



TWO TUPPENNY ONES, PLEASE (1917)

By Katherine Mansfield

Lady: Yes, there is, dear; there's plenty of room. If the lady next to me would move her seat and sit opposite. . . . Would you mind? So that my friend may sit next to me. . . . Thank you so much! Yes, dear, both the cars on war work; I'm getting quite used to 'buses. Of course, if we go to the theatre, I 'phone Cynthia. She's still got one car. Her chauffeur's been called up. . . . Ages ago. . . . Killed by now, I think. I can't quite remember. I don't like her new man at all. I don't mind taking any reasonable risk, but he's so obstinate—he charges everything he sees. Heaven alone knows what would happen if he rushed into something that wouldn't swerve aside. But the poor creature's got a withered arm, and something the matter with one of his feet, I believe she told me. I suppose that's what makes him so careless. I mean—well! . . . Don't you know! . . .

Friend:?

Lady: Yes, she's sold it. My dear, it was far too small. There were only ten bedrooms, you know. There were only ten bedrooms in that house. Extraordinary! One wouldn't believe it from the outside—would one? And with the governesses and the nurses—and so on. All the menservants had to sleep out. . . . You know what that means.

Friend:!!

Conductor: Fares, please. Pass your fares along.

Lady: How much is it? Tuppence, isn't it? Two tuppenny ones, please. Don't bother—I've got some coppers, somewhere or other.

Friend:!

Lady: No, it's all right. I've got some—if only I can find them.

Conductor: Parse your fares, please.

Friend:!

Lady: Really? So I did. I remember now. Yes, I paid coming. Very well, I'll let you, just this once. War time, my dear.

Conductor: 'Ow far do you want ter go?

Lady: To the Boltons.



Conductor: Another 'a'penny each.

Lady: No—oh, no! I only paid tuppence coming. Are you quite sure?

Conductor: (savagely). Read it on the board for yourself.

Lady: Oh, very well. Here's another penny. (To friend): Isn't it extraordinary how disobliging these men are? After all, he's paid to do his job. But they are nearly all alike. I've heard these motor 'buses affect the spine after a time. I suppose that's it ... You've heard about Teddie—haven't you?"

Friend:

Lady: He's got his ... He's got his ... Now what is it? Whatever can it be? How ridiculous of me!

Friend:?

Lady: Oh, no! He's been a Major for ages.

Friend:?

Lady: Colonel? Oh, no, my dear, it's something much higher than that. Not his company—he's had his company a long time. Not his battalion ...

Friend:?

Lady: Regiment! Yes, I believe it is his regiment. But what I was going to say is he's been made a ... Oh, how silly I am! What's higher than a Brigadier-General? Yes, I believe that's it. Chief of Staff. Of course, Mrs. T.'s frightfully gratified.

Friend:!

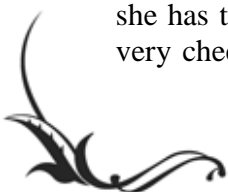
Lady: Hasn't he? He's been most lucky – most mercifully spared ... so far. But he's back again, you know, and 'over the top' every day.

Friend:

Lady: Oh, my dear, everybody goes over the top nowadays. Whatever his position may be. And Teddy is such a sport, I really don't see how ... Too dreadful—isn't it!

Friend:

Lady: Didn't you know? She's at the War Office, and doing very well. I believe she got a rise the other day. She's something to do with notifying the deaths, or finding the missing. I don't know exactly what it is. At any rate, she says it is too depressing for words, and she has to read the most heartrending letters from parents, and so on. Happily, they're a very cheery little group in her room—all officers' wives, and they make their own tea,



and get cakes in turn from Stewart's. She has one afternoon a week off, when she shops or has her hair waved. Last time she and I went to see Yvette's Spring Show.

Friend:?

Lady: No, not really. I'm getting frightfully sick of these coat-frocks, aren't you? I mean, as I was saying to her, what is the use of paying an enormous price for having one made by Yvette, when you can't really tell the difference, in the long run, between it and one of those cheap ready-made ones. Of course, one has the satisfaction for oneself of knowing that the material is good, and so on—but it looks nothing. No; I advised her to get a good coat and skirt. For, after all, a good coat and skirt always tells. Doesn't it?

Friend:!

Lady: Yes, I didn't tell her that—but that's what I had in mind. She's much too fat for those coat-frocks. She goes out far too much at the hips. I half ordered a rather lovely indefinite blue one for myself, trimmed with the new lobster red ... I've lost my good Kate, you know.

Friend:!

Lady: Yes, isn't it annoying! Just when I got her more or less trained. But she went off her head, like they all do nowadays, and decided that she wanted to go into munitions. I told her when she gave notice that she would go on the strict understanding that if she got a job (which I think is highly improbable), she was not to come back and disturb the other servants.

Conductor: (savagely). Another penny each, if you're going on.

Lady: Oh, we're there. How extraordinary! I never should have noticed ...

Friend:?

Lady. Tuesday? Bridge on Tuesday? No, dear, I'm afraid I can't manage Tuesday. I trot out the wounded every Tuesday you know. I let cook take them to the Zoo, or some place like that—don't you know. Wednesday—I'm perfectly free on Wednesday.

Conductor: It'll be Wednesday before you get off the 'bus if you don't 'urry up.

Lady: That's quite enough, my man.

Friend:!!

