

lish clergyman and his wife, to their way of thinking, would be hospitable but limited, for the ideas of opulence and the cloth did not seem to go together. But to their astonishment, going forth expecting a cottage, and not even "a cottage with a double coach door," they found a castle. The resulting complications carried the tale through its whimsical course. As a matter of fact "The Need of Change" is, broadly speaking, true. Mr. and Mrs. Julian Street did meet "the Denbeighs" at a little hotel in the Austrian Tyrol. The name of the particular town was Cortina d' Ampezzo. There the four were together for ten days or two weeks. Later, in England, the Streets went to visit "the Denbeighs" in the latter's elaborate country place which happens to be in the county of Kent. Most of the details of the story are founded upon fact.

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A tale of ten years or so ago that stirred readers to exasperation was Mr.

Cleveland Moffett's
 "The Mysterious Card"

"The Mysterious Card." It dealt with the adventures of an American visiting in Paris, and a card, which while perfectly blank to his eyes, made him an object of horror when it was shown to others. Yet according to Mr. Moffett this story, which provoked so many letters of furious curiosity from persons who insisted on being told what was written on the card, came into existence in the most commonplace way. There was nothing mysterious in its creation, nor was there any particular effort made in its execution. It was not even written by hand, but was dictated quickly and carelessly to a stenographer out in Chicago where Mr. Moffett had been sent by *McClure's Magazine* to do some real detective stories drawn from the archives of the Pinkertons. Every day he would spend several hours talking with these celebrated detectives, and in the evenings, at Mrs. Stewart's theatrical boarding house on Wabash Avenue, he would narrate some of the thrilling

tales for the edification of various actor friends. Thus Mr. Moffett found himself in a story-telling vein and, on one occasion, he improvised what was the nucleus of "The Mysterious Card" story. Having lived in Paris himself, in connection with his work on the *New York Herald*, he laid the scene of this wild fancy in the French capital. He told the story several times with increasing success, each time inventing some new detail to prolong the suspense. Then one morning, as he was doing his daily job of dictating detective copy to the stenographer, he suddenly paused and told the girl to take down a little thing that might be worth printing. And so between two paragraphs of a real detective story, there came into being, in about twenty minutes, the final version of "The Mysterious Card," which attracted more attention and aroused more discussion than all the serious and painstaking work that Mr. Moffett did in the next two years.

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Mr. Stewart Edward White, back from Africa after having made lion marmalade of as many lions as were credited to the immortal Tartarin in the imaginative

Press of the south of France, is now entertaining his friends with accounts of his exploits couched in the fine Tarasconian manner beginning "Once, you are to imagine, of an evening, out in the depths of the Sahara—" But Mr. White, in telling of his achievements, does not forget his humiliations. For example, he tells of a certain Jinks of the Bohemian Club of San Francisco, where his vanity encountered one of the cruellest shocks. He had been told that a United States Senator had come to the Jinks for the express purpose of meeting him and of asking him a question. The information was naturally flattering, and he prepared himself to receive the expected compliment with at least the appearance of modesty. In the course of time the celebrities were introduced. The Senator was most effusive. "This,

Mr. White, is an opportunity that I have been long awaiting. I have read your books, all of them, and there is one very serious question that I want to ask you. How on earth did you ever persuade anybody to publish the stuff?" On another occasion Mr. White was to be the principal speaker at a dinner given in New York City. When the time came for him to begin his address the Chairman rapped for silence. The signal was completely ignored by a number of merrymakers at the far end of the table who kept on with their talk and clinking of glasses. After repeated rappings had failed the Chairman became slightly exasperated, and called out peremptorily, "Here, you fellows at the end of the table, stop having a good time, and listen to White."

We refer again to Sir William Robertson Nicoll's *A Bookman's Letters*, this time on account of the chapter on George Gissing, which was provoked by Morley Roberts's curious *The Private Life of Henry Maitland*. The chapter is in many respects astonishing; and so was Morley Roberts's book, which was the true story of the life of George Gissing. Many persons have questioned the discretion of telling that story. But those who knew Gissing best, both as a man and as a writer, seem to think that he himself would have been the last one to have resented the telling. It is not a pretty story. It begins when he was a student, and a very distinguished classical student, in Owens College, Manchester. There, when a boy of less than eighteen, he formed relations with an unfortunate girl. He had to find money for her, and did so at first out of his scholarships. But in 1876 the students were much disturbed by a series of thefts in the common room, and from a locker room in which they kept their books and papers and overcoats. Books disappeared unaccountably, and so did coats. Money was taken from the pockets of coats left in the room. A detective concealed himself

in a small room, and caught Gissing in the act of theft. There was naturally a tremendous uproar over the affair, and Gissing's academic career was ruined.

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Then Gissing came to America, where he was very unhappy. He found an opening in some of the Chicago papers, but he made little headway. However, it was a beginning. He had written fiction, which was thenceforth to be the poor support of his life. He returned to London and married the girl for whose sake he had ruined himself. The poor creature had addicted herself to drink. Gissing did his best to reclaim her, and they lived together in squalid London lodgings. Often she was almost insane with alcohol, and their rooms were poor, foul, and dirty. For years this went on, Gissing earning by his pen just enough to keep body and soul together. Then he became tutor to Frederic Harrison's son, where he became acquainted with Edward Clodd and others who were kind to him. It was a terrible time, but Gissing was able to talk about the classics, and to cook such stuff as his few weekly shillings could buy. Morley Roberts and he were both of them at that time in great extremity, sitting with their overcoats on, and doing their best to be cheerful. The two went on a trip to Eastbourne. Of what happened while they were there is told in the words of Morley Roberts:

It was the next night that the great news came. In spite of the dreariest weather we had spent most of the day in the open air. After our dinner, which this time was more of a success, or at any rate less of a tragic failure, we were sitting hugging the fire to keep warm, when a telegram was brought in for him. He read it in silence, and handed it over to me with the very strangest look upon his face that I had ever seen. It was unsigned, and came from London. The message was: "Your wife is dead." There was nothing on earth more desirable for him than that she should die, the poor wretch truly being like a destructive wind, for she had torn his heart, scorched his very