

A SPOILER AT NOONDAY

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The affair was never officially reported. For this omission there were, no doubt, certain very good reasons. It is doubtful, too, whether house-dwelling people ever came into possession of any of the facts, but round every Romany camp-fire, from the Cheviots to the Channel, the tale was told hilariously and without loss of a single detail, as a matter of great glory to the race.

This was the beginning of it. Napoleon, the son of Napoleon, and his aunt Dorelia were sitting under a hawthorn bush, out of the sun, and the road glared white, away and away, north and south, between great woods.

“Wake up, Blbi” (aunt), “dere’s a man comin.” Napoleon, reached out a dusty hand and pulled his aunt’s black plait under the yellow head-kerchief. Aunt Dorelia woke up with a start.

“Oh, you plaguesome child, leave me alone !

I'm as sleepy as de seven sleepers with all de cider I've drunk at dat farm."

Aunt Dorelia showed the alien, the true child of the 'Kali' (the dark people), in most of her sentences. She could never for the life of her capture the elusive 'th' sound of the English tongue.

"It's a man, my aunt," repeated Napoleon. "He walks for all de world like as if he had a stick up his coat back. He is looking at us an evil look, my aunt."

Aunt Dorelia sat bolt upright, and stared down the road.

"Boy, it's a prastermengero (policeman)," she whispered. "Mi-duvelesti, how I scorn and despise them."

The policeman came to a stand on the road in front of them. “So you’ve come into these parts again, have you ?” he said. “I thought we had learnt you Boswells plain enough last year that you are not wanted hereabouts. You had far best keep yourselves away.”

Aunt Dorelia eyed him with a steely look. “Mister,” she said, “for civil and decent people keep a civil and decent language. We aren’t doin’ anyone no harm, and we aren’t a-thinkin’ none. As to us bein’ any of Boswell’s lot, I haven’t seen one of them for a twelvemonth this side the Thames water. See now, man, I’ve got my hawkin’ licence here, for you or anyone to see, and we aren’t doin’ no harm to your beat by sittin’ lookin’ at it. So don’t be a-harassin’ of us when there is no cause for it.”

The policeman muttered something about the large possibility of her being worse than a Boswell if, indeed, she did not happen to be one; but, thinking of nothing further to say, he scowled ferociously for a long while,

as who should say : “Don’t think to deceive me, my good girl,” and then he went his heavy way down the road at the regulation two miles an hour, and was lost to sight.

“What’s that man, Aunt Dori ?” asked Napoleon.

“Dat’s a serpent, Poley,” he replied, settling herself down again. “Dere’s other serpents that crawl in de grass. Dem sort crawl on de road. Their minds is bad. They’re all for ‘stroyin’ our dear people. Some of us is foolish and makes favour with them, but it brings no manner of good never. For me, I’d scorn to put any discourse on them but lies. Now listen, Poley, listen and mind these words, long as you do live.”

She sat up and looked at him. Her eyes grew small and had a little point of fire in each of them ; and, as she looked, she held him in the grip of her eyes.

“Now, boy, just you harken, and say all this after me. I, Poley Boswell-”

“I, Poley Boswell,”

“Son of Poley Boswell”

“Son of Poley Boswell,”

“Promise on oath”

“Promise on oath,”

“Never to speak to policemen”

“Never to speak to policemen,”

“Without tellin’ ‘em a lie.”

“Without tellin’ ‘em a lie.”

“ For ever never, Amen.”

“For ever never, Amen.” After a little pause.
“What do you mean, my Aunt, without tellin’ ‘em a lie” ? ‘

“Bless de boy ! What a thing to ask ! Why, a lie is de furtherest travellin’ from de dear God’s truth you ever can go. You just say “ It isn’t “ when for certain sure it is. And when it isn’t, you’ll say you’ve got it in your very hands. The furtherest from God’s truth you can get to.”

Poley deliberated. “I see, Aunt,” he said ; and from that day he felt a pleasurable certainty

that he knew the nature of a lie, and that of such must be all intercourse with policemen.

Aunt Dorelia and Poley were always the very best of friends. He liked her better than anyone in the tents. He often accompanied her on her rounds, and stood by wondering as she dispensed fortunes. She called him her little ‘pireno’ (sweetheart), but he knew he was not really that. Her real sweetheart was splendid Uncle Gilderoy Lovell. Poley had not often seen this Uncle Gilderoy, but when he had come to his father’s tents, Poley was immensely impressed. For Gilderoy was tall and straight and powerful. His clothes were always in a remarkable state of repair. The buttons on his coat glistened like stars in the firmament, and he wore rings on his fingers like any woman. Poley noticed that other men friends were invariably civil to Gilderoy, when his caravan came along, and never swore at him or chaffed him not even when they had all got a little drunk together after a fair. He was the god that filled Poley’s Olympus. He used to try and talk to Aunt Dorelia about this god, but she did not say much only kiss him gently, and tell him that

he must be quick and grow up fine and tall like him, and then perhaps he would let him ride his horses to the fair. Beyond that, she was uncommunicative.

No creature on God's earth is so full of moods as a gypsy. No place so full of moods as a gypsy camp. Especially noteworthy among these camp-moods are three the Rollicking, the Reposeful, and the Apprehensive. The first of these Poley loved. The second made him sleepy. The third made him extremely cross. He never knew what all the mystery was about. At such times he discovered himself entirely unimportant, and he experienced the unparalleled discomfort of being always in the way of people in a hurry.

It was on one of these days, when the mood Apprehensive lay heavily upon the camp, that Poley sat, brooding over his wrongs, literally among the ashes, where the camp-fire had been allowed to burn out. He had been trodden on heavily by his father on the caravan steps, and his Aunt Dorelia had sworn

at him instead of comforting him. All life seemed to him like the ashes of a dead camp-fire. Suddenly he saw, through tear-swollen eyes, the astounding sight of Uncle Gilderoy limping feebly into the camp- that same Uncle Gilderoy who always seemed to him to walk proudly, like the Lord Mayor of all England. And now he came tottering forward, and sat suddenly down in the straw, his face low down between his knees. You could hardly see the colour of his clothes for dust, and when he called out, 'Dorelia, Dorelia.' his voice was husky ; you could hardly hear it. Dorelia was on her knees by his side in a moment, pushing back the damp hair from

his forehead and speaking quick, low words to him. The rest came swiftly up, one by one, till there was quite a small crowd surrounding him. Consequently Poley could not see much. What he heard was mainly low, rapid Romany talk, of which he could understand but little yet.

Such sentences as these were interesting, but

not very illuminating : “The horse wasn’t his. No, it wasn’t”

“Left him all in blood, and callin’ out “ I’m dyin’ “ ‘ ‘ Five of them runnin’ after him, and de night was as black as a piece of coal ‘ ‘ Oh, de dear Lord, what a runnin’ ! “

Then Poley tried to improve his position by creeping between the people’s legs into the front row, but in the effort he got entangled in his mother’s skirts, and nearly overturned her into the straw. Whereupon he was abused and cuffed by all within reach, so that he was glad to crawl out of the way and make good his escape. Disconsolate, he sat down at the opening of a little passage among the tall bracken, where the light was green and cool. He caught sight of consolation in its mysterious recesses, and he crept down the passage like a rabbit. It was good to be away from tents where he was suddenly of so little account, and he had the world before him. So he trailed leisurely along narrow tracks, the glorious uncertainties of their winding

course tempting him further and further from the camp.

At last he stood on the broad expanse of a high road, and there he sat him down contentedly on an ant-hill, in delightful anticipation of watching passing motor cars, without let or hindrance.

But suddenly he discovered that he was not alone. Two tall men stood eyeing him from above. Poley eyed them from below. One man, he noted, was ponderous in breadth of person and of boot, and his garb was blue. There was no doubt about this man's category. He was unquestionably a 'serpent of the roads.' As to the other, who stood leaning on a bicycle, Napoleon felt in some doubt. However, he noted that in bulk and build his appearance was unsatisfactory, and, in spite of the quite inoffensive suit of clothes he wore, Poley decided that it behoved him to be on his guard towards this individual also. It was this man, with sober clothes and the subdued voice, who broke the silence.

“Hallo ! Sonny. So you’ve got into these parts again, have you ? And where do you happen to have got your van to-day, eh ? Not so far from here now, I dare say.”

He spoke so altogether amiably and so unlike the natural policeman that, for one perilous moment, Poley felt inclined to be communicative ; but just in time there flashed across his mind Aunt Dorelia’s admonition on the prevailing power of the lie.

Therefore in reply, with one eye upon the serpent, he pointed a dirty finger into a safe and distant quarter of the heavens. The man in black and the man in blue looked at each other in some perplexity.

“Now look ‘ere” began the indubitable policeman fiercely, taking a threatening step towards Napoleon.

“Don’t be so ‘asty, now don’t you be so ‘asty, Trumper,” said the other, with an air of lofty reproof ; and then, in more ingratiating accents : “Now, Sonny, you’re a good lad. I can see you are. I am wanting to go and see your father, and I just want you to take me to him quick. You see, your father and me’s old friends. Wonderful what feelin’ there is between your father and me. Him and me and your uncle too Uncle Gilderoy ; and I wants us all to meet together straight away. I dare say, now, it isn’t so long since you’ve been seem’ your Uncle Gilderoy, eh ? Is it ?”

Napoleon paused painfully to think, and then said slowly : ‘ I havn’t ever seed no Uncle Gilderoy.’

The devoted friend of Poley’s father scratched his head thoughtfully, but P.O. Trumper boiled over.

“There now, ‘e’s lyin’, I tell you ! ‘E’s lyin’ and

deceivin' us. What 'e wants to get the truth out of 'im is..”

“Can't you keep quiet, Trumper ? That's all I asks of you,” the other said with dignity. ‘ You ain't got no hartifice about you no hartifice for a thing of this sort. Just you leave it to menow, and don't you be interferm'.” Then he turned beamingly on Napoleon. “Well, my boy, I can see as you are a werry clever little boy, a werry clever as well as a werry good boy, and you are thinkin' perhaps that we are after doin' a mischief to your dear father, or to your dear uncle very like. But I tell you all we wishes for them is to do them good. AH we wishes for them is a quiet an' 'appy life. Quiet and 'appy. See ? So don't you be makin' any mistakes and be tellin' us things as isn't true about my two friends.”

Poley contemplated him from the ant-hill. It was hard to write down this man, so remarkably amiable and well-behaved a serpent of the roads, and in the few moments of silence, Poley came as near to having a headache as

ever he had been in all his life, trying to penetrate to the bottom of things. But his perplexity was dispelled by the intrusion of the irascible Trumper.

“If you don’t see you’re a-wastin’ your time, Stackpole, you’re a fool. Why, anybody can see as Vs dissemblin’, and ‘e’s sulky. What I say is ‘a stick about ‘im”

But Mr. Stackpole calmly ignored the interruption. He broadened his paternal smile and continued to nod reassuringly to Poley. It was, however, in vain now that he held Mr. Trumper out of the field by the sway of his heavy shoulders. Poley had heard the word “Stick,” and the word “Stick” was an unmasking of the enemy, and Poley knew with whom he had to deal.

“Well now, Sonny,” the pleasant tones of Mr. Stackpole flowed on, “if you don’t believe me, I’ve got along with me ‘ere a fine present

for your Uncle Gilderoy, a present that will make him clasp his hands with joy ; the best present in the world for ‘im, and I’ve been seekin’ round for ‘im for days and days to give it ‘im.”

“Show me it,” said Poley suspiciously.

“Well,” said Mr. Stackpole, with caution, “I don’t mind if I do, though it’s a thing I don’t show to everybody. It’s a most beautiful pair of rings silver rings for his wrists just like your mother and the rest of ‘em wears, only larger, of course, for a man.”

He dived into his side pocket, and brought out exactly what he had described, a pair of shiny rings, which he dangled before Poley’s eyes. They were linked together, which struck Napoleon as a little odd, none the less they looked distinctly decorative, and Poley gazed upon Mr. Stackpole’s gift with admiation.

“And now, my boy, that you’ve seen what I’ve got to give ‘im, and know how pleased he’ll be, I’ll just ask you to take me to your Uncle Gilderoy, as quick as you can, by the very same way you came up from your father’s van. For it’s my belief that your uncle has just come down here to see your father on a little wisit.”

Now Napoleon’s brief experience of life had told him of the dangers that often lurk within the fairest gifts. He looked therefore well at the rings of bright steel dangling in Mr. Stackpole’s fingers. He looked up at his radiant face, but still ever, over Mr. Stackpole’s shoulder, peered the small eyes of Mr. Trumper, and those eyes told unmistakably of war within the heart. Still Napoleon was in a most painful dilemma. For to renounce his Uncle Gilderoy would doubtless mean that the attractive tribute of Mr. Stackpole’s affection would never come into his uncle’s possession ; whereas, to lead the hateful Trumper straightway to the tents would be a deep transgression of Aunt Dorelia’s commandment. Poley breathed heavily and watched a crow uncertainly hovering in the air above

the tree tops. By the time that the crow had alighted on a branch Poley had made up his mind. He struggled slowly up from the ant-hill.

“Come on, J” said he. Then he took Mr. Stackpole’s proffered hand, and, turning his back on his father’s caravans, he set off, with the two at his heels, down a side lane in exactly the opposite direction from the path by which he had found his way into the road.

The camp of the Romany wore an air of suppressed excitement as evening drew on. It was a silent and tense group that crouched round the camp-fire, which was kept low and only dimly smouldering, for fear of the rising of tell-tale smoke above the trees. Uncle Gilderoy lay heavily asleep in the deeper shadows of the tent. But a further cause of anxiety had arisen. Young Napoleon had disappeared and had been missing from the tents for more than three hours.

Aunt Dorelia divided the minutes between watching over the sleeper in the tent and an anxious contemplation of the darkening lane. Under the trees Napoleon's mother walked to and fro with clasped ringers, softly calling, "Poley, where are you got to, Poley ? "

The shadows lengthened, and thicket and bush and winding track were caught, one by one, into the solemn sleep of the woods. Every disappearing patch of sunlight made Mrs. Boswell shiver- Every tree that was claimed by the shadows made her quicken her step up and down the lane. Still she kept up her low cry, "Poley, Poley, where are you got to ?" Then the sun sank right down behind the trees, and the woods lay in twilight. Twilight gave place to darkness, and with the darkness there came a little lonely figure, winding in and out among the great trunks of the trees. Mrs. Boswell gave a scream of joy. "Oh, my dear, blessed boy ! Oh, my dear, blessed little boy ! What have you been a-doing ?" And she ran and stooped to catch him in her open arms.

Strongly reminiscent of the way in which Uncle Gilderoy had entered the camp in the morning, was the manner of Napoleon's entrance at nightfall. Gilderoy had moved unsteadily on his feet. Poley simply staggered as if he were drunk. Gilderoy's breath had come in short and quick puffs. Poley's ragged coat simply heaved with the pantings of his heart. There had been a curious hunted look in Gilderoy's eyes. Poley's eyes were rolling wildly, but closed under tremulous lids, when the women's hands had seized him. Then came the chorus.

“Oh, de dear Lord ! Where has de blessed boy been ? We've been half crazy 'bout you. Wherever in de world, 'Poleon, did you get to ?”

Then he opened his eyes, and gazed vacantly round the ring of faces and round the camp till his eye fell upon the teapot. When a good deal of pleasant warm tea had flowed down his throat, he raised himself painfully.

“I’ve been through the woods to the Public,” he answered.

“Dordi ! Whatever did you go there for, boy ?”

“I’ve been gone to get a present for Uncle Gilderoy.”

“Whatever do you talk like that for ? What does de strange boy mean ?”

“I got these” he said, and he dragged out of his pocket the glittering token of Mr. Stackpole’s regard for his absent friend.

A solemn awe-struck silence fell upon the gypsies, a silence and a rigidity, and every eye seemed frozen to the object Poley was holding out in his hands.

“My dear Lord God ! Handcuffs !” broke out the elder Napoleon, leaping to his feet, and kicking over his mug of beer in his haste, sending it hissing into the ashes.

“Where, in de dear Lord’s name, did you get them cussed things ?” he demanded hoarsely.

“I got ‘em off a prastermengero,” Poley whimpered, with a fist in his eye, for this was not exactly the popularity he had anticipated. “The prastermengero told me he was bringing them along for Uncle Gilderoy, as he was a friend of his. ‘Deed, my dad, dat’s de truth.”

“Ho ! Gilderoy, Gilderoy, atch apre !” (wake up), screamed Aunt Dorelia, tumbling Poley hurriedly off her knees, where he had found a comfortable resting-place. She shook herself free from him and ran to the tent door. “Here’s the prastermengerl after you, and quite nigh the place, and the little Poley has

brought in a pair of handcuffs he's got off them. Make haste, my Gilderoy, and don't lose a blessed minute !”

Then Gilderoy put his head out of the tent, and looked cheer-ully round him. Strange to say, he was once more the splendid Gilderoy of old. The boldness of his face had returned to him again. He wore the old look of gay serenity. And he stood in the tent door, chuckling softly.

“Oh, go ! Go, Gilderoy !” cried Aunt Dorelia, getting hold of his arm. “You've no time to stand there laughin' like that. They'll be here after you in the leastest minute, very like. You're very near crazy, man !”

“Not I go, my girl,” he said, shaking her appealing hand off his arm. “Not I go, till young Poley has told me how he came by these 'ere things. How was it, brother ?”

“I chored (stole) ‘em !” said Poley, with a ring of conscious pride in his voice.

“Where ?”

“I just told you ! It was on the bench by the “ Red Lion “ Public.”

“Dear Lord ! And how did you get there all that way off?”

“I took ‘em out there them two policemen. They said they were a-wanting you, to give you those fine bracelets, and so I took ‘em right down towards the Public.”

“And why, in mi duvel’s name, did you take ‘em there ?” ‘Cause Aunt Dorelia said I was always to lie to ‘em,” Poley made reply.

“Lor !” cried Aunt Dorelia, aghast.

“Well, brother, and when you come to the Public ?”

“Oh, then they went in and swore most awful as I had led ‘em wrong. And then they said bad, terrible things to me about not movin’ off that bench, and they frightened me near out of my life.”

“And them handcuffs ?”

“They was in the man’s pocket, and the man’s coat was on the bench. You see he’d been a mendin’ of his ole broken bike before he went in to drink.”

“And then ?”

“Oh, then I just happened kick against his coat and heard them things rattle inside, and so I just fetched them out of his pocket. After that, didn’t I just run and run ! They took after me, too, I know, ‘cause I heard ‘em come running up the road, like as they was mad just by where I was hid.”

“Oh, my blessed boy I Weren’t you really too ‘fraid of the men to do all that ?” cried his mother with wide open eyes.

Poley thought. Afraid ? Yes ! Hadn’t he just been afraid, nearly shook himself out of his boots with fear ? But what other line of action had been left to him, and what other pathway lay open at once to loyalty and to safety ? But he could not explain all that. Therefore he only said,

“Well, they was Uncle Gilderoy’s own things, wasn’t they ? The man said so his-self.”

“Is that all truth, Toleon, you’re talking the dear God’s truth ?” cried his father, catching him by the coat collar and shaking him excitedly in his grasp.

“Oh, my dad, yes. It’s true as my blessed eyes. Isn’t them the bracelets there to show ?” and Poley began to whimper a little. But Uncle Gilderoy burst out with a great laugh, and he pickt Poley up from the ground and held him shoulder high.

“Ho ! Ho, Poley ! you’re a fine great choren-gero (thief) f(your size,”he laughed. “You and me together, brother, you and me together are good to beat all the mischief of all the prastermengeri of this ‘ere county. Give me them “ wastengerl “ now, little Poley, if so be they’re mine.”

“Oh, go, Gilderoy ! ‘Deed you must go !” cried Dorelia. She was all the time straining her ears to hear sounds of pursuers coming

in upon them from the woods.

Gilderoy gave a last lingering look at the spoil from the enemy's land, and then he put his arm about Dorelia, and with the other hand, slipped one handcuff over her wrist. Then he said in a low voice, for her ear alone, "Well, I'm off now, my girl, but you can keep them fine stolen goods for me, and when next you and me meet, I'll fasten you to me tighter nor ever them there handcuffs could fasten us, and that's true as my dad. So, good-bye, my girl."

He stooped down, and slipped in among the tall bracken, and was quickly lost to sight among the gathering shadows of the wood. Then, with a small sigh, Dorelia departed with the handcuffs into the caravan.

The Romany were on the road betimes next day, and were slipping quickly and quietly along the narrower and more remote roads of

the woodland country. Mrs. Boswell peered with nervous eyes down every lane they crossed, and into the gaps in the hedgerows.

“Now, don’t you be ‘fraid, woman,” called Napoleon the elder, from the caravan shaft, “and don’t you go on like that. There ain’t no fear for our little Poley.”

“I can’t help it, man,” she said tearfully. “It were such a terrible thing for him to do. I can’t help being frightened.”

“You’re a foolish woman,” he replied, scornfully. “It’s not in reason they’ll think of having the law upon him about the handcuffs. You can take my word for gorspel on that. Why, they darn’t say anywhere one blessed little word about what they’ve lost. They know better.”

But he had hardly emphasised his words with

a scornful expectoration when the sudden apparition of two policemen, standing in the middle of the roadway, made him blaspheme with astonishment low down in his throat ; but his countenance remained unmoved and serene.

“Good mornin’, gentlemen,” said Napoleon civilly.

“Don’t you “ good mornin’ “ me, Boswell,” said Mr. Trumper, the irate. “We’ll just trouble you to hand over that brother of yours, and make no bother about it. I’ve got a bit of paper for him here, wanting him perticular.”

“Maybe you do want him, mister, and so do I,” said Napoleon Boswell imperturbably. “You see he owes me a bit of money not a little bit neither and if you gentlemen would just be so good as to find him for me, I’d take it as a kindness. Anyways, he ain’t here, and what’s more, I don’t know on God’s earth

where ‘bouts he is.”

“That’s as it may be, Boswell,” said Stackpole.
“We’ll see.”

“Well, have a look then ?” said Boswell cheerily.

Whether the police officers expected to find little or much, they found nothing, and after a grim and profound search through the caravans, they confronted Boswell again.

“Now, Boswell, there’s another small matter we’ve got between us,” said Stackpole. “There’s a pair of handcuffs of mine as one of them young fox cubs of yours stole from me yesterday. I’ll trouble you to hand them straight over now, without any of your prevarication.”

Mr. Napoleon Boswell's countenance expressed the blankest astonishment, and his wife laughed a mocking incredulous laugh from the caravan.

“Handcuffs ! What is de foolish man talking of ?” she cried. “Like as if we had any sort of use for them villainous things in our trade. Keep them for your own beautiful business, and go your ways.”

“I tell you, Mrs. Boswell, a son of yours picked my pocket of them yesterday,” asserted Mr. Stackpole obstinately, ‘yesterday afternoon at about three o’clock.”

Mrs. Boswell stared, and then she suddenly raised her voice to a scream and the scream of an infuriated gypsy woman is a truly awesome thing to hear “That’s a lie, P’lice Constable ! That’s a blazin’ lie you’re tellin’ me ! You dropped ‘em in the road yourself, you did, and you knows it ; and it’s all in keepin’

with your black ways of wickedness blamin' on innocent people things you've done out of your own falseness ! Oh, yes, I know you, and the mischief in your minds. I know the mother of you, and she ...”

But the police were spared the pain of hearing the history of their mothers, according to Mrs. Boswell, by the intervention of her spouse, who broke in with less vehemence.

“Why, look here now, our son, he's a little lad there, lyin' asleep in the wagon. Go and look at 'im again if you like not seven years old and sleeping as innocent as a daisy. Just you dare tell that story of yours in full Court tell it in the court, I say that that tender hinf ant up and stole your handcuffs off you, and what do you suppose would happen ? Three months for him ? No, by the Lord, but years and years and double years of scorn for you. Why, you'd never hear the end of it till you were safe in your coffins.”

Mr. Trumper opened his mouth wide to reply, but paused to charge the battery adequately, and Mr. Boswell rushed into the gap. ‘Don’t you talk any more! I won’t hear nothin’ about it. ‘Tain’t likely we can stop here on the road talkin’ such foolishness with you. We’ve got to be at Horton Fair, so off you go, gentlemen, and look for the handcuffs in the ditch where you lost ‘em. If so be you don’t find ‘em, you’ll find us right enough on the fair ground. Then you can arrest that powerful six-year-old ruffian there if you’ve a mind to.’

Then he took the reins in his fingers, smacked his horse emphatically on the shoulder, and the caravan creaked on its way. Once or twice Mrs. Boswell was discerned, amiably waving a duster from the caravan window. The policemen never moved. Mr. Trumper glared a while after the derisive duster, and then turned ferociously upon the disconsolate Stackpole. “I always told you that you were no better than a fool, with all your har-tifices and strategies,” he thundered. ‘It’s just them things as will get you into serious trouble some day a trouble worse nor this

‘ere now, if you don’t take a deal more care. It’s true what Boswell says. You daren’t say a word about it, you know you daren’t, and this ‘ere hincident has been played right through, now for ever.”

The caravan disappeared round a bend of the road. The handcuffs found a final resting-place in the shadowy remoteness of a far corner of Gilderoy LovelF’s gorgeous caravan. Occasionally he used pleasantly to contemplate them. When he did so he was sometimes wont to say, ‘Yes, my Dorelia, it’s a faster sort of holding than theirs that holds me and you together. And it was your Poley, do you mind ? who went and snapped the fastening to, that fine day when he’d been out a-walking with the police. Dordl ! I could laugh now when I think of it.’

R. O. M.

