The Diary of a Nobody

by George and Weedon Grossmith

CHAPTER I.

We settle down in our new home, and I resolve to keep a diary.Tradesmen trouble us a bit, so does the scraper. The Curate calls and pays me a great compliment.

My clear wife Carrie and I have just been a week in our new house,"The Laurels," Brickfield Terrace, Holloway - a nice six-roomed residence, not counting basement, with a front breakfast-parlour.We have a little front garden; and there is a flight of ten steps up to the front door, which, by-the-by, we keep locked with the chain up. Cummings, Gowing, and our other intimate friends always come to the little side entrance, which saves the servant the trouble of going up to the front door, thereby taking her from her work. We have a nice little back garden which runs down to the railway. We were rather afraid of the noise

of the trains at first, but the landlord said we should not notice them after a bit,and took 2 pounds off the rent. He was certainly right; and beyond the cracking of the garden wall at the bottom, we have suffered no inconvenience.

After my work in the City, I like to be at home. What's the good of a home, if you are never in it? "Hom, Sweet Home," that's my motto. I am always in of an evening. Our old friend Gowing may drop in without ceremony; so may Cummings, who lives opposite My dear wife Caroline and I are pleased to see them, if they like to drop in on us. But Carrie and I can manage to pass our evenings together without friends. There is always something to be done: a tin-tack here, a Venetian blind to put straight, a fan to nail up,or part of a carpet to nail down - all of which I can do with my pipe in my mouth; while Carrie is not above putting a button on a shirt, mending a pillow-case, or practising the "Sylvia

Gavotte" on our new cottage piano (on the three years' system), manufactured by W. Bilkson (in small letters), from Collard and Collard (in very large letters). It is also a great comfort to us to know that our boy Willie is getting on so well in the Bank at Oldham. We should like to see more of him. Now for my diary:-

April 3. - Tradesmen called for custom, and I promised Farmerson,the ironmonger, to give him a turn if I wanted any nails or tools.By-the-by, that reminds me there is no key to our bedroom door, and the bells must be seen to. The parlour bell is broken, and the front door rings up in the servant's bedroom, which is ridiculous.Dear friend Gowing dropped in, but wouldn't stay, saying there was an infernal smell of paint.

April 4. Tradesmen still calling; Carrie being out, I arranged to deal with Horwin, who seemed a civil butcher

with a nice clean shop. Ordered a shoulder of mutton for to-morrow, to give him a trial. Carrie arranged with Borset, the butterman, and ordered a pound of fresh butter, and a pound and a half of salt ditto for kitchen, and a shilling's worth of eggs. In the evening, Cummings unexpectedly dropped in to show me a meerschaum pipe he had won in a raffle in the City, and told me to handle it carefully, as it would spoil the colouring if the hand was mist. He said he wouldn't stay, as he didn't care much for the smell of the paint,and fell over the scraper as he went out. Must get the scraper removed, or else I shall get into a SCRAPE. I don't often make jokes.

April 5. - Two shoulders of mutton arrived, Carrie having arranged with another butcher without consulting me. Gowing called, and fell over scraper coming in. MUST get that scraper removed.

April 6. - Eggs for breakfast simply shocking; sent them back to Borset with my compliments, and he needn't call any more for orders. Couldn't find umbrella, and though it was pouring with rain, had to go without it. Sarah said Mr. Gowing must have took it by mistake last night, as there was a stick in the 'all that didn't belong to nobody. In the evening, hearing someone talking in a loud voice to the servant in the downstairs hall, I went out to see who it was, and was surprised to find it was Borset, the butterman, who was both drunk and offensive. Borset, on seeing me,said he would be hanged if he would ever serve City clerks any more - the game wasn't worth the candle. I restrained my feelings, and quietly remarked that I thought it was POSSIBLE for a city clerk to be a GENTLEMAN. He replied he was very glad to hear it, and wanted to know whether I had ever com across one, for HE hadn't. He left the house, slamming the door after him, which nearly broke the fanlight; and I heard him

fall over the scraper, which made me feel glad I hadn't removed it. When he had gone, I thought of a splendid answer I ought to have given him. However, I will keep it for another occasion.

April 7. - Being Saturday, I looked forward to being home early,and putting a few things straight; but two of our principals at the office were absent through illness, and I did not get home till seven. Found Borset waiting. He had been three times during the day to apologise for his conduct last night. He said he was unable to take his Bank Holiday last Monday, and took it last night instead. He begged me to accept his apology, and a pound of fresh butter. He seems, after all, a decent sort of fellow; so I gave him an order for some fresh eggs, with a request that on this occasion they SHOULD be fresh. I am afraid we shall have to get some new stair-carpets after all; our old ones are not quite wide enough to meet the paint on either

side. Carrie suggests that we might ourselves broaden the paint. I will see if we can match the colour (dark chocolate) on Monday.

April 8, Sunday. - After Church, the Curate came back with us. I sent Carrie in to open front door, which we do not use except on special occasions. She could not get it open, and after all my display, I had to take the Curate (whose name, by-the-by, I did not catch,) round the side entrance. He caught his foot in the scraper, and tore the bottom of his trousers. Most annoying, as Carrie could not well offer to repair them on a Sunday. After dinner, went to sleep. Took a walk round the garden, and discovered a beautiful spot for sowing mustard-and-cress and radishes. Went to Church again in the evening: walked back with the Curate. Carrie noticed he had got on the same pair of trousers, only repaired. He wants me to take round the plate,which I think a great compliment.

CHAPTER II.

Tradesmen and the scraper still troublesome. Gowing rather tiresome with his complaints of the paint. I make one of the best jokes of my life. Delights of Gardening. Mr. Stillbrook, Gowing,Cummings, and I have a little misunderstanding. Sarah makes me look a fool before Cummings

April 9. - Commenced the morning badly. The butcher, whom we decided NOT to arrange with, called and blackguarded me in the mst uncalled-for manner. He began by abusing me, and saying he did not want my custom. I simply said: "Then what are you making all this fuss about it for?" And he shouted out at the top of his voice, so that all the neighbours could hear: "Pah! go along. Ugh! I could buy up 'things' like you by the

dozen!"

I shut the door, and was giving Carrie to understand that this disgraceful scene was entirely her fault, when there was a violent kicking at the door, enough to break the panels. It was the blackguard butcher again, who said he had cut his foot over the scraper, and would immediately bring an action against me. Called at Farmerson's, the ironmonger, on my way to town, and gave him the job of moving the scraper and repairing the bells, thinking it scarcely worth while to trouble the landlord with such a trifling matter.

Arrived home tired and worried. Mr. Putley, a painter and decorator, who had sent in a card, said he could not match the colour on the stairs, as it contained Indian carmine. He said he spent half-a-day calling at warehouses to see if he could get it.He suggested he

should entirely repaint the stairs. It would cost very little mre; if he tried to match it, he could only make a bad job of it. It would be more satisfactory to him and to us to have the work done properly. I consented, but felt I had been talked over. Planted some mustard-and-cress and radishes, and went to bed at nine.

April 10. - Farmerson came round to attend to the scraper himself.He seems a very civil fellow. He says he does not usually conduct such small jobs personally, but for me he would do so. I thanked him, and went to town. It is disgraceful how late some of the young clerks are at arriving. I told three of them that if Mr.Perkupp, the principal, heard of it, they might be discharged.

Pitt, a monkey of seventeen, who has only been with us six weeks,told me "to keep my hair on!" I informed him I had had the honour of being in the firm twenty years, to

which he insolently replied that I "looked it." I gave him an indignant look, and said: "I demand from you some respect, sir." He replied: "All right, go on demanding." I would not argue with him any further. You cannot argue with people like that. In the evening Gowing called, and repeated his complaint about the smell of paint. Gowing is sometimes very tedious with his remarks, and not always cautious;and Carrie once very properly reminded him that she was present.

April 11. - Mustard-and-cress and radishes not come up yet. To-day was a day of annoyances. I missed the quarter-to-nine 'bus to the City, through having words with the grocer's boy, who for the second time had the impertinence to bring his basket to the halldoor, and had left the marks of his dirty boots on the freshcleaned door-steps. He said he had knocked at the side door with his knuckles for a quarter of an hour. I knew Sarah, our

servant,could not hear this, as she was upstairs doing the bedrooms, so asked the boy why he did not ring the bell? He replied that he did pull the bell, but the handle came off in his hand.

I was half-an-hour late at the office, a thing that has never happened to me before. There has recently been much irregularity in the attendance of the clerks, and Mr. Perkupp, our principal,unfortunately choose this very mrning to pounce down upon us early. Someone had given the tip to the others. The result was that I was the only one late of the lot. Buckling, one of the senior clerks, was a brick, and I was saved by his intervention.As I passed by Pitt's desk, I heard him remark to his neighbour:"How disgracefully late some of the head clerks arrive!" This was,of course, meant for me. I treated the observation with silence,simply giving him a look, which unfortunately had the effect of making both of

the clerks laugh. Thought afterwards it would have been mre dignified if I had pretended not to have heard him at all. Cummings called in the evening, and we played dominoes.

April 12. - Mustard-and-cress and radishes not come up yet. Left Farmerson repairing the scraper, but when I came home found three men working. I asked the meaning of it, and Farmerson said that in making a fresh hole he had penetrated the gas-pipe. He said it was a most ridiculous place to put the gas-pipe, and the man who did it evidently knew nothing about his business. I felt his excuse was no consolation for the expense I shall be put to.

In the evening, after tea, Gowing dropped in, and we had a smoke together in the breakfast-parlour. Carrie joined us later, but did not stay long, saying the smoke was too

much for her. It was also rather too much for me, for Gowing had given me what he called a green cigar, one that his friend Shoemach had just brought over from America. The cigar didn't look green, but I fancy I must have done so; for when I had smoked a little more than half I was obliged to retire on the pretext of telling Sarah to bring in the glasses.

I took a walk round the garden three or four times, feeling the need of fresh air. On returning Gowing noticed I was not smoking:offered me another cigar, which I politely declined. Gowing began his usual sniffing, so, anticipating him, I said: "You're not going to complain of the smell of paint again?" He said: "No, not this time; but I'll tell you what, I distinctly smell dry rot." I don't often make jokes, but I replied: "You're talking a lot of DRY ROT yourself." I could not help roaring at this, and Carrie said her sides quite ached with laughter.

I never was so immensely tickled by anything I have ever said before. I actually woke up twice during the night, and laughed till the bed shook.

April 13. - An extraordinary coincidence: Carrie had called in a woman to make some chintz covers for our drawing-room chairs and sofa to prevent the sun fading the green rep of the furniture. I saw the woman, and recognised her as a woman who used to work years ago for my old aunt at Clapham. It only shows how small the world is.

April 14. - Spent the whole of the afternoon in the garden, having ths morning picked up at a bookstall for fivepence a capital little book, in good condition, on GARDENING. I procured and sowed some half-hardy annuals in what I fancy will be a warm, sunny border. I thought of a joke, and called out Carrie. Carrie came out rather testy, I

thought. I said: "I have just discovered we have got a lodging-house." She replied: "How do you mean?" I said: "Look at the BOARDERS." Carrie said: "Is that all you wanted me for?" I said: "Any other time you would have laughed at my little pleasantry." Carrie said: "Certainly - AT ANY OTHER TIME, but not when I am busy in the house." The stairs looked very nice. Gowing called, and said the stairs looked ALL RIGHT, but it made the banisters look ALL WRONG, and suggested a coat of paint on them also, which Carrie quite agreed with I walked round to Putley, and fortunately he was out, so I had a good excuse to let the banisters slide. By-the-by, that is rather funny.

April 15, Sunday. - At three o'clock Cummings and Gowing called for a good long walk over Hampstead and Finchley, and brought with them a friend named Stillbrook. We walked and chatted together, except