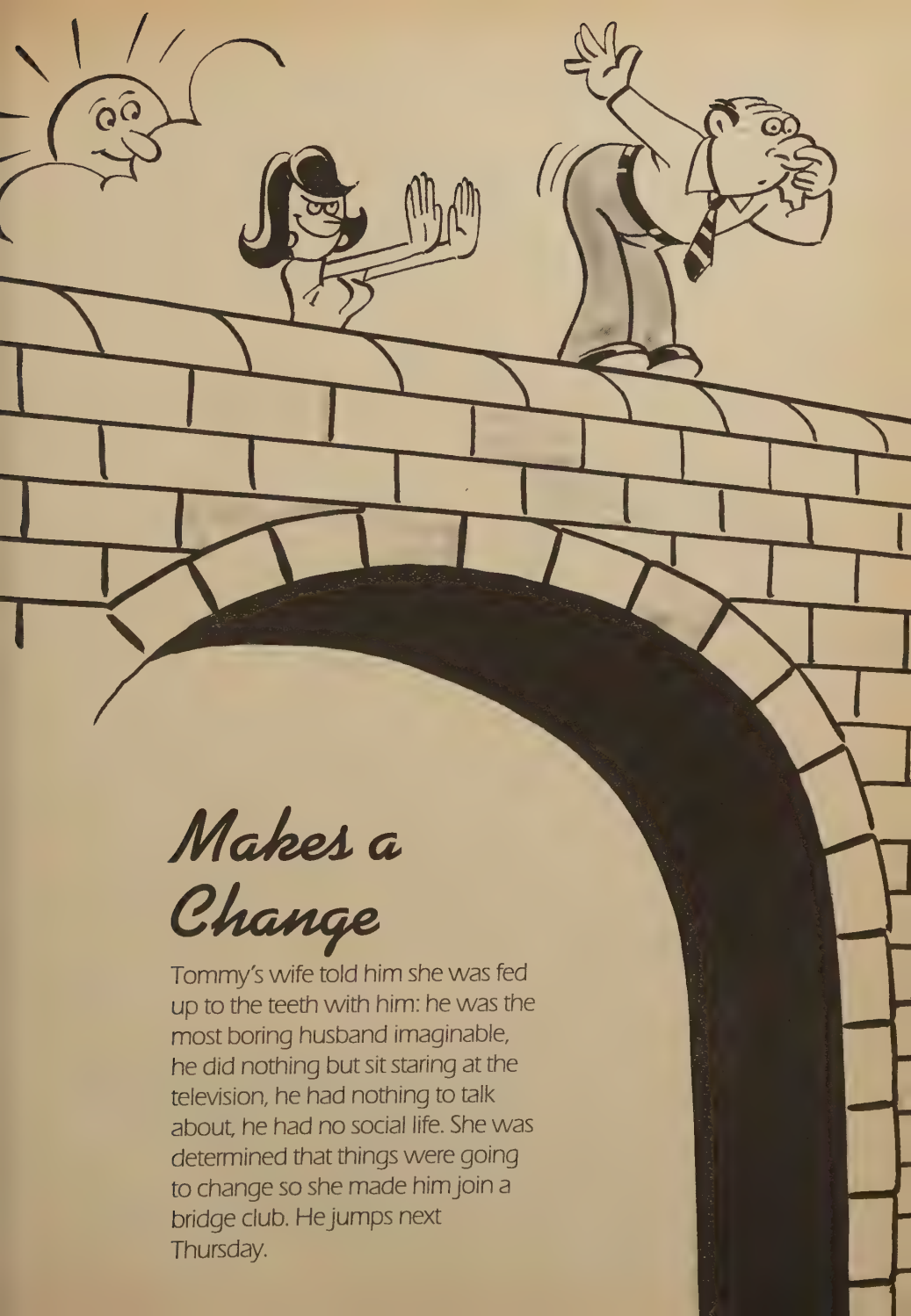
It came as a bit of a shock but they were so keen to keep her with them that they arranged everything – not only did they pay all her expenses at a luxurious nursing home but they agreed to adopt her baby. All went well for the next two years, then once again they found the cook in tears.

'I'm really going to have to give notice now,' she said. 'I'm pregnant again.'

It was even more of a blow this time but after all they had been through already, the couple felt they had to hang onto her at all costs. Once again, they paid all her expenses and adopted the second baby. This time they made sure the cook went on the pill. Another two years passed before they found her in tears yet again.

'Don't tell me you've slipped up again, Mary,' said the woman of the house in exasperation. 'We can't go through all that again.'

'It's not that,' said the cook. 'This time I'm giving my notice because it's too much hard work looking after four of you.'



Makes a Change

Tommy's wife told him she was fed up to the teeth with him: he was the most boring husband imaginable, he did nothing but sit staring at the television, he had nothing to talk about, he had no social life. She was determined that things were going to change so she made him join a bridge club. He jumps next Thursday.

Watch Out

A punter had a £500 win on the horses but he wasn't about to share it with his wife and family so he bought a gold watch with it – fabulous thing, umpteen jewels, shockproof and waterproof, the lot. He was watching television that evening and when the 9 p.m. news came on, he looked at his new watch: 3.30 p.m. So he gave his son a clip round the ear:

'That's for messing about with the telly again!'

Not Spot

A couple went away for three weeks holiday leaving their dog in kennels. When they got back the first thing the husband did was drive off to collect him.

'I don't know what's the matter with Spot,' he said when he returned. 'He never stopped barking all the way home.'

His wife glanced out of the window. 'Oh, that's easy. He's been trying to tell you he's the wrong dog.'

Shopped

A man was driving his wife home from a party when he was flagged down by a police car.

'Are you aware that you were exceeding the speed limit, sir?' the policeman asked.

'Oh no, officer, you've made a mistake.'

'This is a thirty mile zone and you were doing forty,' insisted the constable.

'No, no, I'm certain I never went above thirty,' protested the motorist.

His wife leaned across him and said: 'You might as well give up, officer. It's no use arguing with him when he's had a drink.'

Threats and Promises

A four-year-old, sitting on the beach with her parents, was fascinated to see a small boy peeing into the sea.

'Mummy, I want one of those!' she exclaimed.

Her mother, too sleepy to bother opening her eyes, replied automatically: 'If you're a good girl you'll get one later.'

Poor Outlook

A man came home from an appointment with the hospital consultant, white and shaking.

'You look terrible. Whatever did the doctor say?' asked his wife anxiously.

'He told me I'd have to take a pill every day for the rest of my life.'

'Well, that's not so bad, is it?'

'He's only given me four!'

Quiet, Please

'My great-grandfather was massacred by the Indians at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.'

'Oh, really? Was he one of General Custer's soldiers?'

'No. He was camping in the next field and he went over to tell them to keep the noise down.'

Medical Advances

Parents have a terrible time in these days of test-tube babies. You only used to have to start worrying when your daughter went off with a teenager on a motorbike. Now you have to worry about boys with chemistry sets.



Chasing the Girls

A rich sultan had one hundred wives and he had a splendid harem built for them in one corner of his enormous palace. He kept a eunuch on duty the whole time so that whenever he fancied a bit of the other, he would call out 'number sixty-five' or 'number thirty-three' and the eunuch would set off down four flights of stairs, along the corridors, across the courtyard, round the fountain, through the gardens and up four flights of stairs at the other end to fetch the chosen wife. Then he'd take her down the stairs, through the gardens, round the fountain, across the courtyard, along the corridor and up the stairs to the sultan. A couple of hours later he'd take her back down the stairs, along the corridor ... and all the rest of it.



The sultan lived to the age of eighty but all his eunuchs died before the age of twenty-five. It just goes to show that it's not messing about with women that kills you, it's the running after them.

Hard to Explain

A young couple were enjoying themselves on the back seat of a Mini parked in a quiet spot when suddenly the man let out a yelp of pain. He found he had slipped a disc and the slightest movement was sheer agony. Panic stricken, the girl scrambled back into her clothes and ran to the nearest house to phone for an ambulance. This duly arrived but the ambulancemen could find no way to get the man out of the tiny car, so they phoned the fire brigade. The firemen came and said they'd have him out in a jiffy; all they had to do was cut out the back of the car. Off came the back of the car and out came the young man, his embarrassment covered by a blanket. After he had been driven off to hospital, one of the firemen found the girl in floods of tears.

'Don't worry, love, he'll be all right now,' he reassured her.

'Never mind him,' she sobbed. 'What's my husband going to say when he sees the car?'

Conflicting Advice

The teacher was giving a class of five-year-olds a road safety lesson and explaining about pelican crossings. Afterwards she asked questions to make sure that all her pupils had understood.

'And what do you do when the little green man starts flashing, Mandy?'

'I tell a policeman.'

'No dear, you stop where you are on the pavement.'

Mandy looked puzzled. 'Well, is it only if he's wearing a dirty raincoat that I tell a policeman?'

TRAVEL



In my opinion, this is the easiest category in which to make Howlers, often because of problems with other languages and customs. I don't necessarily mean *the* Customs (where personally I feel I always *look* guilty even when going through the 'Nothing to Declare' gate). I'll never forget once going through the Customs in New York.

I was with a lady companion and by a sheer coincidence we had suitcases which were almost identical. Like a fool I gallantly offered to carry both cases, knowing that neither of us had anything to declare. As we were walking through the Customs hall to the exit, one Customs man took it into his stupid head to have what I think is known as a 'spot check'.

'Excuse me, sir,' he said, 'May I ask you to open that case?' To which request I did the only thing possible – I obeyed.

I can only guess what the Customs official – and the passers-by – thought, as I stood there, trying to look impassive, with the open case full of ladies underwear. As he picked up a pair of what I believe are known as knickers, he enquired sarcastically, 'Don't you find these a bit of a tight squeeze?' I didn't demean myself by replying.

You may find the Howlers that follow even worse (or as I say, better, if you prefer).

All Alike

'I went up the Amazon last summer.'

'My goodness, that must have been exciting but isn't it rather dangerous?'

'Certainly is. I got bitten on the leg by a crocodile.'

'Really? Which one?'

'Goodness knows. All crocodiles look alike to me.'

Peaceful Ride

As Fred drew into the pub car park, a car screamed to a stop behind him. 'I've been trying to catch up with you for five miles. Don't you realize that your wife fell off the back when you took that sharp corner?'

'Thank goodness for that,' said the relieved Fred. 'I thought I must have gone deaf!'

Routine Flight

The Duke of Edinburgh arrived at Birmingham Airport to open a new building with the obligatory civic reception. One of the local dignitaries was fussing round him the instant he reached the tarmac.

'What was the flight like, your Royal Highness?' he asked solicitously.

'Have you ever flown in a plane?' asked Prince Philip.

'Oh yes indeed, many times.'

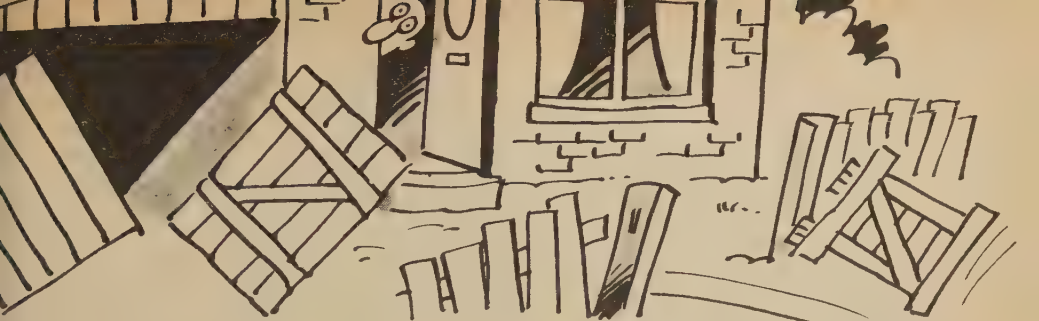
'Well, it was just like that.'

Honourable Maids

A Cockney family was holidaying in Sussex when one of the local lifeboatmen got married. The wedding party looked very grand leaving the church with the bride in a white crinoline dress, the men in toppers and eight pretty bridesmaids. The crew of the lifeboat formed a bridal arch with their oars and the little Cockney girl was thrilled by the spectacle.

'Ere, Mum, ain't them oars smashing?'

'Ssh! Them ain't 'ores, them's bridesmaids.'



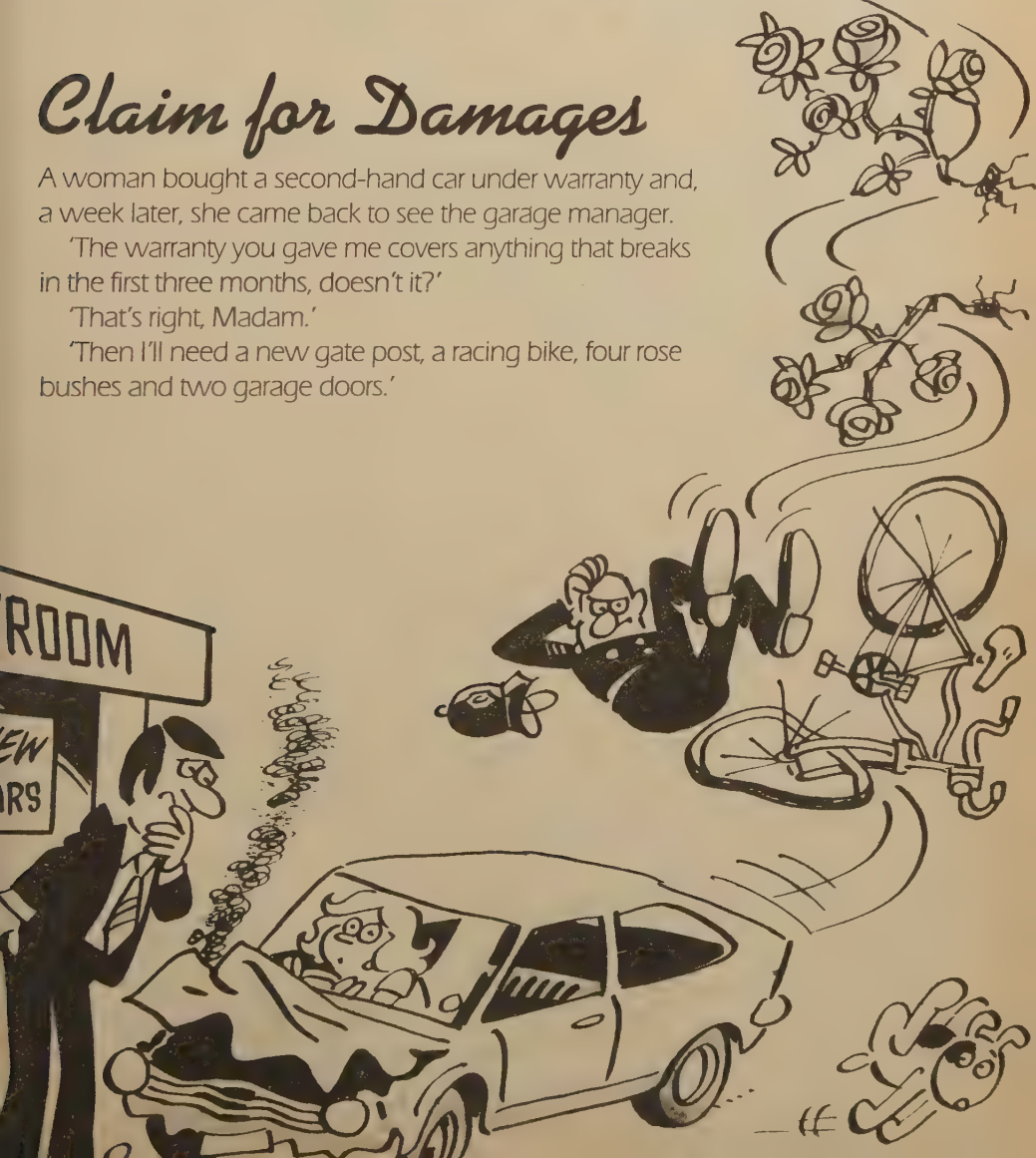
Claim for Damages

A woman bought a second-hand car under warranty and, a week later, she came back to see the garage manager.

'The warranty you gave me covers anything that breaks in the first three months, doesn't it?'

'That's right, Madam.'

'Then I'll need a new gate post, a racing bike, four rose bushes and two garage doors.'





Just Deserts

Two men, Smith and Brown, arrived in heaven together. The head angel totted up Smith's good and bad deeds.

'You've done very well, Mr Smith,' he said. 'You've never stolen or cheated and you've always contributed to flag days. But there's just one thing missing from our records. Have you ever committed adultery?'

'Never,' said Smith.

So the angel gave him a Rolls Royce to drive around heaven. Then he turned to Brown.

'You've done well too, Mr Brown. You've never stolen or cheated and you had your mother-in-law to dinner every Sunday. But I need to ask you the same question: have you ever committed adultery?'

Brown had to admit that he had slipped up a couple of times, so all he got to drive around heaven was a Mini. After a couple of



weeks he was driving along when he saw Smith's Rolls Royce at the side of the road and Smith sitting with his head in his hands.

'What's the matter with you?' he asked. 'You've got this marvellous car, free petrol, no speed checks, what could possibly be wrong?'

'I've just seen the wife on a bicycle!'

Holiday Horrors

Some of these seaside boarding houses are like Colditz on a good week. Last year I stayed in one where we had so little to eat that the seagulls used to throw us bits of bread. The room was so small that the only way you could get in was to be born there. When I brushed my teeth sideways I knocked the neighbours on each side out of bed.

I complained to the landlady that the window was so dirty I could hardly see through it.

'That's not a window, that's the wall,' she said.

I did find the window in the end. 'That window's so small it would be useless in an emergency.'

'There won't be any emergencies. You pay in advance.'

Wishful Thinking

The late Arthur Askey asked an air hostess on a transatlantic flight for some magazines to read, preferably *National Geographic* and *Playboy*. She couldn't resist remarking on his wide taste in reading but the irrepressible Arthur had a quick retort:

'I love looking at all the places I'm never likely to go.'

Beware Below

The North Sea ferry had been rolling wildly all night.

'Look out,' said the man in the top bunk. 'I'm going to be sick.'

The man in the bottom bunk did – and he was!

Fair Exchange

Comedian Tommy Trinder, driving through London in his Rolls Royce, stalled at traffic lights and, though he kept turning the key and pumping the accelerator, nothing happened. He got more and more hot and bothered as the taxi driver behind him hooted his horn more and more forcefully. Eventually Tommy got out, walked back to the taxi, put his hand through the window and slammed it down on the horn.

'There,' he said. 'We'll do a swop. I'll do this and *you* start the b_____ car.'

Well Bred

'Do you know how fast you were driving?' the police officer asked the mink-coated woman driver in the posh car.

'Oh, about 85 I should think,' she told him haughtily.

'And do you realize that this is a 30 mile zone?'

'Certainly. But I'm in a hurry.' She waved an aristocratic hand dismissively.

'Then I'm afraid I'm going to have to book you, Madam.'

'How dare you! I'll have you know I come from one of the best families in the county.'

'That's all right, Madam. I'm booking you for speeding, not breeding.'

Favourable Statistics

Florrie and Arthur were at Gatwick waiting for their flight to Benidorm and Florrie was in a right old state. Arthur did his best to calm her down.

'Air travel is the safest form of travel there is,' he reassured. 'More people are killed on the roads every day than in air crashes in a whole year.'

'If we'd gone to Skegness again, we could have gone by train,' moaned Florrie.

'Didn't you read about that terrible train disaster the other week when two hundred people were killed?'

'Two hundred people killed on a train? However did that happen?'

'A plane fell on it.'

Shared Prayer

A vicar, up in town one day, drove round and round for half an hour, vainly looking for a parking space and in the end he stopped on a yellow line and left a note on the windscreen saying: 'Back right away. Forgive us our trespasses.'

A traffic warden, seeing him hurrying away, wrote on the bottom of his note 'I'll be round again in ten minutes. Lead us not into temptation.'

Mystery Trip

I've had my absent-minded moments, but at least I've never lost *myself*! Lord William Cecil, at one time Bishop of Exeter, known far and wide for his forgetfulness, was on a train journey when a ticket inspector asked to see his ticket. The bishop searched his pockets, his hat and the floor of the carriage, all without result.

'Don't worry about it,' the inspector said kindly. 'I know who you are.'

'That's all very well,' said the bishop. 'But without my ticket, how do I know where I'm going?'

Services Rendered

A London couple were holidaying in New York when they went into a hotel bar for cocktails. When they got the bill, the husband couldn't believe it.

'This is sheer robbery!' he told the bartender.

'The bartender shrugged. 'Don't blame me, Bud. That's what drinks cost in New York. Maybe it's different back in England.'

'It certainly is. In London you can go out and drink all evening, stay overnight in a luxury hotel for free and wake up in the morning to find £20 on the pillow.'

'O yea,' said the barman disbelievingly. 'And how often did that happen to you?'

'Well, it hasn't happened to me personally,' the Londoner confessed. 'But it happens to my wife all the time.'

Predictions

Mabel went on a day trip to Brighton with the Women's Institute and visited the gypsy fortune-teller on the pier. The gypsy turned pale as she gazed into her crystal ball.

'I'm afraid I have some bad news for you, dear,' she said. 'You must prepare yourself for a very big change in your life. Your husband is about to meet a violent death.'

'Oh dear,' sighed Mabel. 'Will I be acquitted?'



Spellbound

A lorry driver saw a pretty young woman with long dark hair standing at a bus stop in the pouring rain and he stopped to offer her a lift.

'That's very kind of you,' she said. 'But I have to warn you that I'm a witch and if you take me with you in your cab anything can happen.'

The lorry driver grinned and said he'd take a chance, so she climbed in beside him. Five minutes later she touched him on the knee and he turned into a lay by.

Slow Journey

A Texan rancher came to spend a holiday with his English cousin on his Devon farm. He did nothing but marvel at the tiny farmhouse, the dinky little fields and the handful of cattle his cousin called a herd. Everything, he reckoned, was bigger and better back home.

'Why, I get in my car after breakfast, drive right around my ranch and without ever going off my own property I don't get back until well after dark.'

'I had a car like that once,' his cousin nodded sympathetically.

Auto Christening

The rabbi and the priest lived next door to one another and they were both keen to keep their end up: if the priest had a new gate, the rabbi had a new gate and if the rabbi repainted his house, the priest was soon out with the brushes. When each man had a new car delivered on the same day they were both well-satisfied, until the rabbi saw the priest pouring water over the bonnet.

'Surely it doesn't need washing already?' he called across.

'I'm christening it with holy water, which is more than you can do to your car,' said the priest cheerfully.

A few minutes later he was amazed to see the rabbi on his knees behind the car, sawing the end off the exhaust pipe.

Exploited

A pretty girl whose ambition was to go to Hollywood and become a film star despaired of ever being able to raise the fare so she stowed away on board ship. Two weeks later she was discovered and taken to the captain. He could see that she was neither dirty nor starving, so he knew that one of his officers must have known about the stowaway all along. Eventually she admitted that the second officer had taken her to his cabin every day for a meal and a wash. The captain, knowing his second officer only too well, insisted on knowing what else had happened.

'Well, he did take advantage of me,' admitted the girl, blushing.

'He certainly did,' said the captain. 'This is the Isle of Wight ferry.'

Sex Discrimination

An English colonel was dining in a Paris restaurant when he found a fly baked into his paté. Angrily he summoned the waiter, pointing:

'*Regardez le mouche.*'

'Eet ees *la mouche* monsieur, because eet ees feminine,' said the waiter, intent on improving his customer's French.

'By Jove, what fantastic eyesight, to tell its sex at that distance!' exclaimed the colonel.

Giveaway

Terry couldn't believe his eyes when he saw the newspaper advert offering '1984 Mercedes, excellent condition, £10'. First he thought it must be a misprint but when he rang to ask, the woman who had placed the advert told him that £10 was all she was asking. When he saw the car, he still couldn't work out where the catch was: it was sleek, shining and mechanically perfect.

'I don't get it,' he told the woman. 'How can you be satisfied with £10 for a car like this?'

'Satisfied? I'm delighted. Four weeks ago my husband ran off with his secretary and now he's asked me to sell his car and send him the money.'



First Motorist

A Sunday school teacher asked her pupils to draw a picture of their favourite Bible story. Billy's picture showed an old man with a long beard driving a car with two apparently naked people in the back.

'I don't know what story that's supposed to be, Billy, but when the Bible was written, they didn't have cars.'

'Course they did,' said Billy scornfully. 'It says God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden.'





Act of Faith

A holidaymaker in Wales decided to do a bit of mountain-walking but he missed his footing and fell over the edge of a precipice. He managed to catch onto a fragile sapling growing out of the rock face and he hung there, a sheer drop below him, unable to move. All he could do was cast his eyes up to the sky and pray.

'Is there anybody up there? Help me or I'm done for.'

To his amazement a voice spoke to him from the heavens.

'Don't be afraid, my son. I will help you but you must have faith. Let go of the tree and I will bear you up.'

The climber looked down at the chasm below and up at the sky above, then he called:

'Is there anybody *else* up there?'



Automatic Perfection

The first passenger trip to the moon was completely booked out, even at £5,000 a ticket. The launch was a complete success and the passengers could hear the roar of the powerful engines, rocketing them through space.

'Welcome aboard, ladies and gentlemen,' came a voice through the intercom. 'This is a historic moment for space travel and your safety is our first concern, so we have cut out all possibility of human error. There is no crew, all the controls are fully automated and programmed by computer and every part of this magnificent machine is a miracle of modern engineering. Nothing can go wrong – go wrong – go wrong ...'

Good Massage

The young typist, back from her holiday in the south of France, was telling her friends all about it.

'I met this fabulous masseur ...'

'You mean *monsieur*,' her friend corrected. 'A masseur is someone who rubs and pats you all over.'

'As I was saying, I met this masseur.'

No Repeat

The nervous passenger kept calling the air hostess to make sure his seat belt was fastened and his seat was in the right position.

'How often do aircraft of this type crash?' he asked.

'Only once.'

Unforgettable

Said the boss to his secretary:

'That was a marvellous week we spent together in Paris. Will you ever be able to forget it?'

'What's it worth?' asked the secretary.

Repeat Booking

An Englishman saw a newspaper advert saying 'Three week cruise, starting Southampton Friday, £30.' So he turned up at the docks with his £30, paid it over, got a bop on the head and woke up in a rowing boat with an Irishman, no land in sight, no food, only an oar each. As they rowed on, hour after hour, he tried to cheer up the Irishman, who was looking down in the dumps.

'Don't worry, they can't leave us out here for three weeks. It's just a joke. They'll send a boat to pick us up.'

'They didn't last year,' the Irishman said dolefully.

Heads Down

Three people sat in a railway carriage, discussing why British Rail was always in the red.

It's vastly overmanned,' said a man sitting in the corner. They want to cut a good 10,000 from the work force.'

'I blame these never-ending wage demands,' said the woman sitting opposite.

'No one wants to put in a fair day's work. Skivers, the lot of them' said an elderly gent with a moustache.

Then they heard the ticket collector coming and they all dived under the seats.

Quick Thinking

An Irishman was cruising on a luxury liner which hit a reef and sank. Everything was chaos, with people screaming and shouting, no life-jackets in sight, so he jumped into the water and started swimming. He swam all night and in the morning he was lucky enough to find an empty lifeboat drifting alongside him. So he started chopping it up to make a raft.

EPILOGUE

Here endeth the lessons to be learnt from the Howlers that people make.

The main lesson is one of comfort – that since nobody is perfect we all get involved in mistakes. We all make Howlers occasionally, so don't worry too much and feel over-guilty. The main thing is to vary your Howlers from time to time, otherwise it gets boring.

Now the answer to the question that has been on your lips all this time . . . 'What has this book got to do with cookery?' Well, I'll tell you.

Early one morning I was in a state of confusion because I was very late for an important appointment. I hastily opened some letters lying there, ignoring the obvious bills and opening the others. There was a letter from the publisher of this book asking if I would like to write a cookery book for him. I was amazed.

Later that night I thought I'd better try my hand at it. After two hours of tears, sweat, smoke and fumes, I gazed down sadly at the charred remains and realized that nobody could possibly even guess what they were supposed to be, or indeed, what they had started life as.

So I reluctantly rang the publisher who was staggered when I mentioned his letter. 'What letter?' he bellowed. I said, 'The letter addressed to me – about a cookery book.' His voice grew even more shrill. 'I sent you a letter asking you to appear at our firm's Christmas 'do' – look at the letter again!' I did.

To my horror, I then realized, it started off, 'Dear etc,' the etc. being the name of a well-known TV cook. I was flabbergasted! I told the publisher that it was *his* fault, since he'd obviously put the wrong letter in my envelope. 'You've made a Howler!', I said accusingly. He calmed down and muttered an apology.

Suddenly I had a brilliant idea. 'Don't worry, we all make Howlers sometimes,' I said soothingly. 'Let me write a book about them.' He was in such a state of stupefaction he agreed – obviously before he'd realized what he had said.

Hence, this book – but can you imagine what a Howler it would have been *had* I written a cookery book, and *you* would have made a bigger Howler *had* you bought it.





This hilarious collection of anecdotes will provide hours of amusement for everyone. Gathered together with the assistance of Frankie Howerd, the volume presents page after page of side-splitting humour.

From the world of show business to the follies of sport, read inside about such comical stories as:

The touring Queen from the Hawaiian Islands who, while visiting Queen Victoria, announced that she was her blood relative – her grandfather had eaten Captain Cook!

The obese gentleman given an enormous bottle of pills by his doctor with the instructions: to be spilled on the floor three times a day and picked up, one at a time!

The medical student shown to the bed of a patient who limped because one of his legs was shorter than the other, and who when asked what he would do in a similar case replied:
"Oh, I guess I'd limp too!"

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