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GRANMORE INVESTMENT COMPANY LIMITED.
By **O. W. ISMAY,** Secretary.

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The Pleasure Of Your Company!
By **SIR WILLIAM THOMAS, M. B. E.**

At a glance Slade was not a particularly pleasant looking fellow—rather the reverse, in fact, with his bulky figure, his rather more like face, and his partly fair hair. But the moment you noticed the mild kindness that shone in his blue eyes, and the sweetness of his smile, you altered your mind about him. I have known many hospitable men (and some women) in my time, but never one who derived such sheer, child-like joy in dispensing it as did Slade. I should imagine that his idea of Heaven would be a long, laden table with a double line of guests thoroughly enjoying the hospitality of his good food and wine!

I had my first experience of his hospitality many years ago—at school, in fact. I was a new boy—he was a term old, and therefore, as far removed from the wretched and rather red-eyed new kid who was me as were the Olympians from the common folk in days of old. I almost ran into him as he was marching across the playground, with an air of importance and a cardboard-box held tenderly beneath his arm.

He gave me a keen glance, and I, having already had bitter experience of these old-timers, shrank away from him. Then I saw his smile, and my fear suddenly left me. "Hello!" he said, and added a sound like "tchik-tchik"—a queer impediment he had in his speech. "New boy (tchik-tchik)?"

I nodded, too miserable to speak. "Keep your pecker up, young fellow (tchik-tchik)!" He gave me a clap on the shoulder—and then, as though struck by a sudden and brilliant idea, added: "Here, come and try some of these tarts. They're extra (tchik-tchik)!" We sat on a seat in an obscure corner of the playground, and I ate rather more than half the supply of very excellent tarts, and, thereafter, felt better. It was only some time later, and by accident, that I discovered he was begging for Murgatroyd, and that the tarts were for a study-tee being given by that great man. Slade had to bolt off to the tuck-shop to obtain a fresh supply, at his own expense, and was thereafter duly clouted by Murgatroyd for being so long.

Later I had many experiences of Slade's incurable hospitality. He was always ready and eager to split his last shilling of toffee, or halve his last sixpence with anyone he could persuade to share it—and if he could find no one he was so miserable that he completely lost his own appetite!

We were never very great chums, for he was always a term ahead of me. We were in the sixth together, but, of course, he left the term before I did—and, curiously enough, I never missed him. There was something singularly unobtrusive about Slade.

We met again when I was on my money-moon, at the village in Sussex. He was genuinely delighted to see me again, and made a tremendous fuss of my wife. He also insisted on taking us straight back to his "little place" for tea. The "little place," I may say, consisted of a perfectly wonderful little abethan manor, and the tea—an honest-to-goodness sit-down tea served on the lawn—was a thing to marvel at! So was the dinner to which he insisted we should stay. He had a wife who seemed almost as charmingly hospitable and unselfish as, and a most delightful baby. During the rest of our stay the hospitality of Slade was almost embarrassing—at any rate, it embarrassed me, because of the sheer impossibility of returning it. But I only tried once to refuse one of his many invitations to dine. He looked at me just as a spaniel I once unjustly struck looked at me, and I'll swear I saw tears at the back of his blue eyes! I hastily amended my objection—and he smiled again.

some horror, for, although his bulk was no less, and his face was still like a round moon, there were beads under his eyes, the paler of his cheeks spoke to my experienced eye of one thing only—lack of food!

"Why," he exclaimed, his hand outstretched, "this is indeed a pleasure (tchik-tchik)!"

He ran his eye over me furtively. The district to which I had been a far from salubrious one, and I was wearing a very old suit of clothes. He drew the obvious (but quite inaccurate) inference from this.

"Are you (tchik-tchik) in a hurry, old lad?"

Before I realized what was going to happen, I had admitted that I wasn't (I had phoned in my story, and was going straight home.

"Then," said he, imperatively, "you must come up to my digs and have a snack, if only for old times sake (tchik-tchik)."

I started to protest, and then, seeing that hurt-dog look coming to his eyes, hastily desisted. I went with him.

His "digs" consisted of a draughting, barely furnished, fireless attic. "Times are not quite what they used to be, old man, but this is quite a cozy little place, really—for a bachelor, you know (tchik-tchik)."

Then he broke up a chair to make a fire, and produced a solitary bicater, a heel of cheese, part of a loaf, and half a bottle of stout. We talked about old times, and he saw to it that I had the lion's share of what was going.

When he left the room for a moment I examined his shabby, frayed old overcoat. What he had hidden in it was a bundle of evening papers. So that was how he got his existence! I knew that Slade was not the sort of man to whom one could suggest anything like charity but I made up my mind I would find a decent job for him, and as a preliminary I suggested:

"Look here, Slade, one good turn deserves another, you know. Will you meet me for lunch to-morrow? I know a nice little place where one can get a topping meal quite cheaply!"

"Why, I should (tchik-tchik) love it, old chap!"

And, though he tried, he couldn't keep the wolfish longing from his voice or his eyes, and, having made the appointment definitely, I went away with a heavy heart.

But the next morning I was down with 'flu, and my wife had to write a letter of regrets and apologies for me. Six days later, when I was better, I called at his digs again—but the attic was bare, and no one knew where Slade had gone to!



MURINE FOR YOUR EYES
I was flabbergasted for the moment. But, as soon as I had slightly recovered myself, the first thing I remembered was the fellow's queer pride—and I knew that if he recognized me he might say good-bye to any chance of helping him.

Observing that I seemed to hesitate, the voice went on: "Possibly you are a stranger here, sir (tchik-tchik)? If so I can assure you that this hotel generous though it is (tchik-tchik) does not supply the necessary bedclothes—and how necessary they are you will soon find out! Now, luckily, I am well-provided (tchik-tchik), for I was fortunate enough to secure a whole 'Telegraph'—as you know, quite a bulky paper! So you see, you will not be robbing me—and it will be a great pleasure to me to offer you such hospitality as is possible—in the circumstances (tchik-tchik)."

While he had been speaking he had removed from beneath his body some of the sheets of newspaper on which he had been lying. Now he held them out to me. I took them—keeping my face averted, and the inarticulate mumble of my reply has not altogether assumed! Something at the back of my throat was making me feel very choky—poor old Slade, still practising his hospitality even in these unutterable depths. . . .

I spread out the sheets of newspaper, with hands that trembled badly, and presently laid myself down beside the man who once again, as so often before, was in a sense my host.

I was sorely tempted to reveal myself to him—to take him to some coffee-stall and stand him the feed I guessed he must be so badly in need of. But I new my man! He would accept my hospitality, possibly, but after that he would disappear, and I should see him no more!

So I kept quiet. Lay with my back to him, and thought out all that I would do for him on the morrow. I would be very clever—very cunning. I would find out his haunts—for even the down-and-outs in London have their regular haunts. Then I would employ a firm of private detectives and one of their men would pretend to be down-and-out also. And he would have a surprising stroke of luck, and be able to stand old Slade a decent suit of clothes and better days.

Then I would come along with a wonderful story of how I had found Slade out—how I had been searching for him all over the place, because I wanted him to help me in some special work—something which only he could do (he was a specialist in one or two subjects, was Slade). And then, from that, it would be quite easy to build up so that eventually I could find him a proper, and fairly remunerative job.

Of course, all this would cost money—but I didn't mind that in the least!

Working out my plans, I must have dozed. When I awoke it was very cold, and a terrible depression got at me. I heard the distant chime of Big Ben—four o'clock. The hour when life is said to be at its lowest ebb.

There was a faint stir from the figure beside me—then a little sigh, and a whispered "tchik-tchik."

After that, silence.

About an hour later the first of the human flossam rose, yawned, stretched, cursed softly under his breath, and, picking up the newspaper on which he had been lying, lurched away into the shadows.

Another and another followed, and I realized that, if my plan was to be carried out, I too must make a move.

Very slowly and cautiously, so as not to disturb poor old Slade, I

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also rose. I did not pick up my newspaper, but slipped quietly away to a spot where I could watch the recumbent form of my old friend without myself being seen.

I waited a long time. One by one the other forlorn figures came reluctantly back from the land of sleep—some sighing, some moaning, some cursing—but all I noticed, taking infinitely more care not to awaken their still slumbering fellows than would have been taken by a smart crowd in an expensive hotel. But to such as them, of course, sleep is not so precious!

At last Slade was the only one left—and he, apparently, still slept. I cannot say how long it was before alarm gripped me, and caused me to abandon all my elaborate plans for his assistance. I went across to him and shook him.

"Slade, old man—let's me, Peter you know! Come on, wake up and breakfast with me, old chap."

But Slade neither answered nor moved. He had eaten his last breakfast, and the sleep he was now enjoying was a long one! I realised, with a cold feeling at my heart, that little sigh, and that faint "tchik-tchik" had been his farewell to a world in which he himself had fared far from well!

I was a witness at the inquest, when the coroner brought in a verdict of "death from natural causes, accelerated by mal-nutrition and exposure." He also talked some nonsense about the "folly" of "such unfortunates" not seeking the

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PULL IN YOUR HEAD, MAJOR—

7-22. J.F.WILLIAMS
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