

**THE OLD INDISPENSABLES;
A ROMANCE
OF WHITEHALL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649050284

The Old Indispensables; A Romance of Whitehall by Edward Shanks

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

EDWARD SHANKS

**THE OLD INDISPENSABLES;
A ROMANCE
OF WHITEHALL**

THE OLD INDISPENSABLES

491
5568

**THE OLD
INDISPENSABLES**
A ROMANCE OF WHITEHALL
BY EDWARD SHANKS

FCS 712W

199029
28/11/25

LONDON: MARTIN SECKER
XVII BUCKINGHAM STREET, ADELPHI

TO
J. C. SQUIRE

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

THE RT. HON. HENRY SMITH, M.P.	<i>His Majesty's Secretary of State for Circumlocutory Affairs.</i>
ARTHUR MULLINS, M.P.	<i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Circumlocution Office.</i>
SIR JAMES BOOTLE, K.C.B.	<i>Permanent Under-Secretary.</i>
MR. WILLIAM BLOOD, M.V.O.	<i>Director of Circumvention in the Circumlocution Office.</i>
MR. THOMAS BURNET	<i>Assistant Director of Circumvention.</i>
MR. FREDERICK PYEBLEW } MR. WILLIAM HARPER }	<i>Members of the Higher Division employed in the Circumvention Branch.</i>
MR. GEORGE EVANS } MR. EDWIN ROKER }	<i>Members of the Second Division employed in the same.</i>
CYRIL HAMMOND	<i>Temporary Assistant employed in the same.</i>
MR. HENRY WILSON, I.S.O. } MR. PAUL JOHNSON } MR. CLARENCE BULGE }	<i>Private Secretaries to the Director of Circumvention.</i>
MR. JAMES RUNTER, C.B.	<i>Financial Adviser in the Circumlocution Office.</i>
MR. AUGUSTUS HOSKINS, C.M.G.	<i>Director of Establishment in the same.</i>
MR. ERNEST TUPPER, M.V.O.	<i>Director of Delays and Evasions in the same.</i>
MR. TOWLE } MR. MINNS } MR. CUXPER } MR. WHALE } MR. BADGER } MR. POLFERRO }	<i>Members of the Towle Committee of Enquiry into the Organisation of the Circumlocution Office.</i>
ALGERNON } PERCY } HEREWARD }	<i>Private Secretaries to the Secretary of State.</i>

MISS JOAN MAINWARING

*A temporary woman clerk
employed in the Circum-
vention Branch.*

DAPHNE PHYLLIS

*A temporary girl clerk em-
ployed in the same.*

NOTE.—Certain of the incidents in this book are founded on incidents which actually occurred, but no attempt has been made, or, I hope, will be suspected, at the portraiture of real persons.

E. S.

I

It was comparatively early in the war that the Circumvention Branch of the Circumlocution Office outgrew its limited accommodation and was obliged to move. It happened, in fact, before the Office of Works had discovered the enchanting possibilities of the great hotels. Some time had still to elapse before the heads of newly created branches were to sit in magnificent banqueting halls and thence to issue their orders to clerks working amid the terrifying wall-papers of the top-floor bedrooms. (It did once happen that a potentate detected in himself the symptoms of incipient agoraphobia and removed to a bedroom, installing his typist in the banqueting-room in his stead. But that belongs to another chapter of our rough island story.) Not yet, at the time of which I write, was the civilian visitor, withdrawing from the presence of the minor omnipotent who had refused him a permit for the release of shampooing oil, abashed and perplexed by the sight of an unobtrusive cupboard enigmatically labelled with the word BOOTS. The ideas of the Office of Works were still pedestrian and narrow in their range. It was imagined that for official purposes an office was desirable.

But the needs of the Circumvention Branch were growing acute. It had been little more than a matter for jesting when four boy clerks were sent to join a room which had previously been thought overcrowded by two Second Division clerks and their five temporary

assistants. It caused no inconvenience at all when all the occupants of this room, now swelled to a total number of twenty-three, were driven into the corridor to make room for four hopeless failures of superior rank whom the Derogation of Crown Appanages Office had cheerfully lent to assist the Circumvention Branch in its labours. It is true that some remark was occasioned when a Higher Division clerk (albeit a very little one, like the souls of the penguins) was also turned out of his room. But they put him at a corner, a distinguished though draughty position, arranged a screen round him and gave him a shorthand typist who could not spell and of whom he was desperately afraid. Thus the claims of caste were satisfied.

The crisis came at last quite suddenly. His Majesty's Secretary of State for Circumlocutory Affairs felt himself growing a little stale and departed from his rule of ceasing work only to sleep and waking only to resume his labours. The first battle of Ypres had been brought to a successful conclusion, and he felt that he owed himself a little relaxation. Besides, he had been outwitted the day before by a contractor, and the day before that by a colleague. He attributed these misfortunes to the result of overwork. So when he was walking from his office to the House and met on the way a polished female friend who invited him to dinner for that night, he felt that for once at least in this way he could best serve the State. The consequences of his overwork must indeed have been serious for him to have missed a certain gleam of purpose in the lady's eye.

He woke the next morning with an uneasy feeling