

## ON FINDINGS THINGS - E.V.LUCAS

### Life:

- ❖ E.V. Lucas (Edward Verrall Lucas) was born in Eltham, Kent on 11 June, 1868.
- ❖ He was born to Edward Lucas, a merchant, and his wife Eliza.
- ❖ He was born during the reign of Queen Victoria.
- ❖ He attended University College School in London but did not pursue higher education.
- ❖ He began his career as a clerk in a bookshop and later worked for Punch magazine.
- ❖ He married Elizabeth Mary Griffin in 1897 and had one daughter, Audrey.
- ❖ He served as a literary advisor to Methuen & Co. and was a prolific essayist and editor.
- ❖ He died in London on 26 June, 1938 at the age of 70.
- ❖ He was buried in St. Giles' Churchyard, Horsted Keynes, Sussex.

### Career:

- ❖ Lucas was an essayist, biographer, critic, and humorist, a prominent figure in Edwardian and Georgian literature.
- ❖ He was known as E.V. Lucas and affectionately called "E.V." by contemporaries.
- ❖ He is celebrated as a master of the personal essay.
- ❖ He is described as a 'gentle humorist' and observer of everyday life.
- ❖ He was associated with Punch magazine, where he contributed from 1904 to 1938, and the Bloomsbury Group circle, though not a formal member.
- ❖ His works are known for their witty observations, light irony, and love of London and cricket.
- ❖ He influenced writers like A.A. Milne and J.B. Priestley.
- ❖ His first major essay collection, The Open Road, was published in 1899.
- ❖ His essays and books were published in octavo and duodecimo editions, often with illustrations.

## Works:

### Essays:

#### ❖ **The Open Road (1899):**

- Its full title is '**The Open Road: A Little Book for Wayfarers**'.
- It is a collection of **essays** and **anthology** celebrating walking, nature, and travel.
- It is one of the best-known **companions for travelers**.

#### ❖ **Fireside and Sunshine (1906):**

- It is a collection of **light essays** on domestic life, humor, and leisure.
- It reflects Lucas's **conversational style**.

#### ❖ **Adventures and Enthusiasms (1920):**

- It is a collection of **humorous essays** on art, literature, and human quirks.
- It includes reflections on **London life** and **cricket**.

#### ❖ **The Phantom Journal (1919):**

- Its full title is '**The Phantom Journal and Other Essays and Diversions**'.
- It is a **miscellaneous collection** blending **fantasy, humor, and criticism**.

## Biographies:

#### ❖ **The Life of Charles Lamb (1905):**

- Its full title is '**The Life of Charles Lamb**'.
- It is a **two-volume biography** of the essayist **Charles Lamb**.
- It is considered a **definitive work** on Lamb, blending scholarship with affection.

#### ❖ **The Colvins and Their Friends (1928):**

- A biography of **Sir Sidney Colvin** and his circle, including **Robert Louis Stevenson**.

## Anthologies and Editions:

#### ❖ **The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb (1903–1905):**

- A **seven-volume edition** edited by Lucas, with notes and introductions.
- It established his reputation as a **Lamb scholar**.

#### ❖ **A Book of English Verse (1927):**

- An **anthology** of poetry from **Chaucer** to **Kipling**, selected for general readers.

### Travel and Humor:

#### ❖ **A Wanderer in London (1906):**

- Its full title is '**A Wanderer in London**'.
- It is a **guidebook-essay** exploring London's streets, history, and charm.
- It went through multiple editions and remains a **classic of London literature**.

#### ❖ **The Hambledon Men (1907):**

- A collection of **cricket essays** celebrating the **Hambledon Club** and early cricket.
- It reflects Lucas's lifelong passion for **cricket**.

### Awards:

- ❖ **Companion of Honour (CH) (1932):** Awarded by **King George V** for services to literature.
- ❖ **Honorary DLitt from University of St Andrews (1921).**
- ❖ **Honorary Fellow of University College London** (recognition for literary contributions).

### Quotes:

- ❖ **A.A. Milne** said: "E.V. Lucas had the rare gift of making the ordinary extraordinary".
- ❖ **J.B. Priestley** noted: "Lucas wrote as if he were chatting by the fireside, but every word was chosen with care".
- ❖ **The Times** obituary praised: "No one captured the charm of English life with such gentle wit".
- ❖ **G.K. Chesterton** remarked: "Lucas's essays are like a stroll with a wise and kindly friend".
- ❖ Critic **Hugh Walpole** called him: "The last of the great Edwardian essayists, whose pen was always light and true".

## ON FINDING THINGS

### TEXT

After the passage of several years since I had picked up anything, last week I found successively a **carriage key** (in Royal Hospital Road), a **brooch** (in Church Street, Kensington), and a **sixpence** in a third-class compartment. It was as I stooped to pick up the sixpence, which had suddenly gleamed at me under the seat of the now empty carriage, that I said to myself that **finding things is one of the purest of earthly joys**.

And how rare!

I have, in a lifetime that now and then appals me by its length, found almost nothing. These three things this week; a **brown-paper packet** when I was about seven, containing eight pennies and one halfpenny; on the grass in the **New Forest**, when I was about twenty, a **half-dollar piece**; and at **Brighton**, not long after, a **gold brooch** of just sufficient value to make it decent to take it to the police station, from which, a year later, no one having claimed it, it was returned to me: these constitute nearly half a century's haul. I might add---now and then, perhaps, a **safety-pin, pencil**, some other trifle, which, however well supplied with such articles one may be, cannot be acquired from a clear sky without a **thrill**. Even **Mr. Rockefeller**, I take it, would not have been unmoved had he, instead of myself, stumbled on that treasure between Stony Cross and Boldrewood.

To be given such things is not a comparable experience. With a **gift**---intention, consciousness, preparation, come in; to say nothing of obligation later. The event is also complicated (and therefore shorn of its glory) by the second person, since the gift must be given. But, suddenly dropping one's eyes, to be aware of a **coin**---that is **sheer rapture**. Other things can be exciting too, but a coin is best, because a coin is rarely identifiable by a previous owner; and I am naturally confining myself to those things the ownership of which could not possibly be traced. To find things which have to be surrendered is as **impure a joy** as the world contains, and no theme for this pen.

The special quality of the act of **finding something**, with its consequent **exhilaration**, is half **unexpectedness** and half **separateness**. There being no warning, and the article coming to you by chance, no one is to be thanked, no one to be owed anything. In short, you have achieved the greatest human triumph--you have got something for **nothing**. That is the true idea: the "nothing" must be absolute; one must never have looked, never have had any finding intention, or even hope. To **look for things** is to change the whole theory--to rob it of its **divine suddenness**; to become anxious, even avaricious; to partake of the nature of the **rag-picker**, the *chiffonier*, or those strange men that one notices walking, with bent heads, along the shore after a storm. (None the less that was a great moment, once, in the island of **Coll**, when after two hours' systematic searching I found the **plover's nest**.)

**Finding things** is at once so rare and pure a joy that to trifle with it is peculiarly heartless. Yet are there people so wantonly in need of sport as to do so. Every one knows of the **purse laid on the path** or pavement beside a fence, which, as the excited passer-by stoops to pick it up, is twitched through the palings by its adherent string. There is also the **coin attached to a thread** which can be dropped in the street and instantly pulled up again, setting every eye at a pavement scrutiny. Could there be lower tricks? I fear so, because some years ago, in the great days of a rendezvous of Bohemians in the Strand known as the **Marble Halls**, a wicked wag (I have been told) once nailed a **bad but plausible sovereign** to the floor and waited events. In the case of the purse and string the butts are few and far between and there is usually only a small audience to rejoice in their discomfiture, but the *dénouement* of the cruel comedy of which **acquisitiveness** and **cunning** were the warp and woof at the Marble Halls was only too bitterly public. I am told, such is human resourcefulness in guile, that very few of those who saw the coin and marked it down as their own went for it right away, because had they done so the action might have been noticed and the booty claimed. Instead, the discoverer would look swiftly and stealthily round, and then gradually and with every affectation of **nonchalance** (which to those in the secret, watching from the corners of their wicked eyes, was so funny as to be an agony) he would get nearer and nearer until he was able at last to place one foot on it.

This accomplished, he would relax into something like real naturalness, and, practically certain of his prey, take things easily for a moment or so. Often, I am told, the poor dupe would, at this point, whistle the **latest tune**. Even now, however, he dared not abandon subterfuge, or his prize, were he seen to pick it up, might have to be surrendered or shared; so the next move was to drop his **handkerchief**, the idea being to pick up both it and the sovereign together. Such **explosions of laughter** as followed upon his failure to do so can (I am informed) rarely have been heard.

--Such was the **conspiracy of the nailed sovereign**, which, now and then, the victim, shaking the chagrin from him, would without shame himself join, and become a delighted spectator of his successor's humiliation.

Can you conceive of a more **impish hoax**? But I should like to have witnessed it.

### ON FINDING THINGS

#### KEY FACTS:

- ❖ **Publication Year**
- ❖ **Essay Title:** *On Finding Things*
- ❖ **Author:** Edward Verrall Lucas (E. V. Lucas)
- ❖ **Publication Year:** 1920
- ❖ **Published In:** *Adventures and Enthusiasms* (1920)

### DETAILED SUMMARY

#### A Week of Unexpected Discoveries

- ❖ The writer explains that after many years of not finding anything, he suddenly found **three things in one week**: a **carriage key**, a **brooch**, and a **sixpence** in a train.
- ❖ When he picked up the sixpence from under the seat, he felt that **finding something is one of the purest joys in life**.

#### Finding Things Is Very Rare

- ❖ He says that in his long life, he has **found very few things**.
- ❖ He remembers finding a **brown-paper packet with pennies** when he was seven.

- ❖ He found a **half-dollar** on the grass in the New Forest at age twenty.
- ❖ He later found a **gold brooch** at Brighton, which he handed to the police and got back one year later as it was unclaimed.
- ❖ He says these few discoveries represent **almost fifty years** of his life.
- ❖ He adds that even small things like a **safety pin** or **pencil**, when found suddenly, can give a little thrill.
- ❖ He jokes that even a rich man like **Mr. Rockefeller** would have felt excitement if he had found the same coin.

### Why Finding Is Better Than Receiving

- ❖ The writer explains that **receiving a gift** is not the same as **finding something**.
- ❖ A gift includes intention, planning, and later **obligation**, which reduces the joy.
- ❖ Finding something is a **solo experience**, with no one to thank and no one to please.
- ❖ He says that a **coin** is the best find because it usually has **no identifiable owner**.
- ❖ He restricts his thoughts only to items whose owners **cannot be traced**, because finding something that must be returned is **not a pure joy**.

### Why Finding Feels So Joyful

- ❖ The writer says the joy of finding something comes from **unexpectedness** and **independence**.
- ❖ The object comes by chance, without warning, and with **no one to be thanked**.
- ❖ He describes the joy as a feeling of getting **something for nothing**, which he calls a great human triumph.
- ❖ He insists that one must **not look for things**, because searching removes the surprise and makes the act greedy or anxious.
- ❖ He compares searching to the work of **rag-pickers**, **chiffoniers**, or people who scan beaches after storms.
- ❖ Still, he remembers a happy moment when he **searched for two hours** on the island of Coll and found a **plover's nest**, which was exciting.

### Cruel Tricks That Spoil the Joy of Finding

- ❖ Because finding something is such a rare and pure pleasure, he says playing tricks with it is **especially unkind**.

- ❖ He mentions tricks like a **purse with a string** that is pulled away when someone tries to pick it up.
- ❖ He also describes a **coin attached to a thread** that is dropped and quickly pulled up, fooling people into looking for it.

### The Trick of the Nailed Fake Coin

- ❖ The writer describes an even worse prank done in the **Marble Halls** of the Strand.
- ❖ A mischievous person once **nailed a fake but believable gold sovereign to the floor**.
- ❖ Many victims approached it secretly, pretending not to show their interest, because they feared attention or competition.
- ❖ They moved closer slowly, pretending to be casual, which amused the pranksters watching from the corners.
- ❖ When a victim finally placed his **foot** on the coin, he felt secure and began to relax.
- ❖ Some even **whistled a tune** as they prepared to claim it.
- ❖ To hide their intention, they often dropped a **handkerchief** and tried to pick up both the handkerchief and the coin at the same time.
- ❖ When the coin would not move because it was nailed down, the hidden watchers burst into **loud laughter**.

### Victims Who Became Jokers

- ❖ The writer says that sometimes the embarrassed victim would laugh too and then **join the crowd** to enjoy watching the next person be fooled.
- ❖ He calls the hoax **impish and mischievous**, but admits that he himself would have **liked to witness it**.