

The Legends of LENNIE LOWER



Edited by Tom Thompson
Illustrated by Patrick Cook

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**Edited with a Backword by
Tom Thompson**

Illustrated by Patrick Cook

This book is dedicated to the memory of the late Cyril Pearl,
a great friend of comedy

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The Perils Of The Home

Make your home worth living in!

We will start with the gate. If it has rusty hinges and the latch won't work, just tear it off and throw it away. It's useless, anyway. Anybody can open it.

A front lawn is only a weekend penance, and should be dug up and cast aside.

All cracks in the outer walls should be filled in. Soap is not bad, and it is easy to work, although the house during wet weather is likely to froth a bit. Still, I think this is rather picturesque, especially if you use scented soap.

The roof should be gone over thoroughly, preferably in the daytime. One is liable to render one's self conspicuous crawling about the roof with a hurricane lamp in the middle of the night.

The first thing to do when inspection of the roof is contemplated is to go somewhere and borrow a ladder. This takes about three days. Always get your wife to hold the ladder, so that you have something soft to fall on in case of accidents. Having reached the roof, examine the guttering carefully for birds' nests, tennis balls, stones, and empty rum flasks.

We then come to the roof proper. If it is a tiled roof it is better to stay on the ladder. This also applies to slate roofs. Corrugated iron roofs may be inspected with a fair amount of impunity, and you can always get someone to call the local fire brigade to get you down again.

If the roof needs painting, paint yourself all over first and then paint the roof. Then, if you get paint on you while painting the roof it won't matter.

Having finished the roof, wipe your hands on your hair and go to the nearest hotel and have three pints. I make this an invariable rule when painting roofs. (My wife often wonders why I paint the roof six times a week.)

When (and if) you get down off the roof, the front and back doors are the next things to be examined. You will probably find that all the

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paint is scratched off around the keyhole and that the lower portion is dented in various places where you have been kicking it when you have lost your key.

If the door is very bad, take it off its hinges and turn it around so that the outside is on the inside. This may be a bit confusing at first, you'll think you're going out when you're coming in. But you'll get used to it in time. After all, appearance is everything.

Windows should come next. Good taste dictates that a window with a busted sashcord should not be propped up with an empty sauce bottle.

Replacing sashcords is a ticklish job, and I have found it easier to punch a hole in the window when fresh air is needed and paste a piece of brown paper over it when you feel that the window should be shut. This method may seem unconventional, but it works.

People who nonchalantly raise and shut windows would be astonished if they could see the inner works. Pulleys, ropes, and lead weights are necessary to open a window. Brute strength is necessary to shut it.

I wonder what sticky-beak invented windows . . .?

Verandahs, if you have any, should be inspected for white ants and borers once a month. It is embarrassing for any home-owner to invite his guest out on to the verandah and see him plunge through the floorboards into the cellar.

Have you a cellar? People without cellars don't know what they're missing.

When our doorbell rings and we don't know who it is we always go into the cellar. During the Depression we practically lived in it. It was a bit damp and I think that's where I contracted my pneumonia. But it was worth it.

I would like to tell you about tuck pointing and dampcourses, but I haven't the time. This is a pity because the dampcourse is particularly fascinating. I speak as one who has been over the course. Strangely enough, there are no water jumps.

I now have an important appointment to avoid. EXCUSE ME!

24 September 1938

Everything in the garden's lovely

Nothing gives me a greater thrill than the sight of a daffodil turning its brave face to the sun covered with slugs and ringworms. Or the festive stinkwort gently closing its blushing petals as the moon quietly thrusts its smiling face into view to mark the closing of the day.

'You've got a wonderful show of slugs, this year,' says the next-door neighbour enviously.

'You've got to feed them,' I reply. 'You should try planting a bed of nasturtiums along the fence.'

'Do you get many wiggly worms?'

'It's a bad season for them. I've planted two rows of delphiniums and never caught one. Just slugs. I threw them back. By the way, the wife won't let me keep my fertiliser in the ice-chest. Says it affects the butter.'

'Do you have butter?' he asks, incredulously.

'Had it for years. We scrape off a bit when we have visitors. Must make a bit of a show.'

'I suppose so. How are you getting on with your stinkwort?'

'Fine! And my couch grass! Scarcely needs any attention. Just look at that patch. Planted daffodil bulbs and drew a row of brown onions entirely surrounded by couch grass.'

'You never can tell.'

'That's what I say. I was digging around the hydrangeas this morning and found a bottle of beer. Label a bit faded, but otherwise as good as new.'

'I've had no luck, so far.'

'If you'd like to crawl through the fence . . .?'

'Pass it through and keep making a noise with the clippers.'

'I always think it's nice to have a paling torn off the dividing fence, don't you?'

(Pass it back, quick! Here she comes!)

'Oh! Hallo, Mr Lower! Now what are you men up to?'

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‘He says that you can’t beat blood and bone — me, I’m for systematic mulching.’

‘Huh! Get inside and wash your filthy hands. And as for you, Mr Lower, are you gardening or guzzling?’

‘Me?’ I was just doing a bit of grubbing about. Does a man good to get out in the air — back to Nature — in touch with the soil — Mother Earth — if you know what I mean.’

‘Yes. I know what you mean to mean.’

‘Yes! Yes! You would. Remarkably intelligent woman. I’ve always said so. Haven’t I, Fred?’

‘And didn’t I agree with you? I married her for her brains, not for her . . .’

‘Yes, go on!’

‘Er — that’s all, my dear.’

‘And just look at the knees of your trousers! Why don’t you put on an old, worn-out pair like Mr Lower?’

‘These are my best trousers!’

‘Yes, Mr Lower, I know that.’

And she walks off, leaving me stunned.

Of course, that’s only the nasty part of gardening. The best part is when you find a bottle of seeds on a back shelf and plant them. You dig them up every weekend to see how they’re getting on and they don’t seem to be getting on at all. Then the wife wants to know what became of her bottle of liver pills, and a suspicion dawns on you, but you don’t say anything. It’s always best not to say anything in a case like that.

What I like best is budding carnations. The trouble is that I can’t control myself and by the time I’ve finished there’s not much left but the stalk. Then you might as well pull the whole thing up and throw it away.

When planting anything it’s always best to sound the plot to be planted very thoroughly for bones. Otherwise you’ll find that the dog will unplant everything and leave a hole two feet deep just where you planted the pansies. After that he’ll cart his 100-year-old bone into the bedroom, leaving a trail of mud and blasphemy behind him.

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The best part of gardening is the hosing. It's astonishing the number of things you can find to hose. The fence, the roof of the toolshed, the street, the next-door cat and yourself. Then you have a drink out of the hose and the water runs down your shirt, after which you reluctantly turn off the tap and make towards the house.

'What on earth have you been doing! Swimming? Don't you *dare* come into my kitchen with those filthy boots.'

'Bah! A man spends his whole afternoon trying to make the place look nice and all he gets is abuse.'

Still, it's nice to go out in the garden in the gloaming and survey the sodden ruins, and smell the good earth.

That is until you find that the dog has discovered the boots you left outside to dry and has taken them under the house to chew them at his leisure.

20 November 1937

Those quaint quintuplets

I was always fond of babies — that is until I got an urgent cable from Dr Dafoe asking me if I'd pop over and mind the Dionne quintuplets for him as he was in need of a holiday. I caught the next boat and took charge. The doctor expressed his gratitude so fervently that I began to be suspicious.

My first job was washing them.

'Yvonne,' I called. 'Where's Annette?'

'Here I am,' said Cecile.

'Ah no! You don't trick me like that. You're Marie.'

'No, Marie's over there, playing with Emilie,' lisped the child, pointing her chubby finger at Yvonne.

All this conversation was in French, of course, as the quins know no English. They'd learnt a bit before I left, though.

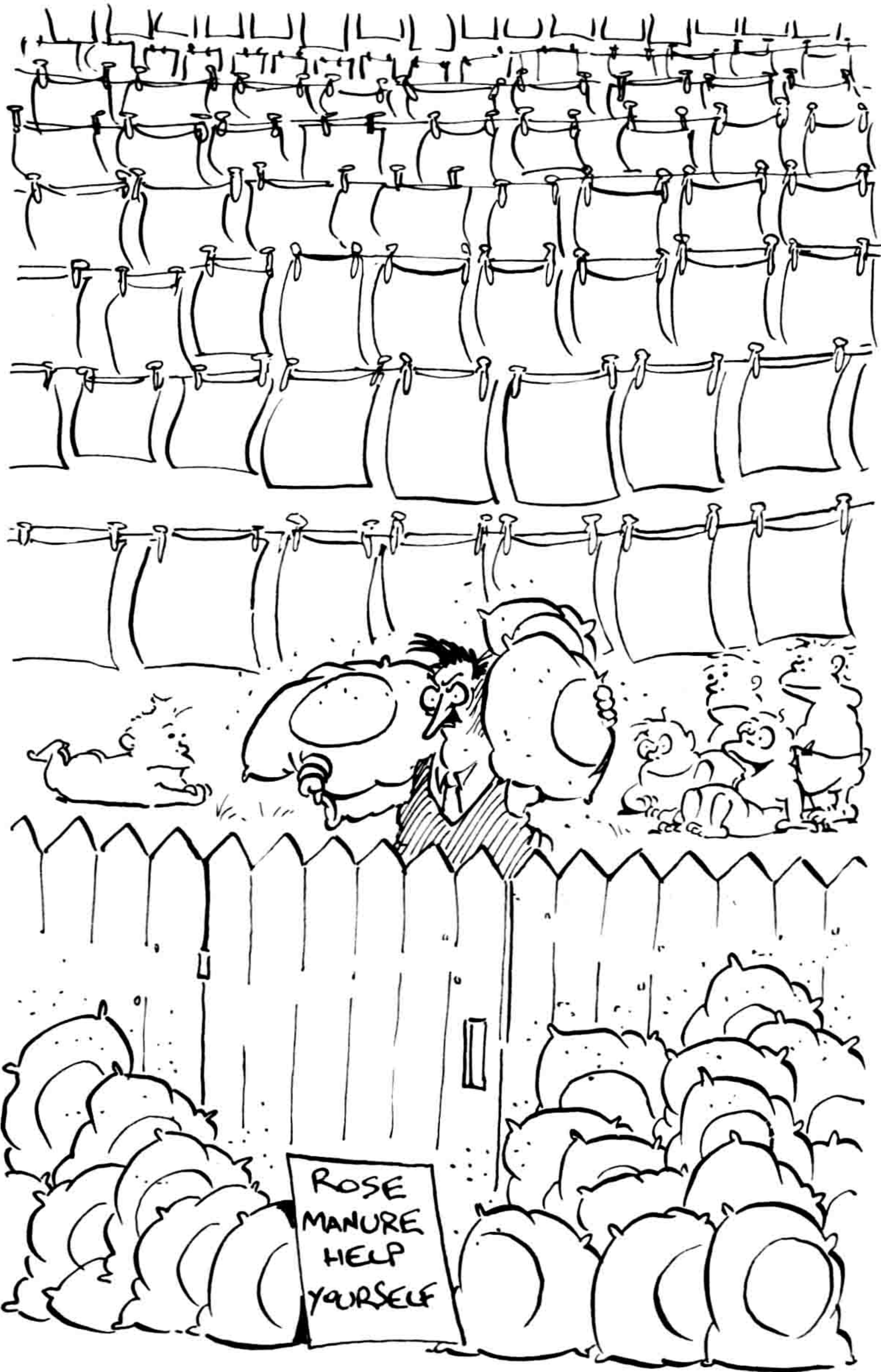
I gave up trying to find out which was which, and started laundering them. I found out, after a couple of hours of steady washing, that I had washed one poor child five times, and the other four were still as grubby as ever.

Then I decided that it would be easier if I numbered them off . . . I called them Yvonne, Y-two, Y-three, and so on. This was partly successful. Each quin got a wash, but by the time I'd finished Y-five, Y-vonne would be dirty again. I eventually solved the problem by herding them all into a corner and hosing them down in bulk.

The hard part was getting them to sleep. By crikey, what a time I had! Dashing from cot to cot, saying, 'Now! Now! The dustman's coming.' I was hoarse from singing lullabies, sea chanties, 'Mademoiselle from Armentieres', and things like that. I must have been in pretty good voice, because the kids stayed awake all night listening and joining in here and there.

About three o'clock in the morning the police came in, and there were a lot of people outside in their pyjamas, muttering loudly.

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The kids looked a bit haggard in the morning, but I put on their eggs and bacon for breakfast, dressed them all as well as possible, and sat them up at their little table. Then the nurse came in.

‘Have you given them their bottles?’ she asked.

‘Bottles!’ I exclaimed. ‘Do you mean to tell me that you have taught those little mites to drink at their age! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! If you insist, I’ll give them a shot of brandy in their coffee, but, mind you, I strongly disapprove!’

‘Stone the crows!’ said the nurse, in French, and swooned away.

I couldn’t be bothered about that, because the time was rapidly approaching when the kids had to be on show and do their stuff for the sightseers.

At this stage I discovered that I had made a mistake in dressing them before feeding them. Most of them were smeared with egg and large coffee stains, but time was short and I bundled them out into their pen.

‘Oh! The dear little things!’ said one of the spectators.

‘Why have they all got their little frocks on back to front?’ said another.

‘Just look at that one on the end rubbing a piece of bacon on her face! How quaint!’

‘That must be Dr Dafoe scraping the egg off one of them,’ said one young lady. ‘Isn’t he handsome?’

‘Righto!’ I said after a while. ‘Time’s up! Next mob, please!’ I then threw a tarpaulin over the kids and the crowd slowly filed out as the next crowd swarmed in.

The nurse seemed a bit frightened when I entered the nursery. ‘I have got their bottles ready,’ she faltered.

‘Now listen, nurse!’ I said, sternly. ‘Lay off this bottle racket. How do you expect these kids to learn to walk when you keep giving them bottles and bottles? Sausages and mash, that’s what they’re having. Now you set to work and put the potatoes on while I peel the sausages. And no more of this funny business!’

It was about this time that the Canadian Mounted Police arrived. They had caught Dr Dafoe at the border with a false beard on and his hair dyed.

‘Thank goodness you’re back!’ I cried, kissing him on both cheeks.

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He sighed. 'Oui,' he said in a dispirited manner.

'Never mind, old chap,' I said, kissing him on the back of the neck, 'the first fifteen years are the worst.'

17 October 1936

Design for living (patented)

I've always wanted to live in a modern home — they seem to be much in the boom these days. I don't mean one with wall beds and folding bookcases and all that. I mean a real modern home such as I have pictured in my wistful moments.

There would be sliding panels in the house so that you could press a button and find that you were no longer there, but in some other place. This is for emergencies only, of course. And St Bernard dogs would do the shopping.

There would be cold needle showers in the bathroom. Celluloid soap and bath salts would be provided and scattered here and there and there would be bath mats of various hues and a small table in green and cream. Of course one would wash in the kitchen sink as usual, but a bathroom like that would be a nice place to look at.

Then there is the kitchen. A most important place.

There would be a machine for washing up the dishes. This machine would also dry the dishes, put them away, and sweep the floor after folding the tablecloth, and then say in a loud mechanical voice, 'Well, thank goodness for that.'

The front door of the house would automatically open when you fell against it. Or if you came home from a shopping expedition laden with parcels you would just kick it and it would fly open. As a matter of fact we've got a door like that at home already. SHE insists that I had the key last, but I distinctly remember putting it in the gravy tureen, where it always goes. However, we still have the back door key.

The laundry would be a home from home. Just toss everything into a machine, turn the switch, and carry on reading your book. All being well, everything comes out of a spout, washed, starched and ironed — although I don't know how this would go for socks.

I forgot to mention that television will be applied to the front door. When the doorbell rings there will be no necessity to go and hide or