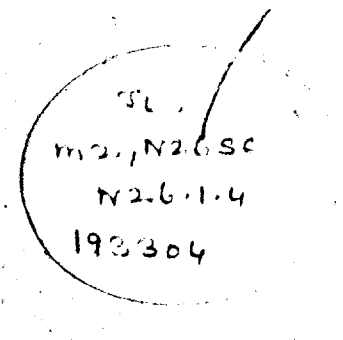
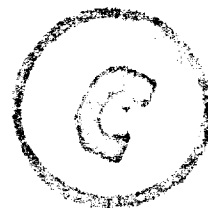
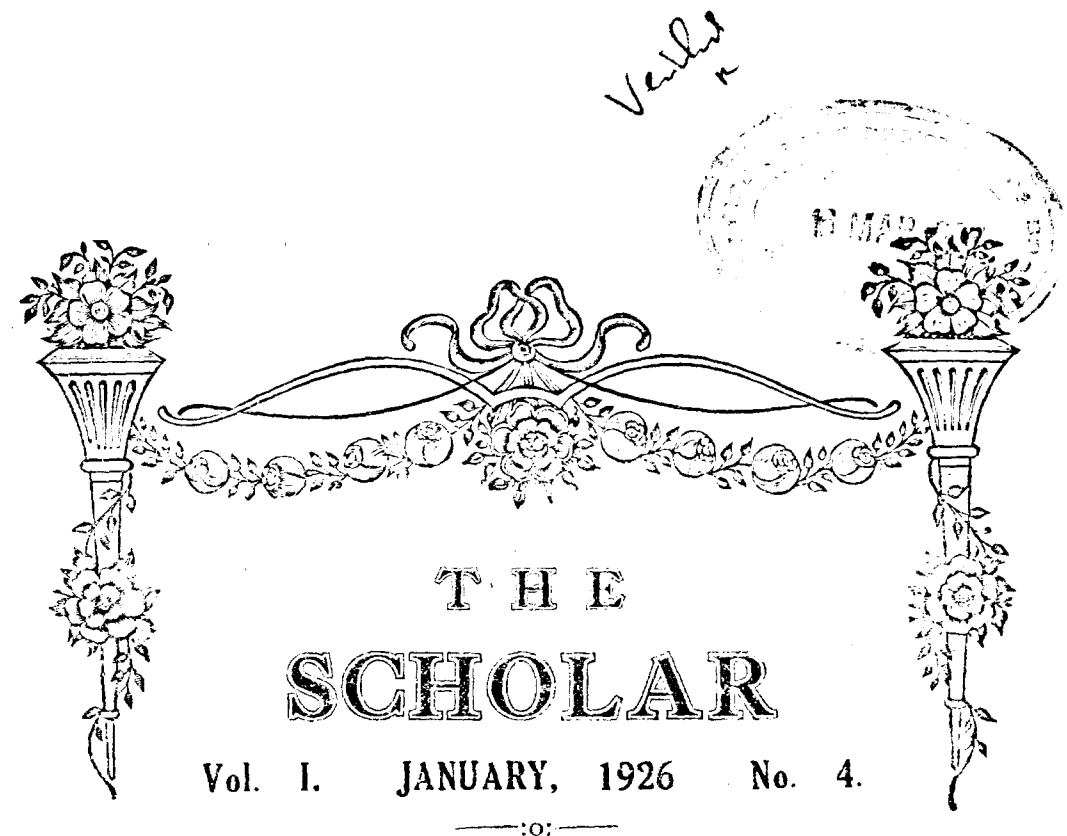


Scholar: Montagu.

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Studies in Journalism

(By a Student of Journalism)

III. LEADER WRITING

IN dealing with the *personnel* in a newspaper office, it was pointed out that Indian newspapers employ very few leader writers as such, their work usually being done by the Editor himself for reasons of economy and finance. Nevertheless, the work done by these leader writers is so important a factor in raising the value of the paper in the eyes of the public that it would be worth while to consider at some length the qualifications of such persons and the peculiar nature of their work. By common consent as it were, leader writing has been considered as the highest form of journalistic work, and consequently, the leader writers may be regarded as being at the top of the journalistic profession, their status, as a matter of fact, being only next to that of the Editor. The leader writers in big newspaper offices are generally experts in their own subjects of special study, such as Literature, Economics or Politics. Their services

are not availed of by the Editor every day, but only when news relating to their subjects of study appear in the day's news, when they might be asked to comment upon them. Thus it might happen that the Economics leader writer may not have to write for weeks together, while the Politics man may have to do so continuously for that period. By the very nature of their work, the leader writers are thrown into very close association with the Editor, at whose bidding they have to write and whose policy they have to uphold. As a direct result of their being specialists in their particular subjects, their observations carry more weight with the public than those of the laymen who can only bring to bear on the subjects a commonsense and superficial point of view and the paper's worth in the estimation of the public is correspondingly raised. This is the justification for their existence in the newspaper office.

But, as we said, few papers in our country could afford the luxury of having such expert men on their staff and their work has therefore to be carried on either by the Editor all alone or with the help of a few of his assistants. Thus, while in the west the tendency is for specialisation, the somewhat precarious existence and hand-to-mouth living of our newspapers demands of those journalists who have to do the work of leader writing not so much specialisation as versatility. Their journalistic mind has to be keen on everything and they must take a genuine interest in all matters that take place under the sun. Their reading has to be more extensive than intensive, and their practical experience and knowledge of the affairs of the world such, as would enable them "to survey mankind from China to Peru". To these qualifications must, of course, be added the ability to think quickly, the capacity to form rapid conclusions and, what is still more important, to state what has to be said in a style as clear, forcible and racy as would attract the curiosity of the average newspaper reader. "The talent of the Journalist," said a reputed Editor once, "consists in promptitude, in the flashing stroke—above all in clearness. He has only a sheet of paper and an hour to state his case, to beat his adversary and to give his judgment. If he says a word that does not go straight to its mark, if he uses a word that the reader does not

seize in an instant, then he does not understand his trade.... The pen of the journalist has all the privileges of free, bold conversation". It is the opportunity to show off this combination of talents and succeeding in the attempt, that makes the work of the leader writer so exhilarating and fires the imagination and ambition of younger souls in the lower rungs of the journalistic ladder. The leading articles which are intended to guide and express public opinion exercise an influence in national and international affairs, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. The power of the press is supreme today in self-governing countries, and part of it is exercised through these leader articles. A primary mission of the press is to mirror *public opinion* and the leader columns constitute one of the means of doing it. No Government can get on in these days without knowing what people think about its administration, and there was a substratum of truth in the hyperbole of one of our now sane politicians, when he declared in his young unregenerate days, that the British Government would come down on its knees if all the newspapers in India shut their shop up for twenty four hours. It is the newspaper which acts as a link between the Government and the people, enabling each to know the other's point of view. It is too late in the day to descant on the need or utility of the leader articles. Suffice it to say, that, without definite opinions, a newspaper cannot pretend to give the lead that it should, in public affairs. Besides, it is not all readers who have the capacity or the education to evaluate and understand aright the *pros* and *cons* of every question that might be discussed and a newspaper which does not help the average reader in this way ceases to retain his patronage and eventually goes into well-deserved oblivion. In these days when so much importance is attached to the leader columns it seems almost incredible that there was a time when there were only news and no comments. But so it was in the earliest stages of newspaper development. The inherent instinct of curiosity in man demanded news and when that was catered to, it asked also that it should be properly interpreted by people who knew how to do it. And here we touch on the clue which explains how and why the comments came to be called 'leaders'. The necessity of distinguishing views from news, we are told, led to the practice of

leading out the comments and these were, therefore, called "leaded" articles, which later on came to be called leader articles. Be that as it may, what is of importance to note here is that the leading article has come to stay and that the interest in them is not likely to wane, because in the words of the poet,

"Though a man a thinking being is defined,
Few use the grand prerogative of the mind."

The average newspaper reader could scarce have failed to notice that in spite of the leader articles being written by more than one person, all of the articles go unsigned. This is what is called editorial anonymity. This is a feature somewhat peculiar to journalism by which the Editor and his staff merge their individuality in the interests of the paper with which they have thrown their lot, the opinions expressed being made to appear as those of the paper itself. It is certainly a part of the strength of journalism that it can give out a kind of impersonal thing, though for the writer himself it might be a self-denying ordinance which deprives him of the credit which naturally falls to those who put their names at the foot or the top of their articles. But, while the practice has much to be said in its favour, it is not without its potentialities for mischief, as in the hands of unscrupulous persons, it might be used to unworthy ends, though, even here it is true that such abuse under the cloak of anonymity will sooner or later bring its own punishment by bringing the paper into disrepute or in the clutches of law. Incidentally it may also be pointed out that there are exceptions even to this rule of anonymity. In exceptional cases or on occasions, it is discarded as when a person of admitted eminence or fame writes at the request of the Editor or in the interests of public good. In some papers, noticeably in those owned by well-known public men or statesmen, the habit has grown of publishing signed articles in the editorial columns. In both cases the value of the articles is substantially enhanced, while in the case of the latter, it has the additional advantage of enabling the writer to make a distinction—if there be any such—between his personal views and the impersonal policy of the paper he controls.

The Man with One Idea

(By P. K. Anantanarayan, M. A., L. T.)

"THE man with one idea!" I can well imagine the curious reader exclaim, "indeed, he must be a fool or a crank." But is he? I know man is a complex being, and the human mind a complicated machine; and if it contains only one idea, it may be said to be almost in a state of mental vacuum. By my phrase, I mean those great thinkers and workers, whose minds are so engrossed, so possessed, so riveted by some mighty idea that conquers all other thoughts and desires and considerations, and for the success of which they devote their whole life-time. The greatest geniuses of the world have been men of this type. The progress of the world, stimulated by the original thoughts and deeds of such master minds, has been chiefly due to the achievements of those pioneers.

This fact is based on a true psychological principle. To do something remarkable, to make a great discovery, to accomplish some public good, it requires natural talents of a high order and sustained work for many years. Without such conservation of energy, such concentration of mind, devoted to a definite cause or purpose without frittering away one's mental or moral powers, success will be well nigh impossible. He should be so inspired by that one aim, so sustained by that one aspiration, that he always thinks of it by day and dreams of it by night. As the rays of the resplendent sun, refracted through the optical lens and focussed at one central point, acquire sufficient heat to burn away any combustible body, so the fiery thoughts of a potent genius concentrated on some high endeavour can solve the most difficult and baffling problems in life.

Such men have lived and worked wonders in different lands and times in the history of the world. But their contemporaries have generally dubbed them dreamers, visionaries and impractical idealists. How often has it turned out that their dreams and visions and ideals have formed the stepping stones of future advancement, that have inspired generations of mankind in their onward march! "They cry for the moon," says the prosaic

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practical man shrugging his shoulders. In their own day, they have been slighted, scoffed at, as crazy Don Quixotes, not taken seriously by the unbelieving public. But they have lived and laboured, sustained by an abiding faith in their own mission, in spite of discouragement and calumny, and have overcome all obstacles and prejudices, till their work was crowned with success.

Ambition and glory have been the main motive forces of some leaders of men and conquerors of kingdoms in all ages. The vainglorious Alexander went on a triumphal march through half the countries of Europe and Asia. To become the greatest of all Romans fired the imagination of the mighty Caesar both as general and as statesman. In a later day, Napoleon, the terror of Europe, before whom crowned heads were humbled to the dust, also had despotic power and dominion as his lodestars in life. Blood flowed like water before them, mankind has had to pay a heavy toll to gratify their vanity: but, we ask, what lasting good have their lives done to the world at large?

Among such adventurous souls, we count some of the explorers and discoverers, who have brought unknown lands and seas, mountains and islands lying in the far away regions of the globe, within the ken of human knowledge. A restless spirit of enterprise and daring animates all their life and activities. They are ready to face all difficulties and brave all dangers, that lie in their path, to attain the goal. Columbus, whose name will ever be associated with the discovery of America, had to face opposition, ridicule and disappointment of every kind in his arduous task, but by dint of his dauntless courage and abiding self-confidence finally realised his dream, and brought a new world before the wondering gaze of an incredulous Europe. Those who have in recent years attempted to reach the ice-bound North Pole, or climb the sublime heights of Mount Everest, have also been impelled by that herculean spirit of exploration that makes light of all ordeals and hardships of life.

No less formidable has been the task of the scientists and inventors, the vanguard of the army of intellectual progress, who have extended the horizon of human knowledge. Those silent and strenuous workers have devoted their whole life-time to study

and research and discovery, in their laboratories or work-shops, away from the din or applause of society, so that they might minister to the comforts, or alleviate the sufferings, of their brethren. Archimedes of Syracuse, the prince of inventors of the ancient world, spent many a long year to find out the Principle, that now bears his honoured name. The marvellous experimental genius of Galileo invented the Telescope, which has brought the wonders of this limitless universe within the range of human vision. To the discovery of the power of Steam and Electricity, which have revolutionised the conditions of modern life, James Watt and Faraday applied their extraordinary intellect, keen observation and inventive skill, and the steady industry of weary years. Pasteur and Lister, who have patiently toiled for years to trace the ravaging diseases to their very source, have conferred immense benefit on their suffering kind. The wonderful researches of Sir J. C. Bose, the 'plant wizard', conducted during the last thirty years have established the fundamental unity of plant and animal life. How indebted is man-kind to those selfless benefactors for their unceasing toil and unselfish endeavour to promote human happiness!

To the same category belong those warriors, 'souls tempered with fire', burning with martial ardour, who have at different epochs liberated their country from the galling yoke of the tyrant or foreign invader. Their passionate love of freedom has impelled them to sacrifice everything, even their lives, on the altar of their country's liberty. St. Joan of Arc, the pure Maid of Domremy, that gentle and pious and faithful soul, fought and died that her 'beloved France' might be freed from the fetters of English dominance. Modern Italy owes its new life and greatness to the self-denying labours of Mazzini, who inspired his countrymen with his own burning spirit of union, liberty and independence. Death at the stake or long exile have been their portion in life, but what a boon they have conferred upon their respective countries! When the far-seeing patriot, Dadabhai Naoroji, declared the attainment of Swaraj as the aim of Indian politics, the sceptics and waverers jeered at him as an idle dreamer, but we have lived to hear the same legitimate goal proclaimed by His Majesty himself.

Above all, among our heroes should be ranked the great prophets and teachers, who have attempted to illumine the darkness and ignorance of human life with their glowing spiritual truths and uplift man to higher levels of moral and religious life. Socrates, the wisest of ancient philosophers, taught the Greeks the importance of sincerity of character and true devotion to the Gods, but his sophist enemies forced him to drink the hemlock as his reward. For their preaching faith in one true God, Jesus was crucified and Muhammad had to flee from Mecca for his life. To find the true path of peace and salvation for mankind, Gautama Buddha gave up his throne and family and led a life of renunciation and prayer. The patriot saint Vivekananda was born with the mission of carrying the spiritual light of the Vedanta to the materialistic West, and the illustrious Mahatma Gandhi lives and labours to prove to the warring world the blessings of Truth and Love.

These 'men with one idea', the seed-idea of progress and enlightenment, are bright beacons, whose light has, in different fields of human activity, inspired mankind to live a higher, richer, and nobler life.

I may close with the noble words of Tennyson :

"Great deeds cannot die;
They with the sun and moon renew their light
For ever, blessing those that look on them."

Since dawn the man had been seated on a stone at the bottom of a ravine. Three peasant women on their way to the vineyards exchanged "Good day" with him as they passed to their work. At sunset when they returned the watcher was still there, seated on the same stone, his eyes fixed on the same spot. "A poor innocent," one whispered to the others, "*pe caire !* a poor innocent," and all three made the sign of the cross. Fabre, the incomparable naturalist, patiently waiting to discover what is instinct and what is reason in insect life is, to these vintagers, an object of supreme commiseration, an imbecile in God's keeping.

Gregory.

The Indian Dhobie

By R. Venkoba Rao, M. E. I. A. (London)

WALKING in the wake of his donkey buried beneath the burden of cast-off clothes, chatting leisurely to his spouse and surrounded by aureola of golden dust stirred by his faithful quadruped, the picture of the Indian Dhobie looks pleasing as he wends his weary way homeward in the evenings to his far off pastoral abode. But behind this pleasing exterior, alas! lurks the lying servant of Humanity, the robber of our wardrobes and our peace, the trial of every house-wife and the truculent democrat that is invading the quietness of our domestic existence. As a type of a turbulent Brotherhood, the Indian Dhobie is making himself more hated than loved and his moral lapses in the virtues of his profession are day by day becoming too flagrant to be forgiven.

He has his caste system, they say, as all other communities have in India. The humblest of them is he who carries his burden on his back doubled up under its pressing weight. The one who owns a donkey deserves his esteem and respect. The one who uses a bull as his beast of burden comes higher up in the social scale. And the highest class of Dhobie keeps a bullock cart to cram his huge bundles of soiled clothes and carries them to the wash.

Whatever the caste system the Indian Dhobie as a race belongs to a class which is directly under the genial influence of Bacchus and every member of that fragrant Fraternity shares with the Scotch cock a strong liking for the "Wee drappie". He develops a head for heady drinks early in life though he sometimes finds it mounting beyond the legal level and then his Bacchanalian escapades are as pastoral and pleasing as his profession which requires, as everyone knows, a bit of woodland and water.

Sheep bells, grazing cows, and green meadows and all that pretty trickle do not in the least seem to throw their subtle spell around his addled soul. A thatch among a grove of feathery

palms, a patient ass, an obliging *clientele* with a lot of dirty linen to wash, a wife and a few children who might perhaps be hungry but never naked is all the strange menage he has to manage.

One would think that he must in such sweet and simple surroundings be able to spin a great epic as he spans the linen on the stone slabs and develop a poetic soul with every rythmical swish of washing clothes. But it is far otherwise. His pastoral poem is perpetually poisoned by his "Wee drappie" and he is after all a very much spoiled soul with shaky legs.

He has bloodshot eyes and a blundering talk when he comes to you. He breaks into a weep or leering smile being entirely at the mercy of his "Wee drappie" which proclaims itself now and then in bursts of incoherent eloquence or spells of inscrutable silence. He wears that mock humility of the drunken sot or his lying bold swagger as his fancy pleases. And no one lies to your face more than he does when he says that he is not drunk when you plainly perceive that he is worse for his "Wee drappie".

He tells you that there is a hole in your coat when you know it never was and never could be. He lifts to your inspection with an unsteady hand, the delicate folds of a specially fine stuff to show how honestly and smartly he works for you just to divert your attention all the time from an unseemly daub of yellow or brown on the over baked shirt-front or coat-sleeve as the result of careless ironing.

He is a great deal shaky in counting the articles of apparel and tries to make up for the missing coat or cravat by simply counting it along with the others! If the trick is found out he fidgets and frets and rubs his hands and looks all over the place but at you and depends upon his latest peg for his inspiration. More often than not he shows a supreme knack of finding substitutes for your things and tries to impress upon you the truth that one thing is as good as another. He sometimes lends your coat or shirt to a needy customer for a small consideration and settles it up before the pay day. He is shrewd enough when it is a matter of paying for his penalties and feels sorry for the

mistake and blames his young wife for the misplacement of the absent article and generally smoothens it off with a romantic tableau in the twilight of the evening.

He brings his wife and requests you to speak to her and ask her if he ever drank or did anything wrong. Once I was in this pleasing situation. I could see my Dhobie was very much the worse for his "Wee drappie" and in the heat of intoxication he had dragged his wife into my presence. She was a black buxom wench of sixteen who was brought to tell me that her husband never drank. The little image of animated bronze stood mute with downcast eyes. She cast a furtive upward glance at me now and then, which had anything but wifely witchery in it. Her husband was too far gone into the seventh circle of contentment to embolden her to hide the truth. He appealed to me in vain to speak to his wife and even wept a little. I sent the man home with some difficulty.

I was sorry for his young spouse who was being hectorred by a drunken husband, but I saw promises of her growing into a large and luscious woman to hold her own against his drunken pranks.

You have to put up with great many things in this world and the Indian Dhobie with a strong predilection for a "Wee Drappie" is one of them.

Artificiality is the greatest bugbear to a sincere life in modern days. One has to express false ideas and conceal real feelings so much and so often now-a-days that after long and protracted practice of this evil virtue, one becomes a stranger to one's own self. There are times when he is at a loss to understand the real feeling which a certain topic rouses in his mind and to sift it from the false attitude which he assumes over it in public. Man in his attempt to hide emotion finally ends with annihilating it. Such is society!

A Trip to Madura

(By Apkut)

BY and by our two friends got down at Dindigul after bidding us a sleepy good-night. On went the train past this station, where we invested eight annas in the purchase of the *sirumalai* fruits, so justly famous for their exquisite flavour. In another hour and a half the train steamed into Madura Station, where passengers to Tinnevely change trains. We leisurely got down and walked up and down the platform, staring inquisitively into an office room where the heavy-eyed booking clerk was distributing tickets to impatient and clamorous passengers, and the sleepy signaller was thumping away at his instrument right miserably. We looked indolently and with an air of conscious superiority at those passengers who with perspiring countenances and innumerable packages were crossing over to the other side of the platform by means of the overbridge. Meanwhile the ticket-collector, the sleepless dragon that watches over the interests of the S. I. R. had taken up his position at the gate and was snarling at the miserable crowd that filed past. But I had not the slightest idea of surrendering my ticket, which I intended to keep as a memento of my trip to Madura. So we quietly strolled into the second-class waiting room, though we had, as third class passengers, no right to do so. It was very dark, dark as hell, but by groping about industriously we discovered two easy chairs with which our skins had come into painful and unexpected contact. The pain was exquisite, our temper anything but sweet, and so in our wrath we apostrophised the S. I. R. in language more forcible than complimentary, and bestowed half-a-dozen vigorous kicks on the chairs themselves. At last, wearied out, we sank into those same chairs and tried to sleep a little. But this was impossible, owing to the officious and unwelcome attentions paid us by a colony of bugs who had settled down in those chairs and who persisted in giving us the pleasure of their company, although we plainly showed our sincere desire to be left alone by angry stampings and savage rubbings. But nothing seemed to discourage the ardour of their

enthusiasm; for, like the Iron Duke's soldiers at Waterloo, as often as one was wiped out of existence, another equally blood-thirsty and brave, stepped into the vacant place and fought on, or rather drank on. Thus passed away the rest of that eventful night, and when the first, faint, ashen light of dawn cautiously peeped into our room, the oldest and blood-thirstiest of our oppressors, like Wellington at the psychological moment, cried, "Up, bugs and at them!" and straightway we felt as if ten thousand pin points were thrust into us at once! It was too much. Like Napoleon's Old Guard, we jumped up, and bestowing one last savage kick on those chairs, rushed away, leaving our laurels and an appreciable portion of our blood behind. Hastily dressing ourselves we sallied forth from our unhappy bed-chamber and leisurely inspected the station, which was being extended. Satisfied with the scrupulous performance of this duty, we approached a neighbouring tap and bathed our faces copiously with the cool waters and then breakfasted heartily on the fruits we had purchased at Dindigul.

We then stepped out of the station, and there right in front of us lay the city of Madura. A fine broad road connected the station with the nearest street. Lofty houses having the appearance of portly well-to-do burgesses lined the streets around me. Far away in bold relief against the beautiful blue sky gleamed the towers of the sacred temple, while all around it, grew thick clumps of trees amidst which the towering cocoanut palm waved its graceful tuft on high. Groups of young women with the black eyes and raven hair so common in our land, with bright brass pots gleaming from their hips, were marching gracefully to the river under the superintendence of elderly widows. In a few minutes the tropic sun, brilliant and dazzling, was seen in the east, pouring a flood of warm, golden light on the towers, housetops and the dark green mass of foliage, which expressed its silent rapture by an almost imperceptible thrill. Bathed in this golden glory, the city was indeed a magnificent spectacle, and I gazed and gazed with increasing interest and admiration, which, but for the interruption which they shortly received, might have resulted in the composition of an epic poem as long as the *Iliad* or as dull as Wordsworth's *Excursion*. But my poetic raptures

were rudely cut short by the harsh, business-like inquiry, "Do you want a jutka, Sir?" and turning impatiently round, my eyes rested on a miserable specimen of suffering humanity, picturesquely dressed in a coat and *veshti* which assuredly must have graced a scare crow at no very distant period, perched on the shafts of a vehicle poetically denominated a carriage, holding the reins of a shaggy, starveling Pegasus, which seemed even without the aid of wings capable of soaring aloft into the sky like its mythic prototype of fame, and which, if I understood aright the expressive language of its hollow tearful eyes, seemed to solicit an answer in the negative. Greatly moved by the silent eloquence of this equestrian petitioner, I growled out a tremendous "No!" upon which the lash descended like a flash of lightning on the back of the unfortunate animal, and away rattled the jutka and its driver, the bones of the worthy steed rattling louder than the vehicle. Ah me! if a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had been there, would he not have thrown himself on the neck of that patient and long suffering animal, would he not have clasped it to his sympathetic heart in the fervour of his enthusiasm, would he not have kissed away its briny tears, and poured carbolic oil on its sores and corn and grass into its empty stomach? Would he not have declared its clumsy evolutions the very embodiment of grace and elegance and would he not have heard in its sorry snort the accusing blast of the trumpet of the Avenging Angel threatening Heaven's righteous wrath against its master?

We now began to find the warm sun a little too warm for us; and so we moved forward and entered a street at random. With the lofty towers of the temple as a landmark, we wandered through many streets, and at last succeeded in reaching the sacred shrine itself. It was surrounded by a lofty wall and there was a garden all round fenced in by iron rails. Hardly had we approached the temple wall, when our nostrils were assailed by vile odours emanating from heaps of refuse matter arranged all round with a precision that would have delighted the soul of the most exacting teacher of Mathematics. I had not bargained for such a reception and fled to avoid it. We took refuge in a coffee-club, where we break-fasted heartily on some excellent

coffee and *dosai* and then inquired our way to the residence of the gentleman with whom my business lay. With true Indian carelessness I had forgotten to note down his address. Vague directions given either intentionally by mischievous persons inclined to be merry at the expense of a stranger, or unintentionally through pressure of business, made us wander a good deal. Dozens of streets we traversed with diminishing ardour, but with one good result, that we saw a very large part of the city of Madura. We were very favourably impressed by the broad and handsome streets which contrasted with the narrow and crooked lanes of Trichy. The houses were well built. The shops were gorgeous with many coloured cloth, so dear to the poor of India. Brass and copper vessels were heaped up in careless profusion. The goldsmith could be seen at work, carving with cunning hand those wondrous jewels whose exquisite workmanship is the delight and the despair of the foreigner. Pyramids of sweets I saw, surrounding the happy proprietor, and making the unfortunate street Arabs who gazed so wistfully at the file almost desperate. After weary wandering we came to the Vaigai, the holy stream, which had more the appearance of a putrid sewer! Water there was none in it, except in a few holes here and there, and a few pious people were qualifying themselves for salvation by rolling about in these puddles. The banks of the river were rendered impregnable and unapproachable by the offensive odour which had driven us away from the precincts of the temple, and the holy Vaigai seemed to be the principal gutter of the great city into which numberless tributaries poured their dutiful offerings of filth!

By and by we came to the new bridge over the river. It was a fine piece of engineering and had an imposing look. We crossed the river, and after beating about the bush for sometime, succeeded in discovering the bungalow of the gentleman with whom lay my business, hidden by a grove of trees on one side and flanked by a marsh on the other. We boldly made our way through the marsh, for utter exhaustion had made us desperate. After struggling with the devouring mud in which we sank deeper at every step, we at length reached *terra firma* and offered to heaven our grateful prayers for having brought us safely through so many dangers.

Our business was soon done. A refreshing bath and a substantial dinner followed. An hour passed in delightful conversation. At one o'clock, in defiance of the scorching sun, we sallied forth on our sight-seeing expedition. We went direct to the Mall, named after Tirumalnaik, one of the former rulers of Madura. I have seen some of the finest buildings in the presidency and almost all the great temples of South India; but not one of them impressed me with such an air of sublimity as this relic of the ancient palace of Hindu Kings. Passing beneath the lofty arched gateway I entered the Mall, which is a hollow square enclosing a tastefully laid-out flower garden. Standing in the centre, I gazed at this imposing specimen of Hindu architecture in speechless awe and admiration. It was a stupendous mass of masonry, with walls of enormous strength and thickness, which seemed proof against the ravages of time. Rows of pillars, tall as the tallest palms, splendid and massive, towering proudly aloft, supported the great edifice. The coating of paint and whitewash was much faded, giving the whole structure a grave and majestic appearance which suited well that stately pile. The roof, washed by the tropic rains, scorched by the burning sun, had a dull dark grey colour which was in perfect harmony with the rugged grandeur of the whole. How grand! How glorious! How eloquently it spoke of those distant times when the genius of South India had not yet been depressed by foreign conquest, when the aspiring soul of her architect found expression in magnificent edifices, at which, degenerate creatures as we are, we stare in breathless awe! This glorious building, which Time seemed powerless to destroy, standing alone in the midst of modern jerry-don, seemed like a Titan of primeval days who had survived into the twentieth century and who now stared from the height of his own hoary elevation at the miserable worms wriggling around him!

But where are the monarchs who once called this splendid palace their own? The sage and experienced councillors who guided the ship of state safe through the storms of fate, whose wisdom was the bulwark of their country, the gallant commanders upon whose manly brows gleamed the fresh laurels of victory,

the beautiful damsels with dark eyes and raven hair, who welcomed to their glowing breasts the war-worn sons of Indian chivalry, where are they? Where the splendid courtiers who thronged like brilliant butterflies round their puissant prince and lived an ephemeral life in the radiance of his reflected glory, where the gorgeous ambassadors who swept past with dazzling pomp towards the throne? Gone! Ah! Gone for ever!

And whom do we see in their place? A foreign judge who in an unknown language lays down the law; a pompous magistrate glaring at the trembling prisoner at the bar; a dozing munsiff with ponderous turban listening with patience infinite to the learned but lengthy discourse of a tiresome advocate; a studious sub-registrar perusing with busy hum the contents of a document! O piteous, depressing, heart-rending spectacle! Musing thus on fallen greatness I left the magnificent Mall of Madura, a sadder and a wiser man!

(To be continued)

—:o:—

To a Pilgrim

Ye, restless wanderer again to Benares,
"God is omnipresent" is thy watchword,
Still searchest Him thou in every temple,
Save in thy temple within.

O! poor pilgrim I pity thy plight,
Art thou not tired of searching Him outside?
Thou art wandering here and there,
But to feel finally "neti", "neti".

If thou resolvest to seek within,
And that in right earnest,
Pray, pick out that real "I" from thee,
Which breathes "soham", "soham" every moment.

G. B.



The Saints I have met

(By Mr. P. V. Aghoram Aiyar, B. A., B. L.)

A generation ago there was but a handful of educated Indians who interested themselves in the ideal of sainthood; so far as the bulk of them was concerned, whatever was said or written about or by saints usually fell on deaf ears. That was a time in our intellectual life when orthodox western literature and science moulded our beliefs and conclusions. We thought that the first lesson we learned from them was to fight life's battle stoutly and rejected the ideal of saint-hood which, to us, looked like a cowardly retreat from this war.

Then, to our great astonishment a new order of saints came into our midst. We watched their work and observed their experiences. We became disillusioned and had to revise our fundamentally wrong notions of them. The values of saintliness have, I think, dawned upon us to day in a very real measure. The most thoughtful members of the community realise that these "homeless rags" are the salt of the earth, and an integral part of the life of every community. I have no fear therefore of plunging into obscurity, if I venture to put down a few impressions that have remained with me about the saints I have seen.

The first I saw was the monk Ramakrishnanda, the president of the Ramakrishna Mission Branch at Mylapore. I met him in December 1908. In a sense he changed my view of life. But perhaps he did it not so much by direct teaching as by the splendid introduction he gave me into the works of Vivekananda. He helped me much to study and understand the thoughts of that great master. He was a fat-bodied and very fair complexioned monk and had advanced to very nearly fifty years when I met him. He held up before me the ideal of renunciation; but I thought that the printed words of Vivekananda, spoke more passionately to me than the living words uttered by this monk. It may have been due to the circumstance that he suffered much by a contrast I made in my mind between him and the founder

of the order. The next I saw is Swami Sarvananda, the present president of the Mylapore Branch of the Mission. From the time I first met him I have had great kindness shown to me. I have perhaps known no other so intimately and no other communicated his life and thought to me with such ardour. There have been occasions when he gave of his very best mind to me. In the early years of his Mission in Madras, when I met him more frequently than now, he was with difficulty expressing himself in English, the only language common to us. But his broken words were fiery and kindled purest aspirations in my heart. Many a time I have gone to him in my moral difficulties. He never once spoke apologetically about life or the ideal which he held the highest for man to cherish. He never once faltered in telling me how I should work my way through my trials. If he had the power, I am sure, he would have used it with all his heart to set me free or to give me the strength to break my chains. He has laid me under a deep debt to him and I cannot repay it better than by enforcing his teaching in life.

In the year 1914 I met also some elderly *Sadhus* of the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur, Benares, and Brindaban. The monks Akhananda and Premananda who were the disciples of Ramakrishna lived then at Belur. I own I saw nothing striking in them then. My glimpse of them was from a distance. There was none who helped me to get close to them. Possibly I am doing them a wrong; I thought in the intervals of my meeting with them that they led comparatively easy-going lives. The days I met them were unfortunately days of festivities and rejoicings. They were probably in the off-hours of their usual work. They may have relaxed themselves a little and given themselves to fun and merriment.

At Benares I met the then president of the Mission, Swami Brahmananda. Ramakrishna bestowed extraordinary spiritual care upon him. In the literature of the Mission he is lovingly referred to as the spiritual son of Ramakrishna. He had come of very high life and his renunciation thrilled people. Among the monks he had the reputation of having scaled the inaccessible heights of spiritual vision. I saw him from day to

day for very nearly a fortnight. But he was a very silent sort of man and few were the words he spoke. He communicated by language very little to me. I thought he spoke now and then only of the common places of religion, and not very feelingly either. In my way of looking at these things there was certainly a sense of disappointment I experienced from the almost determined silence of this monk. But my eyes rested on the very expressive features of the man; though dark and brown in complexion, innocence, tenderness and purity shone from his face. I felt somewhat dimly and glimmeringly that much discussion of controversial matters ought to be avoided to awaken the inner life. In that respect his manner was an object lesson to me. I must own that I unconsciously absorbed for some time this unique manner from the man; this sort of mood stole in upon me for long and I enjoyed some of the deepest reflections of my life then. The contact with these saints had given an added momentum to my mind which had been strengthened by a prolonged course of religious and moral exercises and austerities.

At Benares I met also the Swami Adbhutananda, a rather aged *Sadhu*, but the fire of whose heart was as blazing as ever over the quest of life. He was made by the hand of Ramakrishna. But he did not formally belong to the organisation. He was living, then, on the top-floor of an old fashioned house amidst the crowded parts of the city, on the hospitality of a householder devotee. He knew no English, but talked Hindi fluently and apparently never tired of giving out his deeper mind in these talks. I had a friend who knew both English and Hindi to interpret his thoughts to me. I met him very often there. He is a very loving man. He was most anxious to help me in religion. In his talks he often paid homage to four great prophets, Buddha, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. He exalted the life of renunciation. When I asked him to give me the power to break life's bonds he referred me to God's mercy. I went to Swami Sachidananda, that is his name I think, who was given out as the foremost disciple of Bhaskarananda, that saint of Cawnpore, whose fame brought to him the homage of *savants* and scholars from distant Germany. Bhaskarananda had an *ashrama* in the spacious gardens said to have been given

him by a Rajput chieftain, and the dwelling places of *sadhus* who may come and live there, of *naishtic brahmacharins*, the shrine for worship, the small shrine where his image is set up for worship in pure white marble, are dotting these gardens, here and there. After three days waiting for him, this monk, his disciple, returned one night at about 8 o'clock from Gharipur. My first meeting with him that night was a wonderful one. This man was singing loudly the praises of God and lovingly too. His voice, while it was carried far into the distance across the silence of the night, went with its deep music straight into the hearts of his hearers. On two or three more occasions I met him. He seemed to me to be intensely religion-mad. He was refreshingly frank and child-like.

(To be concluded)



Two students whilst playing,
One of a nature quarrelling,
Due to a cause too trifling,
Turned suddenly to words biting,
Against his friend funny and loving.
To the showering shells of abuses,
The funny calmly retorted "Ah! roses!
"No words on me can create pain,
Don't you shell in vain."
At last the angry calmed in strain,
Said "Many a quarrel have I had
With consequences terribly sad
How is it I feel now so glad?"
"Blow for blow is bad"
Advised the other, "when love can
Move an angry man."

G B.