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Opening extract from

Mister Cleghorn's Seal

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1

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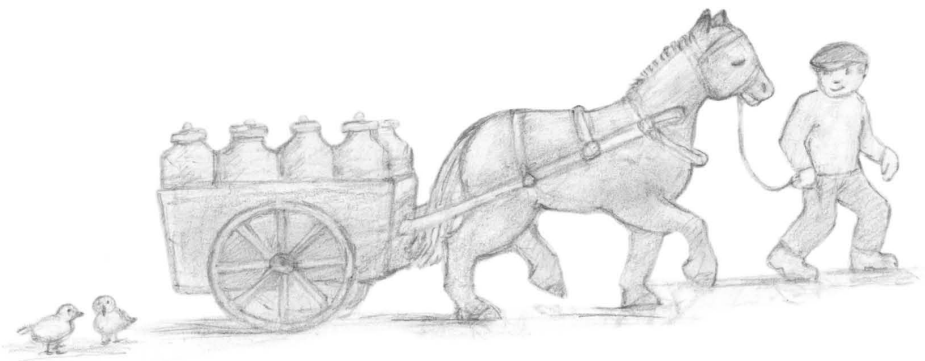
Mr Albert Cleghorn was sitting on the balcony outside his flat, watching the sunrise. It was rather a good sunrise, but the pink and orange sky did not cheer him.

Seven o'clock in the morning, he thought. What on earth was he going to do with the whole long day ahead?

Normally at this time Mr Cleghorn was already busy in his shop, sending the paper boy off on his round, laying out the day's editions, and selling them –



along with pipe tobacco and those newfangled cigarettes – to early travellers on their way to the station. Later he'd be rearranging the twelve big jars of different coloured sweets ready for when the children came out of school, and chatting with the local ladies who needed a pencil or a notebook or some brown wrapping paper.

I should never have sold the shop, thought Mr Cleghorn, even though the people who bought it had paid him a tidy sum. *Whatever am I going to do with myself?*

In the street below, things were beginning to stir. The milkman was leading his horse from house to house and the postman – looking up and seeing Mr Cleghorn on his balcony – waved and pointed, to tell him that he had a letter. When Mr Cleghorn went

downstairs to fetch it, he found the janitor arguing with a little middle-aged lady. The lady was holding a cage with a small bird in it, and the janitor was shouting, as usual.

"No pets!" shouted the janitor. "You know the rules! No pets in the flats!"

"Oh for goodness' sake," said the lady. "It's only my sister's canary, and I'm looking after it for a few days."

"Well, I shall expect to see it gone by the end of the week," said the janitor and retreated behind the window of his cubbyhole to watch for any further infringements of the rules.