She stopped beside an empty motor-car in order to put her hat straight with the help of the wind-screen, in which it was reflected, then she smoothed down her frock and tucked her umbrella more securely under her arm so that the handle, or rather the parrot, could be seen by everybody. After these preparations she went forward to meet the Match-Man.

Now, the Match-Man had two professions. He not only sold matches like any ordinary match-man, but he drew pavement pictures as well. He did these things turn-about according to the weather. If it was wet, he sold matches because the rain would have washed away his pictures if he had painted them. If it was fine, he was on his knees all day, making pictures in coloured chalks on the side-walks, and doing them so quickly that often you would find he had painted up one side of a street and down the other almost before you'd had time to come round the corner.

On this particular day, which was fine but cold, he was painting. He was in the act of adding a picture of two bananas, an apple, and a head of Queen Elizabeth to a long string of others, when Mary Poppins walked up to him, tip-toeing so as to surprise him. "

Hey!" called Mary Poppins softly. He went on putting brown stripes on a banana and brown curls on Queen Elizabeth's head.

"Ahem!" said Mary Poppins, with a ladylike cough.

He turned with a start and saw her. "Mary!" he cried, and you could tell by the way he cried it that Mary Poppins was a very important person in his life.

Mary Poppins looked down at her feet and rubbed the toe of one shoe along the pavement two or three times. Then she smiled at the shoe in such a way that the shoe knew quite well that the smile wasn't meant for it. "It's my Day, Bert," she said. "Didn't you remember?"

Bert was the Match-Man's name — Herbert Alfred for Sundays. "Of course I remembered, Mary," he said, "but—" and he stopped and looked into his cap. It lay on the ground beside his last picture and there was tuppence in it. He picked it up and jingled the pennies.

"That all you got, Bert?" said Mary Poppins, and she said it so brightly you could hardly tell she was disappointed at all.

"That's the lot," he said. "Business is bad today. You'd think anybody'd be glad to pay to see that, wouldn't you?" And he nodded his head at Queen Elizabeth. "Well — that's how it is, Mary," he sighed. "Can't take you to tea today, I'm afraid."

Mary Poppins thought of the raspberry-jam-cakes they always had on her Day Out, and she was just going to sigh, when she saw the Match-Man's face. So, very cleverly, she turned the sigh into a smile — a good one with both ends turned up — and said: That's all right, Bert. Don't you mind. I'd much rather not go to tea. A stodgy meal, I call it — really."

And that, when you think how very much she liked raspberry-jam-cakes, was rather nice of Mary Poppins. The Match-Man apparently thought so, too, for he took her white-gloved hand in his and squeezed it hard.

Then together they walked down the row of pictures. "Now, there's one you've never seen before!" said the Match-Man proudly, pointing to a painting of a mountain covered with snow and its slopes simply littered with grasshoppers sitting on gigantic roses.

The next picture Mary Poppins and the Match-Man came to was even better. It was the country — all trees and grass and a little bit of blue sea in the distance, and something that looked like Margate in the background.

"My word!" said Mary Poppins admiringly, stooping so that she could see it better. "Why, Bert, whatever is the matter?"

For the Match-Man had caught hold of her other hand now. "Mary," he said, "I got an idea! A real idea. Why don't we go there — right now — this very day? Both together, into the picture. Eh, Mary?"

And still holding her hands he drew her right out of the street, away from the iron railings and the lamp-posts, into the very middle of the picture.