

40 *Apologising*

The phrase 'seem to have' is often heard in apologies when things have been mislaid (temporarily lost). This is because it gives the idea of doubt, and the speaker wishes to break the news gently to the owner and not to alarm him too much. Sometimes it is also used when things have been lost, or even broken!

(i)

A I'm afraid I've spilt ink all over the table-cloth.

B Oh, never mind about that.

A I'm 'terribly sorry. Won't you let me pay for it?

B No, I won't hear of it.

(ii)

I'm 'awfully sorry, but I seem to have mislaid your scarf.

Oh, don't worry about that.

I just don't know what to say. I'll replace it, of course.

No, that's quite out of the question.

(iii)

I'm very much afraid I've burned a hole in the rug.

Oh, that's all right.

I 'do apologise. I'll buy you a new one first thing on Monday.

Of course not. I never 'did like it anyway.

(iv)

I'm 'dreadfully sorry, but I've broken a plate.

Oh, that doesn't matter.

I'm ever so¹ sorry. Tell me where you bought it so I can get you another.

No, certainly not. I wouldn't dream of letting you do that.



¹ ever so: very