

Transcripts

The Gibson Pharmacy
Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries

Story 1:

“Penny buys some cough mixture”.

CAST

Mrs Penny Clearwater

Working-class mother, early 30s

Miss Alice Hartigan

Apprentice, aged 15 to 20

Mr Gibson

Pharmacist, aged 40

Additional voice role

Cedric, aged 3 (coughing only)

Underlined content refers to variable content
which will be triggered by real-time conditions.

SOUND OF A BELL RINGING AS THE DOOR TO THE VICTORIAN PHARMACY IS OPENED.

Alice Hartigan: Good morning/afternoon/evening, Ma'am. How may I be of assistance?

SOUND OF CEDRIC COUGHING.
CLEARLY VERY ILL.

Mrs Clearwater: Have a care, Cedric! Cover your mouth with your hand when you cough. He's had this infernal cough for months, Miss. My nerves are in rags. (CEDRIC COUGHS.) Don't take on so. Please excuse my boy.

Alice Hartigan: Mr Gibson has an excellent cure for such things. A tincture of chloroform and morphine. It worked like an enchantment just last week on another little boy, did it not, sir?

Mr Gibson: May I enquire how long your son has been labouring under this affliction?

Mrs Clearwater: Near on three months, sir.

Mr Gibson: Any blood?

Mrs Clearwater: No blood, sir. Just at times he is as cold as ice and I think he will cough hisself to death.

Alice Hartigan: Shall I fetch the chlorodyne tincture, sir?

Mr Gibson: No need for that, Alice. I daresay a bottle of our cough mixture will set him straight.

Mrs Clearwater: I am greatly obliged.

Mr Gibson: That will be one shilling and ninepence.

SOUND OF THE TILL OPENING AND EXCHANGE OF COINS. THE TILL CLOSES.

Mrs Clearwater: Good day to you, Sir. Miss.

SOUND OF PLAINTIVE COUGHING AND RETREATING FOOTSTEPS AS MRS CLEARWATER AND HER SON LEAVE. WE HEAR THE DOOR CLOSE BEHIND THEM AND THE BELL ABOVE THE DOOR MAKES ITS USUAL RING.

ALICE SIGHS.

Mr Gibson: You're wondering, perhaps, why I did not let her have the chlorodyne tincture?

Alice Hartigan: Yes, sir. She seemed exceedingly troubled - and I fear for the boy.

Mr Gibson: I would gladly have sold it to her, but I had a suspicion she couldn't afford it.

Alice Hartigan: Oh.

SOUND OF MR GIBSON WALKING TOWARD THE
SIGHT TESTING ROOM.

Mr Gibson: Don't be downcast, Alice. It was a
decent impulse in you. You have
the makings of a very fine
pharmacist. (PAUSE) And now, I
wonder, will there be time enough
for me to take tea before the next
customer arrives?

SOUND OF THE DOOR CLOSING AS MR GIBSON
LEAVES VIA THE SIGHT TESTING ROOM.

Alice Hartigan: I was only trying to help.

Story 2:

“Mr. Clarke collects the medicine”.

CAST

Mr Clarke

Chauffeur, mid 30s. Throughout the scene he’s good-natured, but hurried - a man on a mission.

Miss Alice Hartigan

Apprentice, aged 15 to 20

Mr Gibson

Pharmacist, aged 40

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SOUND OF A MOTORCAR PULLING UP OUTSIDE.
CAR DOOR SLAMS SHUT AND SOUND OF
DOOR OPENING AND BELL RINGING AS
MR CLARKE ENTERS.

Alice Hartigan: Good morning/afternoon/evening,
Mr Clarke.

Mr Clarke: Morning/afternoon/evening, Miss.
May I speak with Mr Gibson? The
matter is rather urgent.

Alice Hartigan: Naturally. (CALLING THROUGH
DOOR TO SIGHT-TESTING
ROOM) Mr Gibson! It's Colonel
Rathbone's driver!

MR GIBSON BUSTLES THROUGH. THE DOOR
CAN BE HEARD SWINGING SHUT BEHIND HIM.

Mr Gibson: No rest for the wicked! Ah, Mr Clarke, you've come for the Colonel's pills no doubt? Are they made up yet, Alice?

Alice Hartigan: Yes, sir. I prepared them using the pill cutter, as you showed me.

Mr Gibson: And you finished them in gold leaf?

Alice Hartigan: Yes, sir.

Mr Gibson: That's the Colonel's preference, isn't it, Mr Clarke?

Mr Clarke: Yes. Terribly sorry for the scramble, but he has need of them early. He's been called to London on business.

Mr Gibson: Shall I put the payment on account? It comes to two pounds, three shillings and six pence.

Mr Clarke: Please.

MR CLARKE CROSSES OVER TO WHERE ALICE IS STANDING.

Alice Hartigan: Here they are, all prepared for the Colonel. Just let me put the lid on the pill box.

Mr Clarke: Thank you. How splendid they look! Good enough to eat! Well, that is rather the idea, I suppose ...

ALICE LAUGHS. MR CLARKE HURRIES TO THE DOOR.

Mr Clarke: I'm most obliged! Good day to you both.

THE SHOP DOOR CLOSES WITH THE SOUND OF THE BELL AS MR CLARKE LEAVES. AN INSTANT LATER, SOUND OF MR CLARKE'S MOTOR CAR REVVING AND DRIVING AWAY.

Alice Hartigan: (WONDERINGLY) *Two pounds three shillings and sixpence!*

Mr Gibson: I dare say the Colonel can well afford it. Now Alice, I have need of an ounce of zinc oxide. Kindly weigh it out for me and grind it down into a fine powder.

Alice Hartigan: Yes, Mr Gibson.

SOUND OF TEA BEING SLURPED BY MR GIBSON

Mr Clarke: Cold tea! Ugh! Every blessed day the same thing.

Story 3: “Break Time”

CAST

Miss Alice Hartigan

Apprentice, aged 15 to 20

Mr Gibson

Pharmacist, aged 40

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MR GIBSON WALKS ACROSS TO ALICE.

Mr Gibson: No, no, no! Alice, permit me. You must hold the pestle so, like a pen. And with a simple movement – there! - grind the zinc oxide against the side of the mortar.

Alice Hartigan: Like this?

Mr Gibson: Quite so. Using a pestle and mortar is an art! Now, zinc oxide has a restorative effect in many preparations for the skin ...

Alice Hartigan: (MEEKLY, FEELING A LITTLE CHEEKY) Sir, as you know I am very zealous, but I was wondering ... as we have no customers at present ... I was wondering if I might be able to take my break now?

Mr Gibson: (PAINED, BUT GOOD-HUMOURED) I don't see as I have any choice in the matter, my dear! In my day, we were in at six and the day didn't end till nine or ten at night. We'd consider ourselves fortunate if we snatched so much as a moment to take refreshment. But now ... matters are very altered. Perhaps it's for the best.

Alice Hartigan: May I then, sir? It's just that I have an errand to run and I thought I might stop by the pastrycook's...

Mr Gibson: Go on with you.

Alice Hartigan: Thank you, Mr Gibson.

ALICE LEAVES THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR OF THE PHARMACY. SOUND OF THE BELL RINGING AND THE DOOR CLOSING BEHIND HER.

MR GIBSON WALKS SLOWLY BACK TO
HIS FORMER POSITION, NEAR THE CASH
REGISTER.

Mr Gibson: (TO HIMSELF, MOCK-GLOOMILY)
Shop Assistants' Charter!
Half-day holidays! Breaks for
apprentices! How very much the
world has altered!

Story 4: “Mrs Lyons Eye Test”.

CAST

Mr Gibson

Pharmacist, aged 40

Mrs Mary Lyons

An elderly lady with traditional views

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MRS LYONS ENTERS THE SHOP. SOUND OF THE BELL RINGING AND DOOR CLOSING BEHIND HER.

Mr Gibson: (GENUINELY PLEASED) Good morning/afternoon/evening, Mrs Lyons! I am very glad to see you.

Mrs Lyons: Good morning/afternoon/evening, Mr Gibson. And a glorious morning/afternoon/evening, it is!

Mr Gibson: I trust you are in good health?

Mrs Lyons: Perfectly. I have had the diversion of my granddaughter since I saw you last and I feel quite ten years younger.

Mr Gibson: How may I assist you? Is it the whisky for Mr Lyons today?

Mrs Lyons: That would not go amiss, but I ... I wished to talk with you about something rather particular today. You will think me very foolish, but

of late I have experienced a queer sensation in the head ... and when I look into any kind of book, the words seem to leap and jump on the page.

Mr Gibson: I would recommend an eye examination.

Mrs Lyons: How fearsome that sounds!

Mr Gibson: Not at all. I am prodigiously proud of my Sight Testing Rooms and you will see that they are very comfortable and there is nothing at all to be afraid of. I will merely place some lenses before your eyes and ask you to read a few words.

Mrs Lyons: Well, then ...

Mr Gibson: If you would do me the honour of stepping this way...

MR GIBSON AND MRS LYONS WALK TOWARDS
THE SIGHT TESTING ROOM.

Mr Gibson: (OFF) Now, Mrs Lyons. This is my Aladdin's Cave. I flatter myself that there are few pharmacies in England that can boast such innovations. Please be seated.

Mrs Lyons: (OFF) Oh, thank you.

Mr Gibson: (OFF) Are you comfortable?

Mrs Lyons: (OFF) I am quite comfortable.

Mr Gibson: (OFF) Now, I'll just move this lens into position. I'd be obliged if you'd read this paragraph to me.

Mrs Lyons: (OFF) Certainly. What a curious text! "Walked regularly fore and aft the whole length of the vessel, looking out ..."

Mr Gibson: (OFF) Thank you. Now this paragraph. You will observe that the letters are a little smaller.

Mrs Lyons: (OFF) "Following night ..."
(HESTITATES) "... I stood my first watch ..." I confess I cannot make out all the words. Some nautical theme, I think!

Mr Gibson: (OFF) You're doing splendidly. Now, a moment while I change one lens for another. There! How's that?

Mrs Lyons: (OFF) As clear as the day!
"Following night, I stood my first watch. I remained awake nearly all the first part of the night from fear that I might not hear when I was called ..."

THE SOUND MRS LYONS READING FADES OUT.

Story 5:

“Alice Returns and Mrs Lyons’ Relief”

CAST

Miss Alice Hartigan

Apprentice, aged 15 to 20

Mr Gibson

Pharmacist, aged 40

Mrs Mary Lyons

An elderly lady with traditional views

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which will be triggered by real-time conditions.

ALICE PUSHES OPEN THE DOOR OF THE SHOP.
THE BELL RINGS. HER FOOTSTEPS SOUND ON
THE FLOOR, EMPHASISING ITS EMPTINESS.

ALICE SIGHS.

Alice Hartigan: (MUTTERS TO HERSELF) An
empty shop. That won't do at all.
I should have made more haste!

SHE WALKS ACROSS TO THE SHELVES.

Mrs Lyons: (OFF) Well that really was rather
diverting!

Mr Gibson: (OFF) I am glad of it. Now it only
remains for you to instruct me as
to your choice of frames ...

MR GIBSON AND MRS LYONS RE-ENTER FROM
THE SIGHT TESTING ROOM. SOUND OF THE
DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

Mr Gibson: ... and I will adjust them to your face personally.

Mrs Lyons: How thrilling!

Mr Gibson: Ah, Alice. You have returned I see.

Alice Hartigan: Yes, Mr Gibson.

Mr Gibson: And dusting the bottles. That is very good.

Mrs Lyons: (TO ALICE) Be careful on that stepladder, my dear!

Alice Hartigan: Oh, please do not concern yourself. I am perfectly safe. Just keeping the pharmacy ship-shape!

Mr Gibson: Now, Mrs Lyons, what is your preference? We have quite an array as you see ... rolled gold frames, steel frames, these famous best nickeled frames ...

Mrs Lyons: I will permit myself to be guided by you.

Mr Gibson: I always think gold rims look very well.

Mrs Lyons: Then I should like some of those.

Mr Gibson: Certainly. I'd be obliged if you'd try them. Ah, yes. Very fine. Very fine indeed. Now, I hope you won't think me impertinent, but I must check the fit. A few minor adjustments, I think, will suffice. Now ... would next Thursday week suit?

Mrs Lyons: Perfectly. I will count the days. I am greatly obliged to you.

Mr Gibson: Glad to be of service. Good day, Mrs Lyons!

Mrs Lyons: Good day, Mr Gibson.

MRS LYONS LEAVES THE SHOP. SOUND OF FRONT DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING CAUSING THE BELL TO RING.

