

Under Stairs Over Stairs

A truly class-based role playing game

Good morning, m'lord. Today is the 19th April 1903 and Edward VII is the King of England and Ireland. Edwardian Britain, as the land is known, is divided between the over-stairs folk of wealth and class and the under-stairs folk who graft hard and know their place. Outside the doors of one's home, one finds all sorts of anarchists, riff-raff and commoners.

May I present you with a much abbreviated game in which you may play either those from over-stairs or under-stairs. In the future, further material will be available detailing other aspects of life in these interesting times.

CHARACTER BUILDING

It is important to know who one is and what one has done and, so, one's **Curriculum Vitae** (CV) must be kept in good order. Only a most unfortunate chap lacks a name and this is the first thing recorded upon his CV, along with any appropriate titles. A fellow also has an **Age**, which will most likely lie between the years of 1 and 100 -although any reasonable age for a person is possible. A chap might be a lady, and this is recorded as their **Gender** (if it isn't obvious from their title). A chap may be foreign, so a note of his **Nationality** should be made.

They also have a number of **Abilities** including:

Intellect (by which we mean their inherent brilliance or stupidity)

Physique (which defines their strength, agility and other capabilities)

Character (or how stiff an upper lip a fellow has and how pleasant his company is)

Wealth (an uncouth measure, but it allows one to pay one's way)

Position (or where in the social order of things one sits)

Reputation (or how trustworthy a chap is and how much he is liked)

Luck (being a chap's fortune)

Intellectual types sometimes abbreviate these to Int, Phy, Cha, Wea, Rep, Luc and Pos. They are measured on a scale of 1 to 20, with 1 being the lowest of the low and 20 being the finest of the fine. Scores of 7 to 15 for Physique, Character, Luck and Intellect are normal.

Knowing one's place is important, and the first two tables allow a chap to see where he fits into the world. One rolls on the first table to find out if they are from over-stairs or under-stairs, or your referee may simply tell you what you are or may allow you to choose. This sets one's starting abilities. The second table allows one to determine where one stands in the social milieu.

Roll 1d20	... Stairs	Starting level of Ability						
		Pos	Wea	Phy	Cha	Luc	Int	Rep
1-14	Under	1	1	7	7	7	7	7
15+	Over	10	10	7	7	7	7	7

Pos		Pos	
22	King Edward VII	10-15	Gentry
21	Senior Royalty	5-10	Middle Class
18-20	Nobility	3-7	Tradesman
15-20	Aristocracy	1-5	Working Class

A chap has 20+d20 points that may be used to increase one's abilities. It costs 1 point to increase a score that is less than 15 and 2 points to increase a score that is 15 or over.

It is important to know what one has done and, so, a fellow's **Occupation** (Ocu) and **Specialty** (Spe) must be recorded on one's CV. For each occupation a number of years (Yrs) of service must be recorded. A chap's occupation must be selected from the list of Ministry of Labour's approved definitions. An extract from Ministry's List can be found over the page. Where available, a specialisation must also be chosen. Occupations can be taken from age 12 years onwards for under-stairs and 18 years for over-stairs. Your referee may decide

Yrs	Ocu/Spe	Hob/Spe	Yrs	Ocu/Spe	Hob/Spe
1+	+1/+2	0/+1	30+	+6/+9	+3/+3
2+	+2/+3	+1/+1	40+	+7/+10	+3/+4
5+	+3/+5	+1/+2	50+	+8/+11	+4/+5
10+	+4/+6	+2/+2	60+	+9/+12	+4/+6
20+	+5/+7	+2/+3	70+	+10/+14	+5/+7

some occupations are unavailable to a character, based on their Position.

A chap's time isn't all work, work, work though. He may have some **Hobbies** (Hob). These are also recorded, along with a number of years of practice. A short list of examples appears over the page. Hobbies can be taken from 5 years of age onwards. The total of a chap's occupations or hobbies (in years) may not be more than the time they have had to practice them. The referee may decide which occupations are available to a character based on their Wealth.

The CVs for two chaps are shown here.

Lord William Gordon

Age: 62; **Nationality:** British; **Attributes:** Pos 16 Wea 14 Phy 10 Cha 11 Luc 10 Int 12 Rep 12; **Occupations:** Military Officer (Army) 20 yrs, Company Officer (Director) 22 yrs; **Interests:** Country Pursuits (Hunting) 35 yrs, Politics (Lords) 20 yrs

Miss Molly Merry

Age: 22; **Nationality:** British; **Attributes:** Pos 4 Wea 4 Phy 10 Cha 12 Luc 12 Int 10 Rep 7; **Occupations:** Destitute (Work House) 4 yrs, Household (Maid) 8 yrs; **Interests:** Craft (Cross-Stitch) 10 yrs

RULES OF THE GAME

When a chap wishes to attempt to do something where there is a chance, in the referee's opinion, that they might fail, one must throw ones lot in with fate. First the referee sets the difficulty of the task.

Dubious Cricket Analogy	Difficulty
Well played sir	10
Nice googly sir	20
An excellent four on the off side	30
You really hit it for six!	40
Howzat!	50

A fellow who attempts to do something benefits in their attempt if they have an occupation or hobby which gives appropriate knowledge, training or experience in the subject. This benefit is increased if it falls under the area of specialisation within their occupation. A chap with no applicable experience may suffer a penalty to their attempt - at the referee's discretion!

A twenty sided dice is then rolled and its result is added to the appropriate ability chosen by the referee, along with any bonus from an occupation or hobby. If the result is greater than the difficulty selected by the referee, then the attempt is successful.

If two chaps are competing, in a spelling competition for example, both would roll and the one with the highest total would win. In some cases, the referee may set a difficulty as well. In order to succeed, this difficulty must also be beaten. For example, during a contest of marksmanship, a total of at least ten might be required to hit the target.

In situations where time is of the essence, one minute turns are used and each chap may act once in the turn in order of an ability selected by the referee, from highest to lowest. For a race, for example, Physique would be appropriate, but Intellect would be more appropriate during a duel of wits.

A character who is struck a blow, shot, has a nasty fall, has their name smeared, has their wallet stolen or is in some other way injured has one of their abilities reduced. The ability loss resulting from an injury is expressed as a dice roll to be made to determine the wound inflicted.

A chap whose Physique falls below zero is unconscious and may die. If their Character is below zero they are a nervous wreck and if their Intellect is brought low they will need help with the simplest of tasks. Similar fates await when other innate abilities drop this low. At the referee's discretion, points may be restored over time or by a successful test by someone skilled in healing the malady suffered.

Cause of Injury	Ability Loss
Bad Investment	2d6 Wea
Clubbed	1d4 Phy
Court Martial	1d3 Pos
Curse	1d3 Luc
Fall	1d4 Phy / storey
Find dead body	1d4 Cha
Fire, House	1d6/turn Phy
Heavy Drinking	1d2-1 Int / year
Nasty Whispers	1d6 Rep
Poison, Deadly	4d6 Phy / turn
Poison, Weak	1d6 Phy / turn
Punch	1d2 Phy
Robbed	1d2 Wea
Shot, Pistol	2d6 Phy
Shot, Rifle or Shotgun	3d6 Phy



MINISTRY OF LABOUR'S APPROVED DEFINITIONS

I have been asked by the Minister to ensure that it is clear that this listing places Occupational groupings first (these have been emboldened for reasons of clarity) and then lists specialisations afterwards. This listing is an illustrative sample. The full listing is available at many municipal libraries or from His Majesty's Stationary Office.

Over Stairs

Academic- Antiquarian, Archaeologist, Linguist, Logician, Mathematician, Historian, Scientist, Student. **Adventurer-** Aviator, Big Game Hunter, Explorer. **Artist-** Painter, Photographer, Poet, Sculptor, Writer. **Athlete-** Cricket, Field, Marksman, Rugby, Track. **Clergyman-** Bishop, Curate, Missionary, Priest. **Company Officer-** Director, Owner. **Dilettante-** Choose from Interests list but treat as Occupation. **Sleuth -** Amateur Detective, Consulting Detective. **Journalist-** Columnist, Correspondent, Editor, Hack. **Legal-** Barrister, Judge, Solicitor. **Military Officer-** Artillery, Cavalry, Infantry, Navy. **Misplaced-** Jungle Lord, Queen of the Jungle, Left Luggage. **Medical-** Surgeon, Doctor, Physician, Dentist, Psychologist. **Politician -** Ambassador, Parliamentarian, Lords **Retired-** Choose from Interests list but treat as Occupation. **Royalty-** Consort, Heir, Monarch, Nobility, Other. **Lady -** Delicate state, Debutante, Lady of the House, Suffragette, Independent

Between Floors

Educator- Tutor, Governess

Under Stairs

Under stairs characters may have had prior employment in the Unwashed Masses occupations.

Grounds- Gardener, Ground Keeper.

Household - Batman, Butler, Chambermaid, Chef, Cook, Footman, Housekeeper, Ladies Maid, Housemaid, Kitchen Maid, Valet, Maid, Manservant, Nanny, Scullery Maid, House Boy, Hall Boy. **Livery-** Stable Boy, Coachman.

Servants of the Crown

Civil Servant- Foreign Office, Home Office, Treasury. **Police Officer-** Inspector, Constable.

Royal Mail- Postman, Postal Inspector

Bowler Hats and other Middle Class Professionals

Academic, Artist, Athlete, Clergy, Journalist, Legal, Military Officer, Medicine and Politician are also available.

Administrators- Accountant, Clerk, Manager, Secretary. **Banker-** Manager, Assistant Manager, Bank Clerk. **Businessman-** Entrepreneur, Merchant, Stock Broker. **Professional-** Educator, Engineer, Inventor.

Unwashed Masses

Artist, Athlete and Politician occupations are also available to members of the Unwashed Masses.

Agriculture- Farmer, Farm Labourer, Lumberjack.

Cleansing- Chimney Sweep, Disinfecter, Sewer Flusher. **Criminal-** Bookie, Burglar, Conman, Gambler, Loan Shark, Master Criminal, Pick Pocket, Poacher, Prostitute, Thug. **Destitute-** Beggar, Unemployed, Work House. **Enlisted-** Artillery, Cavalry, Infantry, Navy, Sapper. **Entertainer-** Acrobat, Actor, Comedian, Dancer, Singer, Music Hall Girl, Opera Singer, Musician. **Medical-** Asylum Attendant, Nurse, Orderly, Wet Nurse. **Labourer-** Docker, Factory, Labourer, Miner, Steel Worker. **Merchant Marine-** Captain, Engineer, Officer, Sailor. **Prisoner-** At His Majesties Pleasure, Fugitive. **Religious-** Cult Leader, Cult Member, Street Preacher. **Revolutionary-** Anarchist, Communist, Rabble Rouser. **Shopkeeper-** Baker, Barber, Butcher, Greengrocer, Hosteller, Hairdresser, Mechanic, Undertaker. **Sportsman-** Boxer, Jockey, Soccer Player, Wrestler. **Street Vendors-** Dustman, Flower Girl, Holders of Horses' Heads, Lucifer seller, Umbrella Mender, Water Cart Man. **Union-** Activist, Organiser, Striker.

HOBBIES

Athlete, Artist, Politics, Revolutionary and Sleuth occupations may all be taken as hobbies.

Art Lover- Books, Music, Painting, Sculpture. **Country Pursuits-** Fishing, Riding, Shooting. **Collecting-** Butterflies, Dinosaurs, Stamps. **Crafts-** Carpentry, Cross-stitch, Peg Rug, Pottery. **Music -** Brass, Choral, Singing, Sting, Woodwind. **Philanthropist-** Arts, Charitable Works, Public Works. **Travel-** Britain, Europe, Colonial, Exotic Parts.

CHRONOLOGY

1900 Relief of Mafeking (Boer War). Quantum theory developed by Planck.
1901 Death of Queen Victoria. King Edward VII monarch. Marconi sends first message by radio waves.
1902 End of the Boer War. Anglo-Japanese alliance formed.
1903 Wright brothers achieve first powered heavier than air flight.
1904 Entente Cordial between France and Britain.
1905 First Russian revolution. Einstein's special theory of relativity.
1906 Labour Party formed. Existence of atomic nucleus deduced by Rutherford. Suffragettes begin campaign of civil disobedience .
1907 Anglo-Russian entente. Scout movement begins.
1908 Geiger Counter invented.
1909 "People's Budget" rejection by Lords starts constitutional crisis.
1910 Death of Edward VII. King George V Monarch. Post-Impressionist exhibition held in London.
1911 Amundsen reaches South Pole. Power of House of Lords reduced.
1912 Titanic sinks.
1913 Rites of Spring by Stravinsky. Emily Davidson killed after throwing herself under the King's horse at the Derby horse race.
1914 Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Great War begins.

ONE PARAGRAPH ADVENTURES

One just can't get the staff these days. Has someone has been stealing the silverware? Or is Master Sidney clearing his gambling debts?

The weekend at Peebles Mansion was going so well till Sir Merlot was found poisoned in his study with the doors and windows locked from the inside!

Master Sidney has been indiscreet with one of the maids! What are we to do?

It is so good to see you back from Egypt, sir. Well done on finding the sarcophagus, sir. Yes, I agree. I'm sure talk of a curse is just silly superstition.

Oh what a jolly idea, Sidney; a house party while Ma and Pa are away! I'll organise the food and wine. You bring the girls.

'Ere 'ave you 'eard – there's a right ding-dong goin' on downstairs at Number 12! 'arold, the butler, found 'arry skiving off and gave 'im a right talkin' to. Then 'e found 'arry drinking some of 'is lordship's claret. 'arry'll not be sitting down for a day or two.

Sidney, you have gone too far this time. Some time abroad will do you good, so it's off to tour Europe you go. If that doesn't make a man of you, we will see what the Army can do.

AN INVITATION

Expanded rules, background material and adventures for "Under Stairs Over Stairs" will be available at the ImpWorks web site, <http://www.impworks.co.uk/> .

GENTLE FOLK PLEASE NOTE

This game is set in a period of Britain's history when woman were seen as the weaker sex. This does not hold in any way with the author's personal views or opinions on the matter. I'm pleased to say the world has come a long way in the last 102 years. However, to rewrite history to make this a time of equality would remove one of the main sources of dramatic conflict available to the referee. The early part of the 20th Century is a time of great social upheaval. The suffrage movement is becoming proactive; the unions and the labour movement are stirring up the political scene and the over-stairs class is complaining about the shortage of people willing to enter domestic service.

FURTHER NOTES

A few scraps of paper, some pens or pencils, a twenty sided die (d20) and some six sided dice (d6) are required to play. All rounding should be in a downward direction.

CREDIT WHERE CREDITS DUE

Author: Mark Caldwell
Editor: John Wilson
Illustration: Mark Caldwell
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