

J. D. BERESFORD



GOSLINGS

J. D. BERESFORD



GOSLINGS

J. D. Beresford

Goslings

EAN 8596547047322

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



Table of Contents

II— THE OPINIONS OF JASPER THRALE

1

2

3

4

5

III— LONDON'S INCREDULITY

1

2

3

IV— MR BARKER'S FLAIR

1

2

3

V— THE CLOSED DOOR

1

2

3

4

VI— DISASTER

1

2

3

4

VII— PANIC

1

2

3

4

VIII— GURNEY IN CORNWALL

1

2

3

4

IX— THE DEVOLUTION OF GEORGE GOSLING

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

X— EXODUS

1

2

3

BOOK II

THE MARCH OF THE GOSLINGS

XI— THE SILENT CITY

1

2

3

4

5

XII— EMIGRANT

1

2

3

4

5

XIII— DIFFERENCES

1

2

3

4

XIV— AUNT MAY

XV— FROM SUDBURY TO WYCOMBE

1

2

3

4

XVI— THE YOUNG BUTCHER OF HIGH WYCOMBE

1

2

3

4

BOOK III

WOMANKIND IN THE MAKING

XVII— LONDON TO MARLOW

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

XVIII— MODES OF EXPRESSION

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

XIX— ON THE FLOOD

1

2

3

4

XX— THE TERRORS OF SPRING

1

2

3

XXI— SMOKE

1

2

3

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

THE GREAT PLAN

II—THE OPINIONS OF JASPER THRALE

[Table of Contents](#)

1

[Table of Contents](#)

“Lord, how I do envy you,” said Morgan Gurney.

Jasper Thrale sat forward in his chair. “There’s no reason why you shouldn’t do what I’ve done—and more,” he said.

“Theoretically, I suppose not,” replied Gurney. “It’s just making the big effort to start with. You see I’ve got a very decent berth and good prospects, and it’s comfortable and all that. Only when some fellow like you comes along and tells one yarns of the world outside, I get sort of hankerings after the sea and adventure, and seeing the big things. It’s only now and then—ordinary times I’m contented enough.” He stuck his pipe in the corner of his mouth and stared into the fire.

“The only things that really count are feeling clean and strong and able,” said Thrale. “You never really have that feeling if you live in the big cities.”

“I’ve felt like that sometimes after a long bicycle ride,” interpolated Gurney.

“But then the feeling is wasted, you see,” said Thrale.
“When you feel like that and there is something tremendous to spend it upon, you get the great emotion as well.”

“Like the glimmer of St. Agnes’ light, after you’d been eight weeks out of sight of land?” reflected Gurney, going back to one of Thrale’s reminiscences.

“To feel that you are a part of life, not this dead, stale life of the city, but the life of the whole universe,” said Thrale.

“I know,” replied Gurney. “To-night I’ve half a mind to chuck my job and go out looking for mystery.”

“But you won’t do it,” said Thrale.

Gurney sighed and began to analyse the instinct within himself, to find precisely why he wanted to do it.

“Well, I must go,” said Thrale, getting to his feet, “I’ve got to find some sort of lodging.”

“I thought you were going to stay with those Gosling people of yours,” said Gurney.

“No! That’s off. I went to see them last night and they won’t have me. The old man’s making his £300 a year now, and the family’s too respectable to take boarders.” Thrale picked up his hat and held out his hand.

“But, look here, old chap, why the devil can’t you stay here?” asked Gurney.

“I didn’t know that you’d anywhere to put me,” said Thrale.

“Oh, yes. There’s always a room to be had downstairs,” said Gurney.

After a brief discussion the arrangement was made.

“It’s understood I’m to pay my whack,” said Thrale.

“Of course, if you insist——”

When Thrale had gone to fetch his luggage from the hotel, Gurney sat pondering over the fire. He was debating whether he had been altogether wise in pressing his invitation. He was wondering whether the curiously rousing personality of Thrale, and the stories of those still existent corners of the world outside the rules of civilization were good for a civil servant with an income of £600 a year. Gurney, faced with the plain alternatives, could only decide that he would be a fool to throw up a congenial and lucrative occupation such as his own, in order to face present physical discomfort and future penury. He knew that the discomforts would be very real to him at first. His friends would think him mad. And all for the sake of experiencing some high emotion now and again, in order to feel clean and fresh and be able to discover something of the unknown mystery of life.

“I suppose there is something of the poet in me,” reflected Gurney. “And I expect I should hate the discomforts. One’s imagination gets led away....”

[Table of Contents](#)

During the next few evenings the conversations between these two friends were many and protracted.

Thrale was the teacher, and Gurney was content to sit at his feet and learn. He had a receptive mind, he was interested in all life, but Uppingham, Trinity Hall, and the Home Civil had constricted his mental processes. At twenty-nine he was losing flexibility. Thrale gave him back his power to think, set him outside the formulas of his school, taught him that however sound his deductions, there was not one of his premises which could not be disputed.

Thrale was Gurney's senior by three years, and when Thrale left Uppingham at eighteen, he had gone out into the world. He had a patrimony of some £200 a year; but he had taken only a lump sum of £100 and had started out to appease his furious curiosity concerning life. He had laboured as a miner in the Klondike; had sailed, working his passage as an ordinary seaman, from San Francisco to Southampton; he had been a stockman in Australia, assistant to a planter in Ceylon, a furnace minder in Kimberley and a tally clerk in Hong Kong. For nearly nine years, indeed, he had earned a living in every country of the world except Europe, and then he had come back to London and invested the accumulation of income that his trustee had amassed for him. The mere spending of money had no fascination for him. During the six months he had remained in London he had lived very simply, lodging with the Goslings in Kilburn, and, because he could not live idly, exploring every corner of the great city and writing articles for the journals. He might have earned a large income by this latter means, for he had an originality of outlook and a freshness of style that made his contributions eagerly

sought after once he had obtained a hearing—no difficult matter in London for anyone who has something new to say. But experience, not income, was his desire, and at the end of six months he had accepted an offer from the *Daily Post* as a European correspondent—on space. He was offered £600 a year, but he preferred to be free, and he had no wish to be confined to one capital or country.

In those five years he had traversed Europe, sending in his articles irregularly, as he required money. And during that time his chief trustee—a lawyer of the soundest reputation—had absconded, and Thrale found his private income reduced to about £40 a year, the interest on one of the investments he had made, in his own name only, with his former accumulation—two other investments made at the same time had proved unsound.

This loss had not troubled him in any way. When he had read in a London journal of his trustee's abscondence—he was later sentenced to fourteen years' penal servitude—Thrale had smiled and dismissed the matter from his mind. He could always earn all the money he required, and had never, not even subconsciously, relied upon his private fortune.

He had now come back to London with a definite purpose, he had come to warn England of a great danger...

One other distinguishing mark of Jasper Thrale's life must be understood, a mark which differentiated him from the overwhelming majority of his fellow men—women had no fascination for him. Once in his life, and once only, had he approached and tasted experience—with a pretty little Melbourne *cocotte*. That experience he had undertaken deliberately, because he felt that until it had been undergone one great factor of life would be unknown to

him. He had come away from it filled with a disgust of himself that had endured for months...

3

[Table of Contents](#)

Fragments of the long conversations between Thrale and Gurney, the exchange of a few germane ideas among the irrelevant mass, had a bearing upon their immediate future. There was, for instance, a criticism of the Goslings, introduced on one occasion, which had a certain significance in relation to subsequent developments.

Some question of Gurney's prompted Thrale to the opinion that the Goslings were in the main precisely like half a million other families of the same class.

"But that's just what makes them so interesting," said Gurney, not because he believed it, but because at the moment he wanted to lead the conversation into safe ground, away from the too appealing attractions of the big world outside the little village of London.

Thrale laughed. "That's truer than you guess," he said. "Every large generalization, however trite, is a valuable contribution to knowledge—if it's more or less accurate."

"Generalize, then, mon vieux," suggested Gurney, "from the characters and doings of your little geese."

“I’ve seen glimmerings of the immortal god in the old man,” said Thrale, “like the hint of sunlight seen through a filthy pane of obscured glass. He’s a prurient-minded old beast leading what’s called a respectable life, but if he could indulge his ruling desire with absolute secrecy, no woman would be safe with him. In his world he can’t do that, or thinks he can’t, which comes to precisely the same thing. He is too much afraid of being caught, he sees danger where none exists, he looks to all sorts of possibilities, and won’t take a million-to-one chance because he is risking his all—which is included in the one word, respectability.”

“Jolly good thing. What?” remarked Gurney.

“Good for society as a whole, apparently,” replied Thrale, “but surely not good for the man. I’ve told you that I have seen glimmerings of the god in him, but outside the routine of his work the man’s mind is clogged. He’s not much over fifty, and he has no outlet, now, for his desires. He’s like a man with choked pores, and his body is poisoned. And in this particular Gosling is certainly no exception either to his class or to the great mass of civilized man. Well, what I wonder is whether in a society which is built up of interdependent units the whole can be sound when the greater number of the constituent units are rotten.”

“But look here, old chap,” protested Gurney, “if things are as you say, and men rule the country, why shouldn’t they alter public opinion, and so open the way to do as they jolly well please?”

“Because the majority are too much ashamed of their desires to dare the attempt in the first place, and in the second because they don’t wish to open the way for other men. They aren’t united in this; they are as jealous as

women. If they once opened the way to free love, their own belongings wouldn't be safe."

"What's your remedy, then?"

"Oh! a few thousand more years of moral development," said Thrale, carelessly, "an evolution towards self-consciousness, a fuller understanding of the meaning of life, and a finer altruism."

"You don't look far ahead," remarked Gurney.

"Do you think anyone can look even a year ahead?" asked Thrale.

"There have been some pretty good attempts in some ways—Swedenborg, for instance, and Samuel Butler..."

"Yes, yes, that's all right, in some ways—the development of certain sorts of knowledge, for example. But there is always the chance of the unpredictable element coming in and upsetting the whole calculation. Some invention may do it, an unforeseen clash of opinions or an epidemic..."

For a time they drifted further away from their original topic till some remark reminded Gurney that he had meant to ask a question and had forgotten it.

"By the way," he said, "I wanted to ask you what you meant when you said you had seen a god in old Gosling?"

"Just a touch of imagination and wonder, now and again," replied Thrale. "Something he was quite unconscious of himself. I remember standing with him on Blackfriars Bridge, and he looked down at the river and said: 'I s'pose it was clean once, banks and sand and so on, before all this muck came.' Then he looked at me quickly to see if I was

laughing at him. That was the god in him trying to create purity out of filth, even though it was only a casual thought. It was smothered again at once. His training reasserted itself. 'Lot better for trade the way it is, though,' was his next remark."

"But how can you alter it?" asked Gurney.

"My dear chap, you can't alter these things by any cut-and-dried plan, any more than you can dam the Gulf Stream. We can only lay a brick or two in the right place. We aren't the architects; the best of us are only bricklayers, and the best of the best can only lay two or three bricks in a lifetime. Our job is to do that if we can. We can only guess very feebly at the design of the building; and often it is our duty partly to pull down the work that our forefathers built..."

Presently Gurney asked if his companion had ever seen a god in Mrs. Gosling.

Thrale shook his head. "It didn't come within my experience," he said. "Don't condemn her on that account, but she, like all the women I have ever met, has been too intent upon the facts of life ever to see its mystery. Mrs. Gosling hadn't the power to conceive an abstract idea; she had to make some application of it to her own particular experience before she could understand the simplest concept. Morality to her signified people who behaved as she and her family did; wickedness meant vaguely, criminals, Sarah Jones who was an unmarried mother, and anyone who didn't believe in the God of the Established Church. Always people, you see, in this connexion; in others it might be things; but ideas apart from people or things she couldn't grasp. Her two daughters thought in precisely the same way..."

[Table of Contents](#)

One Saturday afternoon Thrale came into Gurney's chambers and burst out: "Just Heaven! why you fools stand it I can't imagine!"

"What's up now?" asked Gurney.

Thrale sat down and drew his chair up to the table. The pupils of his dark eyes were contracted and seemed to glow as if they were illuminated from within.

"I was in Oxford Street this morning, watching the women at the sales," he said. "All the biggest shops in London are devoted to women's clothes. Do you realize that? And it's not only that they're the biggest—there are more of them than any other six trades put together can show, bar the drink trade, of course. The north side of Oxford Street from Tottenham Court Road to the Marble Arch is one long succession of huge drapers and milliners. And what in God's name is the sense or reason of it? What do these huge shops sell?"

"Dresses, I suppose," ventured Gurney, "and stockings, underlinen, corsets, hats, and so on."

"*And* frippery," said Thrale, fixing his brilliant dark eyes on Gurney, "*And frippery*. Machine lace, ribbons, yokes, cheap blouses, feathers, insertions, belts, fifty thousand different kinds of bits and rags to be tacked on here and there, worn

for a few weeks and then thrown away. Millions of little frivolous, stupid odds and ends that are bought by women and girls of all classes below the motor-class, to make a pretence—gauds and tawdry rubbish not one whit better from the artistic point of view than the shells and feathers of any half-naked Melanesian savage. In fact, meaningless as the Melanesians' decorations are, they do achieve more effect. And what's it all for, I ask you?"

Thrale paused, and Gurney offered his solution.

"The sex instinct, fundamentally, isn't it?" he said. "The desire—often subconscious, no doubt—to attract."

"Well, if that is so," said Thrale, "what terribly unintelligent fools women must be! If women really set out to attract men, they must realize that they are pandering to a sex instinct. Do you think any man is attracted by a litter of odds and ends? Doesn't every woman sneer when they see some Frenchwoman, perhaps, who dresses to display her figure instead of hiding it? Don't they bitterly resent the fact that their own men-folk are resistlessly drawn to stare at, and inwardly desire, such a woman? Don't they know perfectly well that such a woman is attractive to men in a way their own disguised bodies can never be?"

"Yes, old chap; but your average middle-class English girl hasn't got the physical attractions to start with," put in Gurney.

"Look at it in another way, then," replied Thrale. "Doesn't every woman know perfectly well—haven't you heard them say—that a nurse's dress is very becoming—a plain, more or less tightly-fitting print dress, with linen collars and cuffs? Don't you know yourself that that attire is more attractive to you than any befrilled and bedecorated

arrangement of lace, ribbons and gauds? Why are so many men irresistibly attracted by parlourmaids and housemaids?"

"Yes," meditated Gurney, "that's all true enough. Well, are women all fools, or what is it?"

"The majority of women are *sheep*," said Thrale. "They follow as they are led, and don't or won't see that they are being led. And the leaders are chiefly men—men who have trumpery to sell. Why do the fashions change every year—sometimes more often than that in matters of detail? Because the trade would smash if they didn't. New fashions must be forced on the buyers, or the returns would drop; women would be able to make their last year's clothes do for another summer. That must be stopped at any cost. Those vast establishments must maintain an enormous turnover if they are to pay their fabulous rents and armies of assistants. There are two means of keeping up the sales, and both are utilized to the full. The first is to supply cheap, miraculously cheap, rubbish which cannot be made to last for more than a season. The second is to alter the fashions which affect the more durable stuffs, so that last year's dresses cannot be used again. This fashion-working scheme reacts upon the poorer buyers, because it compels them to do something to imitate the prevailing mode, if they can't afford to have entirely new frocks. That is where all these bits of frilling and what-not come in; make-believe stuff to imitate the real buyers—the large majority of whom don't buy in Oxford Street, by the way.

"Mind you, there is a limit to the sheep-like docility of women in this connexion. They refused, for instance, to return to the crinoline, and they refused the harem skirt—one of the very few sensible devices of the fashion-imposers. And this in the face of the prolonged, strenuous

and expensive methods of the fashion ring. With regard to the crinoline, I think that failure was due to over-conceit on the part of the fashion-imposers. They had come to believe that they could make the poor fools of women accept anything, and on the two marked occasions on which they attempted to introduce the crinoline, the contrast to the existing mode was too glaring. If the fraud had been worked more gradually by way of full skirts and flounces, some modification of the crinoline to the necessities of 'buses and tubes might have been foisted upon the buyers."

"Oh, my Lord!" ejaculated Gurney; "do you mean to say that women just accept these fashions without any sense or reason at all?"

"You're rather a blithering ass, at times, Gurney," remarked Thrale.

Gurney smiled. "You don't give me time to think," he said, "I feel like an accumulator being charged. I haven't had time yet to begin working on my own account. You're so mighty—so mighty dynamic—and positive, old chap."

"Well, it's so absurdly obvious that there must be a reason for women accepting the fashions, you idiot!" returned Thrale. "And the first and biggest reason is class distinction. The women with money want to brag of it by differentiating themselves from the ruck of their sisters, and the poor women try to imitate them to the best of their ability. Women dress for other women. There is sex rivalry as well as class rivalry at the bottom of it, but they dare not put sex rivalry first and dress to please men alone, because they are afraid of the opinions of other women."

"Sounds all right," said Gurney, and sighed.

“And we, damned fools of men, stand all this foolishness and *pay* for it. Pay, by Jove! I should think so! I should like to see the trade returns of all the stuff of this kind that is sold in England alone in one year. They would make the naval estimates look small, I’ll warrant. We even imitate the women’s foolishness in some degree. There are men’s fashions too, but the madness is not so marked; fortunately the body of middle-class men can’t afford to make fools of themselves as well as of their women—though they are asses enough to wear linen shirts and collars which are uncomfortable unsightly and expensive to wash.”

Gurney regarded his lecturer’s canvas shirt and collar, and then stood up and observed his own immaculate linen in the glass over the fireplace. “I must say I like stiff collars and shirts,” he remarked; “gives one a kind of spruceness.”

Thrale laughed. “It’s only another sex instinct,” he said. “Women like men to look ‘smart.’ When you are playing games with other men, or camping out, you don’t care a hang for your ‘spruceness.’ Oh! and I’ll admit the class distinction rot comes in too. You’re afraid of public opinion, afraid of being thought common. If the *jeunesse dorée* started the soft shirt in real earnest, you would soon be able to persuade your women that that looked smart or spruce, or whatever you liked to call it.”

“Look here, you know,” said Gurney, “you’re an anarchist, that’s what you are.”

“You’re half a woman, Gurney,” said Thrale. “You think in names. All people are ‘anarchists’ who think in ideas instead of following conventions.”

[Table of Contents](#)

Not until he had been staying with Gurney for more than a week did Thrale speak explicitly of his purpose in London. But one cold evening at the end of January, as the two men were sitting by a roaring fire that Gurney had built up, the younger man unknowingly opened the subject by saying,

“Things are pretty slack at the present moment. The *Evening Chronicle* has even fallen back on the ‘New Plague’ for the sake of news.”

“What do they say?” asked Thrale. He was lying back in his chair, nursing one knee, and staring up at the ceiling.

“Oh, the usual rot!” said Gurney “That the thing isn’t understood, has never been ‘described’ by any medical or scientific authority; that it is apparently confined to one little corner of Asia at the present time, but that if it got hold in Europe it might be serious. And then a lot of yap about the unknown forces of Nature; special article by a chap who’s been reading too much Wells, I should imagine.”

“It seems so incredible to us in twentieth-century England that anything really serious could happen,” remarked Thrale. “We are so well looked after and cared for. We sit down and wait for some authority to move, with a perfect confidence that when it does move, everything is bound to be all right.”

“With such an organism as society has become,” said Gurney, “things must be worked like that. A certain group to perform one function, other groups for other functions, and so on.”

“Cell-specialization?” commented Thrale. “Some day to be perfected in socialism.”

“I believe socialism must come in some form,” said Gurney.

“Yes, it’s an interesting speculation, in some ways,” said Thrale, “but the higher forces are about to put a new spoke in the human wheel, and the machinery has to be stopped for a time.”

“What have you got hold of now?” asked Gurney.

“The thoughtful man,” went on Thrale, still staring up at the ceiling, “would have asked me to define my expression ‘the higher forces.’”

“Well, old man, I knew that was beyond even your capacity,” returned Gurney, “so I thought we might ‘cut the cackle and come to the ‘osses.’”

Thrale suddenly released his knee and sat upright; then he moved his chair so that he directly confronted his companion.

“Look here, Gurney,” he said, and the pupils of his eyes contracted till they looked like black crystal glowing with dark red light. “Do you realize how some outside control has always diverted man’s progress; how when nations have tended to crystallize into specialized government, some irruption from outside has always broken it up? You can trace the principle through all known history, but the most marked cases are those of the Egyptians and the

Incas—two nations which had developed specialized government to a science. There is some power—whether we can credit it with an intelligence in any way comprehensible to us from the feeble basis of our own knowledge, I doubt—but there is some outside power which will not permit mankind to crystallize into an organism. From our, human, point of view, from the point of view of individual comfort and happiness, it would be of enormous benefit to us if we could develop a system of specialization and swamp the individual in the community. And in times of peace and prosperity that is always the direction in which civilization tends to evolve. But beyond a certain point—as the individualists have not failed to point out—that state of perfect government will lead to stagnation, degeneration, death. Now, in the little span of time that we know as the history of mankind, there has been no world-civilization. As soon as a nation tended to become over-civilized and degenerate, some other, younger, more barbarous people flowed over them and wiped them out. In the case of Peru the process had gone very far, owing to the advantages of the Incas' peculiar segregation. But then, you see, the development in the East, the new world (I ought to explain that I find the oldest civilization of the present epoch in America) reached a point in Spain and England which sent them out across a hemisphere to wreck and destroy the Incas.

“Well, we have now reached a condition when the nations are in touch with one another and progress becomes more general. We are in sight of a system of European, Colonial and Trans-Atlantic Socialism, more or less reciprocal and carrying the promise of universal peace. Whence, you ask, is any irruption to come that will break up this strong crystallizing system which is admittedly to work for the happiness and comfort of the individual? There has been much talk of an Asiatic invasion, a rebellious India or an

invading China, but those civilizations are older than ours; if we can trust the precedents of history in this connexion, the conquerors have always been the younger race." He broke off abruptly.

Gurney had been sitting fascinated and hypnotized by the compulsion of Thrale's personality; he had been held by the keen, intent stare of those wonderful dark eyes. When Thrale stopped, however, the tension snapped.

"Well," remarked Gurney, "I think that's a jolly good argument to prove that we have, at last, reached a stage of universal progress towards the ideal."

"You can't conceive," asked Thrale, "of any cataclysm that would involve a return to the old segregation of nations, and bring about a new epoch beginning with separated peoples evolving on more or less racial lines?"

Gurney pondered for a moment or two and then shook his head.

"Little wonder," said Thrale, "I had often considered this problem, and I could think of no upheaval which would bring about the familiar effect of submersion. Years ago there was always the possibility of a European war, but even that would have only a temporary effect despite the forecast of Mr. Wells in *The War in the Air*. No, I considered and wondered if my theory was faulty. I was willing to reject it if I could find a flaw...."

"And then?" questioned Gurney.

Thrale leaned forward again and once more compelled the other's fascinated attention.

“And then, when I was in Northern China, seven weeks ago, I saw a solution, so appalling, so inconceivably ghastly, that I rejected it with horror. For days I went about fighting my own conviction. I couldn’t believe it! By God, I *would* not believe it!

“There, within a hundred and fifty miles of the border of Tibet, the outside forces have planted a seed which has been maturing in secret for more than a year. There that seed has taken root, and from that centre is spreading more and more rapidly, and it may spread over the whole world. It is like some filthily poisonous and incredibly prolific weed, and its seeds, now that it has once established itself, are borne by every wind, dropping here and there in an ever-widening circle, every seed becoming a fresh centre of distribution outwards.”

“But what, in Heaven’s name, is the weed?” whispered Gurney.

“A new disease—a new plague—unknown by man, against which, so far as we know, he has no weapon. In those scattered villages among the mountains there are no men left to work. Everything is done by women. They are prohibited more fiercely than any leper settlement. No one dares to approach within five miles of them. But every week or two another village is smitten, and the inhabitants fly in terror and carry the infection with them.

“Gurney, it’s come to Europe! There are new centres of distribution in Russia at the present time. If it isn’t stopped it will come to England. And it doesn’t decimate the population. It wipes the men clean out of existence; not one man in ten thousand, the Chinese say, escapes.

“Is it possible that this can be the means of the ‘higher forces’ I spoke of, the means to segregate the nations once more?”

III—LONDON’S INCREDULITY

[Table of Contents](#)

1

[Table of Contents](#)

Jasper Thrale’s mission was no easy one. England, it appeared, was slightly preoccupied at the moment, and had no ear for warnings. Generally, he was either treated as a fanatic and laughed at, or he was told that he greatly exaggerated the danger and that these matters could safely be entrusted to the Local Government Board, which had brilliantly handled the recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease. But there were some exceptions to this rule.

His first definite statement had been made to his own editor, Watson Maxwell of the *Daily Post*.

“Yes,” said Maxwell, when he had given Thrale a patient hearing, “it is certainly a matter that needs attention. Would you care to go out as our special commissioner and report at length?...”

“There isn’t time,” replied Thrale. “The thing is urgent.”

Maxwell brought his eyebrows together and looked keenly at his correspondent. “Do you really think it’s so serious,